



Save the Children

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When we are asked, not questioned

CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN
ON THE MOVE

MAŠA AVRAMOVIĆ





Save the Children

Save the Children is the world's leading independent organization for children.

OUR VISION is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

OUR MISSION is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

**When we are asked, not questioned -
Consultations with children on the move**

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Design: Arch Design Sarajevo

Print: Amos Graf Sarajevo

Circulation: 200

This publication was produced within the project „Protection of children on the move in North-West Balkans“. Save the Children implemented this project with support of Save the Children Norway.

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MAŠA AVRAMOVIĆ

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FOREWORD

The following Manual *When we are asked, not questioned - Consultations with children on the move* is designed for practitioners who are in direct contact with children on the move, institutions and organisations whose work is focused on these children, as well as the relevant decision makers. Although the Manual primarily deals with meaningful and ethical participation of children on the move, we sincerely hope that this publication will find its practical use among all the professionals dealing with promotion and protection of the rights of the child, t child participation and consultation with children.

In 2012, Save the Children launched a programme aimed at supporting children on the move in South East Europe, towards facilitating their access to the child oriented social security system. According, to Save the Children, the term *children on the move* is defined as “children moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers, and whose movement might also place them at risk of inadequate care, economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect and other forms of violence”.

In 2012, in cooperation with its partners NGO Atina and Group 484, we launched a programme titled SCORE - *Setting an Agenda for Child Oriented Social Reform*, financially supported by the European Commission, Foundation for an Open Society in Serbia, as well as Save the Children Norway. One of the first steps was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of characteristics and consequences of migration of children in Serbia. This analysis helped us gain an insight and ensure a better understanding of the phenomenon, as well as the dimensions and characteristics of the migration process from the child’s perspective, including their views and experiences in relation to the existing support programmes and challenges that they face in exercising their rights. This approach allowed us to hear their personal experiences, as told first-hand, as well as their views on the problems and potential solutions, thus making the child perspective available also to other stakeholders, primarily professionals and decision makers.

Save the Children aims to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and these breakthroughs are based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The very Convention, as an almost universally ratified international treaty, has paved the way for this change, confirming the status of the child as a right holder, rather than the object to the adult’s good will. In addition to provisions on social, economic and cultural rights of the child and the right to protection, the Convention also introduced the principle

of the best interests of the child, whereby the child is placed in the centre of all decisions affecting him or her, in addition to the right of a child to have his or her voice heard, whilst the child is considered capable enough to influence the decision. These two principles of the best interest of the child and participation are complementary and represent preconditions for fulfilment of all other rights.

In order for these principles to become a reality in practice, it is necessary that listening to the children and the truthful taking into consideration of what they have to say becomes a rule, within the family, the local community and in the society as a whole. Throughout all segments of our programme designed for children on the move in South East Europe, from study through the actual design and implementation of programmes aimed at this group of children, including defining directions for improving policy and practice, it is our pleasure, privilege and responsibility to have had the opportunity to give voice to children who are affected by the problem of migration and affected with these programmes and policies. Although children have highly valued their participation in the aforementioned study, they also pointed out that their experience and maturity are not acknowledged and respected when decisions are made that affect them, and that they are often “questioned”, but not “asked” for an opinion. With their contribution to this consultation process, children have shown willingness and maturity. The next step is now up to us adults to show them that they were heard and taken into account and that we are ready for a paradigm shift in the way we treat children.

We wish to extend our gratitude to the children and adults in Serbia and the region, who participated in consultations with the children, and enabled us to better understand what the world is like when walking in their shoes. The methodology that we used in the consultation process has been translated into this Manual, which will hopefully be recognised among professionals and decision makers as a tool that will help them consult with children and take into account their perspective in creating and promoting policies and practices that affect them.

Sarajevo, 6 February 2014

Andrea Žeravčić, Director

Save the Children

INTRODUCTION

The following publication focuses on issue of how to consult with children on the move in a meaningful and ethical way – how to ask children about their experiences, views and opinions, listen to what they have to say and consider their perspective in development and improving policies and practice that concern them.

It is primarily intended for practitioners who are in direct contact with the children on the move, institutions and organisations whose work is focused on these children, as well as the relevant decision makers. However, it is our belief that the Manual may be of interest to all those who deal with the issue of the child participation and consultation with children on both practical and theoretical level.

The publication examines and promotes the child rights-based approach, which emphasises the child participation and the inclusion of their perspective as a precondition for overcoming the challenges in fulfilment of the rights of the child and building quality systems of child protection, care and education.

Looking at the practice, it seems that the children's perspectives, especially of those with difficulties in accessing these systems, such as children on the move who are the focus of this publication, still are not sufficiently reaching out to those who may have the impact on improving their position. This publication has been produced with the aim to contribute to the elaboration of conceptual and methodological framework, practical guidelines and techniques for consultation with children on the move on issues that are important to them. On a broader scale, the publication aims to encourage development of the culture of child participation and institutional structures that support the "listening" to the children, as well as developing the practice of consultation with children in making decisions that affect them.

