



The participation circle

Let's get to work with the participation circle

A workbook for navigating 21 reflection questions.

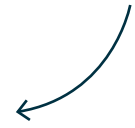
Project:

Team:

Timing:

A participation process involves a great many things:: determining the social challenge, your target group, the role they can take on... These are just some of the decisions you will have to make.

The Children’s Rights Knowledge Center developed the participation circle and is happy to help you get started. You may download the manual on keki.be/en. To support you as a team, you can use this workbook. This way, you will work through all the prompts and be sure not to miss any.



- Are you at the start of a policy process or it is already underway?
- Have you assembled a team?
- Have you decided to set up a participation process?
- Is the first consultation already scheduled?

Take the guidebook and this workbook in hand and get started.

The building blocks



What elements of a basic participatory attitude have you developed and which would you like to develop further?

How do you implement your participation process in a child-friendly manner?

Why do you involve children and young people?

How do you ensure that all children and young people can participate equally?

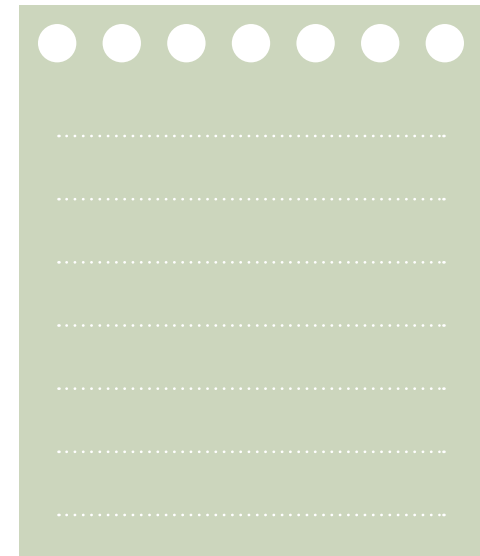
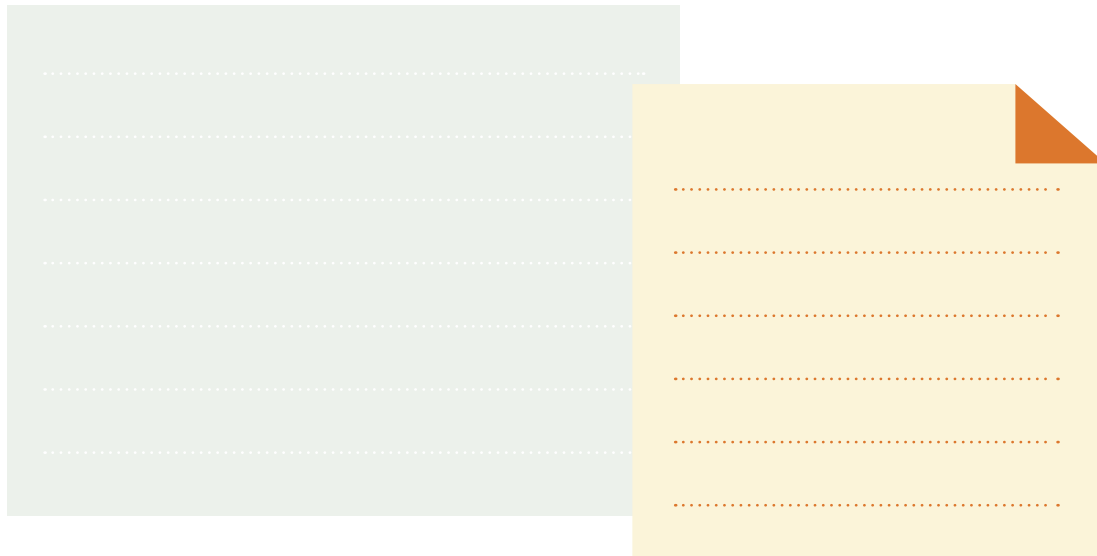
What do you and your team understand by participation of children and young people?

Building block 1 – What do you and your team understand by participation of children and young people?

? How do you define participation?

Write down what participation is and what it is not according to you.

Do you see participation in the same way or do you have different expectations and assumptions?



