Child Participation Guide for Stakeholders

- with Recommendations -

Justice & Environment

ENRICH Project
(Environment, Rights, Children)

2026

Introduction

Association Justice and Environment (J&E) completed a project (Environment, Rights, Children – **ENRICH** – 101147209) between 1 May 2024 and 30 April 2026 in seven European Union member states such as **Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary and Slovenia**.

The main goal of the project was to raise awareness of how the climate crisis and children's rights intersect and to advance children's right to have a voice in environmental/climate change matters. The method to attain this goal was to undertake a) **research and stakeholder surveys** to assess the current level of awareness of key stakeholders regarding child rights in environmental and climate policymaking b) a number of **national training events**, aimed at educating key environmental stakeholders about child participation rights and methods to enforce them, and c) two **international events** to share experiences, research results, and present specific recommendations to policymakers and the practical implementation of child participation policies in climate action.

Our main target groups were **environmental and child rights NGOs and activists, environmental educators and education NGOs, and official bodies and policymakers** dealing with children and environmental matters.

Child participation should be understood not as a voluntary engagement tool but as a legal obligation stemming primarily from Article 12 of the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**, as well as from Articles 3, 5, 13 and 17 thereof. Participation in environmental and climate decision-making is particularly relevant in light of children's heightened vulnerability to environmental harm and their long-term stake in sustainability policies. Therefore, participation mechanisms described in this guide should be interpreted as minimum standards necessary for rights-compliant policymaking rather than optional consultation practices.

Context

Part of the project was about discussion with key national stakeholders on what regulates child participation in environmental and climate matters and how practice of such participation looks like in reality. It was a common impression across countries participating in the project that a number of stakeholders within our target audience encountered issues such as child rights, international conventions on child rights and environmental participation or national case law supporting child participation for the first time via our programme. This inspired us to formulate more general, more comprehensive suggestions for our audience – partly based on preceding documents issued in the past, partly based on our own lived experience.

It is well-known that child participation and the concept of involving children in policy making and decision-making, applying a rights-based approach is becoming more and more important and many scholars and civil society organizations advocate for a better and more impactful regime for child participation. This concept is underpinned by a number of international documents, adopted by either Intergovernmental Organizations, the academia or the civil sector, describing how child participation should look like in practice. Some of these key documents are the following:

- Unicef's **Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation**
- Unicef's **Guidance to Support Meaningful Participation** (most likely the one with the highest influence of all, containing the 9 basic requirements for effective and ethical participation, also supported by the **Child Rights Support Center**)
- Council of Europe's **Principles for promoting children's participation**
- European Commission's **documents on child participation in political and democratic life**
- IRFC's **Child Participation Toolkit**
- Child Rights International's **Guidebook for Training of Trainers on Mainstreaming Children's Participation**

As the project activities unfolded in the 9 countries where J&E was active in the ENRICH project, each of us had different impressions and different lived experience about the level of awareness of key stakeholders about child rights and child participation, the receptiveness of state and municipal bodies of the concept of involving children into

policy making and decision-making, and the like. Based on the lessons we learnt, we formulated our own guidelines or suggestions with special regard to environmental and climate related matters.

In many countries, children's participation in environmental policymaking still takes place on an ad hoc basis and depends heavily on individual initiatives of institutions or civil society actors. A child rights-based approach requires participation to be embedded structurally in decision-making procedures, including legal safeguards, institutional responsibilities, accessible consultation formats and monitoring mechanisms ensuring that children's views are systematically considered.

Nationally inspired guidelines

In order to follow a well-known structure, we list our ideas following the logic of the Unicef Guidance to Support Meaningful Participation with its 9 basic requirements for effective and ethical participation and formulate our guiding principles along those lines, based on national experience gained in the ENRICH project. These guidelines relate to the Unicef basic requirements but reflect what our project partners have learnt during the implementation of the project and represent a view that is based on actual on-the-ground research or capacity building actions. At every aspect, the Unicef basic requirement is cited, followed by special project-specific guidance.

1. **Transparent and informative: Children must receive full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views and the purpose and scope of participation opportunities.**

Information provided to children should not only explain the topic of consultation but also clarify how their views will be used, who will make the final decision, and what limits exist within the decision-making process. Children should also receive accessible explanations about the institutional framework of environmental governance so they can understand where influence is possible and where structural constraints apply.

