Effective Child Participation in Policy-Making and Implementation

Leda Koursoumba
Vice Chair of ENOC
Commissioner for Children’s Rights, Cyprus

European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)
THE STRENGTHS IN FOCUSING ON CHILD PARTICIPATION

Participation as a Right

Participation as a means for the realization of other rights

CRC, Articles 12, 13, 14, 15

Participation : One of the Guiding Principles of the CRC

CRC/ GC/ No.4 (2003)

• Contributes to child’s personal development
• Enhances democracy
• Promotes children's empowerment
• Improves services provided to children

European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)
The greatest difficulties in making child participation effective and useful in policy-making

Wrong Assumptions

• Programs for adults would equally benefit children as well
• Adults “know better”
• Adults are in a position to determine what the best interest of children is
• Consultation with children is a waste of money, energy and time, a luxury that can’t be afforded

Luck of established structures and procedures for promoting children’s participation
How to get children living in poverty to participate

Research findings:

- Children in poverty have a “differential” experience of their conditions of living
- Children in poverty experience their situation in terms of social relationships rather than access to material resources
- Children in poverty tend to report less participation in both informal social networks as well as organized activities

Some thoughts:

- Need to focus on their own experiences and needs
- Take into consideration the conditions under which they live, especially the material and financial constraints they face
- That they may come from various backgrounds and do all face the same difficulties and constraints
- Policy making to be effective should be more than a box-ticking exercise or even an one-off consultation; it should aim to an in-depth investigation of children’s real experiences

Participation should be used as a tool for policy making

European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC)
THANK YOU!