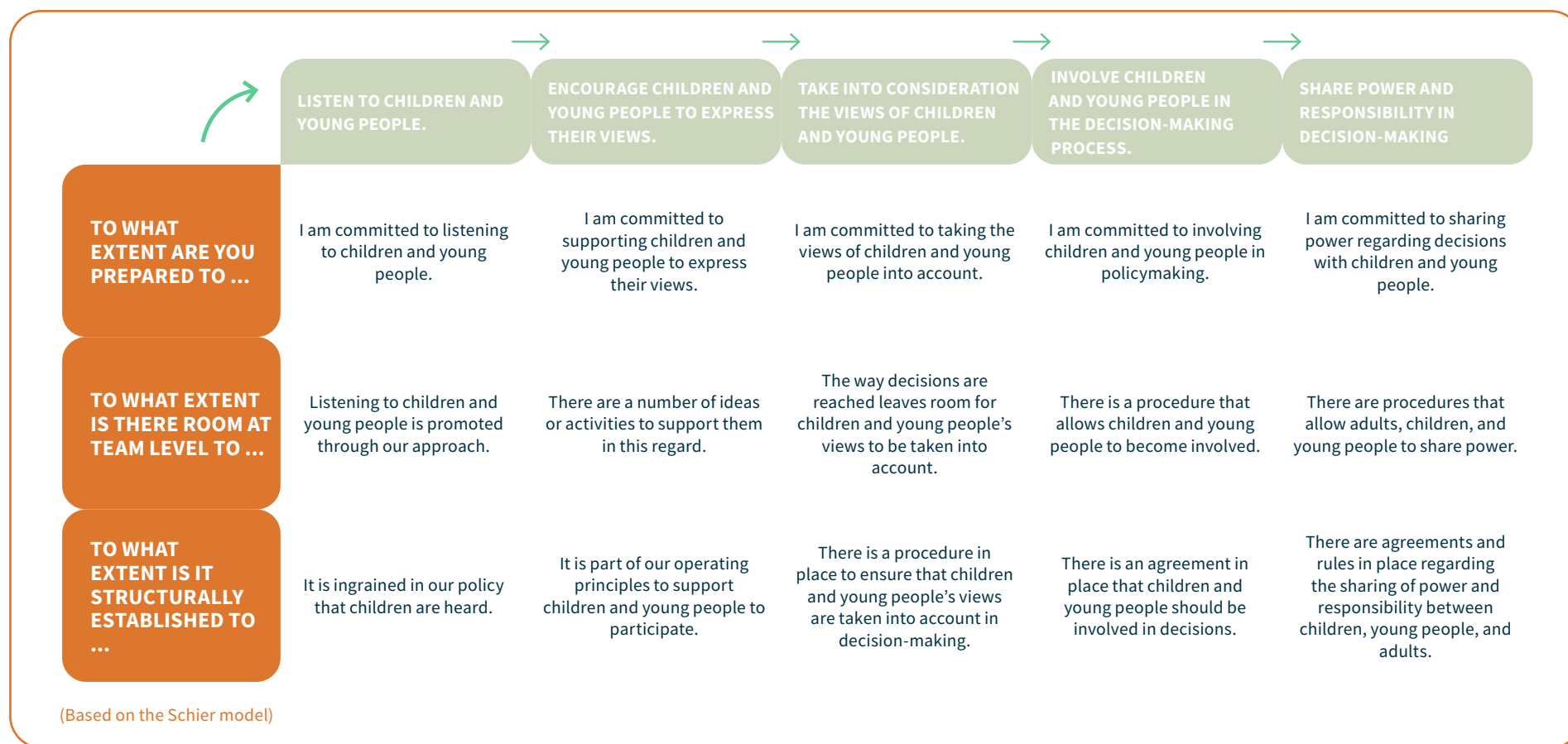
? What colleagues have knowledge and experience of child and youth participation?



? To what extent is there support for participation?

Review the chart, highlight, and exchange:

- Where are you and your team situated? Is there a difference?
- Where do you want to find yourselves?
- What needs to change to embed more opportunities structurally?



