Adolescents’ participation – Evaluation tools

Working document

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References
Methodology and instruments of analysis

This paper originates from the need to investigate a specific dimension of participation: its evaluation. The internal discussion in the working group highlighted that the aspect that is most often overlooked or insufficiently analysed in its practical implications is evaluation. The group observed that evaluation is a largely debated topic, in many different contexts, but good intentions are often not translated into concrete action and good practices. Also with respect to the practices concerning the right to participation there seem to be some problems.

Evaluation has a fairly recent history, as it established itself as an independent working and research field in the United States in the Sixties of the last century. Since then, it has evolved and spread to multiple sectors and topics, it has been applied for theoretical studies and methodological innovations and it has become a common practice in many countries. Evaluation processes have been implemented by private businesses, by public institutions, in the framework of EU-funded programmes and they have been applied in the economic, organizational-professional, research, training, social and healthcare settings – just to mention the best-known cases.

However, changes have occurred not only in the number of sectors where evaluation has been applied, but also in the individuals and entities in charge of it. In the very beginning, evaluation was the prerogative of expert economists and it was solely interpreted as cost-benefit analysis. However, it soon became clear that this was a limited, short-sighted approach and that there was the risk of 'producing' evaluators concerned only with the political interests of decision-makers.

Today we are at a key moment, because the idea of doing evaluations receives wider support than in the past, especially in Europe. In light of the increased need for efficiency due to tighter budgets and of the growing public attention paid to the effectiveness of EU policy instruments in general, the demand for demonstrating their impact is growing. In this respect, monitoring and evaluation play a key role in providing the necessary evidence. Europe “has already made considerable progress: evaluation results are actively employed to inform policy-making, infrastructural development for evaluation has been stimulated at the member state and local levels, and the EU’s own evaluation capacity and techniques are continually evolving”.

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1 Another setting in which evaluation has been and is still being discussed is the school setting. However, this specific area does not fall within the scope of this study, so it will not be discussed here.
2 S. Capogna, “Intervista a Nicoletta Stame sui 'classici della valutazione'” (Interview with Nicoletta Stame on the 'classics of evaluation'), in Formazione e cambiamento, VIII/50, February 2008.
For instance, this is also demonstrated by the fact that the so-called “Barca Report”\(^4\), requested by the European Commission faced with proposals on how to reform European cohesion policy, gives a lot of space to evaluation and in particular to the evaluation of the effects of projects and measures (in which the author prefers the “counterfactual” approach).

In this report, evaluation is considered important not only as an instrument for an ex post analysis, but also as an activity which can guide the elaboration of the programme (ex-ante, when the evaluation activity is being planned) and as a methodology which can improve the setting of objectives and of criteria for the selection of the programme beneficiaries. Pillar 7 quoted in the “Barca report”, titled *Promoting the learning process*, consists indeed in the following: “Encouraging the design and implementation of counterfactual methods for assessing the impact of policy interventions, to improve understanding of what works, especially in a prospective sense, so that evaluation is designed together with the intervention and can have a disciplinary effect by focusing attention on objectives and on the criteria for the selection of beneficiaries”\(^5\).

The value and practical importance of evaluation is also confirmed by the analysis of several manuals on child participation which have been drawn up in recent years.

The most frequent reasons why to choose a programme evaluation can be grouped into a series of macro-categories\(^6\):

1. Make decisions: produce valid comparisons between programmes to decide which should be retained, e.g. in the face of pending budget cuts; determine the need of continued funding; indicate the programme’s impact on participants; indicate which programme activities to continue and which ones to end; inform staff about the programme; assist in prioritizing resources by identifying programme components that are most effective or critical; help in the planning and delivery of organizational actions by providing diagnostic information before any future action is taken.
2. Improve programmes.
3. Improve delivery mechanisms to be more efficient and less costly. Over time, product or service delivery ends up being an inefficient collection of activities that are less efficient and more costly than need be. Evaluations can identify programme strengths and weaknesses to improve the programme.
4. Verify that what people are doing is what they think they are doing. Evaluations can verify if the programme is really running as originally planned.
5. Understand, verify or increase the impact of products or services on customers or clients.
6. Discover problems or needs early to prevent more serious problems later.


\(^5\) Ibidem, p. IX and 85-88

\(^6\) These categories have been developed on the basis of a series of manuals on child participation which have been drawn up in recent years. For a complete list of these manuals, see the specific section in the bibliography.
- Recommend improvements for the future
- Ensure quality

7. Change thinking: facilitate management's really thinking about what their programme is all about, including its goals, how it meets its goals and how it will know if it has met its goals or not. Evaluation makes it possible to continually improve a project, both during its implementation (adaptive management), and with new projects.

8. Empower participants: build client confidence about purchasing, participating, or using the programme. In some cases, the evaluation process - if well done - allows the people involved in it to learn how to conduct an effective evaluation and it may make them more willing to facilitate future evaluations themselves.

9. Generate knowledge: produce data or verify results that can be used for public relations and promoting services in the community; provide information to stakeholders and sponsors such as the effects, potential limitations, or apparent strengths of the programme. Participating staff gain knowledge and understanding of the programme. Evaluation is not just about demonstrating success, it is also about learning why things do not work, or how things may work better. As such, identifying and learning from mistakes is one of the key parts of evaluation.

However, if this is not enough to convince of the practical usefulness of evaluation, there is another practical reason which, in our opinion, includes all the ones listed so far, because it provides the background of meaning in which evaluation now appears as important as ever. It pertains to the role that evaluation can play with complex dynamic innovations. Today, the social, economic, political and governance context is increasingly characterized by complex situations, with three main features:

1. Highly emergent (difficult to plan and predict).
2. Highly dynamic, rapidly changing.
3. Relationships are non-linear and interdependent rather than simple (linear cause-effect).

These objective characteristics combine with other major sources of uncertainty, of which we have recently become aware:
- Human irrationality.
- Behavioural Economics.
- The influence of different contexts.
- Change in all its splendid manifestations.

Therefore, evaluation is an important instrument of action, whose value increases over time. But what do we mean when we use this term? Talking about evaluation is not easy. Already in 1997, Pawson and Tilley stated: “The term evaluation carries so much baggage that one is in danger of dealing not so much with methodology than with incantation”. Even if this statement dates back to 1997, it seems like

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the effects of this incantation have not yet vanished with respect to the use of the term evaluation. The ambiguity and enigma behind the use of this word originate in our opinion from two factors: the common understanding and interpretation of the term evaluation and its superficial use. As to the former, the ambiguity is probably due to the fact that the verb evaluate contains in itself the verb judge and that, in the way it is commonly used, its meaning is often reduced to the idea of judgement. The need to evaluate, i.e. to carry out the subjective and/or collective process aimed at expressing a value judgement on an activity, project, or programme in order to improve it, is often only and exclusively interpreted as judgement.

The second aspect, i.e. the superficial use of the term evaluation, consists in the fact that the word is often used in a univocal way, i.e. to indicate only one thing. In fact, evaluation can include any or a variety of many different types of evaluation, such as for needs assessments, accreditation, cost/benefit analysis, effectiveness, efficiency, formative, summative, goal-based, process, outcomes, etc.

The type of evaluation used to improve programmes depends on what decision-makers want to learn about the programme.

Faced with the existing problems in the use of the term evaluation, in order to clarify things, we have chosen what we consider the most comprehensive and exhaustive definition of evaluation among all the ones elaborated by sociologists. Bezzi states the following: “The term evaluation indicates a number of connected activities which lead to express a judgement for a public purpose; this judgement is reached through processes of research which represent the essential, unavoidable element for the reliability of the procedures and for the accuracy of the information used to express that judgement”.

On the basis of this definition, Bezzi clearly shows that an evaluation, in order to be defined as such, must have the following characteristics:

1. it must be a process: the evaluation cannot consist in a single action, but it must be made up of several actions which are logically connected to each other;
2. it must be based on multiple approaches: the evaluation cannot consist in a single action, nor can the various actions be all of the same kind;
3. it must be useful: the various actions which make up the evaluation must not only be logically connected to each other, but they must also be functionally useful. As argued by Martini, there is often a sort of misunderstanding, in that people believe that the action itself of collecting data is already a process of evaluation. In fact, evaluation consists in the precise usage of data with the aim of bringing about a positive change. In other words, in order to do an evaluation, the collection of data must translate into real mechanisms which improve practice.

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9 C. Bezzi, Introduzione alla valutazione, materials from a 2010 conference, available on www.lavalutazione.it
10 A. Martini, La valutazione delle politiche pubbliche: chi l’ha vista?, Cogest - Ciclo di conferenze su “Conti pubblici e controlli: prospettive e problemi” (Cycle of conferences on “Public finances and checks: prospects and problems”), 7 November 2002, Aula Magna della Scuola Superiore della P.A.
11 Ibidem.
4. it must have a clear purpose: “evaluation does not consist in spontaneous opinions, unstable impressions, but in judgements aimed at guiding direct actions”\(^\text{12}\);

5. it must be wide-ranging: as evident in the definition above, judgement is an important part of evaluation, but it is not the only one. Evaluation is a process whose aim is to bring about change, whereas, when the judgement is an end in itself, change is hampered or even made impossible;

6. it must be methodologically sound: the judgement elaborated following the evaluation process must be based on solid reasoning and on the explicit disclosure of the elements on the basis of which that judgement has been formulated. This implies “the explicit presentation of the instruments and methods used to elaborate, compare and analyse those elements and the explanation of the logical connections between the various steps”;

7. it must have a public dimension: evaluation must pursue a public purpose; it must involve judgements needed to solve political, planning, organizational and management issues linked to programmes which concern the community as a whole or specific groups.

However, according to Martini, knowing and understanding what evaluation is (hence also what it is not) does not seem to be enough to do a good evaluation. In his interesting paper, he warns of the sometimes exaggerated claims about the positive effects of evaluation. Martini asks a number of provocative questions: “...does evaluation really improve public action? Does it always produce a positive effect, even when the intellectual effort and the resources used in the evaluation process - or management control, or whatever you want - are very limited? Because the intellectual and material resources invested in the evaluation process are often very limited. Can there be contradictions, tensions, or adverse effects? And, above all, is it enough to measure something in order for it to improve?”. Martini warns us not to believe that evaluation - whatever it is - can automatically bring about improvements.

According to Martini, in order for an evaluation process to be well-done and useful, it is necessary to clarify from the very beginning to those who “wish for” evaluation - considering it as a remedy and as a recipe for improvement - which aspirations the evaluation process shall strive to fulfil.

Based on his multi-year experience in this field, Martini identified 5 categories of aspirations to which an evaluation process can respond:

1. the desire for meritocracy
2. the desire for rationalization
3. the desire to give an account
4. the desire for knowledge
5. the desire for participation.

The desire for meritocracy responds to the need to identify the best ones to reward them - be it projects presented to receive funding, managers to be evaluated, or alternative approaches to be taken into

\(^\text{12}\) Bezzi, op. cit.
consideration. The purpose of this type of evaluation can be summarized in the following sentence: this is the best one/this is praiseworthy. The mechanism underpinning this approach is a cognitive, investigative one.

With respect to the desire for rationalization, “the essence of this evaluation is not to reward the best one, but to identify what is not working. When we want to rationalize, we want to send signals to correct abnormalities such as excessive costs or poor quality”\(^{13}\). The purpose of this type of evaluation can be summarized in the following sentence: this does not work. In this case, the outcome is not a ranking (as in the previous case), but rather a comparison with established standards that are equal for all. The underlying mechanism is rationalizing.

The desire to give an account consists in the aspiration to summarize and present one's own activity. The purpose of this type of evaluation can be summarized in the following sentence: this is what I have accomplished. In this case, the focus is clearly on knowledge, transparency and the sharing of one's own achievements. This is very different from detecting abnormalities. A very good example of this type of evaluation are the programmes financed by European funds.

As regards the desire for knowledge, “in the American and in the Anglo-Saxon context in general, evaluation basically means to learn from experience. So it basically consists in the critical analysis of an activity, aimed at concluding whether it works or not. This does not mean either to rationalize it or to give an account of it, but rather to do evaluation research. In this case, the key sentence is the following: we must learn something useful from the implementation of a public programme.

This is different from giving an account, since the goal is to understand if what is being done is working or not, in order to learn a general lesson for future activities. This kind of aspiration mainly translates into the desire to identify the mechanisms, which lead to the action which is being evaluated, to influence the problem for which action is being taken and to understand which obstacles do not allow these mechanisms to be effective. From a cognitive point of view, this type of evaluation is much more ambitious, precisely because its objectives are more challenging and complex”\(^{14}\).

Finally, while from a historical point of view meritocratic evaluation (the one used in school) is the oldest type of evaluation, participatory evaluation is certainly the most recent one. Through it, the so-called stakeholders in a public action are called to present their points of view. The customer satisfaction systems are an example of it: “they do not simply respond to a need for rationalization, but their purpose is basically to give all the legitimate stakeholders in a public action the possibility to express their judgements”. The purpose of this type of evaluation can be summarized in the following sentence: I, who experience this, think that.

This list, albeit short, immediately clarifies what was highlighted at the beginning of this paper, i.e. the widespread superficial use of

\(^{13}\) Martini, op. cit.
\(^{14}\) Martini, op. cit.
the term evaluation, which can indicate a number of different things, objectives and methodologies.

On a positive note, the list of different desires which evaluation may respond to show us that the different approaches can be used in a complementary way, in such a way to respond to the different needs for evaluation, which may concern the same action, project, or programme.\textsuperscript{15}

It is now evident that evaluation is not a neutral instrument, as it responds to different aims, expectations, needs and interpretations, hence also to different values and interests.

Indeed, evaluation is not a neutral tool which simply gives an accurate picture of the situation. Every evaluation is aimed at bringing about change and it plays a significant role in modifying the context that is being evaluated. Every instrument that measures something – all the more so in the case of something as complex as a political programme, a project, or an action – necessarily carries with it values and models. Evaluators have a major responsibility with respect to the change they recommend.

So it is important to state very clearly that there are good evaluations and bad evaluations.

Given the complexity of any evaluation process, it is advisable to avoid considering the result of evaluation as a general analysis of average and aggregate values.

On the contrary, it is advisable:

- to make reasoned analyses which shall respect the complexity and wealth of each phase of the process;
- to elaborate joint interpretations which are given sense from and give back sense to the context in which the evaluation is carried out;
- to distinguish the project from the process, the result from the product, the effects from the impact, having a clear idea of the purpose of evaluation from the very beginning.

\textsuperscript{15}As stated by Stame in the previously mentioned interview (see footnote 2), a good evaluation is never based on a single, univocal recipe: on the contrary, evaluation should be strictly context-based, hence capable of integrating also different perspectives.
2. Representation of children

2.1 General comment on different models to support child participation

A lot of time has passed and many critical analyses and practices have been done, especially by NGOs, from the document published by Arnstein, in which she stated that “citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power”\(^1\), paving the road for models supporting participation.

In those times people used to talk about participation taking only adults into account as reference targets. It was after the publication by the CRC that participation started to be seen as a practical dimension of children’s life, too.

Hart\(^2\) reinterpreted some of his works on participation through a point of view that takes into account the characteristics of people in developmental age, posing this challenge: “A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic”\(^3\). For years, his 'ladder of children participation' has been one of the most important references to question ourselves on the participation levels in groups of children and kids.

However, we would like to clarify a concept before going on. To win this challenge, the people who work for participation use a method rather than a model. The manifold and different participation practices empirically showed the uselessness of the definition and the use of a model. A method develops its knowledge through experience, while a model looks for self-confirmation in the experience (they start from two different positions: a model is a top-down approach; a method is bottom-up). Participation as a method means to acknowledge the need to go step by step, bearing in mind that any step requires a self-questioning or “just” an analysis of the present moment. At the same time, this approach makes everyone aware that there is neither miracle recipe nor external expert knowledge that, when applied, can lead to a positive outcome of this challenge. In other words, a social action relying on participation as a method, goal, strategy and tool spurs from the understanding of the non-linear character of our environment and from the need to build a knowledge able to make rational consciousness and intuitive knowledge move together (as in a dance), a unity based on a very deep knowledge of the living context.

\(^3\) Ibidem
The area of intervention around the topic of participation has always kept the analysis of the practices and the analysis of the participation concept itself for its close interrelation with power. In 1996, White warns about the ambiguity of the term participation. "The status of participation as a ‘Hurrah’ word, bringing a warm glow to its users and hearers, blocks its detailed examination. Its seeming transparency — appealing to ‘the people’ — masks the fact that participation can take on multiple forms and serve many different interests. [...] At national level it is seen in the rhetoric of civil society and good governance. At the programme and project level it appears as a commitment to participation." A year later, Treseder’s manual highlighted the hierarchical and consequential set up of the tools suggested by Hart which is not able to respond to the multiple dimension that participation can acquire in groups and individuals. The interpretation tool suggested by Treseder has more dynamism in the elements that make participation up:

- youngest subjects and their age ranges with different characteristics.
- adults add the different and manifold roles that could be taken up in a participatory process.
- stages of a participatory process.

Having said that, we can understand why Treseder’s representation of this multiple dimension of variable factors in time and context is a circular image that does not have a beginning nor an end. As in Hart’s work, the term participation refers to children and young people involvement in decision-making, whatever form this may take. According to Treseder, “consultation” means deliberately asking children and young people about their views. This is not taken as intrinsically negative if it is used as a stage leading or with the potential to lead to a more complete participation level. Davidson takes and strengthens this circular image with The Wheel of Participation. Davidson’s study refers to the participation of adult citizens to the public life, however, his suggestions help us disambiguating and clarifying the practical contents of those concepts related to the participatory process. This circle entails 4 categories of actions: a quarter of the circle dedicated to information, a quarter to consulting, a quarter to participation and a quarter to strengthen power. Each quarter is, in turn, divided in functional parts in order to reduce the ambiguity of concepts, practices, tools and goals.

This in depth analysis aimed at deducing the theory from the practice is even more evident in Shier’s work. For instance, basing on the practices by international associations and organization which have taken the participatory dimension into account, especially relating to the skill/competence of the adult in creating an appropriate environment for the involvement of children.

19 In this case we refer to the pedagog by Freire and Don Milani.
21 Ibidem
22 Treseder P., 1997, Empowering children & young people training manual: promoting involvement in decision making, Save the Children
that is also consistent with the development of cultures allowing and supporting transversal participatory practices to the performed activities; Sheir suggests a different tool.

Once again, in this case the figure used to represent the process has a gradual hierarchy, in which, however, every level interact with the following and the preceding ones and in each level there are phases on which we have to question ourselves before going on. We go from a minimum participation level, implying listening to the child, to a maximum level of power and responsibility sharing in the decision making process. The innovative and interesting aspect of this representation is that it puts in relation and intertwines more than one dimension, creating a useful tool for the observation and the concrete building of a participatory dimension. The suggested path presents the progression of the participatory dimension by sorting the different levels of presence of the minor in the decision making practice on the basis of the following steps involving three different dimensions of adults involvement.