In Hungary, experience shows that children rarely receive accessible information about environmental decision-making processes in a format that allows them to understand how and when they can influence outcomes. Although national curriculum elements such as sustainability education ("Education for Sustainability") introduce environmental topics in schools, they typically do not explain participation rights or consultation

opportunities connected to real policy processes. To strengthen transparency, child-friendly summaries of environmental strategies and consultation procedures should be systematically prepared and disseminated through schools and youth organizations, including clear explanations about how children's views can influence decisions.

In Bulgaria, the analysis shows that information on environmental decisions must be adapted to be understandable and usable by children by providing

- non-technical summaries: Administrative procedures such as Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) should include a "non-technical summary" written in accessible, child-friendly language;
- visual and interactive tools: Use digital platforms that incorporate visual aids, gamification, and interactive elements to help children understand complex environmental or policy data;
- active dissemination: Schools and local administrations should act as "informational hubs," actively providing children with data about their rights and the status of their local environment.

2. **Voluntary: Children should never be coerced into expressing views against their wishes, and they should be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.**

Voluntary participation must include the possibility for children to withdraw their contribution without negative consequences and without needing to justify their decision. Special attention should be paid to situations where participation takes place in school environments or institutional settings, where implicit expectations from adults may unintentionally influence children's willingness to participate.

3. **Respectful: Adults should acknowledge, respect and support children's ideas, actions and existing contributions to their families, schools, cultures, and work environments.**

Make participation methods respect children. In order to ensure that e.g. municipal participation mechanisms remain meaningful over time, local authorities should regularly document which proposals made by children were implemented, partially implemented or rejected, and explain the reasons for these decisions. Publishing such follow-up information strengthens trust in participation processes and prevents children's involvement from becoming symbolic.

In Slovenia, local communities are the level of government at which decision-makers, in principle, are closest to the electorate (the people). This is reflected in the forms of direct democracy, which are most extensive at the local level. In addition, local communities have a considerable degree of flexibility in implementing ways for children and young people to participate in decision-making at the local level, including in non-formalized ways, as a way of gathering the views of children and young people regarding the needs of the local community in order to guide the measures taken by local authorities.

One such example is the Municipality of Postojna. Since 2016, children have been involved at the local level through the annual organization of Children's Municipal Councils. Elected children from three local schools, serving as representatives from local primary schools, gather twice in a school year at the municipality and present their proposals for measures directly to the mayor and the head of the municipal administration. The mayor responds to their proposals in person. According to municipal representatives, there is always a desire to implement the proposals, which happens regularly. Where implementation is difficult or impossible, this is explained to children on the spot, for instance, when the proposals concern matters that fall not within the municipality's competence, but within that of the State. From among their own members, children also elect a mayor and two deputy mayors, who represent the Children's Municipal Council at the regular sessions of the Municipal Council of Postojna. The Children's Municipal Council is organized through cooperation between the Municipality of Postojna, a local non-governmental organization seasoned in working with children — the Youth Centre Postojna — and the primary schools in the municipality.

This example of good practice demonstrates the importance of respecting the views of children when designing policies on the local level and their value for the decision-making of municipality's officials, including in environmental matters. Not only do local children get to express their opinion directly to the mayor, which is treated as a valuable insight into the needs in the municipality, but also a direct response is given to their proposals, even if these are unviable. This shows respect for children's efforts and gives them a sense of being an actor in local democracy. Furthermore, giving their representatives a position at the table in the Municipal Council provides them with a position on par with that of an elected official. Such a position of children can be successfully achieved only in collaboration with the municipality with a wider set of actors in organizing respectful participation, particularly the ones that have the knowledge about how to work with

children and those that know specific children, their needs and requirements, such as local NGOs and schools.

4. **Relevant: Children should have opportunities to draw on their knowledge, skills, and abilities and to express their views on issues that have real relevance to their lives.**

Relevance also requires that participation opportunities are linked to decision-making stages where children's input can still influence outcomes. Consultations organized after policy priorities have already been defined risk limiting children's role to commenting rather than shaping decisions. Therefore, children should be involved at agenda-setting stages whenever possible.