It is not imperative to always take yet another step further. Look at your goals and accordingly make targeted choices about the role of children and young people.

Building block 2 – Why do you involve children and young people?

? For what reason(s) do you want to involve children and young people in the policy process? (tick)

- Legal goals:** comply with legal obligations, realise children’s rights in practice, empower children to exercise and enforce their rights if necessary.
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- Policy goals:** allow signals received and/or input gathered to influence the policy process, shaping a democracy where citizens participate in policy.
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- Substantive goals:** find out what is going on in the lives of children and young people and thus reach better decisions.
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- Pedagogical goals:** empower children and young people, train them in certain competences, such as reflecting on relevant topics, forming an opinion, listening to others, and being open to everyone’s views, and teach children and young people about their right to participation and other children’s rights.
.....
- Political goals:** bolster involvement of children and young people to meet political expectations.
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Also consider the reasons why children and young people would want to be involved.

Building block 3 - What elements of a basic participatory attitude have you developed in yourself and what elements would you like to develop further?

Some basic elements of a participatory attitude:

- **Authenticity:** remain genuine and sincere and do not assume a role.
- **Engagement:** be involved with the children and young people you work with.
- **Equality:** stand besides children and young people, not above them.
- **Openness:** accept children and young people as they are.
- **Unconditionality:** stand unconditionally behind the children and young people you work with.
- **Positive attitude:** explore the strengths, capabilities, and potential of children, young people, and their environment.
- **Professional proximity:** let the balance between distance and proximity be determined by the personal growth process of children and young people.
- **Trustworthiness:** always respect privacy.
- **Respect:** respect the individuality of the children and young people you work with.

? What other elements are you thinking of?

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? What are your strengths as a team?

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? In which elements do you want to grow as a team?

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? What actions will you undertake to this end (training, coaching ...)?

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Building block 4 – How do you ensure that all children and young people can participate equally?

? How do you ensure that all children feel secure to participate?

? How will you take into account group dynamics?

? How you tackle this should depend on the specifics of your participation process.

? Include this concern in the different steps of the participation circle.

? Decide who will monitor these questions during the preparation and implementation of the participation process.

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Building block 5 – How do you realise children’s rights throughout your participation process?

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child clarified in its General Comment No 12 what conditions must be met in order to realise the right to participation in a child-friendly manner. These are the following:

- **Be transparent** and inform children and young people about their right to participate, how they can participate, and the objective and potential impact of the participation process.
- Ensure that participation in the process remains **voluntary**. Children and young people are not obliged to participate. Allow them to opt out of the process.
- Treat children and young people’s views with **respect** and make room for their own ideas and activities.
- Involve children and young people in **issues relevant to their lives** where they can draw on their own knowledge, skills, and competences. Give children and young people space to decide for themselves What issues are relevant and important to them.
- Provide a **child-friendly environment** and forms of work adapted to the children’s abilities.
- Ensure an **inclusive** participation process that includes children and young people in diverse life circumstances, without discrimination and in a culturally sensitive manner.
- Provide adequate **training** for the facilitators of the participation process, as well as for the children and young people themselves.
- Take measures to ensure a **secure situation**.
- **Channel back** to the children and young people how their views have been taken into account.

? Determine who will monitor the various preconditions during the preparation and implementation of the participation process.

Children and young people can have their own way taken on this. Also involve them in shaping these conditions.

The five different steps



STEP 1

DEFINING THE SOCIETAL CHALLENGE

How do you define the societal challenge?

? How do you include children and youth perspectives when formulating the problem? (tick)

Decide What technique you will use to delineate the societal challenge.

- Perception survey:
- Location visit:
- Environmental analysis:
- Advisory group:
- Bottom-up participation:
-

? How can you be more (structurally) attentive to what resonates with children and young people?

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It constitutes an added value to also think about how you can be more structurally attentive to the perspective of children and young people.

What content focus do you choose for your participation process?

? What societal challenge will you tackle?

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? What information do you already have about ...

the impact of the societal challenge on children and young people?

the perspective of children and young people?

Does this information apply to all children and young people?