For each level of the kid involvement there are three evaluation and control levels, assessing the growth of intensity, stability and acknowledgement of participation forms. The questioning practice is the most characteristic feature of researchers. In order to achieve a useful action, social work - promotional, preventive or for protection purposes - requires a continuous set of useful questions to understand where we are in this path.

Another useful element for the practice is the relation between children’s participation with the adult awareness level and the dialogue between these two dimensions in their context.

A further contribution to practical thoughts on participation comes in 2001 from UNICEF. This document has the prerogative to broaden the vision and action range: it doesn’t talk just about participatory processes, but it deals with a program designed through the creation of a broad environment in which participation is not just supported in the direct relation with the supporting adult but by the formal and informal occasions occurring in a given environment. "The goal of adolescent participation programmes is to ensure that young people aged 10-19 years have the capabilities, opportunities and supportive environments necessary to participate effectively and meaningfully in as enlarged a space as possible (along the four axes shown), to the maximum extent of their evolving capacities. Participation along these axes should not be arbitrarily denied to adolescents, but it should also always be voluntary and not coerced." 

The guide by Sinclair et al. is a point of reference for those who (as a collective subject) want to start, promote, support and make participatory processes with children grow. However, the focus stays on the observation and the list of characteristics by which an entity promoting participation must abide.

This guide spots 4 areas of analysis: the first related to practices, by highlighting how urgent and necessary it is to gather data, information, accounts on children’s participation status “....but too

26 Ibidem
27 Sinclair R., Kirby P., Lanyon C., Cronin K., 2003, Building a culture of participation. Involving children and young people in policy, service planning, delivery and evaluation, National Children’s Bureau (NCB) and PK Research Consultancy (PKRC), London
little attention is given to collecting systemic and rigorous evidence of outcomes.”

The second is related to the awareness, that is to say, each organization must respond to a given (even if not as explicit) reference culture supporting a specific idea of childhood, learning, citizenship, etc. The most important point is to clarify the culture of belonging and bear in mind that “The different cultures all have a place in enhancing children’s participation, but only child/youth-focused organisations automatically assume that all children and young people will be involved in any decisions affecting their lives.”

The third area of analysis is focused on the changes imposed by the organization promoting participatory processes. This guide proposes that organisations adopt a whole systems approach to participation. In applying this approach, the four parts of service development that need to be considered are:

a. culture,
b. structure,
c. practice and
d. review (it means the process of monitoring and evaluating the participation of children and young people).

“This change is about the whole ethos and culture of the organisation and needs to happen within senior management, as well as within frontline staff, and across policy and practice. It is about developing new ways of working with children and young people. Developing the infrastructure and building organisational capacity needs dedicated commitment, sufficient staff support and an undertaking to adopt an organisational learning approach: all of which are more likely where there are champions of children’s participation.”

The fourth and last area highlights once more that “Meaningful participation is a process, not simply the application of isolated participation activities or events”

The latest point is taken up and further developed in the work by Driskell and Neema.

In order to promote a long lasting participation going beyond single projects and making it possible to achieve a real program, it is necessary to work bearing in mind 5 different dimensions:

• normative,
• structural,
• operational,
• physical,
• attitudinal.

These dimensions are characterized by interactivity and mutuality (that is to say, one contributes in creating and supporting the vitality of the other and vice versa. The lack of one of these slows down and could also block the development of the other). This dynamism makes the creation of a participation space for the everyday life of children possible over time. “We hope to contribute to a larger project of refocusing debates on participation toward more careful

28 Ibidem, pg.7
29 Ibidem
30 Ibidem
31 Ibidem
consideration of the deliberate choices that shape organizations and to emphatically underscore the point: participation does not just happen. (...) The design of public institutions and organizational practices serve to facilitate or constrain meaningful and sustained participation. (...) We believe that a clear articulation of the spatial practices of participation opens new possibilities."

Obviously, this debate does not end with the above analysed text, however, from now on, the analyses begin to focus on each particular aspect of the participatory process and program. Nowadays, the analysis is focused on the so-called on-line participation. There are many documents trying to define this kind of participation, however, this research is not a further attempt in doing so. We hope that, in the near future, we will be able to perform further research on on-line participatory processes.

What emerges from this brief study of tools is that reflections in recent years have made it possible to define instruments and ways of representing the participation process that help to clarify its complexity and efficacy in terms of growth opportunities not only for children but also for adults. Participation, in the sense of sustaining and stimulating in children and adolescents the possibility of playing a central part in their life action, should be considered not as a model but rather as a method that changes and grows progressively according to a series of concepts that have become essential values in the participation process: search/action, dynamism, transversality, bottom up process, ecological awareness, “with” and not just “for”, individual and collective reflectiveness, creativity, knowledge of the context, project versus program approach, organization awareness, adult competence and abilities. From these documents, we have seen that, especially with boys and girls, participatory processes lead to rethink about the role of adults, the culture of organizations, the communities in which children live, the external culture and the policies adopted by public entities, the aims of education, the social reproduction and cultural learning, the structure of society, the concept of democracy and the representation model, the different gender-related participatory forms, and the reference cultural schemes.

What emerged is that for each of these tools we generally refer to active participation as a way to express our own point of view. However, this approach gives for granted that children are able to listen, understand and talk, if it’s not specified. Hence, we think it is interesting to quote the results of a research in 2007 on a group of children affected by disabilities.

That document clearly states that “For some workers, there appeared to be a concept of ideal participation, based on a notion that anything less than a child taking part in a review meeting and contributing to complex decision-making processes was not valid. [...] Our society operates as if communication only takes place through written or spoken language.”

This, in our opinion, should lead, on the one hand, to a higher

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33 Ibidem
36 Ibidem pg VIII - IX
precision in defining participation (we will talk about it in its dedicated chapter) and, on the other, a better clarity and concreteness of the aimed objectives and the study of the tools used for the participation of children. For instance, the document states “Some literature points to the necessity of not only formal mechanisms through which children can participate, but also the need for informal approaches – a listening culture, where children can voice their views and be listened to at any time (see Figure 1.4), (McNeish and Newman, 2002; Lightfoot and Sloper, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Kirby et al., 2003a, 2003b). Studies in the main concentrate on formal mechanisms, but Lightfoot and Sloper’s study found that young people urged an informal approach, in addition to formal structures and dedicated ‘participation workers’ (2002a, 2002b, 2003). This is an important point to reiterate particularly for some disabled children and young people whose communication may take a number of forms. Formal structured mechanisms may not be accessible and therefore understanding that participation includes methods such as observation is often neglected. For some severely disabled children, adults observing, for example, their behaviour or body language in a number of settings can provide a wealth of information and can be used to inform the decision-making process (Morris, 1998a, 2003; Marchant et al., 1999a; Marchant and Jones, 2003).”

2.2 Forms of representation formally recognised at national and regional level

Analysis of the political-administrative organisation of the countries that responded to the questionnaire

The 28 EU countries show models of administrative organisation which are very different in terms of organisation, skills, distribution of financial resources and functioning.

What we are interested in detecting is not the territorial organisation for statistical purposes, but rather to present the administrative organisation in each country which is useful to understand the formal levels where decisions are made. This is to understand at what levels the participation of children and young people is formally recognized within that territory.

The states are divided into federal states and unitary states. In both there are different levels of decentralization. In relation to the 22 countries that have sent the completed questionnaire, the situation is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Federal/unitary</th>
<th>Level of decentralisation</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Austria</td>
<td>Federal State</td>
<td>One level of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>9 federated states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Belgium – Flemish</td>
<td>Federal State</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial</td>
<td>Three communities/regions,</td>
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37 Ibidem pg 26
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Levels of Territorial Decentralisation</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Cyprus</td>
<td>One level of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>6 districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>5 Regions, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>One level of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>15 counties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>6 provinces, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>Three levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>22 regions, departments, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>16 regions/States (Länder), districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>Three levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>13 administrative regions, peripheral units, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>Three levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>4 provinces, counties, cities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Three levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>21 Regions, provinces, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>Two levels of decentralisation</td>
<td>10 counties, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>One level of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>3 districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>12 provinces, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Three levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>16 Voivodeships, districts, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>One level of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>18 districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>14 Regions, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Slovak</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>8 Regions,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic</td>
<td>territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Slovenia</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Spain</td>
<td>Unitary State</td>
<td>Three levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>17 autonomous communities or regions, provinces and municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Sweden</td>
<td>Unitary State</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>21 counties, municipalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Hungary</td>
<td>Unitary State</td>
<td>Two levels of territorial decentralisation</td>
<td>19 counties and 20 urban counties</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among unitary States:
- 5 countries have 3 levels of territorial decentralization: Spain, France, Ireland, Italy and Poland
- 9 countries have 2 levels of territorial decentralization: Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Lithuania
- 6 countries only have one level: Cyprus, Estonia, Slovenia, Finland, Luxemburg, Portugal

Among federal states:
- Germany after unification includes 16 federal states (Länder) and has 2 levels of decentralization;
- Austria consists of 9 federal states and has only 1 level of decentralization;
- Belgium, became a federal state in 1993 and has two types of federated states (regions and communities) and has 2 levels of decentralization.

REPRESENTATION AT DIFFERENT LEVELS
Representation at national level:
Out of 22 countries that answered the questionnaire, 17 (77%) stated that forms of representation of children are formally recognized at national level. Types of representation formally recognized at a national level include:
- National children’s/Schoolchildren’s/Youth Parliaments
- National assembly of Youth
- National Children’s /Youth Councils
- National Conference of Students/Coordinating committee of Students
- Youth advisory Panels/Councils
- Children Rights governmental Committee (which includes a representative from the Youth Parliament)

Representation at regional level
Eight out of the 22 countries (36%) formally recognize forms of representation of children at a regional level. It is also important to recall here what was indicated in the premise, namely that 5 countries have three levels of decentralization, 8 countries have two levels of decentralisation and 6 countries have one level. Two countries stated that only certain regions in their country formally recognize forms of representation of children. This is due to certain laws being adopted by some regional governments and not by others.

Types of representation formally recognized at a regional level include:
- Regional/Provincial youth council
- Regional Children’s/Youth Parliaments
- Youth Advisory Councils

Representation at the local level:
Fourteen out of the 22 countries (64%) formally recognize forms of representation of children at a local level. Types of representation of children formally recognized at a local level include:
- Local Children’s/Youth Councils
- City council of Children
- Local/Community Children’s Parliaments

Representation at other levels:
Thirteen out of 22 countries (59%) formally recognize forms of representation of children of other levels. Types of representation formally recognized at other levels include:
- Student participation in schools, e.g. Student Councils/Unions
- Youth Governments
- NGO Projects including Youth Councils and Youth Parliaments
- Youth advisory delegation of Sami (indigenous parliament)

ROLE, FUNCTIONS AND STATUS OF REPRESENTATIVE BODIES
National level
The main roles or functions of National Children’s/Youth Parliaments such as those in Greece, Ireland and Luxemburg are:
- To provide a forum where the voice of children and young people can be heard;
- To give young people the opportunity to represent the views of young people at a national level
- To give young people and young organisations the opportunity to participate in the discussion of issues related to action and policy for youth at a national level
- To work for changes to improve the lives of young people
- To foster a positive attitude to “civic” values
- To introduce the values, rules, practices of democracy.

National bodies which represent schoolchildren and students, such as the Pan Cyprian Coordinating Committee of Students and the Lithuanian Schoolchildren’s Parliament, that focus more on issues relating to education and student lives. The remits of students:
- Represent the interests of students
- Reflect students’ views on educational reform


- Analyse laws of importance to students and youth and to draft laws or amendments to the current legislation and present them to the National Parliament
- Keep contacts with similar institutions of students in other countries.

The role of National Youth Advisory Council/ Panels such as the Youth Advisory Council in Portugal and the Youth Advisory Panel in Greece is to advise their Governments on issues related to youth policy and the civic, social and economic integration of young people in society. Representative bodies such as the Children Rights Governmental Committee in the Czech Republic and the National Council for Children in Denmark focus on the rights of children in society and make recommendations on relevant legislation.

The Dutch National Youth Council is an independent umbrella organization of national youth organizations in the Netherlands, and is dedicated to expand and improve youth participation in the Netherlands in a meaningful and significant manner.

In terms of status, the Children’s Parliament in Cyprus is a standing body with its own statute and the Czech Republic’s Children Rights Governmental Committee is a permanent advisory governmental body. The National Children’s Parliament in Finland is recognized by administrative procedures, not by law.

Regional level
Representative bodies are not as common at regional level as they are at a national or local level. Their role is to promote youth participation and involvement at a regional level. Members of regional Youth Council/ Parliaments are usually representing young people from their local area. Some countries only have representative bodies in certain regions; for example, in Italy laws pertaining to young participation only exist in certain regions and not in all of them.

Local Level
Generally, local Children’s/ Youth Councils are recognised as official structures for participation by children and young people in the development of local policies and services. They also serve to familiarise young people with institutions and politics at a local level. Some countries also have local Youth Parliaments, which have similar roles.

Other Levels
The rights of young people to participate in school life in the form of representative bodies for students, such as Students councils or Unions, are recognised in laws in many countries. Generally, students’ representative bodies are structures for students, through which they can become involved in the affaire of the school, working in partnership with school management, staff and parents for the benefit of the school and its students. The Lithuanian School Student Union has a wider mission, which is to represent school students by influencing the politics of education and youth, educating students on real-life problems, joining together in collective activity, cooperating with governmental and non-governmental institutions in creating the ideal school-student community.
Youth associations or NGOs are also involved in forming representative bodies of young people in the form of Youth Councils, Parliaments, seminars and voluntary work. For example, an NGO in Estonia, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affaire has organised seminars on inclusion of children to find out children’s opinion and proposal on how to better ensure their rights.

MECHANISMS FOR FUNDING AND SUPPORTING/FACILITATING REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

National level
Finding and support for Children’s Youth parliaments come from central governments through various Ministries, such as the Ministry for education in Greece, and Finland and the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth affairs in Ireland. Some parliaments are funded by government but run by committees or youth organizations.

The Children’s Parliament in Cyprus also receives funding through various European and international projects in which it participates. The Pan Cyprian coordinating committee of students is funded from student’s subscription.

Regional level
No mechanisms for funding and supporting/facilitating representative bodies at a regional level were mentioned.

Local level
Representative bodies at a local level are funded by both local and central governments. Youth Councils and Youth Advisory bodies in Finland are funded by local municipalities with varying funding levels. The youth councils in Ireland are overseen and partly funded by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth affaire (OMCYA).

Other levels
In Ireland the Office of Minister for Children and Youth affaire (OMCYA) collaborates with the Department of education and Skills in overseeing the running of the students council support service.

PROCESS AND CRITERIA FOR ELECTION OF MEMBERS ON REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

National level
At a national level, the process and criteria for election of members on representative bodies varies between the selection of delegates from local Youth Councils, student Councils and youth organisations to the assessment of written submissions from interested young people. For example:

- National Youth Parliament Council members in Ireland are elected from members of Local Youth councils
- Members of the national Conference of students in Luxemburg and the Pan Cyprian Coordinating Committee of students in Cyprus are elected from student councils/committees from secondary schools. Members of the children, Parliament in Cyprus are elected by District electoral Assemblies which consist of delegates nominated by the Student Councils of secondary schools and of non-school delegates who apply for membership.
- Portugal’s Youth advisory Council and Luxemburg’s national Assembly of Youth members are made up of representative of the
most significant youth associations and organizations in their respective countries. Similarly in the Netherlands, members of the national Youth Council include political and leisure interest groups, those representing young people of ethnic minorities backgrounds and students unions.

○ The Youth Parliament in Greece asks students to prepare a written work, which address an issue affecting young people personally or on a wider social context. Based on the assessment of written work, the Committees of the Youth Parliament selects 300 youth parliamentarians from Greece and 50 from Cyprus and Greeks abroad.

○ A member of the Youth Parliament in the Czech Republic represents children’s right; Governmental Committee, alongside members of governments, ministries and NGO.

Regional level
The process for election of members onf representative bodies at a regional level was not discussed.

Local Level
In Slovakia members of the Community Child Parliaments are mainly the representatives of School Parliaments. Youth Councils in Portugal are made up of representative children’s and young people’s associations. In terms of criteria, young people in Greece must be enrolled on the Local Youth Council. Young people then participate in a ballot in order to elect the Youth Council members, president etc. Delegates from Youth Councils in Ireland are elected to represent their local area at the annual national Youth parliament.

Other levels
Student Councils members or school representative are usually elected by other students. Ireland and Austria both have representatives student bodies at secondary school level, whereas Austria also has student representatives at primary school level. Austrian students elect a federal school speaker from federal students’ representatives. They are entitled to comment on draft acts and draft ordinances; to submit suggestions for acts and ordinances, raise issues and present complaints, and to plan and organise further training measures for students’ representatives.

In Finland, the Youth advisory delegation of the Sami (indigenous) parliament are nominated by members of the parliament.

AGE PROFILE
National
The age profile of members on representative bodies at a national varies between 10 and 30 years of age. However, there were only two bodies with member over 18 years of age and most were aimed at young people between 12 and 18 years of age.

Regional
Only one country cited age in this category, which was the Finland’s Youth advisory Councils, which usually has an age profile of 15 years or older.
Local
Local representative bodies were made up of Children and Young people’s Councils and the most common age profile was 12 to 18 years (Ireland and Finland). Children as young as seven years of age are involved in Italy’s City Council of children up to 12 or 13 years of age. Older teenagers aged 14 and 15 years of age are involved in Portugal and Greece, going up to 28 years of age in Greece.

Other
Children and young people are represented on student councils at primary and secondary school age in Austria and secondary school age in Ireland and Finland. While all secondary school ages are represented on student councils in Ireland, only young people aged 16 to 18 years are represented in Finland. Children and young people aged 10 to 18 years are involved in the Youth Government in Netherlands and young people above 15 years of age are involved in a Youth advisory Delegation of the Sami (indigenous) Parliament in Finland. NGOs work with young people aged 14 to 18 in Estonia.

INVOLVEMENT OF SELDOM HEARD CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
National level
Seldom heard children and young people are involved in children’s/young people’s Parliaments in Cyprus and Ireland. While involvement of seldom heard children and young people is not specifically ensured in Finland’s National children Parliament, they have developed methods for consulting with children placed outside their homes via the Internet. Children from ethnic minorities children with disabilities and children in care are included in Greece’s Youth advisory panel and interest groups for ethnic minorities are members of Netherlands’s National Youth Council.

Regional Level
There was no reference to the involvement of seldom heard children and young people at regional level.

Local Level
At a local level, Ireland’s Youth Councils ensure the involvement of hard-to reach children and young people.