In particular, the publication addresses the following:

- specificities of the situation and the position of children on the move, as well as challenges in fulfilment of the rights of these children in the migration context
- child participation as one of the basic principles and preconditions for fulfilment of the rights of the child, the conceptual framework of child participation, ethical principles, as well as benefits from the child participation
- consultation as a special form of child participation, principles and specificities of consultations with children on the move, the preconditions for the attainment of a systemic approach in consultation with children, as well as the methodological framework which ensures that children are “heard”
- practical guidelines for consultation with children on the move, which include issues relevant to planning, organisation, implementation and monitoring of consultations
- specific methodological approach in consultation with children on the move that has been developed and applied in practice

Our aim was to streamline the theoretical foundation with the methodological and practical issues of consultation with children on the move, with an emphasis on the ethical dimensions and approaches in a relevant and contextually appropriate manner, while opening up a forum for dialogue and partnership with children in a creative way. We hope that we have succeeded and that this publication will provide useful guidelines and encouragement to all those who seek to advance their work with and for children - by asking and listening to children.

Maša Avramović

Belgrade, February 2014

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

In 2012, in cooperation with its partners NGO Atina and Group 484, Save the Children in the North West Balkans launched a programme titled SCORE – Setting an Agenda for Child Oriented Social REform¹ aimed to provide access to the child-rights based social security system for children on the move in the Republic of Serbia.

The notion of *children on the move*, albeit recent, refers to a phenomenon of “children moving for a variety of reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily, within or between countries, with or without their parents or other primary caregivers, and whose movement might also place them at risk of inadequate care, economic or sexual exploitation, abuse, neglect and other forms of violence”².

The actual programme was motivated by a significant increase in the number of children on the move in Serbia during the last few years, and especially children as asylum seekers, children in the process of readmission and children victims of trafficking (Galonja et al, 2013). Despite the fact that there is no unified and integrated system of records and monitoring of this population of children, statistics kept by certain professional services and non-governmental organisations clearly point to this trend.

An increase in the number of children on the move is in line with migration trends both at global and European levels (Reale, 2005). As a result, Serbia has become a transit, and less frequently a final destination for children on the move, who, in this period, most often originate from war- torn areas of Africa and Asia. On the other hand, migration of children originating from Serbia and the region is due to the slow-paced social transition, followed by poverty, marginalisation of certain social groups and often ineffective social protection system (Galonja et al, 2013).

The SCORE programme is one of the first programmes in the country, aimed to contribute to an overall perception and contextualization of the phenomenon of children on the move, whilst understanding the challenges for the rights of the child in the process of migration, as well as improving the social protection

1 The project *Setting an agenda for Child Oriented Social REform* was implemented in the period from June 2012 to June 2013, thanks to the financial support of the European Commission, Foundation for an Open Society in Serbia and Save the Children Norway.

2 This is the definition of Save the Children, that in addition to the listed characteristics, also includes the groups of children on the move, namely refugees, internally displaced children, asylum seekers, irregular migrants, victims of human trafficking, children working and/or living on the streets, returnees under readmission (Save the Children – Child Protection Initiative, 2010).

system based on the rights of the child. The programme consisted of: 1) an analysis of existing policies and practices, taking into account the perspectives of professionals with a mandate to protect children, as well as authentic experiences and perceptions of children on the move; 2) training of professionals aimed at strengthening competences to develop programmes intended to protect such children; 3) series of activities aimed at raising awareness on the position and rights of children on the move.

Programme implementation has clearly shown that the inclusion of the child perspective in dialogue about the phenomenon of children on the move, as well as the rights of the child in the context of migration, can substantially contribute to the understanding of the complex position of those children, as well as in defining the directions for improvement of policies and programmes intended for children. In fact, this has been underlined by numerous stakeholders who took part in this programme as one of its most important aspects. On the other hand, the programme has indicated a number of conceptual, methodological and ethical challenges that come up in the consultation process with children on the move, and served as a platform to develop an innovative approach in “listening” of child perspectives.

In its study, Save the Children has included the results of consultation with children obtained by applying the methodology developed. The study was presented on the Day of General Discussion organised by the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)³ on “The Rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration”, making sure that the voice of children is heard in the process. The Committee on the Rights of the Child had recognised and accepted the recommendations of the study, and accordingly prepared guidelines for the state parties to improve the status of children on the move. The European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) also devoted its annual 2012 meeting to the issue of fulfilment of the rights of children on the move, while underlining the importance of the inclusion of the child perspective. The methodology of consultation with children has also been applied in similar programmatic initiatives by Save the Children in the countries of the region, thus facilitating the dialogue and exchange of experiences.

Despite the fact that the child participation is recognised as one of the underlying principles for a comprehensive attainment of the rights of children, many challenges for its practical application nevertheless remain. It seems that the inclusion of the child perspective in a dialogue on child-related issues is still for

³ The Day of General Discussion of the United Nations' Committee on the Rights of the Child was held on 28 September 2012 in Geneva (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013)

the most part in the domain of individual initiatives and organisations, rather than being integrated into development of policies and practices that are intended for them. Therefore it is very important that the concept of “listening to children” becomes a part of the culture of institutions and organisations that deal with children, with a continuous dialogue on outstanding issues and the exchange of good practices. This manual was prepared so as to give its contribution to this end.

When it comes to children on the move, one must not lose sight of the fact that access to social security system is significantly hampered for many of them. Even when they do get involved in support programmes within the system, these programmes are usually insensitive to the complexity of the situation these children find themselves in. Numerous challenges are ahead on the path to a systematic approach in providing conditions for a comprehensive exercise of the rights of children on the move. In this endeavour, child perspectives ought to be identified and acknowledged. Consultations with children are the first step to this end.

CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

*“You embark on this path with a myriad of questions.
 With unrelenting sense of uncertainty, insecurity and fear.
 You have many plans that may come true.
 Imagining how life could be.
 Hoping for a better life.”*

Children who have left their place of habitual residence and are on their way to a new destination or have arrived at a new destination are commonly referred to as *children on the move*⁴.