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? What additional information do you need about ...

the impact of the societal challenge on children and young people?	the perspective of children and young people?

? Around which specific issue do you want to work with children and young people? Delineate themes and sub-questions.

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Is the topic well-defined and does it connect to the living environment of children and young people? This is essential for a good participation process. Start thinking about how you want to work with the input of children and young people in the subsequent policy process.

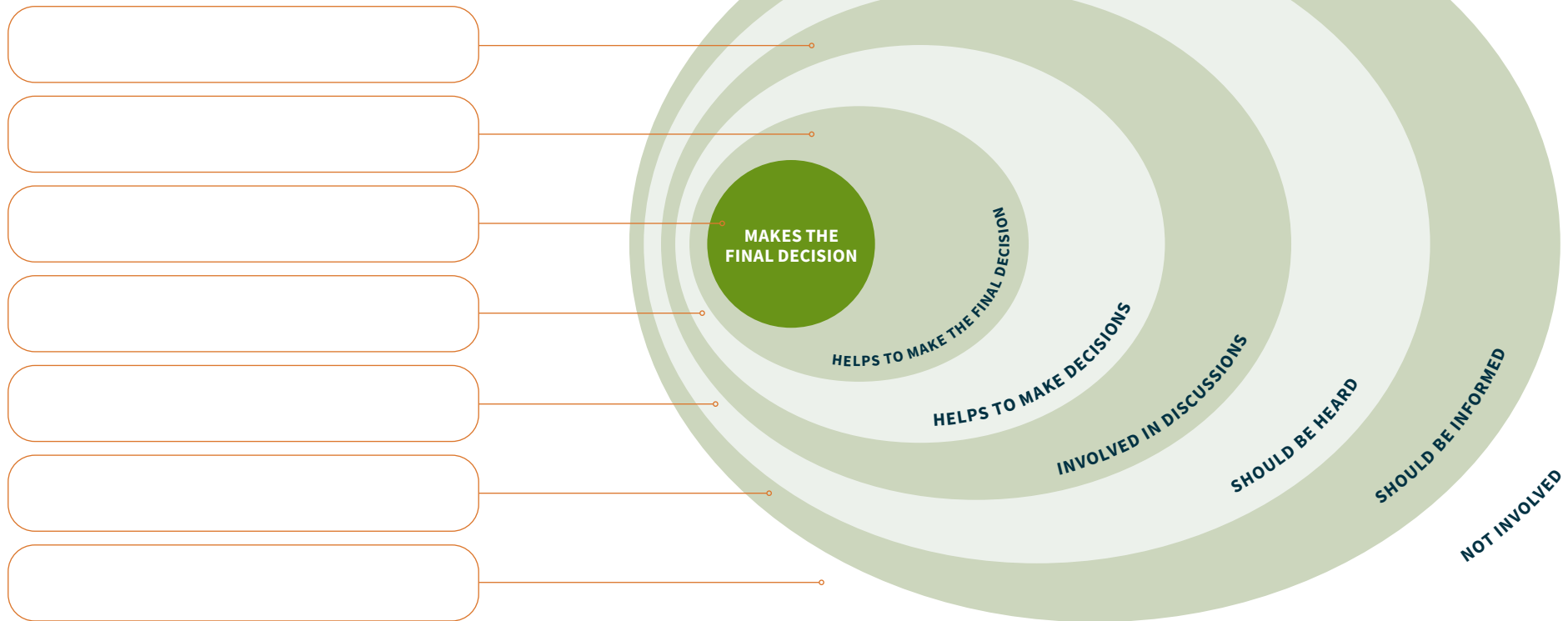
STEP 2

DEFINING AND REACHING THE TARGET GROUP

Who is (in)directly affected by the policy?

Use the 'circles of influence' methodology.

- Who has a stake in the policy?
- Who do you want to involve in the participation process?
- What information is available about the interest groups?



Which children and young people do you involve?

By now you have decided what form the participation process will take, separately or together with adults. Now we can take the next step.

? Which subgroup of children and young people do you want to work with?