Other Levels
In Estonia, NGOs working with young people ensure there is a gender balance as well as a representation of young people from Estonia and Russia, from different types of secondary schools and young people living in children’s homes.

INTERNAL ROLE AND PROCEDURES OF REPRESENTATIVE BODIES
National level
National representative bodies, which are predominately Children’s/Youth Parliaments, tend to operate on two separate levels, meeting once a year and forming committees to implement their goals. For example, in Ireland, after the annual national Youth Parliament each year, one representative from each of the 34 Local Youth councils is elected to form the national Youth parliament (Dàil na nOg) which works to implement some of the changes young people call for at the national Youth Parliament. Similar to Ireland, the national children’s
Parliament in Finland meets once a year and a board and subcommittees develop further themes selected by the children. There are also two levels of membership in the Greek youth parliament, one at regional level, and the other at national level with all regions combined.

The use of the Internet is common among representative bodies at a national level. For example, while Youth Advisory Council in Greece meet with the Ombudsman four time per year, in the interim they communicate via the Internet or in other ways. Finland’s national children’s Parliament works mainly through Internet.

The Lithuanian Schoolchildren’s Parliament participates in various workgroups and members actively work in their respective municipalities between sessions. The Children’s Parliaments in Cyprus has five district Parliamentary groups, which elect their own officers and convene monthly in preparation for full sessions.

Regional/local level
No internal rules and procedures of representative bodies were commented on at a regional or local level.

Other levels
In Austria and Ireland, Student councils interact with school management in relation to school rules and policies and other issues concerning school life. They also organise school events such as fundraising for charities. The Lithuanian School Student Union has an annual action week which, as well as running sports and cultural events, initiates discussions among students across the country on school problems.

Some of the 12 Dutch provinces run type of Youth parliament, which is involved in preliminary meetings for the national youth debate. Also a model of European parliament is organised annually by the provinces at which secondary schools can participate.

REPRESENTATIVE BODIES’ LINKS WITH ADULT DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES AND INDIVIDUALS
National level
Some bodies have formal regular links with adult decision-making structures and individuals. For instance, Children’s/Youth parliament in Cyprus and Greece convene annually in their Houses of Parliament and are chaired by the president of their Parliament. Cypriot Commissioner also attends the session in Cyprus for Children’s rights.

Similarly, the Dutch national youth council meets with the Dutch Minister for Youth and Families twice a year to discuss policy issues within the field of youth participation and the main proposals of the Greek Youth Advisory Panel are sent by the Ombudsman to the competent ministries and authorities at the end of each year. The Council of the National Youth Parliament in Ireland spends two years seeking support from policy-makers and Ministers in making changes for young people based on the main recommendations agreed at their annual Parliament, which is also attended by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.
Some children’s/Youth Parliaments/Committees are represented on advisory bodies and committees relating to the rights of children, for example, the Advisory Committee of Commissioner for children’s Rights in Cyprus and the Advisory Body to the Ombudsman for children in Finland.

The national Council for Children in Denmark offers advice and consultancy to authorities on issues concerning children and is available for consultation on legislation on other initiatives or significance to children.

Region level
There were no references to links with adult decision-making structures and individuals at the regional level.

Local level
Youth Councils in Ireland have established links with the adult representatives of City and County Councils, while the Community Child Parliament in Slovakia collaborates with local mayors and deputies and is involved in public presentation at a local level.

Other levels
Student Councils links with adult decision-making structures and individuals are most commonly seen at school level in relation to school policies and other issues relevant to students. However, there are links between Student Councils and ministerial departments in some countries. For example, in Ireland, students were represented on the Student Council Working Group (2003-2005) which was established by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affaire (OMCYA).

Likewise, the Lithuanian School Student Union closely co-operates with the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania and other civic initiatives encouraging organisation to establish a modern democratic student environment in Lithuania. They also meet with the employees of municipalities and education division during their Annual Action week.

REPRESENTATIVE BODIES LINKS WITH OTHER CHILD/YOUNG DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES/BODIES

National level
In Finland and Ireland the National Children’s/youth parliaments have links and lines of communication with local children’s parliaments/youth councils as well as Student councils in their respective countries. The national Council for Children in Denmark also has a children panel, which includes almost 1,200 children (aged approximately 10-12) spread across the whole country. This panel volunteers their opinion on the subjects taken up by the Council. The panel conveys their attitude to issues such as smoking in school, children’s problems with parents’ divorce and bullying. The Council disseminates the children’s replies to the public at large, child experts, politicians, children and others with an interest in the field of children.

In Greece, the Youth Advisory Panel created an electronic forum, which allows members of the Panel as well as other young people, who had applied to become members, communicate and exchange their news and
opinions on matters of common interest. In Cyprus, the Pan Cyprian Coordinating Committee of Students is also represented on the Cyprus Youth Board.

Regional level
There was no reference to links by other child/youth decision-making structures or bodies at a regional level.

Local level
In Local Youth Councils in Greece, young people are invited to participate in public meetings held by Municipal or Community Youth Council and express their thoughts on issues of concern. Youth Council in Ireland create links with other Youth councils, student councils, youth organisations and other group.

Other levels
As mentioned previously, Student Councils in Ireland link with Youth Councils at a local level. In Austria, members of the federal students’ representative body maintain contact with students’ representatives. The Lithuanian School Student Union is a consultative member of the European School student Unions (OBESSU).

LEVEL OF IMPACT OF REPRESENTATIVE BODIES

National Level
The following examples of the impact of the representative bodies at a national level are outlined below:

- In Finland, the Ombudsman for Children has used the advice of the national children’s parliament in the process of reporting to the UN Committee for the rights of the child. The Parliament has given advice to the Ministry of justice and MEPs.
- The most significant impact of Finland’s national children’s Parliament has been delivering information to municipalities and encouraging them to establish and develop the local children’s parliaments and through that to emphasize children’s involvement in the local decision making process.
- Young people from the Irish Youth Parliament have contributed towards the development of policies at local at national policy areas. Recently, the Council of the Youth parliament, among others, successfully lobbied the Minister for Health and Children to commence a programme of administering the cervical cancer vaccine to young girls.
- The National Council for Children in Denmark can request that public authorities account for political decisions and administrative practice in certain areas.
- Members of children’s/youth parliaments in Cyprus, Finland and Ireland participate in media such as radio and television to get their voice heard, while the Youth parliament in Greece is broadcast on public television.
- The Lithuanian Schoolchildren’s Parliament has helped develop the skills of pupil participation in public life, strengthened pupils’ self government and served the needs of civil and patriotic education of youth.
- Eurochild recognized the Cyprus Children’s Parliaments as ‘Stakeholders’ and actors in the field of child participation.

Regional level
No countries referred to any level of impact of bodies at a regional level.

Local level
In Ireland, Youth Councils and the National Youth Parliament are recognised as the official structures for participation by children and young people in the development of policies and services. Youth councils in Ireland have been involved with many local authorities in projects such as:

- The development and management of future recreation facilities and youth cafes
- The development of playgrounds
- Encouraging active citizenship
- Promoting road safety among teenagers
- Highlighting health and safety on school buses
- Developing conservation and heritage plans.

Other levels
Student Councils in Finland and Ireland have had an impact in relation to decision-making and changing school rules and policies. Students in Ireland were also members of the Students Council Working Group (2003-2005), which was established by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. Eleven second-level students, aged between 13-17 years, were members of this Government Working group, which in 2003 marked a milestone in public policy-making. The Lithuanian School student Union has achieved some significant results relating to schoolchildren and their problems.
3. Practices

3.1 General description of the projects and introduction to this part of the research

This part of the research specifically focused on evaluation. Our purpose was to get to know which theoretical, methodological and practical approaches were the basis of the evaluation process in each project; starting from this, we wanted to identify some common aspects and, above all, find out which lessons had been learned from practice. The main goal we set ourselves at the beginning of this work was to be able, at the end of the analysis, to identify a minimum set of standards for the evaluation of child participation and of its outcomes.

The method we chose was to broaden the field of investigation as much as possible, without setting a single area of research beforehand, but rather inviting participants to describe their most significant experiences.

We sent out the description frameworks (DFs) to request information to all the EU member states and we received 23 answers. As the replies came in, we decided to focus on 4 main areas, which we called daily life, civic participation, formal/non-formal education, research with children.

The various projects were divided into the four areas of action following the indications given by the partners in the Description Frameworks (DFs)38. Even if some of the initiatives have such characteristics that they could very well be included in more than one area of action, for practical purposes we decided to assign them to only one category.

Area of daily life

DEFINITION OF THE AREA
The area of daily life includes all the projects and initiatives which do not have public visibility, which take place in the contexts of life of the persons involved in them and which are implemented on a regular basis. This category includes projects carried out with families, in hospitals, in children's services. These actions are aimed at having a direct or indirect impact on children's quality of life in their daily life contexts. We included in this area seven DFs.

THE ACTIONS, EXPERIENCES AND PROJECTS

1. Beispiel Stadt Dornbirn/Oberdorf – Austria

38 Description Frameworks will be referred to as “DFs” from now on in this document.
This initiative was carried out in the Weppach district of the town of Dornbirn, in Austria, where the majority of the population is of Turkish descent.

The problem tackled by this project is the fact that the adult inhabitants of the area were not very tolerant of children playing outdoors.

The objective of the project was to improve interactions between generations when it comes to using public areas to play outdoors.

The children were involved in a field research, whose aim was to find out which games the adults living in the area used to play when they were children and where they played. The visible results of the field research were a photographic exhibition and a play which was performed in the neighbourhood. The non-visible result was that relations began to develop between the generations living in the area, as mutual understanding and respect improved. In the end, the initiative led to the signature of a formal agreement by children and adults on how to manage public areas; this document was then hung on the front door of every block of flat in the neighbourhood.

The project was funded by the Municipality of Dornbirn and by the Regional Government of Vorarlberg.

2. Be smart on line – Estonia

This project focused on the dangers of the internet for children. Its objectives were to increase children's capacity and capabilities and to give adults (teachers and parents) information about illegal contents or activities existing on the internet.

In order to carry out an information campaign aimed at educating children, adolescents, parents and teachers on the risks of the web for children, two bodies were created: an advisory body made up of adults only and a youth panel comprising 15 boys and girls aged 14 to 17 who come from different parts of Estonia (8 girls, 7 boys). The members of the youth panel gave advice to the project team, in particular on how to plan and conduct activities aimed at young people. The youth panel presented the opinions and thoughts of young people to the project team: what kind of information they need to make internet usage safer and more successful and in what way this information can best reach children and young people. The youth panel members were also active as voluntary trainers. They conducted workshops on safe internet usage for younger students, either independently or in collaboration with adult trainers.

75% of the project was being co-financed by the European Commission’s Safer Internet Programme and by NPO Estonian Union for Child Welfare.

3. We participate! - Italy

This project was launched after the earthquake which on 6 April 2009 hit the city of Ancona in the Marche region.

Its objective was to give young people a more prominent role in the processes of progressive reappropriation of the area. "Partecipiamo!" has encouraged the adoption of measures to promote the participation of young students in the life of the local community.

In order to achieve this objective, the young inhabitants of Ancona were asked to develop proposals for the rehabilitation and
reconstruction of a site damaged by the earthquake. Alternatively, they could make proposals for the creation of a new space in the municipal area which could act as a catalyst for their creativity and which could be at the same time a "symbolic place" fostering a process of progressive re-appropriation and a sense of belonging to the community. A competition was thus organized to collect proposals, at the end of which a committee of external experts evaluated 15 project proposals coming from the 8 schools participating in the initiative. Each proposed project was sponsored by the local authorities, whose representatives worked with the students and teachers to identify the sites where these projects could have taken place. At the end of the competition, the committee awarded a prize of €100,000, which served to support the educational institutions which promoted the project and to encourage its implementation by the local authorities. The project was funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and by the Region of Abruzzo.

4. Living in Palermo - Italy

The project was elaborated based on some observations contained in a social research carried out in the city of Palermo on the topic of children's life. This study highlighted that there was difficulty including young people in social life and that, as a result, their participation in the decision-making process of the city was quite limited.

The objective of the project was to provide young people with instruments that could help them find their own path to self-determination.

In order to achieve this objective, the promoters of this initiative took children and adolescents as the starting point of the project. Those who participated in the project from the very beginning worked as “FACILITATORE TERRITORIALE” (territorial facilitator) and they became the key figures of the project itself. Their main goal was to promote “PATTI INTERGENERAZIONALI” (intergenerational pacts), in order to encourage other young people to promote activities, solidarity and to fight against urban decay. In this way, the young had a chance to choose and to play three different roles. Firstly, they could act as facilitators, helping other young people in the information gathering process and in planning activities. The idea was to create spaces and meeting points for the young, stimulating self-determination and giving them the chance to become aware of their abilities and competencies; the methodological models of reference were participation and peer education. Secondly, the young could participate as volunteers in charity activities. They were given the possibility to manage community spaces (Ludoteca del Mediterraneo, Parco Robinson – in the suburban area of Borgonuovo), to create a recreational area for children and to restore a small park. Thirdly, young people could simply play the role of users, taking part in the activities and workshops created for them. The project was funded by the Municipality of Palermo.

5. Smartkids - Malta

The document presents a socio-educational service addressed to children aged 0 to 3 years. The aim of the service was to provide a
safe and stimulating environment to children whose parents are in employment, in training, or are actively seeking to enter the labour market.

The project was entirely funded by a private institution, The Foundation for Educational Services (FES).

6. Platform for Children's Citizenship – Portugal

The objective of the project is to improve the socio-educational initiatives which are promoted by local social cooperatives in favour of children in danger or at risk of exclusion.

The method used in this project consists in the organization of a number of activities by the Platform for Children's Citizenship. This body was created as the basis to promote networking between the institutions protecting children at risk and in danger. This Platform created a working model to share knowledge and best practices, to give constant access to action programmes and to develop a structured and horizontal action by different organizations. The main objective of the Platform was to work on the children’s right to participation, in such a way to implement articles 2, 9, 12 and 13 of the CRC.

After consulting all the parties involved in the Platform for Children's Citizenship and after listening to their experiences, difficulties, potential and how they could contribute, the Platform carried out three activities:

- The drawing up of the Chart on Child Participation, which was the result of the reorganization of all the collected materials
- The creation of a “knowledge bank”, in the form of a website where everybody could feed in, share and discuss their knowledge and experiences. This is a valuable instrument for the organization, as it contains several types of documents, scientific articles on children’s rights to participation and reports.
- The promotion of a meeting for children and youngsters, which was organized jointly by a group of children, young people and adults.

The project was promoted by the Comissão Nacional de Protecção das Crianças e Jovens em Risco (National Commission for the Protection of Children and Young People at Risk), by the Instituto da Segurança Social, IP – Centro Distrital de Lisboa (a government body), by PIEC (a government body), by some NGOs and by some public institutions.

7. La Casa+Grande (The Biggest House) – Spain

The description framework presents a youth participation process for the construction of a youth resource centre. This process was initiated following an explicit request made by a group of 30 students of a secondary school, who signed a petition for the construction of a new youth centre in the "Casco" area (in the Eastern part of the city), because the existing facilities were too small.

The objectives of the initiative were the following: 1) to discuss and find practical, functional solutions for the construction, fitting out, contents, services and management model of the "Casa+Grande" youth centre through a participatory process; 2) to create an area for educational interaction and collective work to discuss how to promote the development of civic skills and the rights of young people in the
construction of community life, starting from a simple idea: their involvement in the construction of a public building.

The Municipality then decided to build the new facility in a neighbouring park called "Parque de Casa Grande" ("Big House Park"). The park's name is a perfect fit for the initiative, which is known as "La casa + grande" (The Biggest House).

To this purpose, architecture firms were invited to submit projects which had to include youth participation already in the design stage of the new centre.

The centre now hosts all types of programmes and services, focusing in particular on spare time activities.

The project was promoted by the Department for Children and Young People of the Municipality of Rivas Vaciamadrid.

Area of civic participation

DEFINITION OF THE AREA
The area of civic participation includes the projects and initiatives concerning debate, decision-making and issue management which pursue public purposes. These initiatives are carried out in formally recognized bodies, either individually or in group, and they help promote the idea of active citizenship, which is the basis of democracy. Overall, ten DFs were included in this area.

THE ACTIONS, EXPERIENCES AND PROJECTS

1. 101 Children to Toompea (Parliament) – Estonia

The aims of the project were to encourage the participation of young people in the national decision-making process, as well to prioritize and develop their participatory skills. An important result of the project was the drawing up of proposed amendments to legislation - these are young people's ideas on what to improve or change. The document was handed over to the Parliament. Another aim of this and of similar annual projects (since 1992) was to present the point of view of young people, to bring it to public attention and to make it known to politicians and the media.

The main outcome of the project was the youth session (Forum) held in the hall of the Estonian Parliament.

Participants in the Youth Forum included older pupils of primary schools, high school and vocational school students, i.e. students aged 14 to 21 coming from all over Estonia. Furthermore, these students also participated in pre-forum meetings.

The main project organizers and decision-makers were youth organizations themselves: the Youth Council of the Estonian Union for Child Welfare and the Estonian School Student Councils' Union. The young people were supported by the leaders of the "School Peace" programme promoted by the Union for Child Welfare. All the participants in the youth pre-forum meetings submitted their ideas for inclusion in the final document. The organizers prepared the summaries and the leading team of the project (mainly formed by young people)
reviewed all the suggestions and compiled the draft version of the final document.
The project coordinator was the NPO Estonian Union for Child Welfare.

2. National Association of Youth Councils – France
The objectives of this project were to promote the collective participation of young people in local decisions through children’s councils, to promote debate and reflection, as well as to give information on methodology and evaluation.
The method used to achieve these goals consisted in the local council of adults funding and supporting the local youth council. The children were either volunteers or they were elected. An adult was in charge of organizing and managing the local youth council, whose activities were financed by the council of adults. The local councils were organized in commissions or working groups, with each commission being specialized in a specific topic or project.
The bodies and institutions involved in this project were the National association of youth councils, the Regional Councils, the Departmental Councils, the Local Councils and the INJEP (National Institute on Youth and Popular Education).

3. Dáil na nO'g Council, National Youth Parliament – Ireland
The Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) has the lead role under the National Children’s Strategy (2000), in ensuring that children and young people have a voice in the design, delivery and monitoring of services and policies that affect their lives, at national and local level. The OMCYA is responsible for overseeing the development and improvement of structures that promote and enable participation by children and young people and undertakes specific participation initiatives with statutory bodies, government departments and non-government organizations. A key structural initiative is Dáil na nÓg, the annual national youth parliament for young people aged 12 to 18 years, which is funded and overseen by the OMCYA. 200 delegates are elected to Dáil na nÓg through their local Comhairle na nÓg (local child/youth councils) and attend the annual parliament. At the event they vote on a series of recommendations on issues that have been identified by young people at their Comhairle na nÓg.
The recommendations voted on by the young people at Dáil na nÓg 2009 (the national youth parliament) to be pursued by the Dáil na nÓg Council 2009 were under the thematic headings of mental health and physical health.
Under the theme of mental health, delegates at Dáil na nÓg (the youth parliament) recommended:
- the need for improved implementation of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in schools.
Under the theme of physical health, delegates at Dáil na nÓg (the youth parliament) recommended:
- the need for a free cervical cancer vaccine programme for girls.