This *movement* can be either:

- voluntary or involuntary
- temporary or permanent
- within or between countries

Children on the move can be either:

- accompanied by an adult (parent, caregiver) or peers, as well as unaccompanied
- internally displaced or refugees from war or natural disasters, asylum seekers, irregular migrants, returnees from the readmission process, victims of trafficking in humans, children living and/or working on the street.

Due to specificities and variability of the total conditions and circumstances of migration of children, it is by no means uncommon that children on the move are recognised within several of these categories, as well as at different stages of the migration process moving from one category to another (Galonja et al, 2013).

There can be numerous causes behind migration, including those at the macro level such as wars and political conflicts, natural disasters, economic crisis, economic underdevelopment and discrimination of certain social groups, as well as those at the micro level - violence, abuse or neglect in the family or immediate environment, gender discrimination, etc. (Punch, 2007).

⁴ Definition given by the Global Movement for Children (<http://www.gmfc.org>)

In order to understand the phenomenon of children on the move, it is important to bear in mind that these are, in most, children who migrate due to inability to exercise some of their basic rights in the original place of residence (Save the Children, 2013). Decision on migration is mostly motivated by an assessment of children and/or their parents/caregivers to have more opportunities for a better life elsewhere.

The phenomenon of migration impacts children in different ways and they take on different roles in the process, often conditioned by decisions of their family (Human Rights Council, 2010). Children may be in a position to follow their parents who have decided to migrate or in a situation where they leave the place of residence unaccompanied by adults, frequently with an aim to provide additional income for the family that stays at home. The process of migration brings about the separation of families, as well as voluntary or forced separation of children from their parents (*Ibid*).

On the other hand, the very movement frequently exposes children to numerous risks (Dottridge, 2008; Save the Children 2013). The fact that they travel alone entails a range of hazards, especially when children are travelling via illegal channels. They can often find themselves in life-threatening situations, they can become victims of smuggling or trafficking in humans, sexual or labour exploitation, whereby these risks are far greater if the child is travelling unaccompanied by adults. Even if the risks of abuse, exploitation and violence are successfully avoided, the life of these children is often marked by poverty and poor quality of life, neglect and social exclusion (O'Connel & Farow, 2007; Reale 2005). Based on the status they have, children are often denied access to health and social care, as well as education.

On the other hand, even when they do reach the desired destination, many children are being returned "voluntarily" or deported to their country of origin, or forcibly displaced when it comes to internal migration, where in both cases the principle of the best interests of the child is often disregarded (Human Rights Council, 2010).

Notwithstanding these risks, many children in their struggle for survival see migration as the only solution (Punch, 2007). For other children, migration is a possible way out of the vicious circle of poverty in the absence of prospects, and a way to ensure better living conditions (Vandenhole, 2011). In the process of migrations, some children truly get what they dreamed of, but for many of them it still remains a dream that did not come true (Galonja et al, 2012; Punch, 2007).

Specificity of the position of children on the move

"I would like others to understand our story - why we went on this trip and all that we've been through. That way they would know how to help us."

As previously mentioned, the children on the move are classified into different categories based on the specificities of a situation in which they are at a given moment, but also based on already identified groups of children targeted by child protection system. However, such a categorisation of children often loses sight of the importance of *movement* itself as factor that opens up a number of challenges for the attainment of the rights of the child and requires a comprehensive approach to their care and protection. Migration context affects children in various ways, exposing them to multiple risks, and it is very important that their classification in a particular category by the system does not lead to partial exercise of their rights, as is often the case in practice (Human Rights Council, 2010). A particular problem is that those groups of children on the move that are not recognised by the system are most frequently left without the support needed.

Also, when it comes to migration policy measures, it should be noted that these often prescribe universal procedures for migrants, ignoring the fact that a significant part of the movement is made up of children. It remains a particular challenge to develop and coordinate these measures with child rights-based protection of children (*Ibid*).

Finally, the movement carries a specific sequence of circumstances and complex situations in life for every child, having a child faced with complex choices that can lead to serious risks, but also creates opportunities for a better life (Punch, 2007). It is therefore very important at different levels of policies and practices of child protection that children in the context of migration are recognised as active subjects and holders of rights guaranteed under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Challenges in the implementation of the rights of children on the move

States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the international community, must provide conditions for the exercise of the rights of children on the move, regardless of their status. The attempt here is to look at the numerous challenges in the attainment of the rights of children on the move, through the prism of the basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in their integrity and interdependence.⁵

Non-discrimination principle

According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the right to non-discrimination guarantees all the rights for all children free from discrimination on any grounds. The Convention recognises particularly vulnerable groups of children and emphasises the importance of providing additional support to those children in fulfilment of their rights.

In a number of countries, due to non-compliance of the status of children on the move with the basic principles of the Convention, these children face multiple forms of discrimination - from systemic to discrimination by the immediate environment. Insufficiently developed institutional mechanisms that ensure access to the rights and protection of children, indicate that systems of many countries do not recognise this group of children as a particularly sensitive category. In a significant number of cases, it is the status of migrants that brings children in this position of discrimination in terms of a comprehensive access to rights. Another problem is the discrimination against children on the move by the immediate environment, including racism and xenophobia.

⁵ An overview in this Chapter is based on a report from the Day of General Discussion organised by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2012, entitled “The rights of All Children in the Context of International Migration”, the study of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on challenges and good practices in the implementation of international framework for the protection of child rights in the context of migration from 2010, as well as the results of the survey “Children on the move - support programmes and protection of children on the move in the Republic of Serbia” from 2012 .