With regard to the relevance of children's participatory rights, this section provides recommendations on how children and adolescents in Austria can access the legal system to enforce their environmental rights, while also highlighting current initiatives in Austrian schools aimed at strengthening the participatory rights of children and adolescents.

The right to participation (Art. 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) encompasses various rights and guarantees, such as children's access to justice. In Austria, there have been and continue to be efforts to secure children's access to justice in environmental matters through the courts. The effective enforcement of children's rights in court is a central pillar that is particularly important in the context of the climate and biodiversity crises and intergenerational justice.

Two cases have already been brought before the Constitutional Court of Austria, in which 12 children and adolescents challenged Austria's inadequate climate protection law. In these cases, a complaint was filed regarding the violation of intergenerational justice, which is enshrined in the Austrian Constitution (Federal Constitutional Law on the Rights of Children). The complaints were dismissed on procedural grounds.

Furthermore, in an EIA proceeding which is still ongoing, it was argued that intergenerational justice and the right of children and adolescents to sustainable development must be taken into account. The construction of an expressway violates the rights of children of the affected farmers under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In none of these court proceedings has a violation of children's rights been confirmed (to date). This highlights gaps in legal protection. The cases before the Constitutional Court

failed because they did not meet the formal requirements for admissibility. To ensure that children and young people have full access to justice as part of their right to participate (especially regarding the climate and biodiversity crises), legislative changes are needed in Austria. To comply with the ecological children's rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, either the Climate Act must be made enforceable, or the possibility must be created to file a climate lawsuit regardless of individual impact.

In the Austrian schools, there are campaigns to educate children and young people about their participatory rights. This is essential for empowering children and young people by making them aware of their rights and giving them opportunities to demand and exercise them. NGOs are deeply committed to this cause, and there are various approaches to encouraging children and young people, both inside and outside of school, to exercise their right to participate. "Zentrum Polis" is an organization commissioned by the Austrian Ministry of Education to develop workshop materials for schools that teachers can use to educate students about their rights as guaranteed by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to show them how they can claim or assert their rights.

At the systemic level, the principle of "Education for Sustainable Development" has been introduced in Austrian schools. This principle is already incorporated into the curriculum for elementary and secondary levels: the aim is to build children's competencies for sustainable development. Work is currently underway to develop a separate course on "Democracy Education". A central component of this course will be teaching students about opportunities for democratic participation. Children and young people should learn the extent of their scope for action and that this is based on fundamental rights.

5. **Child-friendly: Environments and working methods should consider and reflect children's evolving capacities and interests: Make participation methods child-friendly.**

The case of the revision process of the National Energy and Climate Policy in Slovenia is an example of how this requirement was met but how it also showed shortcomings – and how other countries can meet this requirement by following the example but also by learning from the mistakes.

The National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) is the central climate policy document in Slovenia. It sets out the country's specific targets in the areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as the specific measures for achieving them. The adoption of the NECP and its revisions is required by the EU Regulation 2018/1999 on Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, which, in Article 10, also sets out

the conditions for public participation in its preparation. Article 10 of the Regulation provides that the public must be given an early and effective opportunity to participate in the preparation of the final plan, sufficiently early before its adoption. The public must be informed of this and be given reasonable timeframes for participation. The state must limit the administrative complexity of such participation. A summary of public comments and the state's position on those comments must also be provided. Strategic Impact Assessment (SEA) must be undertaken according to the Environmental Protection Act. As part of the first NECP revision, completed in December 2024, Slovenia involved the public at several stages. The public consists of every natural and legal person, including children. A preliminary consultation on the objectives and guidelines of the NECP was organized, along with the first round of targeted consultations. The first proposed update was presented to the public in spring 2023, followed by an online consultation and targeted consultations. In 2023, several additional targeted thematic consultations with stakeholders were carried out in the areas of transport, buildings, and spatial planning. On this basis, a draft update was prepared and submitted to the European Commission.