4. Vitamina CC - Italy
The project was launched following a reflection phase which involved different professional figures and skills (teachers, educators, trainers, social workers, etc.). The result of this reflection phase was that participation is the means through which democratic processes are built. In Italy, once you are 18, you gain the right to vote, but it would be unrealistic to think that an individual can “suddenly” become a citizen at the age of 18 if he/she has never had the opportunity to directly experience what it means. Citizenship and knowledge of participatory processes can only be acquired through practice at all ages, as they cannot be taught as abstract concepts.
In order to favour this process of change/learning, the group of peers was identified – both in methodological and practical terms – as the ideal setting for this targeted educational process, as it helped create an active, participatory atmosphere which positively influences the dynamics of relations.
The Project VITAMINA C.C. was aimed at promoting educational continuity through the different school levels. It is fundamental that children learn how to practice active democracy since the very beginning of their social life. That is why the project promoted the role of students’ committees, a kind of representation which is based on a holistic approach to the individual at any age – child, adolescent or young adult.
The project was supported by the Region of Tuscany and by the Municipality of Castelfiorentino.

5. National Youth Assembly – Luxembourg
The national youth assembly was set up following the coming into force of the law on youth of 4 July 2008 (Loi du 4 juillet sur la jeunesse). Its mission is to give young people and their organizations the possibility to participate in the discussion of questions related to actions and politics for the young, both on a national as well as on a European scale.
The aim of the national youth assembly is to develop a structured dialogue with the younger generation. Thus, participation is the aim of the project, not its method.
The national youth assembly is composed of three elements:

1. The youth parliament, which has the objective of promoting the social and political participation of young people. Members of the youth parliament meet members of the parliament and the resolutions of the youth parliament are made public.

2. The “infomobile” (information truck), which has the objective of communicating with the young by informing them of the existing opportunities and by collecting their views.
The homepage www.jugendparlament.lu, which enables everyone to inform themselves on the views and concerns of the young.
No information on the promoters of the project is provided in the DF.
6. Draft National Children’s Policy – Malta
Malta is currently finalizing the draft National Children’s Policy. Based on the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was decided that the approach to be taken would be to involve children at all stages of the drafting process. Such approach reflects one of the main themes of the Policy, which is Active Participation. To this purpose, a number of participatory exercises were conducted, involving children aged from 3 to 18 years of age.

In order to promote participation, several instruments were used:
- Questions asked to children at the event organized by the Commissioner for Children to commemorate the 21st Anniversary of the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Questions asked at the National Children’s Day event organized by the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family;
- Informal Discussion held at the National Children’s Day event organized by the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family, where the different themes of the Policy were discussed by children;
- Participation through various forms of art on the theme ‘Children today and tomorrow’;
- Discussion in Personal and Social Development lessons in schools;
- Arts exercises on the different themes found in the Policy with the students of Skolasajf (Summer School) and Klabb 3-16 (for those children aged 3 to 16 attending Summer School);
- Informal BBQ with Local Youth Councils and Youth Organizations.

7. Youth Parliament Programme – Portugal
The Youth Parliament Programme has a particular pedagogical objective. It promotes knowledge of Parliament rules and proceedings, it promotes citizenship education and it raises the interest of children and young people for the discussion of different political topics. It also promotes the discussion of reviews by youngsters, it encourages them to defend their ideas, to listen to others and to learn to respect the decisions of the majority. In the final phase of the Programme, the recommendations which have been discussed in the Youth Parliament are approved.

This is an initiative of the Parliament, which is developed throughout the school year in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Every public or private school (elementary or secondary) may join the Programme, which culminates with the annual two-day session in the Parliament: a meeting intended for secondary school students and a meeting intended for elementary school students. The sessions of the Youth Parliament Programme are held annually in the Parliament.

The objectives of the project/initiative are the following: educating for citizenship; stimulating civil and political participation; fostering knowledge of Parliament rules and parliamentary debate; promoting democratic debate; promoting respect for diversity of opinions; fostering knowledge of the rules adopted in the decision-making process in Parliament; encouraging reflection and debate on a different topic selected every year; giving young people the
opportunity to experience participation in the electoral process; encouraging self-expression and argumentation.

The programme is part of the activities for young people developed by the National Parliament to promote active citizenship education.

8. Children's social participation experience: Children's Participation Council in Sant Feliu de Llobregat – Spain

This is a children's social participation experience, as the project promotes children's civil rights and exercise of citizenship within a local context. The concept of childhood on which the project is based acknowledges the children's capacity to participate in social life through their daily activities; in other words, the children are considered as social activists in the daily practice of politics. It is through the practice of participatory action itself that the individuals get to experience and to share democratic principles and values. This educational process is understood as being part of children's personal development and of the construction of their identity as citizens.

The council deals with different topics. On the one hand, children propose topics they are interested in, regarding their rights and needs as a children's group, as well as their city and community. On the other hand, every year the government team prepares a work proposal or project to be submitted to the council.

The method used in this project is characterized by the promotion of the group's importance and relations, by the existence of a common project and by the children's participation in the preparation and management of the project itself. Through their constant involvement, children participate in all the phases of the project, from the design stage to its development and evaluation. The council's participation in recreational, festive or cultural initiatives and activities taking place in the Municipality (Three Wise Men Parade, Carnival, Inauguration of Fira-Joc, Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) is the clearest public manifestation that children take part in the day-to-day development of the city and in the evolution of its historical heritage and identity. Externally, the council also collaborates in conferences, congresses, seminars, etc. which are organized by entities working for the protection and promotion of children's wellbeing and/or participation.

The Municipality is the main authority which supports the project, together with the Province of Barcelona. The city's primary schools play an equally prominent role, as they provide classrooms to hold meetings and as they accompany children's representatives to the council during their mandate. More specifically, schools provide areas where the other children from the Municipality can give their feedback and make proposals to the council, but most importantly, they play a fundamental role because they believe in the teaching potential and in the social value of the project.

9. Municipal Forum for Children’s Rights of the Principality of Asturias – Spain

In the region of Asturias, child participation is part of the project to support Municipal childhood policies which was launched in 2004 by
the Department of Social Welfare of the Government of the Principality.

In order to cover all the initiatives developed separately until that date, the Principality of Asturias created the Municipal Forum for the Rights of Children and Adolescents. At present, the Municipal Forum includes 30 Municipalities.

The child participation model promoted by the Municipal Forum for Children's Rights of the Principality of Asturias is based on two bodies: the Municipal Board for Childhood and the Municipal Group for Child Participation.

The first body (MBC) is composed of adult representatives and of all the children from the Municipal Groups for Child Participation. The Municipal Board for Childhood meets both in plenary sessions and in working commissions to collaborate in the organization and carrying out of the initiatives included in the Childhood Plan, to monitor its development and to make recommendations as appropriate.

The second body (MGCP) is composed exclusively of children and its functioning is independent from the Board. The dynamics and the procedures used in its meetings have been adapted to facilitate the participation of children. The Group is coordinated by one or two monitors and it holds meetings on a weekly basis, in two-hour sessions, eight months a year: as a result, child participation is guaranteed on a regular basis.

The Asturian Department of Social Welfare is developing these policies through the Asturian Institute for Social Care of Children, Families and Adolescents, which integrates the Observatory for Children and Adolescents of the Principality of Asturias, an institution in charge of elaborating and carrying out initiatives to promote children’s rights.

10. The peaceful school. Democratic Citizenship – The Netherlands

In the Netherlands, Municipalities should have some form of youth participation since 2011, as established in the framework programme 'Opportunities for all children' of the former Dutch Ministry for Youth and Families. Since 2006, schools have the obligation to work on the issues of active citizenship and social inclusion.

In short, this programme focuses on democratic citizenship: students acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills that are necessary to function in the Dutch democratic society. Functioning means contributing to the community, feeling responsible for society, being open to differences, being willing to behave democratically, forming opinions and a critical view on information.

To this purpose, the promoters of the project have adopted a pedagogical approach which transmits the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed for democratic citizenship through education. Schools should organize education in an open and respectful learning environment, based on democratic values. The project is not just about transferring knowledge about democracy, but also about teaching children how to behave in a democratic society.

The peaceful school is a project created by Eduniek (Education consultancy) in collaboration with Dr. Prof. Micha de Winter from the Utrecht University and it is funded by the Ministry of Education,
Area of formal and non-formal education

DEFINITION OF THE AREA
The area of education is also very broad and it includes projects and initiatives carried out in the area of both formal and non-formal education. The former indicates the kind of education which takes place in the institutions that are formally dedicated to education and training and which leads to obtaining a diploma or recognized qualification. The term non-formal education indicates any educational activity which is organized outside the formal education system and which, for instance, takes place in the workplace or in the framework of civil society organizations or groups, in associations, etc. Non-formal education is intended for clearly identifiable groups of people and it pursues specific objectives in the field of learning, but it does not lead to obtaining degrees or recognized qualifications. We included in this category three DFs.

THE ACTIONS, EXPERIENCES AND PROJECTS

1. The expert group of young people with school drop-out experiences (upper secondary education programmes) of the National Council for Children – Denmark

In 2010 Denmark focused strongly on secondary school dropouts and on possible measures to reach the government's target of 95% of the students of any year group completing secondary education. However, the Council did not have the young people's perspective on core issues, so it decided to set up an expert group of young people who had dropped out of secondary school in the past.

The main objective of the project was to better qualify and refine the current debate on the initiatives needed to improve the completion rate in secondary education. There was the political will to act, but there was also a need for new perspectives and arguments in regard to the choice of focus. This project would help discover the perspective of some of the young people who had dropped out of the school system. The concrete and measurable objective of the project was the elaboration of recommendations to help make political and organizational decisions.

The young people of the expert group were invited to evening meetings. They were then split into groups to discuss one or two of the subjects more thoroughly and in the end they were invited to share the results of the working groups with the rest of the participants. As a result of these common discussions, the young people were asked to reformulate their statements into recommendations aimed at parents, teachers, educational advisors, politicians and other authorities, as well as to rate them in order of importance. These recommendations were then presented one by one in a video by the young people themselves. The idea behind the video was to bring the voice of all the members of the group to the Council’s conference which was held on the topic in November 2010, without them having to speak directly at
the conference. However, all the young people did participate in the
classroom – one of them also as part of a debate on stage.
The project was funded by the Danish National Council for Children, by
the Danish Chamber of Commerce and by the Ministry of Education.

2. Klabb 3-16 – Malta
This project is about a new after school care service called Klabb 3-16 which was set up by the Foundation for Educational Services (FES).
Klabb 3-16 is an after school care service for children aged 3 to 16
years who attend State, Church and Independent Schools. The service
bridges the gap between when school finishes and when parents finish
work. Furthermore, it also provides care during school holidays for
the families who need it. The centre has a planned programme of
activities, during which children do their homework, play and take
part in a number of activities.

The centre organizes activities according to the interests of the
children, who can express their desires and needs when they enrol for
the service. As a result, the activities are not only age appropriate,
but they are also built on what the children decide to do during the
day. For example, if some children decide to spend some time in free
play, they can do so; if a group of children would like to organize a
football match, then they are allowed to do so.

3. Dinja Wahda Project (One World) – Malta
Dinja Wahda is BirdLife Malta’s outward-looking educational
initiative. It is a project that seeks to broaden environmental
awareness and therefore develop an environmental conscience through
the main primary education institutions.

Dinja Wahda is BirdLife's commitment to education for sustainability.
It is presented in an Action Guide through 30 green activities for
primary schools. Together with their pupils, teachers choose the
activities they would like to carry out in their schools and
communities. The range of activities covers different skills,
interests and varying levels of teacher and pupil participation.

The Dinja Wahda Project pursues the following objectives: emphasize
the pivotal role of the natural environment for life in general; give
children diverse opportunities to experience the natural environment:
to discover it, to connect with it, to be inspired by it, to learn
from it, to care for it and to protect it; enable individuals to learn
first-hand about the connections and interactions between humans and
the world around them and about its complexity; provide the knowledge,
values and skills that allow children to participate in decisions
either at an individual level or collectively, both locally and
globally; ensure the continuity of biodiversity through direct and
indirect conservation actions.

The pupils participating in the project write to the Minister in
charge of environmental matters to express their concerns related to
environmental issues. The activity is indeed called “Dear Minister”. The
Minister discusses the issues brought forward by the children and,
whenever possible, also takes their pleas into consideration.
Area “Children and research”

DEFINITION OF THE AREA
The last area groups the DFs which describe projects for the involvement of children and adolescents in the research field.

Researchers usually do research on children and adolescents: in other words, a group of adults decides the scope of the research and carries out a study considering the children and adolescents as the target of the research itself.

Research in this field helps better understand the desires, needs and cultural perspectives through which children and adolescents in a given context interpret reality. Hence, the objective of research is usually to find out if and to which extent the policies and programmes adopted by an administration respond to the children's needs, desires and expectations and how these programmes are perceived and evaluated by their beneficiaries.

In the last decade, researchers have taken up the challenge of doing research with children and adolescents, considering them as co-researchers to be involved from the very early stages - such as when they have to choose the scope of the research.

As is the case for all forms of child participation, also in this field adults must know and be able to recognize the relations of power between adults and children and manage them in a fair, respectful and competent way. We included in this category three DFs.

THE ACTIONS, EXPERIENCES AND PROJECTS

1. Nuoret luupin alla - Youngsters in focus – Finland
According to the Constitution of Finland (731/1999), the public authorities shall promote the opportunities for the individual to participate in societal activity and to influence the decisions that concern him/her. This obligation applies to children and youngsters as well.

The research project "Youngsters in focus" produces information about the living conditions, thoughts and desires of children and youth around 9 thematic areas: family, leisure time activities, school satisfaction and opportunities to have an influence in school activities and programmes, politics and how to influence it, flow of information, security, violence and bullying, health and hopes for the future.

The project aims to strengthen the participation of children and youth, as well as to develop youth work.

The survey will make it possible to acquire more information about, for instance, the well-being of children and youngsters and the possibilities they have to participate in the decisions of the Municipality that concern them. The idea behind the research project and the survey is that children and youngsters are the best experts of their own lives, so they must be seen as active agents when it comes to influencing the decisions that concern them.

The research was carried out by the Turku University and by the Turku Institute for child and youth research.
2. Satisfaction survey by and for residents of Driever's Dale – The Netherlands
Driever's Dale is a social pedagogical care centre for children and adolescents aged 6 to 21 years. The centre provides care to children with mild intellectual disabilities and/or behavioural problems. The residents' council of Driever's Dale, in collaboration with Stichting Alexander (a Dutch non-profit research and advice bureau on youth participation), decided to conduct a survey in order to get to know the opinions, wishes and ideas of the residents of Driever's Dale.

The method which was adopted for the research is a hierarchical one. Every single step of the research process was discussed with the children: the preparatory stage; the research activities; the results and their presentation.

The research carried out in Driever's Dale is an initiative promoted by the Driever's Dale social pedagogical care centre, in collaboration with Stichting Alexander.

3. Children Research Group – The Netherlands
This text presents the involvement of children in research as a method.

The Children Research Group is a method that can be used to give children a voice and the right to participate in the development of policies.

The Children Research Group has shown that children actively think about topics that concern them. By conducting a research on these topics, the children not only learn to express their own opinions, but also to express the views of other children. Because of this, the Children Research Group is a good method for child participation in the long term. It is a process with a beginning and an end, thanks to which children can be effectively involved in policy making.

The method which was adopted for the research is a hierarchical one. Every single step of the research process was discussed with the children: the choice of the topics; the search for information about the topics; the selection of good questions on the chosen topics; the choice of the research method; the creation of the research instruments; the collection of data; the analysis of data; the conclusions and the presentation of results.

This method is considered as a creative teaching method. Thanks to it, children developed their cognitive skills and learned to use critical and analytical thinking.

The Children Research Group was sponsored by Stichting Utopa (an organization that aims to stimulate the creative talents of people) and the project took place in the Child Rights Home in the Netherlands.

3.2 Presentation of the method and the instruments used to the analysis
From the very beginning, the ChildONEurope Assembly agreed to carry out a Europe-wide research project aimed at knowing, spreading and analysing child participation activities taking place in various
settings, e.g. in schools, in public life, in local politics, in the health care system or in the legal setting.

The Assembly also highlighted the need to dedicate part of the research to the specific issue of evaluation, with the goal of identifying in particular a minimum set of evaluation criteria.

The choice of the methodology

Based on the characteristics of the collected materials, on the research goals and on the need to adopt an appropriate methodology for the research objectives, we deemed it logically sound to opt for a qualitative methodology for this stage of the research.

Qualitative research includes a wide range of research techniques whose objective is to analyse all that is not numerical, i.e. texts, dialogues and interviews, audio recordings, etc.

Qualitative research does not focus on the number of cases. Its aim is rather to collect as much information as possible on a given case and to look at it in all its facets – be it the case of an individual human being, a group, a context or a text.

The collected data are not expressed in numbers: this requires an interpretative rather than statistical analysis. The challenge of qualitative analysis is to disclose the presence of elements which cannot be captured by any kind of objectivist approach. Another peculiarity of qualitative research is that it works on small, specific samples. Its objective is to investigate a phenomenon or topic in order to understand it and its results cannot be generalized statistically.

Given the characteristics of the materials and the request made by the ChildONEurope Assembly, we deemed it unavoidable to opt for a qualitative approach for our analysis.

Characteristics of materials

- The documentation we received is only made up of written texts.
- These texts are not original materials, but they were written ad hoc to provide information related to the explicit joint objective of our research. In other words, the texts are not free descriptions of the projects, but they are the replies to the specific questions contained in a document (the description framework – DF) which was drawn up by the researchers and which reflects their theoretical approach.
- The 23 received replies are a too low number for a quantitative analysis.
- The documents were selected only after receiving them and the ones which could not be used were eliminated. The texts which were excluded were the following: 1) all the ones written in a language other than English; 2) all the ones which did not provide enough information to be usable.

39 From the very beginning, the research group decided to use a common language for communication purposes. Given its diffusion among the members of the research group
Overall, six replies were excluded from the research analysis presented in the following pages.

Characteristics of the request made by the ChildONEurope Assembly

As is evident throughout the text, the idea of the Assembly was not so much to carry out yet another research on child participation in the various contexts that concern children and adolescents: this topic has indeed already received a lot of attention at an international level. The Assembly rather wanted to reflect on a practice that has yet to be improved in order to fully implement children's rights, in particular the right to participation.

The Assembly began by observing that the use of evaluation as an instrument to implement the right of children and adolescents to participation is still limited.