In practice, the provision of equal access to the rights for children on the move, especially to social, economic and cultural rights, is conditional on the current state policy, development level of the system of child protection, and economic standards. Many children on the move face a series of violation of fundamental rights - such as the right to protection from various forms of violence and exploitation, the right to health and social care, education, etc. Also, what is often lacking is the support to these children needed for them to be included in services and programmes of the system of child protection. As a result, these remain inaccessible to them even despite the absence of any legal obstacles.

Principle of the best interest of the child

The principle of the best interests of the child in the context of migration of children is a particularly sensitive and complex issue. In the background of indisputable importance to act in accordance with this principle, there are numerous and complex factors that should be taken into account, especially when it comes to international migration.

In order to determine the best interest of the child, it is necessary to examine the situation of every child individually, namely the circumstances of the child, his/her vulnerability and resilience, the need for protection, development needs, child upbringing and culture to which the child belongs, whilst also being mindful of the child perspective.

Due to their status, the majority of children on the move are exposed to measures and procedures of migration policies that are often in conflict with the rights and the principle of the best interest of the child, which exposes these children to numerous risks. Many of them attest to detention measures and deportation despite the existing procedures, separation of families, slow procedures in reconnecting with family, etc.

The right to life, survival and development

Every child has a guaranteed right to life, survival and development. This principle emphasises the basic human right that includes not only physical survival, but also the right to development of the child until the child achieves his/her full capacity, which is conditional on the holistic application by all state parties to the Convention.

The threat in fulfilment of this right is one of the strongest factors propelling children and their families to opt for migration, regardless of the risks and uncertainties that it entails.

Many children, especially those travelling via illegal channels, are witnesses to dangers and sufferings caused by unsafe modes of travel, armed attacks on groups of migrants, arrests and harsh prison conditions, as well as various aspects of exploitation and violence that children are exposed to ... On the other hand, even if they do manage to avoid these risks, the lives of many children on the move are marked by poverty, social exclusion and limited access to rights, creating unfavourable conditions for the development of these children.

The principle of child participation

The right of the child to be involved in the exercise of their rights is one of the fundamental principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This right is also indicative of the importance of the inclusion of child perspective in decision-making processes that affect them, as well as developing policies and practices that are intended for them, whereby children are acknowledged as rights holders and active participants in their own lives and development.

Exercising the right to participation is particularly important for children in the process of migration, wherein they are faced with a series of decisions that significantly influence their lives.

A large number of children on the move attest to commonly not being informed, asked or in any way involved in the process of deciding on the asylum application, deportation, forced displacement ... and other issues that had significantly influenced their lives and wellbeing. Also, most of them had no opportunity to be even consulted about the services and support programmes that are designed for children on the move.

PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN

The participation rights of the child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines basic rights of every child. In addition to the rights relating to adequate care and protection of children, the Convention also encompasses civil rights and liberties, that is, participation rights guaranteed to every child. These rights define the status of children as rights holders and active participants in its attainment.

Recognition of the child as the subject to own rights is expressed explicitly or implicitly in several articles of the Convention which define:

- right of the child to express opinions (Article 12)
- freedom of expression (Article 13)
- freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14)
- freedom of association (Article 15)
- right to privacy (Article 16)
- right of access to appropriate information (Article 17)

Article 12 stands out as the key one, whereby the child has the right to freely express opinions and the right to have his/her views given due weight in making decisions that concern the child. This Article mandates that children are in the very centre of developments with any relevance for them, including their active participation in such developments. This is recognition of the value of the experiences of children, their perspectives and attitudes, also commanding respect for personality and dignity of the child.

Article 12 stipulates the legal and social status of children. Although they do not have the autonomy of adults, children are individuals in full capacity, involved in the exercise of their rights. Participation allows the child to take actions in order to promote, represent and protect his or her rights.

As a backbone for fulfilment of other rights, child participation was singled out as one of the four underlying principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in addition to the right to life, survival and development, the right to non-discrimination and the right to the best interest of the child.

Participation of children is a prerequisite for the attainment of other rights of children.

So, for example:

- *The best interests of the child cannot be defined without taking into account the views of the child.*

Adults can respond to the needs of the children if they know what goes on in their lives and how they perceive it; the best person to ask are children themselves.

- *Participation of children contributes to their protection.*

If children are empowered to recognise the violation of their rights, if they have the opportunity to express their views and concerns, they can significantly contribute to their protection.

- *Participation is the precondition for full development of the child.*

All modern theories agree that the active participation of the child in his or her own development and the environment serves the purposes of his or her full development.

For a more comprehensive understanding and comprehensive enforcement of the right to express a view, as the basis for the child participation, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in the General Comment on the Right of the Child to be Heard,⁶ emphasises the following:

- *Regardless of age, every child has the right to be heard*

Numerous studies underline the assumption that every child has the ability to form his or her view, even if unable to express it verbally (Lansdown, 2005; Sinclair, 2004). The right to express views must not be limited to “adult language”; it is therefore necessary to recognise and appreciate different ways of expression by children and support the participation of children of different ages.

- Children have the right to express their views *freely*

A child should not be exposed to pressure, nor requested to share his or her views in case the child does not want to or is not interested. Expression of views must be the free choice of the child. This refers to authentic, autonomous views of the child; hence, the child should not be subjected to any form of manipulation. A precondition for the exercise of this right is for the child to be informed, which is ensured by those responsible to hear the child.