Make a conscious choice. Do not automatically limit yourself to children and young people who have experience with policy processes or a specific life experience linked to the societal challenge, or to children and young people with good verbal communication skills or a certain level of education.

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? Who do you involve? (tick)

- Children and young people themselves:
- Their representatives:
- Both:

? How do you put the group together? (tick)

- Existing group:
- New group:

A small group may be sufficient for a successful participation process. Representativeness is not a strict necessity. You should however be aware of the diversity in society. Each voice represents only a limited group of fellow citizens.

How do you get children and young people in socially vulnerable situations involved?

? Do you also want to involve the group(s) that are not (sufficiently) heard in the policy process?

? If so, will you involve them separately or will you opt for an inclusive participation process? How will you do that?

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Think about ...

- ways to reach them.
- ways to get them excited about the participation process.
- the time and space to ensure a secure environment and mutual trust.
- potential barriers and access needs (in terms of transport, communication, accessibility, and costs).



How do you convince children and young people to participate?

? How do you want to reach the target audience?

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? How do you make the barriers to participation as low as possible?

Location (free and independent accessibility, familiarity, safety) and time of day (during school, after-school activities, weekends, holidays) make a significant difference.

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? How do you value their participation and input? (tick)

Some options and tips:

- Provide a material reward, e.g. a small gift or a voucher:
- Emphasise learning opportunities:
- Highlight uniqueness:
- Create a special experience:
- Make it an enjoyable moment:
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The biggest motivator for participation is a participatory process that connects, both in terms of topic and methodology, with the lifeworld of children and young people.

STEP 3 OUTLINING THE PARTICIPATION PROCESS

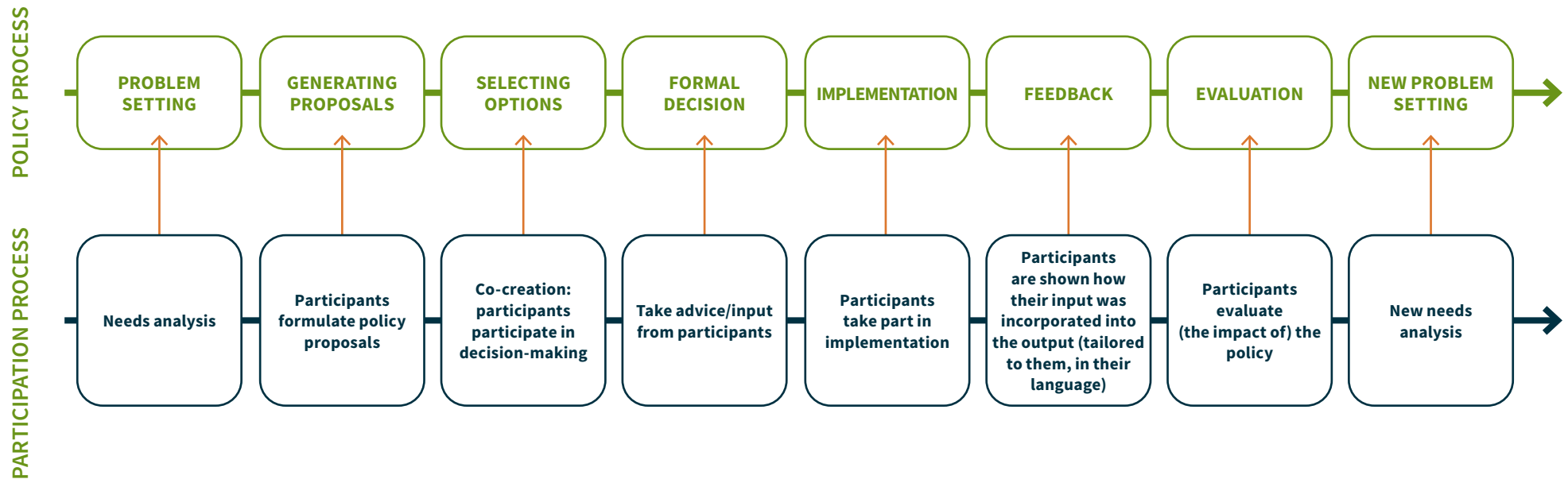
At what stage(s) of the policy process do you want to involve children and young people?