After making this general consideration, the Assembly deemed it useful to focus on projects and initiatives in which evaluation is used and to analyse how it is conducted and what results it achieves. The aim of this task would be the identification of models, instruments and indicators that can be useful to promote and develop child participation.

Given the specificity and complexity of the task, the qualitative approach was considered by far the best methodology to produce valuable results.

Research limitations

Being based on materials which were sent by the partners and not collected by the researchers, this analysis presents some peculiarities.

The first limitation of the research is its scope, as it does not focus on a single research field, but on all the ones which were suggested by the Network's partners.

The second limitation is the target population of the various initiatives, which includes children and young people aged 6 to 18/25 years. In other words, these initiatives involve children, adolescents and young people who have already acquired basic language and social skills that allow them to express themselves verbally with others.

The third limitation is that the various projects are not carried out at the same level, but on different scales. Although in the beginning researchers asked to receive information on projects carried out at the national level, participants sent information on local, regional and national initiatives.

and of the Assembly, English was chosen as the working language. Although this decision was repeatedly communicated to participants, some description frameworks were written in the languages of their countries of origin. To be consistent with the decision made in the beginning, as well as for economic and organizational reasons, we decided not to translate these documents and to exclude them from the research. In all, six description frameworks were written in the languages of their countries of origin.
Research instruments

DATA COLLECTION
As highlighted in the first part, in order to collect data concerning the formal recognition of the right to participation, we used a questionnaire containing 11 questions: this instrument helped us investigate the legal dimension in all its aspects and at different government levels, i.e. national, regional/provincial and local.

For the research part dedicated to evaluation, we deemed it necessary to elaborate another research instrument, whose characteristics would help give an extensive description of a project or initiative.

The result was the elaboration of what we called “Description Framework” (DF). The DF clearly shows that the area of interest was not the entire project, but a specific part of it: the part on evaluation, in particular the people involved in this phase and the methods used for it. The document provided a common structure for the description of the evaluation phase of the concerned initiative. The main goal of this work was to be able to identify a minimum set of standards for the evaluation of child participation and of its outcomes. In the description framework, the partners were asked to reply to a number of questions which were grouped into three areas: the first area focused on the history and key characteristics of the project; the second area focused on the method of participation adopted by project promoters and on the degree of participation of children and young people in the initiative; the third area focused on the evaluation methodology used in the project.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY
In line with the qualitative approach we decided to adopt, whose goal is to give an accurate and detailed description of a phenomenon, we analysed the materials and data contained in the description frameworks by grouping them into four macro-categories:
- Who does the evaluation?
- Which kind of evaluation?
- What is evaluated?
- How is the evaluation conducted? Does it include the use of indicators?

In order to classify the collected information, every text was separated into shorter and simpler parts: these were then classified according to variables derived from the theory of evaluation (see the part of the introduction dedicated to this point).

For practical purposes, all the texts we received were analysed by making use of the grid below.
**EXPLANATION**

The column “Partners” includes the list of partners who collaborated in this phase of the research by sending materials. For practical purposes, the countries were listed using international car codes.

The column “Titles” contains the specific titles of all the DFs that were sent by the partners, hence the titles of the projects or initiatives described in them.

The column “Domains” presents the areas of action, which were also abbreviated: DL stands for “Daily Life”, CP for “Civic Participation”, FnFE for “Formal and non-formal education” and CaR for “Children and Research”.

The other columns contain the replies to the four questions on evaluation listed above.

The column WHICH stands for “Which kind of evaluation?” and it contains all the information related to this question. This column is divided into two sub-columns with the headings IN and OUT. IN stands for “Inside evaluation”\(^{40}\) and OUT for “Outside evaluation”.

The column WHO (abbreviation of the question “Who does the evaluation?”) contains the information on the entities that manage and are involved in the evaluation process. This column was divided into three sub-columns: A stands for “Adults”, so it lists the projects in which the evaluation was conducted by adults only; C stands for “Children”, so this sub-column contains the projects in which the evaluation was conducted by children only; the sub-column “Both” lists the projects in which the evaluation was conducted by both adults and children.

\(^{40}\) We did not use the term “Internal evaluation” because it has a specific meaning which does not correspond to the cases selected in this study. Internal evaluation is indeed an evaluation planned and conducted by an entity and/or individuals who are not immediately involved in the implementation of the project being evaluated, but who belong to the same organization. In internal evaluation, the people who conduct the evaluation are different from the ones who carry out the project. The evaluation is the task of a group of individuals who belong to the same organization (e.g. association, cooperative, NGO, etc.), but who have not actively participated in the project and who are not involved in it. The cases analysed in this study are all cases of self-evaluation (see below for the definition of self-evaluation). From Glossario del gruppo tematico “Metodi e tecniche” dell’AIV – Associazione Italiana di Valutazione – versione 25 febbraio 2012 (Glossary of the thematic group “Methods and Techniques” of the Italian Evaluation Association – VERSION OF 25 FEBRUARY 2012), edited by Claudio Bezzi; p. 137.
The column WHAT contains four sub-categories. Once again, each of them was named with an abbreviation to facilitate the use of this tool. ME stands for “Meritocratic evaluation”, RA for “Rationalizing evaluation”, AC for “Accountability evaluation” and LEA for “Learning evaluation”. A more thorough explanation of these concepts will be given below, in the paragraph analysing the replies to this question.

In the last column, “Indicators” is the abbreviation of the question “Does it include the use of indicators?”. This column provides information on the presence of indicators in the description framework.

### 3.3 Outcomes of the analysis

**Who does the evaluation? And which kind of evaluation?**

The group wanted to know if, in the projects explicitly focusing on the right to participation, the evaluation was conducted similarly to or differently from other contexts. That is why the first question focuses on who does the evaluation and is called to express a judgement.

When we began to examine the data, we realized that focusing only on this question would considerably reduce the scope of the analysis, so we decided to add another category. The question of who does the evaluation is indeed closely related to the kind of evaluation that is being conducted. We distinguished two main categories of evaluation:

- **outside evaluation**
- **inside evaluation**

So we decided to organize the results of our analysis by considering the two questions together.

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41 The term “outside evaluation” was used to indicate an evaluation conducted by those who did not participate in the project, hence as a synonym of “external evaluation”. It is “the evaluation of a development intervention conducted by entities and/or individuals outside the donor and implementing organizations” (from the Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management; OECD, 2010; p. 23)

42 The term “inside evaluation” was used to indicate an evaluation conducted by those who participated in the project, hence as a synonym of “self-evaluation”. It is defined as “an evaluation by those who are entrusted with the design and delivery of a development intervention” (from the Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management; OECD, 2010; p. 35). We chose to use this terminology in order to distinguish this kind of evaluation from the one defined as “internal evaluation” (see below for its definition)
Table 1 shows the six projects (out of 23) for which the partners did not provide any information on the persons involved in the evaluation process and did not state if this process was conducted/coordinated internally or externally to the organization. The 17 remaining cases were divided into two groups: the first group includes the projects in which the evaluation involved both adults and children (15 cases) and the second group the projects in which the evaluation was conducted by adults only (2 cases).

THE INTERNAL ORGANIZATION OF PROJECTS
Before looking more closely at the evaluation process, it is necessary to examine the internal organization of the various projects. The analysis of the documents showed that the projects, especially the long-term ones, have a number of similarities. In each case there is indeed an internal organizational structure that makes the implementation of the project possible. In most of the cases, the organizational structure includes the following entities:

- one or more institutions which promote and/or provide economic support to the project, which is normally defined as a platform
- a technical core group, usually made up of adults, that is in charge of managing and coordinating every project activity
- one or more working groups usually made up of children who are supported by process facilitators (group leaders, educators, teachers, etc.)
- finally, when the evaluation is entrusted to an external entity, this list also includes a university or a body/group built ad hoc and for a limited period of time for the purpose of evaluation.

These observations will be useful when, in the following paragraphs, we will look at the entities/individuals in charge of the evaluation. Having a clear picture of the organizational structure behind the project, it will be easier to identify who is given the task of conducting the evaluation and what is evaluated.

WHO DOES THE EVALUATION? ADULTS AND CHILDREN
The first group includes the 15 projects in which the evaluation was conducted by both adults and children.

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43 No information is available concerning two projects in the area of Daily Life (Austria and Malta), two in the area of Civic Participation (Malta and Spain) and two in the area “Children and Research” (Finland and the Netherlands).
Two types of evaluation were used in this group: inside evaluation, i.e. carried out within the entity that promoted the project of child participation; and outside evaluation, i.e. conducted by an external entity to the one promoting participation.

Table 2

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<tr>
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<th>Daily life</th>
<th>In</th>
<th>Out</th>
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<tr>
<td>EsBe smart online</td>
<td></td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>OUT</td>
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<tr>
<td>I We participate!</td>
<td></td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>OUT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Living in Palermo</td>
<td></td>
<td>OUT</td>
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<tr>
<td>P Platform for citizenship of children</td>
<td></td>
<td>IN</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>E The youth resource center: the biggest house</td>
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<td>IN</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Civie Participation</td>
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<td>F National youth assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>I Vitamina CC</td>
<td></td>
<td>IN</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRL Dàił na nOg Council – National Youth parliament</td>
<td></td>
<td>OUT</td>
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<td>L National youth assembly</td>
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<td>P Youngsters parliament programme</td>
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<td>E Municipal children rights</td>
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<td>IN</td>
<td>OUT</td>
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<tr>
<td>NL The peaceful school</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Formal and non formal EDUCATION</td>
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<td>M Dinja Wahda Project (one world)</td>
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<tr>
<td>DK Young people with school drop-out experiences</td>
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<td>IN</td>
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<tr>
<td>NL Children Research group</td>
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SELF-EVALUATION
In 10 cases out of 15 (the ones in which the value in the third column is “IN” and the background is light blue) the evaluation was conducted inside the project, normally by the entities which actively participated in it. This kind of process is called self-evaluation.44

WHO ARE THE ADULTS WHO CONDUCT THE EVALUATION TOGETHER WITH THE CHILDREN?
In all the cases, the adults involved in the evaluation together with the children were the same who supported them from the beginning to the end of the participatory process. They accompanied the children during the process and they belong to a number of professions: facilitators, educators, group leaders, teachers.

WHO ARE THE CHILDREN WHO CONDUCT THE EVALUATION TOGETHER WITH THE ADULTS?
As regards the children involved in the evaluation, the situation is more heterogeneous. The analysis highlighted that the approaches differ considerably from one project to the other. In 4 projects out of 8, the evaluation was conducted only by a restricted group of children (usually the ones who regularly participated in the various project phases and who had more responsibilities in its implementation). The name given to this restricted group may change from one project to the other: youth panel, working group, promoter group, children research group. In these cases, even if the project

44 Self-evaluation is an evaluation process - involving research activities and discussions - conducted by the same entities and/or individuals that are involved in the implementation of the project or programme which is being evaluated. Hence, those that are involved in the design and management of the project or programme activities also take it upon themselves to conduct an evaluation and to express a judgement. Self-evaluation differs from internal evaluation because it is conducted by the individuals who have also actively participated in the project. Cf. Glossario del gruppo tematico “Metodi e tecniche” dell’AIV, cit., p. 19 and 137.
had an impact on a large group of children and adolescents, the evaluation was entrusted to a restricted group, with the number of members ranging from 7 to 30 (only in the Spanish project called The Biggest House).

In three cases the evaluation was entrusted to the entire group, i.e. to all the children involved in the project. In these cases the number of participants was considerably higher, namely some hundreds. Only in one case the evaluation was conducted by both the restricted and the entire group of children.

FINDINGS
The analysis of the texts showed that the amount of information provided by the partners is not the same for all the levels of the evaluation process.

Although in the first section (in which the partners were asked to outline the main characteristics of the project) almost all the DFs gave a clear and structured description of the organizational levels and of the entities in charge of each specific project, in the section on evaluation almost all the partners focused on the evaluation conducted with and by the children. In other words, in most cases the description of the evaluation process only focuses on the children and on the adults who supported them.

Only in two cases the description was more wide-ranging, mentioning all the various entities and individuals involved in the evaluation.

For instance, in the case of the Vitamina CC project (Italy), the children were accompanied not only by the project facilitators, but also by their parents. In no other case were parents involved in the discussion and evaluation of the child participation process.

The situation is even more complex in the case of the Municipal Forum for Children's Rights of the Principality of Asturias. The description of the evaluation process mentions different levels:

- The Municipal Forum for Children's Rights of the Principality of Asturias assesses its activities and reflects on its practices on an ongoing basis. At the Annual Meeting of the Municipal Forum all participants representing their Municipalities or the collaborating entities review all the activities performed in the previous year, assess the results and prepare the activities to be developed individually or together during the following year.

- The Municipalities that have a Municipal Board for Childhood or a Group for child participation hold an annual meeting to review and evaluate the activities developed during the year.

- Every time a Council approves a childhood plan and creates a Board for Childhood, a seminar is organized to share, analyse and evaluate the process which was adopted, the results and in particular the findings and innovations which were introduced.

Only in this case we received a detailed description of all the various entities, organizations and decision-making levels involved in the evaluation.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION
The 5 remaining cases are the ones in which the value in the third column is "OUT" and the background is yellow. In these projects, the
evaluation was conducted by adults and children together, but it was managed and organized from the outside, i.e. by an entity that was not directly involved in the project.

Who is the external entity?
In three cases the external entity is a university\(^45\). In one case it is “a committee of external experts, both adult and young” (We participate – Italy), which was created ad hoc for that project and whose only purpose was its evaluation. In another case, the respondent generally referred to “an independent evaluator” (Dàil na nO'g Council – National Youth Parliament – Ireland), without giving any specific information on its nature.

FINDINGS
Also in this case (as already done above) we will not focus now on what is evaluated, because this topic will be addressed in a separate chapter. What is interesting here is the description of the evaluation process. The analysis of the documents clearly showed a number of qualitative similarities:

- the evaluation carried out by external entities is more easily formally recognized by all the entities and individuals involved in the project
- the children, young people and adults who accompany the children are involved in the process, but they cannot decide what should be evaluated, nor how the evaluation should be conducted (instruments, deadlines, etc.)
- the materials produced are sizeable, well-organized and available for consultation
- the evaluation methods and instruments are manifold and diverse. More than one methodology is adopted to conduct the evaluation
- every aspect of the evaluation is useful and functional to an overall design, which is explicitly stated in the documents and available for consultation.

ADULTS ONLY
The two cases in which the evaluation was conducted by adults only are the Estonian initiative called “101 children to Toompea” and the Maltese project “Klabb 3-16”.

In the Estonian initiative, the evaluation was carried out by the organizers of the child participation process (“The project promoters described the level, methods and output of youth participation”).

In the Maltese project, the evaluation pursues the goal of improving the service – and from the point of view of adults only. “FES (Foundation for Educational Services\(^46\)) strives to offer the best possible service. This is achieved through:

\(^{45}\) In the project “Living in Palermo” (Italy) it is the Department of Education Sciences of the University of Bologna. In the project “National Youth Assembly” (Luxembourg) it is the University of Luxembourg. In the project “The peaceful school” (the Netherlands) it is the of Department of Education Sciences of the Utrecht University.

\(^{46}\) http://www.fes.org.mt/
- Listening and discussing with service users how the service can improve. This is important for FES in order to continue to offer a personalized service to the children and their parents.

- Internal discussions at different levels of the organization – Board of Directors, Senior Management Team, meetings between the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Executive responsible for the service, regular meetings with the Centre Coordinators, staff meetings in the centres.

- Maintaining contact with other centres abroad.

**COMMENT**

Our analysis clearly showed that the documentation frameworks present a wide variety of approaches to evaluation. Firstly, there is considerable heterogeneity as to who must/can conduct the evaluation. Among the 23 projects, there are two cases in which the evaluation was carried out by adults only, whereas in other cases several dimensions and levels of evaluation were entrusted to a restricted group of children or to the entire group of children. In other projects, the evaluation was conducted by the group of adults who supported and facilitated the child participation process, in one case also with the inclusion of parents. This variety of approaches clearly shows that the concept of evaluation is not interpreted in the same way by the partners of the Network.

On the other hand, what the description frameworks have in common is that most of them do not contain any information on the evaluation conducted by the other individuals who participate in the project. At the beginning of the paragraph we made a distinction (which became evident during the analysis and comparison of the texts) between the various entities and individuals who are involved in the implementation of the project. In most cases, only two of them seem to be involved in the evaluation. Nothing is said about the other project levels. This seems to confirm the absence of a systemic and critical view of the evaluation process.

**What is evaluated?**

Going back to the main grid presented at the beginning of the chapter, the analysis continued with the third question: what is evaluated?

Table 3

Table 3 shows the 6 DFs (out of 23) – and the areas they belong to – for which no reply was given to this question
THE ANALYSIS INSTRUMENT

The column WHAT (see the general grid at the beginning of this chapter) was divided into 4 sub-categories which were derived from the the theory of evaluation and in particular from Martini\(^47\). This helped to record what information was collected and for which purposes of evaluation.

Martini stresses that the purpose of evaluation is not “to produce absolute, incontrovertible and salvific truths, but simply more informed, thus more solid, arguments”\(^48\). Martini also underlines that the term evaluation is now used to indicate too many things. That is why he recommends identifying specific evaluation objectives, in order to optimize time and to improve the data collection instruments and methodologies which will be adopted in the process of evaluation.

The 5 categories of aspirations to which an evaluation process can respond, identified : the desire for meritocracy, the desire for rationalizatiby Martini (the desire to give an account, the desire to learn and the desire for participation – see pages 10-11 for more detail), in practice, often tend to overlap, but each corresponds to its own field of investigation, which requires the adoption of different, specific instruments.

The aim of the last kind of evaluation, which Martini defines “participatory”, is to let stakeholders express their points of view on a public action. The customer satisfaction systems are an example of it, as their purpose is basically to give all the legitimate stakeholders in a public action the possibility to express their judgements. This type of evaluation is aimed at finding out which stakeholders took part in a project phase and what they have to say about it. As we went on with our research, we realized that the category defined by Martini as “participatory” could create some ambiguity about the objective of the analysis and that, starting from a reductive interpretation of this term, it limited the possibilities of analysis of some characteristics of the DFs. That is why we decided not to use this category of analysis and to use only the first four ones (out of the 5 listed by Martini).

RESULTS

With respect to the objective(s) of evaluation in the various projects, table 4 shows the distribution of replies in the 4 categories of interpretation. These categories - the aspirations of evaluation - are not exclusive to each other, but more than one is often present in the same project. The quantity reported in the table indicates the number of references to every specific category included in the text. In a lot of cases, multiple evaluation objectives are listed for a given project.

Table 4 What is evaluated?

\(^47\) A. Martini, *La valutazione delle politiche pubbliche: chi l’ha vista?*, Cogest - Ciclo di conferenze su “Conti pubblici e controlli: prospettive e problemi” (Cycle of conferences on “Public finances and checks: prospects and problems”), 7 November 2002, Scuola Superiore della P.A.