⁶ <http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/children/participation/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf>

- The child has a right to have his or her perspective *heard and acknowledged in all matters affecting the child.*

The participation right of the child extends to all issues and decisions affecting the lives of children - family, school, local community, and the wider social and political level. It may affect the individual child or children as a social group. The child has a right not only to have his or her views heard, but also acknowledged and given due weight.

- The child has the right to be heard in *any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child*

This right applies to all proceeding without restrictions, and includes the duty of the States to ensure that proceedings involving the child are accessible and appropriate for the child. It is important that the proceedings are conducted by trained professionals in adequate conditions which will ensure a safe and conducive environment for the child. Following the proceedings, the decision-makers are required to explain in what way and to what extent were the views of the child acknowledged.

- The child has the right to be heard *either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body*

It is important that, whenever possible, conditions are ensured for the views of the child to be heard directly. On the other hand, the child should be given the opportunity, if he or she so decides, to be heard through a representative or an appropriate body.

Therefore, by having the right to be heard in all matters that concern them and the right for their views to be given due weight, *children actually have the right to participate in all matters and proceedings affecting the child* (O’Kane, 2006). As it stands, this right is often referred to as the right to participate.⁷

The right of the child to participate is the right to take part in exercising his or her rights, to be an active doer in own development and actively contribute to his or her environment.

Such understanding of the right to participate is embedded not only in Article 12 but also in a number of other Articles to the Convention. It should be noted that **Article 5** defines the status of the child in relation to adults responsible for him or her. According to this Article, parents/guardians and other adults

⁷ It should be noted that the term ‘child participation’, although not explicitly mentioned in the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, has found its place both in literature and in policy and practice.

(including professionals who work with children) have the right and duty to provide appropriate direction and guidance in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child in the exercise of the rights by the child. Highlighting the evolving capacities of the child aims to draw attention to the increasing ability of the child to make decisions affecting his or her life, both in partnership with adults, as well as independently.

The right of the child to actively participate and contribute to his or her environment, in addition to Article 12, also encompasses all other civil rights and freedoms defined under the Convention (**Articles 13 through 17**). In particular, one should bear in mind the right of the child to freely express own views and ideas in different ways, and to seek, receive and impart information of all kinds (Article 13), and the right of the child to access appropriate information (Article 17), which is a prerequisite for the right to express views. Article 15 is also noteworthy, whereby children have the right of association and peaceful assembly. This right can be seen as an incentive for children to work together with their peers to initiate and run a variety of activities in their environment in order to improve their position.

Based on all the foregoing, it can be concluded that the right of the child to participate is grounded in interconnectedness of several Articles of the Convention.

The participation rights of the child

children being informed

The right to access appropriate information (Article 17)

expression of views	*	participation	*	children's initiative
<i>freedom of expression</i>		<i>the right to participate</i>		<i>freedom of association</i>
(Article 13)		<i>in decision-making (Article 12)</i>		(Article 15)

the right to have the evolving capacities of the child acknowledged
(Article 5)

The concept of child participation

The concept of child participation is based on the right of the child to participate. However, child participation is defined in different ways. Although there is no single definition of the term, it can be seen that it is most often associated with the participation of children in decision-making on issues that concern them. In this context, there is a highlighted importance of information exchange and dialogue between children and adults, based on mutual respect and the division of power (O’Kane, 2006; Hart, 1992; Avramović 2012).

Given the nature of the issues that children are entitled to be included in, different aspects of child participation may be observed:

- Child participation in making *decisions concerning his or her personal life* (e.g., in developing an individual plan of social protection of the child, in the process of deciding on the application for asylum, the activities of the programme in which the child is involved, etc.). This is a way for the child to contribute to determining and respecting his or her best interest, to influence everyday events, as well as the outcomes of decisions defining his or her life.
- Child participation in *planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes, projects or services intended for them* (e.g. various support programmes for children on the move). This enables children to actively participate in improving the conditions for their own development.
- Child participation in *developing, evaluating and improving policies and practices concerning children* at the local, as well as national and international level (e.g. in the process of developing a local action plan for integration of children from the readmission process, assessment of progress made in implementing the rights of the child in the context of migration etc.). Children are recognised as active citizens and actors of social change.

Taking into account that children work together with adults in the process of decision-making, depending on the nature of that cooperation, several levels of involvement of children can be observed:

- first level - the child is informed about relevant issues
- second level - the child is informed and expressing his or her views on certain issues
- third level - the child expresses his or her views, while adults take these into account when making

decisions concerning the child

- fourth level - the child make decisions together with adults
- fifth level – the child alone makes the decision that adults respect (Lansdown, 2010).

This model reflects the division of roles and responsibilities between children and adults in the decision-making process. It should not be seen as a framework that places different forms of child participation in a hierarchical relationship, suggesting that one should always strive for the highest level of child participation. In practice, it is possible and most adequate to apply the context and different circumstances that affect that level of child participation (Avramović, 2012).

Also, it is important to note that the definition of child participation as our starting point has had certain limitations. Participation boils down to expression and respect of opinions of children in the decision making process, which is merely one aspect of participation. What is ignored is the action, that is, the active components of child participation, hence the need for a broader definition that will cover various ways for expressing an active role of children in their life and environment.

Therefore, for the purposes of this Manual, the following theory is suggested, whereby child participation is:

a process in which children have the **relevant information**, the possibility to **express their views**, to be **heard** and **acknowledged**, as well as to be **involved in activities** and to **initiate activities** related to the issues that concern them.