At the same time, the SEA procedure was also conducted in parallel, including a phase of participation by the general public. After a positive opinion had been issued on the environmental report, the final NECP proposal was publicly displayed in spring 2024 and a public consultation was held. The organization of public participation in the update process was commendable, as it took place at multiple levels, in several phases, and involved the public both on general issues and on specific sectors. Despite this exemplary framework for public participation, however, the process of revising the NECP revealed practical difficulties in encouraging the participation of children and young people. In the NECP revision process, young people were identified as key stakeholders, yet the Ministry for Environment, Climate and Energy succeeded in engaging only two youth associations in the participation process: Youth for Climate Justice and the Youth Network of the Slovenian Nuclear Society. The reasons for the lack of more active engagement of children and young people in climate policy can be identified in the unsuitability of participation mechanisms for younger generations, which are even less appropriate for children. Information about the document under preparation was presented in an unsuitable form. The main website dedicated to the NECP revision, although useful for professional users who are familiar with the subject matter, was too complex and unclear for the engagement of younger users. The language was technical, relied on expert abbreviations, and referred to legal and technical documents, which does not ensure accessibility for children. This also applied to the document itself (the

revised NECP), whose length does not allow for effective engagement of young people. The NECP is 365 pages long, while the environmental report, which is key to addressing the environmental impacts of the NECP, adds another 455 pages. Although both documents include summaries, these are unsuitable for younger generations because of the large amount of data presented and the inaccessible language. The forms for submitting comments are likewise not designed in a way that is appropriate for children, as they require specific comments on specific wording in the plan, rather than encouraging children to choose freely how they wish to express their views.

The process of the NECP revision would be improved if the following measures were taken:

- A separate, clearer set of information should be provided about the policy changes that would be appropriate for children. The explanation should be shorter, presented in simpler terms, and depicted visually.
- A form for commenting on the policy should not be prescribed for children, thus enable diverse types of contributions, varying according to children's age and maturity. Particularly problematic in the current format is the requested reference to articles and pages, giving the impression that children cannot give general comments and responses to a fundamental climate policy document in Slovenia.
- A targeted consultation with children should be undertaken in collaboration with children's rights CSOs and schools. Their involvement is fundamental in order to adapt the consultation process to the age appropriate to the children involved.

Similar challenges have been identified in Hungary in relation to national-level environmental policy consultations, where participation opportunities formally open to the public rarely reach children in practice. Consultation materials are typically published in technical language and through platforms primarily used by adult stakeholders. Experience from child-rights organizations demonstrates that when schools and youth communities are directly involved as intermediaries, participation rates increase significantly. Therefore, adapting consultation formats through school-based workshops, facilitated group discussions and visual explanatory materials would substantially improve accessibility for children.

Child-friendly participation should include multiple formats of expression beyond written comments, such as visual methods, storytelling, group discussions, mapping exercises or digital tools adapted to different age groups. Allowing children to choose how they

communicate their views increases both accessibility and authenticity of participation outcomes.

6. **Inclusive: Participation opportunities should include marginalized children of different ages, genders, (dis)abilities and backgrounds.**

In Croatia, children's participation in decision-making on climate-related issues remains predominantly concentrated in larger urban areas, as well as within better-resourced educational institutions and civil society organizations. Most initiatives and consultations take place in urban centers, while rural, island, and other underrepresented areas are significantly less covered.

As a result, children from rural and remote areas, children from Roma communities, children with disabilities, and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds often have limited access to participation opportunities. These inequalities are further linked to regional disparities in access to public services and educational opportunities.

In the context of climate change, these groups of children are also disproportionately exposed to environmental risks, including extreme weather events, pollution, and energy poverty, which may have negative impacts on their physical and mental health and development. Despite this, their perspectives are rarely systematically included in decision-making processes.

Existing practice in Croatia, including the work of the Ombudsperson for Children of Croatia in engaging children and incorporating their views into national reports, demonstrates a recognized framework for child participation. However, such mechanisms remain largely mediated and do not consistently reach children from marginalized backgrounds. Furthermore, broader human rights findings, including those related to the continued challenges in ensuring equal access to education for Roma children, point to structural barriers that also affect their ability to participate.

Experience from the Croatian context shows that, in the absence of targeted outreach measures towards excluded groups of children and adapted approaches, existing participation mechanisms may unintentionally reproduce existing inequalities. Standard participation formats are often not sufficiently accessible or adapted to the diverse needs of children.