\(^48\) Ibidem.
1. ME – MERITOCRATIC EVALUATION

Historically, meritocratic evaluation is probably the most common kind of evaluation. Its aim is to identify the best ones. It does not focus on the other aspects of the process, but it focuses exclusively on identifying the best performers, based on a competitive logic which is founded on pre-set assessment criteria and which leads to the elaboration of a ranking. For instance, this kind of evaluation is applied to assess projects eligible for funding or managers. In this case, the idea of evaluation is close to the one of selection.

This category includes only one project: We Participate – Italy. In this case the evaluation concerned 15 project proposals coming from the 8 schools participating in the initiative. The objective of the committee of external experts (composed by 5 members, 4 adults and a young student) was to evaluate all the proposed projects. These were sponsored by the local authorities, whose representatives worked with the students and teachers to identify the sites where the redevelopment projects could have taken place. At the end of the evaluation, the committee awarded a prize of €100,000, which served to support the educational institutions which promoted the project and to encourage its implementation by the local authorities. The process ended with the final ceremony, during which the winning project received the award.

As stated by Martini, this type of evaluation is based on a number of criteria which are set in advance and which are used to elaborate the final judgement. Indeed, the organizers of We Participate stated that “the winning project was selected by the Evaluation Committee, based on criteria that relate to different procedural and material aspects”.

2. RA – RATIONALIZING EVALUATION

This type of evaluation focuses on what went wrong in terms of costs and quality. It responds to a very practical desire for organizational efficiency and effectiveness. This occurs for instance when an impartial body is called to assess the functioning of an organization.
In this case, the evaluation is comparative, using standards as a reference. This category includes two projects, both from Malta. Here below we present some quotations from the Description Frameworks.

“Over the past few months, there has been an increasing demand for this service. FES (Foundation for Educational Services) is trying to meet this demand with the opening of new centres in various areas. FES is constantly striving to improve this service for the benefit of both children and their parents. Training workshops for staff and parents are delivered on a regular basis in order to achieve this. Regular meetings are also held with all stakeholders in order to discuss ways in which to expand and improve this service.” Malta – Smartkids

- Listening and discussing with service users how the service can improve. This is important for FES in order to continue to offer a personalized service to the children and their parents.
- Internal discussions at different levels of the organization – Board of Directors, Senior Management Team, meetings between the Chief Executive Officer and the Senior Executive responsible for the service, regular meetings with the Centre Coordinators, staff meetings and the centres.
- Maintaining contact with other centres abroad (a team from FES will be visiting centres in Denmark in 2012). Malta – Klabb 3-16

It can be noted that the two projects have in common the goal of improving the service in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. The individuals involved in the process of analysis of the service quality are:
- the stakeholders – mainly the parents who access the services;
- the persons in charge of the various organizational levels.

The evaluation responds to the desire to improve the service quality for production and commercial purposes.

FINDINGS
The analysis of the documents led us to make two considerations.
Firstly, there is the issue of what is meant by participation. In these two cases (but also in others) the DFs contain the presentation of a service. In other words, in these texts the term participation is interpreted as the availability of a service in a given area. Participation is not interpreted as a shared decision-making process paying attention to the skills of the individuals involved in it. Participation is rather seen as the provision of a service.
Secondly, there is the issue of the evaluation objective described in the two DFs. In line with what was stated above, the only focus of evaluation is the service.

3. AC – ACCOUNTABILITY EVALUATION
This kind of evaluation is intended to give an account of what was done, of the actual implementation of the project developed by
children and adults. Its purpose is to describe the tangible outcomes of the processes of participation (this is a necessary requirement to achieve a truly responsible participation). This evaluation usually consists in the elaboration of systems for the description and measurement of the activity. The ultimate goal of this type of evaluation is to convince external observers of the value of the activity itself.

For this category we received a wealth of information which is not comparable to the answers received in the other areas.

The results of the project were:
- the restoration and redevelopment of two areas in the city
- initiatives/activities carried out by young people and directed to other young people (two activities every month)
- the involvement of 30% of young people living in the outskirts of Palermo (Borgonuovo)
- the involvement of 200 young people in charity activities, plus another 40 young people who acquired project skills (young people with an experience in responsible activities)
- work experience for 20 young people. Italy – Living in Palermo

In an extended meeting of the Platform these three products (1. Chart of child/youth participation 2. Knowledge bank; 3. Meeting for children and young people) were presented and the Platform also discussed the self-assessments made by the working groups. Portugal – Platform for Children's Citizenship

The project promoters described the level, methods and output of youth participation. Estonia – Be Smart on Line

"Life story" in video format featuring some participants in the project 6 years later. The video can be seen at the address http://www.rivasaladia.tv/inicio/index.gsp?idvideo=24Y [...]. This "life story", as well as the full contents of this project are being shared with the cities that belong to the Network for the Civic Participation of Children and Adolescents, in the framework of the National Network of Educating Cities. Spain – The Biggest House

Here are some sections of the evaluation report which highlight the outcomes of the project49:
- influencing policy: “The presentations made by young Council members at the annual conferences of the National Association of Principals & Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) marked the first time that young people had ever addressed these conferences”.
- positive personal outcomes for young people. This item of the list also belongs to the type of evaluation which intends to assess the

49 We decided to quote only some parts of the various paragraphs, because quoting the entire text would have taken too much space.
effects of a project on the individuals involved in it; that is why this item was included also in that category (see below).

The following items in the list also belong to the category of rationalizing evaluation. They indeed reflect the very practical aspiration to improve the organizational efficiency and effectiveness, so they were included also in that category:
- focusing the work of the Council
- support the Council members
- key role for facilitators
- the term of the Council

Ireland – Dàil na nO'g Council – National Youth Parliament

At the Annual Meeting of the Municipal Forum all participants representing their Municipalities or the collaborating entities review all the activities performed in the previous year, assess the results and prepare the activities to be developed individually or together during the following year. In addition, the Municipalities that have a Municipal Board for Childhood or a Group for child participation hold an annual meeting to review and evaluate the activities developed during the year. Spain – Municipal Forum for Children's Rights

The group met three times in autumn 2010. The Council published a report written by a journalist, containing a reportage on the third and on the last meeting of the group, an interview with one of the young experts and the recommendations from the group of policy makers and decision-makers. Furthermore, a video was produced which presented the participants, their individual experiences of dropping out of secondary education and their recommendations to Danish decision-makers. The expert group of young people with school drop-out experiences of the National Council for Children – Denmark

FINDINGS

It is interesting to note that in some cases the descriptions are very short and quite vague, whereas in others they are very detailed and precise. The most original way to give an account of the project was the production of a video, rather than the drawing up of written materials. This approach is certainly more in line with the language and instruments used by young people, who are familiar with this kind of technology.

As can be seen in the document analysis, some dimensions of evaluation cannot be given a univocal connotation, but they can be interpreted in different ways. That is why some excerpts were assigned to more than one category.

4. LEA – LEARNING EVALUATION

According to Martini, the fourth kind of evaluation is based on acquiring knowledge for learning purposes. Its goal is to learn from experience. So it basically consists in the critical analysis of an activity, aimed at concluding whether it works or not and whether something can be learned from it and used in the future. In this case, the evaluation identifies the mechanisms through which public action
produces results and it tries to understand which obstacles do not allow these mechanisms to be effective. In order to distinguish the goal of this kind of evaluation from the previous one, it is useful to stress that “identifying the mechanisms through which public action produces results is different from reporting results: they are both praiseworthy activities, but they are not on the same level”\textsuperscript{50}.

ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

The materials included in this category are so large that it took a long time to analyse all of them. We read the various texts several times, until we identified some subsets which would be useful to classify and examine so much material.

We identified four subsets (see Table 4), which describe the knowledge fields on which the evaluation focused.

a) The first subset includes the accounts and reports that help to understand what worked, what did not work and what needs to be constantly updated (Table 4, Column LEA-1).

“In April/May 2010 the external evaluator telephoned young people who had stopped attending Council meetings throughout the year.” Ireland – Dàil na nO'g Council - National Youth Parliament

“Moreover, it is common practice to organize regular seminars at the end of relevant activities. Thus, each year the Municipal Workshop programme and the judgement of the audience are evaluated to better adapt the contents of the Workshop to their interests.” Spain - Municipal Forum for Children's Rights

b) With 9 projects, the second subset is the largest one (Table 4, Column LEA-2). This group includes all the projects in which the evaluation focused on the impact\textsuperscript{51} the project had on the various entities and individuals involved in it. The entities taken into consideration in the analysis were the following: (b-A) the institutions, (b-B) the city, (b-C) the children and (b-D) the adults.

b-A) the INSTITUTIONS

“The group started to work on the impact of products on the institutions, particularly on their working plans, on technical assistance and on the actual participation of children and young people”. Portugal - Platform for Children's Citizenship

b-B) the CITY

“A qualitative evaluation is made with them (young group) regarding the extent to which a successful participation experience has had an impact on the city (a facility has been built taking into account their desires and hopes)”. Spain - The Biggest house

\textsuperscript{50} Ibidem.

\textsuperscript{51} The long-term results of the project, or the broader effects of the programme on society, on the community, on the children's lives or on the institutions.
b-C) the CHILDREN
In these cases, the goal of the evaluation is to assess the lasting impact of the project on the children as individuals (improving their knowledge, self-confidence and sense of responsibility). All of these claims imply that children have opportunities to acquire:

b-C-1) new knowledge 
b-C-2) new skills 
b-C-3) more self-awareness 
b-C-4) changes of attitudes during the process of participation.

B-C-1 NEW KNOWLEDGE
Two projects fall under this category.

“They learned a lot about the local democratic process and about the neighbourhood problems” Italy - Living in Palermo

“The children research group proved to be a successful pilot initiative. In the evaluation, the children pointed out that they had learned a lot in the field of children’s rights”. The Netherlands - Children Research Group

B-C-2 NEW SKILLS
The acquisition of specific skills is another element which is often taken into consideration in this kind of evaluation (5 cases).

“The ability to choose between different options and to understand their real needs”. Italy - Living in Palermo.

“A qualitative evaluation is made with them regarding the extent to which a successful participation experience has had an impact on them. It has improved their connection with the city”. Spain - The Biggest House

Within this evaluation, multiple methods were used. It is a mixed-method design in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. A total of 18 schools participated, nine in the experimental group and nine in the control group, for a total of approximately 180 classes and 1,000 pupils from grades 5/6.

The basic questions addressed in the evaluation were:
- what was the impact of the programme on the students' citizenship skills?
- what was the role of the teachers during the meetings of the groups?
- how did the educational advisors implement the programme?

The Netherlands - The peaceful school

Furthermore, conversations with the members of the expert group after the conference revealed that they had learned
- to express their opinions
- to think about them
- to express the views of other young people in a similar situation

Denmark – The expert group of young people with school drop-out experiences of the National Council for Children

“The children research group proved to be a successful pilot initiative. In the evaluation, the children pointed out that they had learned a lot in the field of children's rights, as well as about research and presentation skills. The creative teaching methods allowed the children to develop their cognitive skills and to learn to use critical and analytical thinking. [...] Furthermore, they learned to express themselves, to present their arguments and to reply to questions from others. Thanks to the children research group, links between people were created and the children also began to feel attached to the new environment.” The Netherlands – Children Research Group

B.C.3 MORE SELF-AWARENESS
Together with the acquisition of specific skills, self-awareness is also often taken into consideration in this kind of evaluation (5 cases).

“They learned a lot about the different resources they have”; “the young people involved in the project gained self-awareness and showed the will to take decisions about their life projects” Italy – Living in Palermo

“During the project a survey was carried out among the young panel members to investigate how they evaluated their own role and contribution to the implementation of project activities and goals.” Estonia – Be smart online

“A qualitative evaluation is made with them regarding the extent to which a successful participation experience has improved their confidence and knowledge of their responsibilities and rights.” Spain – The Biggest House

Positive personal outcomes for young people. “Young people who were not directly involved in making presentations or who had not been at the time of the interview reported that they too are more likely to feel that they have something important to say as a result of their work on the Council.” Ireland – Dàil na nO'g Council – National Youth Parliament

“Furthermore, conversations with the members of the expert group after the conference revealed that they had learned a lot and that they felt respected and more confident that their opinions would be taken into account.” Denmark – The expert group of young people with school drop-out experiences of the National Council for Children
B.C.4 CHANGES IN ATTITUDES

The last group is the one concerning observable changes in attitudes.

“It has improved their connection with the city. It has improved their confidence in public authorities and in democratic institutions (basically with the Municipality).” Spain - The Biggest House

“There is consistency between the problem the project wants to face and the assessment method. Indeed, participation is defined as dialogic and relational and the assessment is aimed at measuring the quality of relations between the council of adults and the youth council.” France – National Association of youth councils

“Children developed socially and emotionally. Through a close collaboration, the children learned to know each other and the adults accompanying them. Furthermore, they learned to collaborate better.” The Netherlands - Children Research Group

B-d) the ADULTS

Only in one case the text described the impact of the project on adults.

“Decision-makers were impressed by the personal experiences and opinions of the expert group [...]. The participation, presentation and the work of the expert group were considered very valuable for the outcome of the conference. Indeed, the personal experiences and opinions of the young people in the expert group impressed practitioners as well as decision-makers”. Denmark - The expert group of young people with school drop-out experiences of the National Council for Children

c) The third subset includes the 6 projects in which the evaluation was aimed at promoting change (Table 4, column LEA-3) by collecting the opinions of the people involved in an activity and/or their suggestions on how to improve it. This kind of replies was included in the category of learning evaluation, because the DFs show that the focus was more on the individuals than on the service. This decision was obviously made after reading the whole text and considering its overall sense.

“They were asked for opinions and recommendations on how to achieve an effective involvement and successful participation of young people.” Estonia – Be smart on line

“The evaluation assembly meets with the promoter group (consisting of 30-60 young people of both genders aged between 16 and 18 years) when the design of the building is completed. The meeting is directed by the team of educators and focuses on a main issue: does the designed...
building, whose construction will begin shortly, correspond to what you want it to be?” Spain – The Biggest House.

“There is no formal assessment of the Programme as a whole. In each school, the teacher responsible for the initiative prepares a report on participation in collaboration with children and youngsters and suggests improvements to the Programme. Suggestions are welcomed and usually result in changes to regulations.” Portugal – Youth Parliament Programme

“An evaluation of the annual conference was made through an internet-based survey among participants and its outcome was very positive”. Denmark – The expert group of young people with school drop-out experiences of the National Council for Children

“After the project was completed, an evaluation was carried out with the children of the Children Research Group. They were asked what they thought of the course and how it could be improved the next time. This ensured that all the children were able to exert real influence. This contributes to their development as active and engaged citizens – citizens who are aware of their rights, including the right to be heard, and who are determined to use this right.” The Netherlands – Children Research Group

“The teachers involved in the project, together with the BirdLife team, carry out an informal evaluation of the project. Participating schools and class teachers are invited to submit their comments on project activities, as well as suggestions on how to improve them in the following years. Furthermore, students can also send their comments, queries and suggestions through the Dinja Wahda blog, as well as by email to a BirdLife Committee member.” Malta – Dinja Wahda Project (One World)

FINDINGS
This group includes projects in which children and young people were encouraged to express their opinions on the specific activity or service, or to help adults better respond to their needs. In this respect, it is interesting to look at the following statement:

“Through the involvement of young people the project promoters got closer to the target audience (kids who use the Internet and their parents). Hopefully, they were also able to more effectively achieve their goals of promoting a wiser and safer use of the internet by children and by their parents and of restricting the online spread of illegitimate contents (harming children / teenagers in particular).” Estonia – Be smart on line

It is now important to make a consideration: using young people to reach the young also implies the potential risk of exploiting them. This kind of approach certainly has a lot of positive aspects. Involving children and young people to acquire information implies
- the full recognition of their competence and skills
- the respect for their knowledge and culture
- the promotion of peer education - based on the idea that we are all educators and pupils at the same time - and its recognition as an educational resource.

However, it is always fundamental to consider the risk of exploiting the presence of young people to achieve objectives (maybe also praiseworthy ones) which have been set by adults. If adults involve children and young people without letting them take part in decision-making, or without making them aware of the process they are involved in, there is the risk of simply exploiting their knowledge, naivety and generosity.

THE PARTICIPATION PROCESS

c) The fourth subset ……. (Table 4, column LEA-4)

Four DFs describe how the evaluation was aimed not only at investigating some specific aspects, but at achieving the more ambitious goal of evaluating the entire participation process. In these cases, the evaluation responds to the need to know the organization and dynamics of the various phases and entities that make up the process.

The following list comes from the DF of the Irish project “Dáil na nO’g Council – National Youth Parliament”. These items (with their headings only) had also been included in the accountability evaluation category.

Focusing the work of the Council. “This year has seen the emergence of an extremely focussed Council […] Two elements have contributed to this focus. The young people themselves started the year in a focussed manner. At the national youth parliament Dáil na nÓg 2009, a short DVD was shown illustrating the work of the 2008 Council and two members of that outgoing Council presented on their work.”

- support the council members. “The vital support provided by the NYCI team ensured that practical arrangements ran smoothly.”
- key role for facilitators. “The facilitation provided by OMCYA staff was of prime importance in supporting the work of the Council.”
- the term of the council. “The focussed nature of the 2009 Council and the level of outputs really underline the need to re-examine the term of the Council. In previous years there has been a sense of frustration as young people feel that they are getting into their stride and then their term is over.”

Ireland - Dáil na nO’g Council – National Youth Parliament.

“Evaluation is a process based on the constant interaction with the chain of events, a process marked by the prevalence of diagnostic objectives, aimed at clarifying the dynamics of relations and at promoting self-awareness during the educational process. Evaluation is
a practice based on dialogue, an open survey carried out in the course of action, which eventually leads to understanding the process in all its specificity and extent. The conceptual framework is the paradigm of complexity (Morin, 1990). The evaluation is the complex result of an interaction with the analysed phenomenon, which is aimed at strengthening dynamics rather than at controlling them, and which embraces the principles of research-action (to mobilize and involve all the players and people participating in the activities and to generate knowledge and change). The idea is to understand phenomena in their complexity, through the adoption of the following guidelines:
- shift the focus from attitudes to behaviours
- the process dimension
- the holistic perspective

A series of indicators were identified for the dimensions listed above. These indicators remained a constant point of reference during all the activities and, at the end of the project, they will enable us to judge if we will have achieved our goals and to outline more and more effective intervention strategies.” Italy – Vitamina CC

“Every time a Council approves a childhood plan and creates a Board for Childhood, a seminar is organized to share, analyse and evaluate the process which was adopted, the results and in particular the findings and innovations which were introduced.” Spain – Municipal Forum for Children's Rights

Within this evaluation, multiple methods were used. It is a mixed-method design in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. A total of 18 schools participated, nine in the experimental group and nine in the control group, for a total of approximately 180 classes and 1,000 pupils from grades 5/6.