Bearing in mind the above, several key features of child participation can be singled out:

- Participation of children is a *continuous process*, not the status or outcome, and cannot be reduced to isolated activities. It involves the *active participation of children* in their lives and environment. The concept of child participation relies on the fact that children have an active role in their own development (James & Prout, 1997). The concept of child participation should make this fact visible to both adults and children, and serve as an incentive to adults to build a context, together with the children, in which children will be active factors in the development of their full capacity and contribute to the community in which they live through their participation.
- *There are different practices of child participation* - children participate in a variety of settings: the family, social and health care, school, community ... and express themselves in different ways: speak

their mind, how they feel or what they want, contribute to problem identification and solving, trigger various activities and actions, express their views using different media, they are associated, share their knowledge and skills to their peers, represent themselves or their peers, participate in the work of various institutions and organisations, etc. (Avramović, 2012)

- Participation of children should be in accordance with the *interests and competencies of children*, as well as the context in which it is achieved. Adults often assume that children are not sufficiently competent to participate in making decisions and taking action, and that they are unable to take responsibility. On the other hand, many studies focused on the experiences and perspectives of children indicate that adults often tend to underestimate the capacity of children (O’Kane, 2006; Lansdown, 2005). Furthermore, contemporary theories of child development emphasise that the competence of the child is dependent on the environment and context in which the child grows, the personality of the child, his or her life experiences, expectations, and the support received. Competence of the child for participation depend on the form and scope of participation, the experience of the child and his or her awareness, a situation of the child, his or her setting and best interests (Avramović, 2012). Competence of the child for participation is being developed through the very process of participation, or cooperation between children and adults in a setting that is risk-free and conducive for children.
- Child participation is the *responsibility of adults* to work on creating opportunities for children to contribute with their views and activities to their own development and the development of the community in which they live. Possibilities for child participation depend on the status of children in a given society (James & Prout, 1997; Christensen 2008). The first prerequisite for child participation is for adults to perceive the importance of the active role of the child in own life and setting, as well as to recognise the value of the contribution of children. This refers to the participation of each individual child, and children as a social group.
- Participation of children involves a *partnership between children and adults* as well as children with their peers. Partnership relations are based on mutual respect, cooperation and division of responsibility. Participation includes joint activities for adults and children: the exchange of information, perspectives and ideas, dialogue, launch and implementation of joint actions, providing feedback, etc. Children and adults are devoted to a particular issue, focused on a common goal, acting as partners in developing activities, undertaking actions and assuming responsibilities.

Benefits of child participation

Child participation entails a number of benefits for the child, as well as for policy and practice concerning children, but also for the wider community.

Significance of participation for the child

- Through participation, the child builds active attitude towards life, own rights, and his or her setting
- Participation leads to wellbeing and greater quality of life of the child - creating a more favourable environment and a greater possibility of choice
- Through participation, children living in difficult circumstances build resilience that helps them deal constructively with their life situation
- The child participates in decisions pertaining to his or her life and assumes responsibility for its implementation. Decisions made reflect the best interests of the child to a greater extent.
- Participation has a positive impact on the children when it comes to the development of responsibility, tolerance, critical thinking, creativity, self-confidence and positive self-image, acquiring different skills and knowledge (e.g. about their rights, about teamwork, expressing in different ways, discussion, negotiation, organisation ...)
- The child respects the opinions of others and is taught to build partnerships with peers and adults, based on mutual respect and cooperation.

Benefits for adults and professionals working with children

Professionals who work with children, while taking into account child perspective, they question their assumptions about the needs and competencies of children, and become more willing to genuinely respond to their needs. They discover a new quality of communication with children, and build partnerships with children.

Benefits of child participation for improving policies and practices concerning children

Appreciation of child perspective and experience leads to better decisions in all areas that affect the lives of children, such as education, social and health care, etc., and contributes to a more efficient policy, work of institutions, as well as the quality of programmes that are designed for children.

Participation of children contributes to:

- better understanding and consideration of the needs of children
- consideration of issues and problems from a new perspective
- identifying the obstacles that children face in the system
- prioritisation, better redistribution of resources
- developing innovative approaches
- greater accessibility to institutions and the relevance of the programme
- creating better living conditions and a more conducive environment for the child
- more efficient and more comprehensive support to children

Positive impact on the position of children in the community

- Participation leads to improvement in the attainment of the rights of the child
- Children take an active role in their environment and recognise the value of their participation in the community; they are empowered to point to the violation of their rights and to advocate their rights
- Adults recognise children as social actors
- Children are becoming more visible in society

The principles of meaningful child participation

Notwithstanding the different circumstances and ways in which children can participate in their environment, it is important that child participation is substantial, rather than manipulation or quasi-participation.

The following section cites the principles of good practices of child participation, as developed by Save the Children,⁸ based on years of experience and its key role in the promotion of child participation at the global level. These principles suggest different aspects that should be kept in mind in order to secure the prerequisites for meaningful child participation, while at the same time presenting guidelines for planning, implementation and monitoring of the process of child participation.

Ethics

The ethical approach, with the best interest of the child in its core, is the key to ensuring the meaningful child participation. Participation process should be transparent - with clearly defined goals and expectations of child participation, the roles and responsibilities of both children and adults. Adults need to be open and honest in terms of the influence that children have in the decision-making process and must present children with all relevant information. It is important that children understand the purpose of their participation and to be able to influence the process to the highest extent possible, from planning to monitoring and evaluation of child participation.