To address these challenges, the following measures are proposed:

- systematic use of existing local structures (schools, community organizations), with particular emphasis on rural and underrepresented areas
- involvement of local professionals (teachers, expert associates) as intermediaries in work with children
- application of simple, accessible and adaptable participation methods
- combination of online and offline approaches to reduce geographical and digital barriers
- strengthening education on climate change as a prerequisite for informed and meaningful child participation ensuring that children are better able to understand the challenges they face
- strengthening the resilience of education systems to climate impacts, in order to ensure continuity of schooling during extreme weather events and other climate-related disruptions

Ensuring inclusion is essential not only from a child rights perspective, but also for the legitimacy, representativeness, and effectiveness of children's participation in shaping climate policies. Inclusion also requires recognizing power differences between children and adults participating in the same consultation processes. Specific facilitation methods should be used to ensure that children's views are not overshadowed by institutional actors or more confident participants. Separate child-only consultation spaces may sometimes be necessary to ensure equal participation conditions.

7. **Supported by training: Adults, as well as children should be trained and mentored in facilitating participation so they can serve as trainers and facilitators.**

Training programmes should be provided not only for professionals facilitating participation but also for decision-makers responsible for integrating children's views into policy processes. Without institutional capacity to interpret and apply children's input, participation risks remaining disconnected from actual decision-making structures.

In Bulgaria, the analysis shows that children should be trained in environmental literacy since the information is only useful if children have the skills to interpret it. This includes training in civic and legal competence so that children understand their rights, how administrative processes work (e.g., how a municipal budget is formed), and where to

find official information. The development of communication skills requires training in advocacy and public speaking that empowers children to transform the information they receive into persuasive arguments when meeting with decision-makers.

One form of training can be a method that requires extra attention and can be described as “learning by doing”. While it has its risks, the method transfers valuable knowledge that is not only rights-based but also practical and easily applicable. One way of such training method is by involving children in planning or decision-making bodies appropriate for their age and life situation. This may take the form of a small council within a school class or among the students in a school year that is entrusted with making a decision on a relevant subject. By being involved early and meaningfully in smaller decisions, children can learn to navigate in the context of decision-making, to count on different options, to prioritize and to take into account views that differ from their own. This knowledge then can later be transferred into other contexts, e.g. local youth councils formed next to municipal councils and can serve as long-lasting experience, which trains children to be able to participate effectively and help others participate as well.

8. **Safe and sensitive to risk: Expression of views may involve risks. Children should participate in risk assessment and mitigation and know where to go for help if needed.**

Risk-sensitive participation requires prior safeguarding assessments, including consideration of potential emotional burden related to discussing climate anxiety, environmental loss or future uncertainty. Children should be informed in advance about available support people and complaint mechanisms in case participation raises concerns or discomfort.

Institutional safeguards must be in place, including a Child Safeguard Policy and a Complaint Procedure (with appropriate and child-friendly Complaint Mechanism / Complaint Form) in order to make sure children are not only guaranteed a safe space but also there are remedy mechanisms in case something in this process fails. In case children from different backgrounds are involved, the mechanisms and documents must be sensitive to incorporating special conditions of children, including offering a multi-lingual process and documents should children with diverse linguistic backgrounds are involved.

In addition, children should be monitored as regards their psychological status in order to avoid any excess stress or emotional burden, and an alert mechanism should also be

in place in order to serve as an early warning system to avoid negative psychological impacts in children due to their participation.

9. **Accountable: Children should receive clear feedback on how their participation has influenced outcomes and should be supported to share that feedback with their peers.**

Accountability requires that children receive feedback not only about whether their proposals were accepted but also how their views influenced policy reasoning. Where suggestions cannot be implemented, explanations should be provided in accessible language. Closing the feedback loop is essential for maintaining trust and sustaining long-term engagement.

In Hungary, children's participation in public decision-making processes is often organized through one-time consultations without structured follow-up or feedback mechanisms. As a result, children rarely receive information about whether their views influenced decisions. Pilot programmes implemented by child-rights organizations show that providing feedback sessions after consultations significantly increases children's willingness to participate again and strengthens their trust in institutions. Establishing mandatory feedback procedures in environmental consultations involving children would therefore be an important step towards meaningful participation.