The basic questions addressed in the evaluation were:

1. what was the impact of the programme on the students' citizenship skills?
2. what was the role of the teachers during the meetings of the groups?
3. how did the educational advisors implement the programme? The Netherlands - The peaceful school

FINDINGS
In order to have a clearer picture of the analysis results presented so far, the table below summarizes the distribution of answers according to the type of evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>ME</th>
<th>RE</th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>LEA</th>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 4, the analysis of the DFs highlighted the prevalence of the so-called learning evaluation. This dimension was listed at least among one of the objectives of evaluation in 14 DFs.
out of 17. Since this dimension corresponds to an ambitious concept and design of evaluation, we identified four subsets.

The aspect which is most often taken into consideration within this category of evaluation is the impact of the project (in 9 DFs). In particular, project organizers are most interested in acquiring information on the impact of the initiative on the children (who are the real protagonists), the adults who accompanied and supported them, the institutions and the city.

The results of our analysis show that impact evaluation is generally well-known and widespread. Its focus is on the children and young people who are the target and agents of the initiative. Only in very few cases impact evaluation is used to assess the impact of a project on other individuals. Special attention should be devoted to the 4 projects which use learning evaluation to assess the entire participation process. Even if they are only a minority, these projects are very advanced, because the evaluation methodology they adopt uses research-action (involving young participants) to acquire data and to interpret them. It is also interesting to note that the four projects all fall under the category of Civic Participation. Another interesting observation is that in two cases the evaluation is conducted by a university and in the remaining two cases by the promoters of child participation, with the support of external experts.

The second most common kind of evaluation is accountability evaluation. The fact that project promoters pay so much attention to giving an account of what they do is not surprising. Indeed, many of the projects are totally or partially funded by public institutions, so they need to provide results to justify receiving funds. This kind of evaluation leads to the elaboration of written, publicly available documents which present the benefits brought about by the initiative. The focus is more commonly on: the number of individuals involved in the project; the number of meetings which were held; the number of initiatives which were promoted; the number of opportunities given to and created by the young participants in their daily lives.

The third category of evaluation is the one whose aim is rationalization. In our study, only two projects conducted this type of evaluation and they were both promoted by the same private entity. In both cases, the evaluation was carried out with the goal of improving the service; no information was provided on the groups of parents, of children and of community representatives.

The fourth category, meritocratic evaluation, only includes one project: in this case, being the project a sort of call for proposals, the objective of the evaluation was to choose the best proposal.

These are the main observations which can be made after reading the table “vertically”, i.e. after looking at the categories separately from one another. However, it must be taken into consideration that the evaluation often pursues more than one objective. When reading the table “horizontally”, the following can be observed:

- The most common combination is the one of accountability evaluation and learning evaluation. In 6 cases out of 14, the evaluation is aimed both at giving an account of what was done to the exterior and at learning from experience;
Findings show that meritocratic evaluation and rationalizing evaluation seem to exclude any other form of evaluation. Even if in the theory of evaluation all the different kinds of evaluation can be combined with others, this did not occur in these cases.

How is the evaluation conducted? Does it include the use of indicators\(^{52}\)?

Table 6 presents the results of the analysis of the DFs with regard to the tools which were used to conduct the evaluation in the various projects.

Table 6 Evaluation tools

RESULTS
The table clearly shows the large number and heterogeneity of the tools used for evaluation purposes in the various projects.

Only in one project the evaluation was of meritocratic type. The peculiar nature of the project (competition between different schools in the area, with the best proposal being selected by a committee awarding a money prize) required the use of specific evaluation tools which were not used in the other cases. As stated in the section dedicated to theory (taken from Martini), meritocratic evaluation is based on a number of criteria established in advance, which are used by the evaluators to achieve their objective. In the next paragraph we are going to present the criteria listed in the DF of this project.

CRITERIA
The winning project was selected by the Evaluation Committee, based on criteria that relate to different procedural and material aspects. In the evaluation process of project proposals, particular attention was paid to the following aspects:

\(^{52}\) From the Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management; OECD, 2010: an indicator is a “quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor”.
- Activation of participation processes to promote the leading role of children: to check and promote the actual role played by children in their choices, respondents were asked to describe the tools designed and used to create working groups of children, to choose their representatives for the project, to define the project idea and to promote the exchange of views on the project methods within each working group.

- Activation of networks and linkages with the local authority: respondents were asked to list the key elements on which they chose to focus and to provide information on how the students were helped to elaborate their proposals and contribute to the project. An important element was the activation of a network with the third sector, with families or with any experts in the field. Furthermore, considering the need to involve the local authority in project development at school, respondents were asked to send a short account of every meeting they had with the representatives of the Municipalities. Respondents were also asked to provide information that would allow an assessment of: the creation of networks in the area through the involvement of figures that further enrich the project idea (families, experts in the field, third sector, etc.); the ability to link with the local authority (activation of contacts and number of meetings held with the representatives of the Municipalities to promote consensus on the processes and objectives of the project proposal to be developed at school).

- Finally, the evaluation of the projects also took into consideration their vision, objectives and processes, as well as the new or innovative elements proposed by the children who worked on the proposals and the ability to anticipate the development prospects for the place or area covered by the project proposal (which may surface over time). *Italy - We participate!*

After focusing on the criteria used in the only project which adopted a meritocratic evaluation, let us now focus on the analysis of the tools used in the other projects, in which the evaluation pursued different purposes. The various tools are presented in order of frequency of use.

**INTERVIEWS**

This tool was used in 5 cases.

It has been used within two types of evaluation:
- social analysis;
- process indicators

Every project phase was important for the process and each of these has been defined in terms of process and its effects measured through indicators. The project elements (local promotion, multipurpose centre, etc.) have been identified on the basis of:
- the use of human resources;
- the method;
- the documentation;
- quantitative and qualitative indicators.
Focus group and evaluation process with interviews to young people. [...] The identification of the different processes in the various project phases has made it possible to evaluate the tools used for them and to constantly and continuously check the situation. Italy – Living in Palermo

The main assessment tools are questionnaires and interviews with the group leaders, the adults and the young people. These instruments are promoted and validated at a national level. France – National youth assembly

The evaluation tools were:

Interviews to each other....

(then there is a list of other tools used for the evaluation, which will be quoted below because they do not fall under this category) Italy – Vitamina CC

The evaluation included a number of interviews with the various stakeholders involved in the project. The question was: How did the educational advisors implement the programme? The Netherlands – The peaceful school

Telephone interviews can be included in this heading (in the table they are in a separate column). Even if the method is different, the tool is indeed always the same:

The evaluator telephoned a small number (3/4) of young people after each meeting and also spoke to advisors to the Council on the phone every second meeting. In April/May 2010 she telephoned young people who had stopped attending Council meetings throughout the year. She conducted telephone interviews with three policy makers who had attended the roundtable discussion and got a written response from another after she had asked for questions in advance. Ireland – Dáil na nO'g Council – National Youth Parliament

MEETINGS
This tool was used in 4 cases. We include in this category also the use of Focus Groups (which is under a separate column in the table), because the situation and conditions of meetings and focus groups are quite similar.

Regular meetings are also held with all stakeholders in order to discuss ways in which to expand and improve this service. Malta – Smartkids

The Platform’s methodology is based on 3 types of working sessions:
- Technical core meetings.
- General meetings of the Platform with all the institutions focusing on the tasks and results of the working groups. These meetings were
also the forum for the right to participation, with some guest experts and presentations by institutions on their activities related to participation.

- Meetings of the working groups with technicians and/or young people from the institutions of the Platform. Portugal – Platform for Children's Citizenship

The evaluator met with OMCYA staff in October, February and March and with one of the NYCI Project Managers (May). She conducted two structured focus group meetings with young people from the Council at the meeting in February 2010. She met with and interviewed the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Barry Andrews TD, in May 2010. Ireland – Dáil na nO'g Council – National Youth Parliament

**OBSERVATION**
This tool was used in 3 cases.

The evaluator attended two meetings of the Dáil na nÓg Council, in June 2009 and February 2010. At the first meeting, she made a presentation outlining how the evaluation would be undertaken, she also briefed the advisors who were to have a role in the evaluation. The evaluator attended one of the Oireachtas (Parliament) Committee meetings, at which the Council made a presentation, the roundtable discussion hosted by the Council in February 2010 and the launch of Life Skills Matter- not just points, in May 2010. Ireland – Dáil na nO'g Council – National Youth Parliament

Question: What was the role of the teachers during the meetings of the group? Semi-structured observation scheme designed for the meetings of the group The Netherlands – The peaceful school

At every stage of the experimental project there is a moment of “participant observation” and process monitoring. The assessment tool used for the observation is made up of group observation cards drawn up by experts/educators. Italy – Vitamina CC

**INDICATORS**
Like the previous one, this tool was used in 3 cases.

The ANACEJ elaborated and formalized tools to assess participation in local councils. Indicators were elaborated, such as the place of participation, the attendance, the number of exchanges between adults and young people during the council meetings, the number of projects elaborated, the quality of the dialogue, the competencies which were acquired. The evaluation stressed the need to let children take part in decisions which concern not only their lives, but also the life of the whole local community! France – National youth assembly

These indicators remained a constant point of reference during all the activities and, at the end of the project, they will enable us to
judge if we will have achieved our goals and to outline more and more effective intervention strategies.

Objective indicators: thanks to these indicators, the evaluation is not influenced by any sort of judgement or by the involvement of any of those who take part in the project. The following are some of them:

- Presence of students in Committees and Assemblies.
- Presence and attendance of parents’ representatives in parent-teacher class committees, school boards and school district boards.
- Number of parents’ remarks and proposals during the various types of meetings.

Indicators of conscious evaluation: these are the indicators which all the individuals involved in the project can autonomously observe, to then move to self-evaluation. The following are some of them:

- Involvement and active participation in the various working groups, focusing in particular on participants’ interest, willingness to collaborate and to put forward new proposals, efforts made to achieve objectives.
- Effectiveness of communication in the group work, by checking the degree of listening and understanding.

Indicators of participation: After analysing all the projects on participation carried out so far, the association Kappaerre has outlined a series of objective indicators which define the degree of participation on Hart’s ladder at the beginning and at the end of the project.

The indicators of observation are jointly built by all players, on the basis of the following:

- Roger Hart’s Ladder of Participation/Indicators of Participation
- IVAC approach (Investigation-Vision-Action-Change)
- Learning process “thought-action-reflection”
- System of Quality Indicators of the Tuscan Charter on Education to Sustainable Development.

Furthermore, the Innovation Team (teachers, educators), in collaboration with experts on vocational training and guidance, has the task of elaborating criteria and instruments for the recognition and certification of skills and experiences, building on tools existing in different sectors and integrating them (e.g. Youthpass – Youth in Action programme of the European Commission for the period 2007-2013). Italy – Vitamina CC

Every project phase was important for the process and each of these has been defined in terms of process and its effects measured through indicators. The project elements (local promotion, multipurpose centre, etc.) have been identified on the basis of:

- the use of human resources;
- the method;
- the documentation;
- quantitative and qualitative indicators. Italy – Living in Palermo
QUESTIONNAIRES
This tool was used in 4 cases, in two of them under the label “Surveys”.

During the project a survey was carried out among the youth panel members to investigate how they themselves evaluated their role and contribution to the implementation of project activities and goals. They were asked for opinions and recommendations on how to achieve an effective involvement and successful participation of young people.

Estonia - Be smart on line

An evaluation of the annual conference was made through an internet-based survey among participants and its outcome was very positive.

Denmark - The expert group of young people with school drop-out experiences of the National Council for Children

Question: What was the impact of the programme on the students' citizenship skills?
“Citizenship competencies (student version)” questionnaire elaborated by the University of Amsterdam;
“Citizenship competencies (teacher version)” questionnaire elaborated by the University of Amsterdam and by the Institute for teacher training;
Questionnaire on the group to be filled in by the teachers: in this questionnaire the teachers were asked questions about the climate in the classroom. The Netherlands - The peaceful school

The main assessment tools are questionnaires and interviews with the group leaders, the adults and the young people. These instruments are promoted and validated at a national level.

France - National youth assembly

OTHER TOOLS
This group includes tools, which were used only in one case each. They were created ad hoc by the group or entity in charge of the evaluation in order to better organize the collected information.

The evaluator designed evaluation sheets, which young people completed at the end of each meeting. These evaluation sheets were posted to the evaluator who analysed them and prepared a PowerPoint presentation which was emailed to the OMCYA and delivered to the subsequent meeting.

Ireland - Dàil na nO'g Council – National Youth Parliament

Written essays/Self-evaluation reports (namely a systematic set of materials produced by participants)/Tests aimed at assessing knowledge of the main learning topics (Constitution, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Students’ Charter, local institutions, etc.)/Web platform to exchange information

Italy - Vitamina CC
4. Discussion. What of positive can be learned from different experiences

4.1 Evaluation of the impact allows us to compare experiences and to learn from our experiences and from the experiences developed by others

The choice on which this research is based is to go deep into the analysis of the participatory process and, in particular, on evaluation, in order to investigate its various features. The orientation of the group, based on the goals of the work and on the knowledge of resources, timing and availability of the different partners, was to not define a specific area of intervention but to make the most of all the material that was sent. Only after its arriving (the various DFs), they were collected in four broad areas: daily life, civic participation, formal and non-formal education, children and research.

Hence, the material on which we worked was characterized by heterogeneity of the areas of living, localisation (local, national, etc..), age of participants, etc.

The choice of using a model definition of the evaluation process, (see the one from Martini) that it’s not based on the object of evaluation but on a wide and general purpose, makes it possible to compare materials that are so different.

What is being compared, therefore, are the evaluation purposes set out from different situations, and the tools used to meet those goals.

Thus, following the classification indicated by Martini, the forms of evaluation we devised were inspired by the following principles: meritocratic / rationalizing / accountability / learning.

More than just one evaluation purpose

The first element that this kind of approach has allowed us to acquire is that the cases in which, during the evaluation, a single objective of knowledge is pursued are rare. What becomes evident from the material at our disposal is that it is a common practice to establish several evaluation goals at the same time.

As seen in the previous chapter, only 5 cases needed evaluation pursuing just one goal of knowledge (see Table 4); the others, on the contrary, show an evaluation process that:
a) puts several cognitive objectives together
b) the goals that are put together are, mostly, accountability and learning.

Beyond impact evaluation - a multiple objective
The impact evaluation, which is the specific activity in which we are interested to describe in this section, falls, in our method of analysis, into the area of activities of the Learning Evaluation.

The activity groups in which it this type of evaluation was articulated were (see Tab.4):
1. what went wrong,
2. the impact,
3. opinions and suggestions;
4. the process.

As far as the second point, impact evaluation is concerned, there are three the elements that have become evident during the analysis of the material we received:
1. IE (impact evaluation) is the area around which the largest number of projects have sought to acquire information to be able to reach a judgment. As we have seen, the impact of activities in the field of participatory evaluation is the area supported by most activities. To us, this means that, in all those entities dealing with participation, there is a strong need to go to find out what relates an action with its effects and the context in which all this takes place.
2. IE is always related to other areas of knowledge. The second element characterizing impact analysis in the different realities is that it does not represent an exclusive evaluation goal, but it always goes along with other cognitive purposes. It is always associated with other specific areas of evaluation such as 'What went wrong' and 'participatory process'. Some examples of this peculiar approach, holding different purposes and scopes together, are the cases of Ireland (IR) and Spain (E) (see Table 4).
3. The most frequently associated area with IE is the one defined as 'opinions and suggestions'. The third element coming from the analysis is the frequent association of the 'impact evaluation' with the 'opinions and suggestions'. This association during evaluation practices shows that it is increasingly common practice to compare the impact evaluation of practices with the knowledge of the subjective view of each participant in the participatory process and their recommendations.

Evaluation on Impact : from attitudes to decision makers
Gathering together all the various forms in which the impact evaluation has been articulated into all the projects, it should be noted that what is most frequently investigated to evaluate the impact concerns the changes occurring in the behaviour of children. Although numerically inferior but present, there are some documents in which they kind of impact caused by the intervention on institutions and adults is concerned.

53 As indicated in the previous chapter, by “impact evaluation” we refer specifically to the evaluation that is focused on the consequences of the actions undertaken.
The most developed areas of investigation about children are those related to the acquisition of skills and self-awareness. The original part of this specific research is that, in some documents, there is an explicit reference to changes in behaviour. Therefore, this investigation is not based only on knowledge, skills and self-awareness, but it also observes changes in the behaviour in the context of life, in institutions and in the relationships with adults.

The range of investigation of the impact evaluation is expanded (as far as Portugal's experience is concerned) to the public entities. The documents on which the assessment is based are:

- programs,
- technical assistance given to participatory processes,
- the actual participation of children in decision-making.

The impact detected on adults regards decision makers, however, is limited to the detection of reactions or comments made during their meetings with the children. This makes an area of analysis clear on which, generally speaking, it is still necessary to work in order to define, in a systemic way, objectives and functional indicators to shed light on what impact the children participatory process can produce on decision makers.

### 4.2 The identification of the positive outcomes and the added value of involving children and adolescents

**Evaluation as a necessity**

As we stated several times in this document, the submitted material was characterized by an extreme heterogeneity of content, methods, forms, complexity and length of the texts.

However, what becomes clear from the analysis, as a common element, is the need of the evaluation process. If in some cases it is still a response to an external, in most cases we can detect an attribution of need to the evaluation in its different forms and articulated actions.

Although there are several different documents, most of them consider the evaluation as a necessary tool for the project vitality and for the effectiveness of the participatory process.

This need for evaluation we can find in these document, refers to several reasons. Here are the most common ones:

- to improve
- to continue
- to put a critical distance from doing
- not stopping in front of difficulties
- to learn from what has been done
- to make decisions
- to account for what has been done

In an attempt to sum up this list, we can say that evaluation within these experiences is considered to be a useful tool not just to determine what has actually been achieved and to show how much and how it was done, but also to recognize it as a continuous training support. For the self-development of skills of anyone involved, evaluation is seen as a necessary tool for growth.
Evaluation generates knowledge and change

Through the analysis of the most articulated, challenging and representative evaluation processes we can see a cognitive setting interpreting evaluation as the complex result of a mutual relationship between the parties taking place in a specific context. The ultimate goal of the evaluation is to strengthen the dynamics between these parties and not to control them. An effective evaluation embraces the principles of action - research in order to mobilize and involve all stakeholders taking part into the activities to generate knowledge, recognition and change.