Voluntariness and relevance

Child participation should refer to issues that are directly or indirectly related to children. Ways of involving children must at least be in accordance with their competencies and interests, taking into account their experience and perspective. Children should have all the relevant information and sufficient time to consider it, in order to decide whether to participate and to what extent. Child participation is voluntary and child has the right to withdraw from participation at any time, if so desired.

Equality of all children

The concept of child participation is based on the principle of equality of participation for all children affected by a certain issue, and is therefore contrary to any aspect of discrimination and exclusion of children. Therefore, it is important to devote special efforts to engage children from marginalised groups and provide support for their participation. In all participatory activities, opinions and contribution of each child must be taken into account and respected equally. Cultivating an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation between all participants is fundamental for the meaningful child participation.

⁸ Save the Children (2005): *Practical Standards in Child Participation*, London: International Save the Children Alliance

Supporting environment/setting

A supportive and conducive environment greatly contributes to the quality of child participation. It is necessary to invest resources to create the conditions for genuine child participation: a forum where children feel accepted and respected, methods that take into account the competencies and interests of children and encourage them to participate, support for the participation of children from different backgrounds and with different experiences.

It is especially important to support the children to realise that they can contribute to positive change for themselves and their peers with their experiences and ideas.

Trained and trusted adults

The key role of adults who lead the process of child participation is to encourage child participation with their knowledge and skills, helping them recognise and strengthen their potential to become actively involved in issues that concern them. They need to be trained, equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead the process of participation and resolving any problems that may arise, to be reliable and with personal qualities for this kind of work with children. It is particularly important for the meaningful child participation to build partnerships between adults and children.

Safety and protection of children

Adults have a responsibility to protect children from anything that may put them at risk of abuse and various forms of violence, or anything that could compromise their safety or affect their participation. Strategies and procedures to protect children should be determined as early as in the planning process of child participation. It is important that children are aware of their rights to be protected and to know whom to contact in case of breach of any of their rights or such risk. Adults should have the necessary knowledge and skills to adequately respond to risky situations and protect children.

As regards child participation, it is important to make sure not to jeopardise the privacy of children in any way.

Feedback on child participation

It is very important that children receive feedback on the process, results and outcomes of their participation - about the impact that their experiences, ideas and recommendations have had on decision-making, policy and practices that affect them, and how they contributed to a positive change. It is also essential that children have the opportunity to give feedback to adults about their participation. Monitoring and evaluation of processes and outcomes of child participation should be an integral part of any participatory activity, where children should participate as one of the leaders of the process.

CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN

Child participation is exercised in various ways. The framework for child participation is usually created by adults, while the process always depends on the dialogue and the quality of relations established between children and adults. Children are active in creating space for participation; they seek and find ways to participate in their setting (Žegarac, 2006). Support and partnership with adults is valuable for them in this process.

In relation to different roles that children and adults can have, it is possible to distinguish various aspects of child participation:

- adults consulting with children
- joint initiatives of children and adults
- child initiatives supported by adults (Avramović, 2012).

This Manual will specifically address consultations with children. However, it should be noted that the various forms of child participation are not mutually exclusive. Among these, often there are no firm boundaries, so in practice, child participation initiatives shift from one category onto another.

Consultations as a form of child participation

Consultations with children are a model of child participation where adults (relevant experts and decision-makers) ask children about their experiences, views and attitudes in order to assess and understand the child perspective on relevant issues and acknowledge it in the process of developing and improving policies and practices concerning children.

Consultations with children may be organised at different levels: within institutions and organisations whose work is aimed at children in the local community, as well as at national and international level.

Time-wise, consultations may be designed as:

- a time-limited activity (for example, in cases where children are consulted in relation to some specific, current issue);
- a process that is a part of a wider initiative (for example, when children are consulted at various stages of a project targeting children)
- continuous process (for example, constant consultations on a programme or service in which children are involved)

The advantage of this model of child participation is that these are focused towards clear goals. Thanks to the possibility to hear children, the model allows an insight of relevance for the review of existing policies and practices, as well as decision-making with a view to their improvement. Therefore, consultation is often the first step in the initiatives of child participation.

On the other hand, it is characteristic of consultation with children that these are initiated and led by adults. Children may have an impact on the consultation process, but not directly on its outcomes, since adults are the ones responsible for final decisions (Avramović, 2012). By organising consultations with children, adults who are responsible for creating and improving the policy and practice concerning children, actually demonstrate that they value the experiences and views of children. However, to discuss the true child participation, it is essential that there is a willingness to listen and take into account the views of children, and to have them genuinely involved in the decision-making process. It is essential that children receive feedback on their participation in this process, and the way and extent in which their views influenced the decision.

Consultations with children on the move

Children on the move, as well as other children, exercise many of their rights - such as the right to health and social care, alternate housing, protection under special circumstances, the right to education, leisure ...in various institutions and organisations. It is therefore important that these institutions recognise child participation as one of the basic principles in their work.

This refers to the institutions and organisations:

- *developing a practice where children on the move are directly involved* (e.g. shelter centres for children of asylum seekers, day care centres for children working and/or living on the streets, social welfare centres, health centres, non-governmental organisations implementing programmes with the children on the move, schools, police, cultural institutions ...)
- *developing services, programmes, and projects tailored for children on the move* (e.g., social welfare centres, NGOs, shelter centres for children on the move ...)
- *developing and delivering policies (laws, regulations, policies) involving children on the move* (e.g., relevant ministries, offices of the ombudsperson for the rights of the child, bodies within local governments ...)

One should bear in mind that the above classification is provisional only, and that many institutions and organisations are at the same time engaged in developing programmes and services, as well as direct work with children (Avramović, 2009).