? At what stage(s) of the policy process do you want to involve children and young people?

Discuss and indicate on the diagram:

- The stages that constitute your policy process.
- At which stage(s) you want to involve children and young people.

Adjust the diagram, if necessary.



? What is the timing for the different stage(s)? How do the timing of the policy process and the participation process relate to each other?

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What is the role of the children and young people involved?

? What role do children and young people want to assume? A participation process is successful for you when children and young people ... (tick)

- share in knowledge: children and young people are informed about those issues that concern them.
- think along: children and young people themselves think about things that concern them. They do this from their own realm of experience.
- join the discussion: children and young people talk about their experiences and opinions, both with peers and adults.
- make decisions: children and young people make a decision, alone, together with you as a policy officer or with other interest groups.
- implement together: once the decision is made, children and young people are involved in its implementation.
- evaluate together: children and young people help assess to what extent the expected objective has been achieved and how it can be improved.
- other, viz.

? Discuss this with children and young people at the beginning of the participation process: how do they view their role?

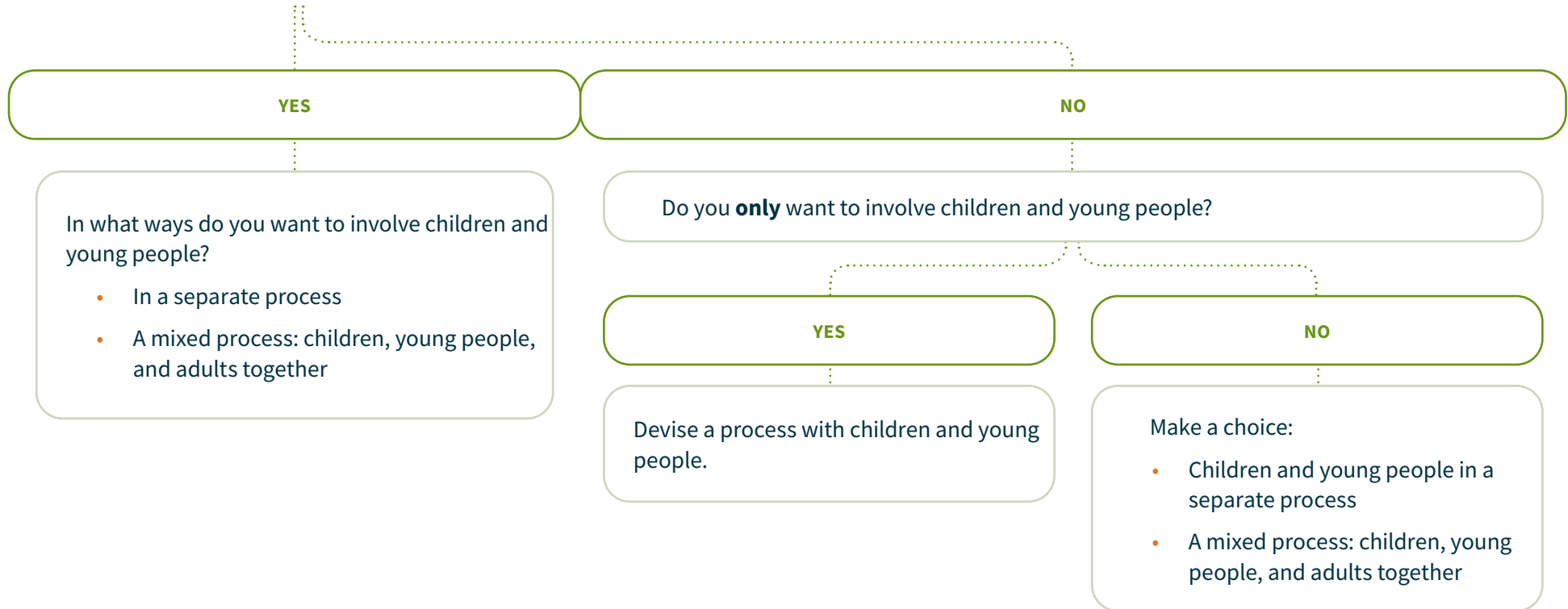
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Consciously choose a role that is achievable: what can you effectively realise? Think about the support that you visualised in Building Block 1. Communicate transparently about the role and mandate that children and young people will effectively have. That way, you avoid confusion or frustration.