Conclusions

Governments and public institutions should ensure that child participation in environmental policymaking is supported by:

- legal guarantees requiring consultation of children in relevant policy processes
- institutional coordination between environmental and child-rights authorities
- dedicated budgets for participation activities
- monitoring mechanisms assessing the quality and impact of participation
- partnerships with child-rights organizations experienced in facilitating participation

Recommendations

To ensure that children's participation in environmental and climate policymaking is meaningful, ethical and rights-based, the following measures are recommended:

☞ Children's participation should be recognized as a legal obligation rather than a voluntary engagement practice. Public authorities at national, regional and local levels should explicitly integrate children's participation requirements into environmental governance procedures, in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and relevant European standards on democratic participation.

☞ Environmental participation frameworks that address "the public" should explicitly recognize children as a distinct stakeholder group. Experience from national climate policy consultations shows that children's participation does not occur automatically within general public consultation procedures unless specific child-focused participation formats are created.

☞ Participation rights should be complemented by effective access to justice in environmental matters. Without legal avenues allowing children to challenge decisions affecting their environmental rights, participation risks remaining limited to consultative rather than enforceable engagement.

☞ Participation opportunities should be embedded at early stages of policymaking, including agenda-setting, planning and evaluation phases. Consulting children only after draft strategies or policy priorities have already been defined limits their ability to influence outcomes and reduces participation to a symbolic exercise.

☞ Authorities should systematically document how children's contributions influence environmental decision-making processes. Publishing implementation outcomes of children's proposals increases transparency and helps prevent participation processes from becoming symbolic.

☞ Child-friendly information materials should be systematically prepared for environmental strategies, climate action plans and consultation processes. These materials should explain the purpose of participation, the scope of possible influence and the institutional context of decision-making in accessible language adapted to different age groups.

☞ Participation processes should include structured feedback mechanisms ensuring that children are informed about how their views were considered and how they influenced decisions. Where proposals cannot be implemented, transparent and understandable explanations should be provided.

☞ Participation mechanisms should be adapted not only for adolescents but also for younger children. Experiences from national consultation processes show that participation formats relying exclusively on written submissions or formal consultation platforms unintentionally exclude younger age groups unless alternative child-friendly methods are introduced.

☞ Key environmental policy documents should be accompanied by child-friendly summaries explaining their objectives, expected impacts and participation opportunities. Experience from national climate planning processes shows that technical documentation alone does not enable meaningful engagement of children.

☞ Participation opportunities should be organized before key policy directions are finalized. Evidence from climate strategy consultations across several countries indicates that children are often invited to comment only after technical priorities have already been determined, which limits their ability to shape policy outcomes.

☞ Special attention should be given to ensuring the participation of children in vulnerable or marginalized situations, including children living in rural areas, children with disabilities, Roma children, children affected by environmental risks and children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Without targeted outreach and adapted participation formats, existing inequalities are likely to be reproduced.

☞ Public authorities should cooperate with child-rights organizations, schools and youth services that have experience in facilitating safe and meaningful participation. Such partnerships help ensure that participation methods are appropriate to children's age, capacities and social contexts.

☞ Cooperation with child-rights organizations and youth-focused civil society actors should be formally integrated into participation procedures. Such organizations play a key role in reaching children who are otherwise not represented in institutional consultation processes and in ensuring that participation methods remain accessible and inclusive.

☞ Local-level participation mechanisms such as children's councils or youth advisory bodies can provide stable and continuous channels for dialogue between children and decision-makers. Establishing similar institutionalized forums at municipal and regional levels can significantly strengthen the sustainability and impact of children's participation in environmental governance.

☞ Professionals working in environmental governance should receive training on children's rights and participation methodologies. At the same time, children should be supported in understanding environmental decision-making processes and their participation rights through education and capacity-building opportunities.

☞ Safeguarding considerations should be integrated into all participation processes involving children, including risk assessment, protection of privacy, emotional support where needed and access to complaint mechanisms. Participation should never expose children to reputational, psychological or institutional risks.

☞ Participation processes addressing climate change should recognize the emotional dimension of children's engagement with environmental issues. Providing safe spaces for discussion and support mechanisms where needed can strengthen children's confidence and willingness to participate.

☞ Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be introduced to assess both the quality and the impact of children's participation in environmental policymaking. This includes documenting how children's views influenced decisions and identifying structural barriers that limit meaningful engagement.

☞ Finally, participation mechanisms should be designed as continuous processes rather than one-time consultation events. Establishing long-term structures for dialogue between children and decision-makers contributes to more legitimate, inclusive and sustainable environmental governance.

Co-funded by the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.