It's interesting to note that the experiences expressing more complex and articulated forms of evaluation, show common characteristics:

1 Time and continuity of activities on the territories

The experiences showing more critical knowledge on evaluation have been existing for a long time (6 – 10 years and more). Their continuity is ensured by the organization making the intervention or by the institution in charge of financing participation projects. In all of these cases, there are national or local policies supporting the participation of children. We stress the importance of these characteristics because there are many studies showing, and the present one is a further confirmation of it, that spending a long time on a given territory with continuity, hasn’t only a positive effect on all subjects involved\(^54\), but also, as we can see in this case, it allows for a continuous discussion and debate on the tools at hand in order to improve and refine them.

2 Dynamism

In these experiences the ability to change and to evolve from within is tangible. They differently express a continuing ability to adapt to difficulties, to children's interests and to the results achieved.

Innovative characteristics on evaluation

Based on what we just said, the evaluation process is a path of knowledge that is based on the need to understand not just what has been done, used resources, etc. but, most of all, the different factors able to influence the change processes.

The characteristics associating the different evaluation processes are:

1. The use of mixed methods. The evaluation not only consists of quantitative data, but also of qualitative data. The evidence is especially convincing because the data collected using different methods (both qualitative and quantitative) shows a consistent picture.
2. Creation of an evaluation process both internal (as self evaluation) and external: university / ministry / independent evaluators
3. Different types of tools. In order to respond to the need to collect data and information, the tools used are many and different (see Table 6): surveys / questionnaires / interviews / observation / focus group / web platform etc.. etc..
4. Creation of tools. The evaluation process often involves the creation of specific tools for the evaluation process. The tools borrowed from other contexts are not applied but for each of them there is an adaptation or they are carefully crafted to capture data and information. We are sure that this concept will become clearer by reading the documents. “The Innovation Team (teachers, educators), in collaboration with experts on vocational training and guidance, has the task to elaborate criteria and instruments for the recognition and certification of skills and experiences, building on existing tools in different sectors and integrating them (eg Youthpass - Youth in Action program of the European Commission for the period 2007-2013).” Italy - Vitamin CC. The OMCYA should build upon their experience of participation an excellent modelling work into the future and think about ways this expertise and experience could be replicated within other organisations. Consideration should be given to the development of facilitation training guidelines. Ireland - Dáil na nÓg
5. Definition of multiple evaluation purposes. The more comprehensive evaluation envisages more cognitive goals at once. It does not respond to a single goal.
6. In those experiences in which the evaluation takes an important structuring process, researchers interview as many individuals as many directly or indirectly involved actors in the participatory process: children / reference adults / parents / decision makers / project managers etc..

\(^54\) Chawla L., Heft H., Children’s competence and the ecology of communities: a functional approach to the evaluation of participation, Journal of Environmental Psychology, 2002, 22, pg.207
The added value
The added value of involving children in the evaluation process make it possible to:

- ensure that all the children will be put in the position to have a real influence on the process
- stimulate critical skills and competences
- activate self-reflective capacities
- recognize a personal interpretive perspective
- lay the foundations to achieve the capacity to make long term decisions
- ensures that the final judgment of a project is made up also by the children’s point of view
- guarantee to learn from experience
- give the same importance to the process and to the result.

4.3 Which are the benefits for the different stakeholders?

Stakeholders for public and private entities
Before providing an answer to the title of this section we would like to put our attention on the term “stakeholder” and make some considerations about it. In our opinion, applying this concept to a work on recognition, support and protection of children's rights and in particular on the evaluation of the participatory process, requires a necessary clarification in order to avoid ambiguity.

The extreme heterogeneity of the documents, gave us the stimulus for this deeper analysis. Among these experiences, it is possible to find several ways of financing. The set of documents collected contains some experiences financed and controlled by public bodies and other ones financed and controlled by private partners.

Given this situation, it seems appropriate to briefly recall the boundaries within which we use the term stakeholder.

The meaning of “stakeholder”
The term stakeholder was created in the field of economics and finance and refers to a person or a group owning a significant percentage of a company's shares.

The Freeman contribution\textsuperscript{55} broadens the focus to the groups who have an important role for the success of a company so that the term acquires a wider meaning, referring not just to the more direct concept of owners of shares. Freeman has a strategic interest for this social category. According to its interpretation, stakeholders are functional to the survival and development of the company. This opening of views implies a change in the business strategy, which moves away from having the only purpose of maximizing shareholder value, to get to the collateral obligation to meet the needs of others for the sake of the survival and growth of the company itself.

The approach we shared takes a step further and takes into account the normative character of the theory of stakeholders, according to which the benefit of different stakeholders is a purpose (and not just an instrument) of the company's activity\textsuperscript{56}. According to Donaldson and Preston, stakeholder theory must be considered as descriptive, instrumental, or normative. By this third term we mean that this theory has to be used to interpret the function of the company, including the identification of moral or philosophical guidelines in order to manage it.\textsuperscript{57}

Accepting the normative character of the stakeholder theory implies to interpret the function (and offer guidance) of the company on the basis of explicit philosophical and moral principles.

As we already said, this paper adopts the meaning of that term by which the involvement of stakeholders, especially children, in the evaluation process it is not functional at maximizing the profit of a few, but for the improvement of the practices and the creation of added value in the social context in which the project is located.

In order perform a good evaluation process, it is necessary to have this kind of common vision “...children are both rights-holders and stakeholders in business as consumers, legally engaged employees, future employees and business...”

\textsuperscript{56} There are many examples of the instrumental use of evaluation activated by companies only as a strategy to promote their interests or as a façade behind which there is not really an interest to evaluate the positive or negative impact of actions.
\textsuperscript{57} Donaldson, T., Preston, L., La teoria degli stakeholder dell’impresa: concetti, evidenza ed implicazioni, in Freeman, R., Rusconi, G., Dorigatti, M. (a cura di), Teoria degli stakeholder, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2007
leaders and members of communities and environments in which business operates. [...] The Committee recognizes that duties and responsibilities to respect the rights of children extend in practice beyond the State and State-controlled services and institutions and apply to private actors and business enterprises.  

Within this conceptual framework, stakeholders are ‘those who give meaning’ to the collected information in order to get to a judgment that takes into account all the cultures involved within the evaluative frame capable to address the complexity of the context in which it is located.

**Benefits for the different stakeholders**

What emerged from the analysis of the documents are two types of benefits: the first one has a more general nature, the other one, instead, has a more specific nature for each category of stakeholders.

The benefits brought by the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluation process in general are:

- strengthening of the sense of reflection between the decision-making process and the evaluation process
- expansion of the perspective while dealing with a particular issue and improvement in quality and depth of the issues at the base of the evaluation process in an analysis that takes into account the complexity theories (i.e.: Morin)
- greater awareness of the evaluation between the different stakeholders
- more open and transparent lines of communication
- identification, formalization and measurability of children/teenagers experiences
- definition of a coherent set of technical tools for data collection and information processing;
- possibility to judge the children’s interpretation of the experience along with the of adults’ ones.

Before presenting what has specifically emerged from the documents about the benefits for each stakeholder, it is important to remember that the stakeholders are not always the same, but, they vary for social importance, decision-making power, communication skills, language skills, visibility, availability of communication tools.

This helps us to say that the more the various levels of power and area of interests between the various stakeholders are known and recognized, the more all the stakeholders, especially children and kids, will enjoy these benefits.

The importance given in the previous section to the construction of the evaluation tools is justified not just from a technical and methodological point of view, but also from an ethical pedagogical one. Every single stage has its own levels of expertise, as well as every child has his/her particular way of expressing himself or herself. Adapting existing tools or building new ones according to the evaluation duty and to the skills of anyone involved, goes in the direction of encouraging the use of power of which every child is capable of in its specific context of life and its specific level of development.

Making a good evaluation in the field of rights implies, therefore, to give a combined and critical analysis of the various interests at stake, connecting rather than opposing the various interpretations, in order to achieve an improvement for institutions and policy-making.

However, what clearly emerges is that this type of evaluation, related to the right of participation and the policies promoting it, is that it is particularly connected to learning processes. This is because evaluation itself brings about the will to do something to promote and put processes of change into practice.

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58 Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children’s rights, (14 January – 1 February 2013).
59 Bezzi C., Il disegno della ricerca valutativa, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2010
Benefits for Children
- taking part in the evaluation makes children more aware and knowledgeable about the evaluation itself
- promotes the acquisition of various skills including focus, and those already listed under section 4.2
- it makes a valuable input explicit, visible and understandable
- the unique insight into the issues brought by the children becomes evident

Benefits for Decision makers
- increases the awareness and the competence in the evaluation.
- adds value and visibility to the work that has been done
- helps the decision-making process

Benefit for Educators
- improve outcomes
- allows to express a unique insight into issues
- this case, too, brings about a better awareness and competence in the evaluation.

Benefit for Families
- Promotes transparency and leads to better decision making
- makes the process more transparent and shared, promoting debate, communication and collaboration between people with different interests.
- increases awareness and knowledge about the evaluation.

Benefit for Organization/services
- the involvement of children in the evaluation process contributes to the delivery of more efficient and responsive services

Benefits for Institutions – local or national governments
- increasing the Government’s accountability and driving innovation
- increasing control over what is done
- reducing the possibility of error or reducing the impact of negative action on the various parties
- building consensus

Benefit for the Community
- a greater consideration of the interests of all stakeholders increases the control over what is done
- reducing the possibility of error or reducing impact of negative action on the parties

Benefit for the Culture of Rights
The last category it is not a proper stakeholder, but it is more of a cultural benefit, stimulated by this content “The Municipal Forum for Children Rights of the Principality of Asturias assesses its activities and reflects on its practices on an ongoing basis, in order to build a theory on child participation, as we promote and sustain. In turn, our practice draws on that theory. [...] This analysis and constant reflection about our activity has been a key element for the development of the child participation model in Asturias, as every element in which it is based responds to needs detected at the evaluation process”. Spain - Municipal forum for Children's rights
4.4 Guidelines are needed to make results comparable between different participatory experiences. Appropriated indicators should be identified

The last element that we believe should be put in this work is the importance of going in the direction of making the experiences comparable.

The specific area in which we want to put our work is the evaluation of the participatory process.

**EVALUATIVE PROCESS**

The analytical work done so far allows us to point out some general criteria that a proper evaluation process must have:

**CLARITY**
- The first concerns the transparency of why it was decided to undertake an evaluation process. Whether it is carried out by an external subject or a self-evaluation, it is always necessary to make clear, explicit and shared what is the goal or goals you wish / want to achieve.

**SELECTION**
- The second concerns the choice of the tools to make the evaluation. Each document has a large variety of different tools that are functional to collect data and information. In the vast majority of cases the list of the tools used to make evaluations is reported, but nothing is said about the decision to use them. However, in the most interesting evaluation cases, the use of the different tools is not randomized but it rather responds to functionality and specific purposes. The ways in which the choice of tools to use is articulated take a different road in the project Living in Palermo, where, for instance, those tools instruments are related to each phase of the process, while in the case of the School of peaceful, the choices on specific tools are related to specific questions.

**CONTEXTUALIZATION**
- The final result of each evaluation is indeed different from each other. This is because that result responds to the characteristics and the feedback received from the context in which it takes place. For 'context' Bezzi means "client, relevant stakeholders (including beneficiaries), common practices applied to that field. This 'connection' is essentially semantic and pragmatic, it has to do with the sense of the collected information which must have a significance and a local and contextual validity (the one that Patton calls face validity). For this reason, to have such a nexus of meaning, I cannot "invent" the right questions of the questionnaire or the proper criteria for the construction of indicators and so on in a self-referential way. On the contrary, I have to deepen the relationship of meaning actually occurring in that context (this is what I call I exploration of the semantic field)."

**VALUES**

The last indicated criterium is related to the clear explanation of the system of values assumed during the evaluation process. In most cases it is not explicit but when it is, it turns out to be an additional element helping to explain the meaning given to the experience and, therefore, increases the quality of the evaluation process. "The conceptual framework [used] is the paradigm of complexity (Morin). The evaluation is the complex result of an interaction with the phenomenon analyzed, which is aimed at strengthening dynamics rather than at controlling them and which embraces the principles of research-action (to mobilize and involve all the players and people participating in the activities and to generated knowledge and change)".

**DEVELOPING INDICATORS**

According to the EU Commission, which argues that "the impact of all relevant EU action, including in the legislative domain, should be monitored on the basis of a set of appropriate indicators", and with the aforementioned precisions about the set-up of a quality evaluation process we will now make a resume of the findings from the documents in the field of indicators.

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60 Bezzi C., Il disegno della ricerca valutativa, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2010
The first element to consider is the absence or little presence of references of the indicators adopted in the documents. There are only three CF in which information on indicators is present.

**DEFINITION**

- By indicator we mean a functional tool applying theoretical concepts to a practical dimension, making them useful. It is considered a high information content variable allowing a simple evaluation of complex phenomena by providing sufficient information to guide our decisions. In other words, each indicator must correspond to a concrete element allowing the measurement of the performance. The indicators are therefore extremely important because they are tools for gathering evidence.

**FEATURES**

For the indicators to be really useful it is necessary that:

- They specifically relate to the object of the measurement (**validity**)
- They are comparable over time and across different situations (**reliability**)
- They are able to register the changes, improvements and deteriorations of the phenomenon (**sensitivity**)
- Data can be easily retrieved (**detection**)
- Timeliness, articulation, dissemination, cost and non-complexity of the indicators (**simplicity**)
- The indicator is defined with the consent of the stakeholders who want to assess the quality or the change (**legitimacy**).
- They only change as a consequence of the actions we mean to evaluate (**specificity**) and not because of other diverse reasons.

In the analysis of the texts, we met a dual use of indicators: one related to the need to identify indicators of change, and the other related to the effective reporting of what has been done. None of the analyzed experiences accounts for the use of indicators to measure the quality of the process in place. The areas in which these indicators were used relate to:

- **THE PROTAGONISTS OF THE PARTICIPATORY PROCESS**
  - the relationship of the subjects within the group and their environment
  - knowledge
  - skills and well-being

- **REFERENCE ADULTS**
  - the frequency of communication between children and adults of reference
  - the adults themselves

- **INSTITUTIONS (school and / or public administration)**
  - opening to the children’s requests
  - changes in the approved programs and taking a child vision
  - indicators of institutional change demonstrating development and learning capacities, awareness and attitudinal shifts and policy reorientations

- **The ENVIRONMENT in which the children live (community)**
  - Increase of interaction within the informal environment

**SET OF INDICATORS**

The abovementioned indicators must be contextualized and developed in order to gather the needed data and information.

Here is a set of areas in which one can organize the evaluation and construction of those indicators.

- **PROGRAM AND PROJECT INDICATORS:** it is necessary to identify program and project indicators in order to verify the functional phase and the level of implementation achieved

- **INDICATORS OF CHANGE**

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61 Porchia S, Valutazione servizi educativi Regione Toscana, (Evaluation early childhood education and care services) Istituto degli Innocenti 2009

62 Ibidem
In subjects / reference adults / institutions / community

- **IMPACT INDICATORS**
  collecting data on the effects of the process on subjects / reference adults / institutions / community / decision makers

- **INDICATORS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

They are interrelated with the environmental results and impacts, including measures of the consequences of project interventions.
Concluding remarks and recommendation

This Report has been devoted to analyse how child participation programs are evaluated in different European countries, and the empirical implications of program evaluation in this context, in order to be able to open a broad debate and to agree on recommendations.

Child participation programs evaluation has been pointed out to have several distinct functions: supporting decision-making, improving existing programs, improving efficiency, verifying implementation, checking for the impact, prevent problems or needs during the implementation process, change thinking, empower participants and generate knowledge.

We have reached a clear agreement that evaluation is an important instrument for action. However, it is also a powerful tool to learn: during the evaluation process, we can learn more about social phenomena and social dynamics – and we can also learn more about the effects of our intervention tools, and the different ways of organizing and implementing programs.

At present, in the European countries we have very different legislative and political frames to support child participation. However, we also have diverse psychosocial contexts – different social attitudes towards and social representations of children, adolescents and their social participation. In a big majority of countries, children social participation is not a big priority or a big aspiration of our adults. Nevertheless, in all European countries we have identified interesting participatory programs, and many of them have been evaluated.

For that reason, ChildOne Assembly decided to ask member states to send to the Secretariat fulfilled files about some of their outstanding participatory programs and its evaluation. A big deal of this Report describes and analyses the answers received.

The participatory programs we have analysed could be grouped according four major areas of participatory activity: daily life, civic participation, formal and non-formal education and research with children. Four main questions were used to analyse the files received: Who does the evaluation? Which kind of evaluation? What is evaluated? and How is the evaluation conducted?

A majority of the programs here analysed include evaluation involving both adults and children. Only a few programs were evaluated only by adults, and some of them did not provide information about evaluation. In most cases, the adults involved in the evaluation together with the children were the same who supported them from the beginning to the end of the participatory process – therefore, they were programs with a self-evaluation design. However, in some cases, the evaluation that was conducted by adults and children together, was organized and managed from outside the programs, that is to say, by an entity that was not directly involved.

Next, we have analysed the evaluation process according the aspirations of the evaluation, which have been divided by 4 kinds: meritocratic, rationalizing, accountability and learning. The learning evaluation has been the most prevalent, followed by the accountability evaluation.

The different programs here analysed used different tools to conduct the evaluation: Interviews, meetings, observation, questionnaires, indicators and other tools.

Results shows that evaluation of the impact allows to compare experiences and to learn from experiences and the benefits are not only for participants, but also for all social agents involved (stakeholders): decision-makers, supporting institutions, practitioners, adults in general, and, of course, children in general.

Children and adolescents involvement in program evaluation show different positive outcomes: it generates knowledge and positive changes. It represents an added value: children have the experience of having real influence in the process of improving the reality; they improve skills and competences; they activate
reflective capacities; they recognize a personal interpretative perspective; they build up to capacity to make long term decisions; they have a part in the final judgement of a project, their point of view being taken into account; they learn from experience; and give importance both to process and to the result.

Our last conclusion is that guidelines are needed to make results comparable between different participatory experiences. For that purpose, appropriated indicators should be developed for different kinds of participatory programs, and a permanent forum should be organised in order to exchange experiences, analyse results and identify good practices.

In the evaluation process the first issue is to identify the areas or aspects to be evaluated (e.g. meritocratic /rationalizing /accountability /learning); secondly it is necessary to identify the indicators. Finally, the third dimension that needs to be addressed is how to combine these areas of evaluation with the level of evaluation. Such an issue has to be decided by the group that carries out the evaluation process taking into account the socio-cultural context. In other words, the identification of shared indicators is not sufficient, as each group has to define its own indicators and its own methods of evaluation.

The experience of collecting information from participatory programs in different European countries has shown fruitful and should be continued. To give value and continuity to this work, it would be useful for the partners to:

a) open a debate on evaluation methods and techniques;
b) decide to carry out a cross-country pilot project on the practices of participatory evaluation and to adopt the same indicators in monitoring and evaluating participatory projects; and
c) acquire a single staff (composed of representatives from different countries) to monitor the testing.