What format(s) do you choose for the participation process?

? Do you already have a participation process underway or planned with adults?



→ Make sure the process is adapted to the living environment of children and young people.

STEP 4 SHAPING THE PARTICIPATORY MOMENT

Do you plan and facilitate the participation moment yourself or do you (partially) outsource it?

? For what purpose do you want to use an external facilitator?

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? Who would be suitable?

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? Can the children and young people involved take on certain facilitating roles themselves? E.g. the role of chairperson, reporter ...

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How do you inform children and young people?

? What information is needed for children and young people in order to participate?

About the societal challenge (knowledge about the topic, history ...)	About the policy and participation process (budget, political context, timing of the process and regulations)

? What skills are needed to participate? And how will you strengthen these?

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You can rely on different people to inform the children and young people. For example, invite the head of policy making.

Which methodologies do you use?

? Which methodologies do you think would be interesting to use?

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Critically review this and exchange.

- Do the methodologies achieve the chosen objective? Do they deliver the output you need for the policy process?
- Do the methodologies match the competences and interests of the children and young people involved?
- Do you also use non-linguistic methodologies?
- Do the methodologies take into account elements such as culture, gender, and physical capabilities?
- Can the methodologies be adapted smoothly?
- Is the set of methodologies sufficiently varied?

The methodology is a tool, for achieving exchange and insight, so do not hold on to it longer than necessary. Dare to let go if it does not catch on.

STEP 5 EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK

How will you evaluate the participation process with your colleagues as well as with the children and young people involved?

? When and how will you evaluate the participation process with the children and young people involved?

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? What is the outcome of the evaluation process with the children and young people involved?

What went well? What did you achieve?	What could have gone better?
What would you do differently next time and how?	What opportunities do you see for involving children and young people in the future?

→ Ensure that the lessons learned are optimally shared within (and outside) your organisation so that you can build on them in the future.

How has the participation process affected your behaviour, thinking, and attitudes? And those of the children and young people involved?

? What has changed in your behaviour, thinking, and attitudes throughout the participation process? And for the children and young people involved?

	TEAM	CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
BEHAVIOUR		
THINKING		
ATTITUDE		

? In what ways do you want to further improve yourself? What coaching, support, or training can help?

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How do you feed back the impact of the participation process to the children and young people involved?

? How will you communicate what happened with the input from the children and young people?

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? How will you communicate about the input from children and young people that was not or only partially considered?

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? When and how will you provide interim feedback during the participation process?

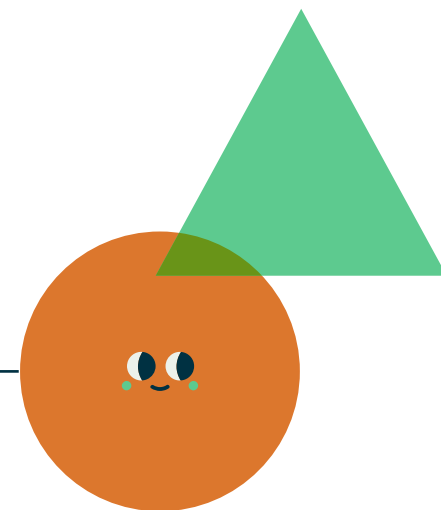
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Survey among the children and young people involved on how they want to be kept informed (or not).

What opportunities and needs for a new participatory process are emerging?

A large light green rectangular area with horizontal dotted lines for writing. A pencil icon on the left side has a line that starts with a wavy pattern and then extends horizontally to the right, ending at a cartoon orange character.





CHILDREN'S RIGHTS KNOWLEDGE CENTRE
WWW.KEKI.BE/EN

The participation circle was developed as part of the REFLECTOR 2.0 project : policy participation as a catalyst for a children's rights perspective



Flanders
State of the Art