The following table lists issues of relevance for consultations with children on the move within institutions whose work is focused on this group of children.

Consultations with children on the move

Direct work with children on the move

In the decision making process concerning the personal life of the child, as well as all legal and administrative proceedings affecting the child.

Consultation as part of everyday practice - in planning activities and modes of operations, adopting the rules and procedures ...

In the process of evaluating the quality of work of institutions / organisations and their programmes, as well as in the process of building (improving) the quality

Examples

Information and consultation with the child when deciding on the asylum application, adoption of an individual protection plan, decision on custody, decision about medical treatment ...

Consultation with children about the choice of topics and activities within the programme of support organised by a non-governmental organisation; schedule of daily activities or code of conduct in the accommodation centre for children of asylum seekers ...

Consultations with children on their views regarding the quality of programmes where they are included in terms of programme content, quality of relations with adults and peers, support that children receive, the risk of violence and other forms of abuse ...

Developing services, programmes, projects

In the process of planning, implementation and evaluation of services, programmes and projects

Consultations with children at all stages of a programme by a non-governmental organisation aimed at the reform of the protection system for children on the move or a study with children on the move ...; consultations with children in designing and piloting new services

Developing policies regarding children on the move

In the process of developing regulations and procedures relating to children on the move

In the process of devising strategies related to improving the achievement of the rights of children on the move, the protection of children from violence ...

Consultations with children when developing protocols for conduct of professionals working with children on the move (e.g., case manager at the social welfare centre, legal aid providers to children asylum seekers ...) or regulation for action in assessing the age of children migrants, the procedure for treatment of children in border control ...

Consultations with children on the move within the UN Days of General Discussion on the rights of children in the context of migration, in the process of developing a strategy or action plan to protect children on the move

In addition to these, it is also noteworthy to mention some other issues faced by children on the move, which are important for the exercise of their rights and well-being. These issues concern the separation from family and/or reconnecting with family, determining guardianship for children unaccompanied by adults, the treatment of children of migrants primarily as offenders, rather than subjects with rights to special protection, exposing children to proceedings and procedures that violate their rights - especially when it comes to measures of border control, then the issue of the availability of social and health care, as well as education, the quality of programmes in which they are involved, etc (Human Rights Council, 2010). Consultations with children to move on these issues when making decisions that affect them both as individuals and as a social group is a child right that is essential to meet the best interests of these children.

Prerequisites for the introduction of consultation with children as a principle

The adoption of relevant legislation and the introduction of procedures and mechanisms for the inclusion of children is one of the preconditions for child participation, including consultation with children in institutions and organisations. However, regulations and procedures are often insufficient. They need to be further detailed at the level of each institution and translated into practice. And perhaps more importantly, within the institution, it is necessary to build ethical principles underlying the image of the child as a competent entity with the right to participate in decision-making processes that concern the child, whose views and attitudes are worth listening to.

The introduction of child participation as one of the basic principles in the work of institutions and organisations that focus on children involves a systematic approach, developing a culture of child participation, institutional structure that supports the inclusion of children, followed by developing the practice of child participation, its monitoring and improvement (Wright, 2006; Avramović 2009).

- *The culture of child participation* implies that the participation of children in an institution is recognised as a value framework. This means that employees and management recognise the importance of including child perspective in planning and improving institutional practice that is aimed at children and building partnerships with children. At the institution level, there is an open dialogue between employees, as well as with children about the principles, practices and obstacles to child participation.

- *Institutional structure* involves planning of child participation, defining the roles and responsibilities of employees who will lead the process of child participation and the provision of necessary resources.
- *The practice of child participation* is related to the development of mechanisms and methods of child participation, building partnerships with children, creating supportive settings and the implementation of various participatory activities with children. It is important, whenever possible, to ensure continuity in child participation and involve children in all stages of the process.
- *Monitoring and evaluation of child participation* implies developed mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the introduction of child participation as a working principle, participatory activities with children (in terms of planning and organisation, methods of work with children, the quality of the established relations), as well as the results of child participation (whether the participation of children resulted in positive change in policy and/or practice concerning children and in what way, as well as for the children who participated, professionals, institution itself)

The introduction of child participation and consultation with children as the principle is a long-term process. It requires a comprehensive approach of providing general measures which the State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is obliged to take (the adoption of the legislative framework, regulations and rules), through the promotion of child participation, education of relevant professionals to understand the importance of listening to children 's perspective, as well as to have the necessary knowledge and skills to lead the process of child participation and change institutional practices toward building partnerships with children, and finally through the empowerment of children to actively participate in their lives and environment (Avramović, 2012).

Methodological framework of consultation with children

Dialogue between children and adults

Listening to children is the essence of consultations with children, which takes place in the dialogue between children and adults. It is crucial for viewing and understanding of children experiences and perspectives, and their appreciation in the decision-making process.



Dialogue between children and adults implies:

- active listening and communication between adults and children that cannot be reduced only to the words uttered, but also includes other senses and emotions
- constant interpretation and review of views of children and adults
- awareness of the purpose of the dialogue and the process of a joint search for meaning
- changes arising from the attainments of understanding

Adult:

- accepts and respects the child as a competent interlocutor whose value comes from his or her existence and actions, with his or her specific position, experiences and perspectives
- adapts the dialogue with everyday life context of the child, his or her experiences, rights and choices
- driven by the child's (self)understanding of issues that are relevant for the child, while the child's competence, (in)dependence, vulnerability and resilience direct the adult in efforts to enable the

child to participate in the dialogue in different ways

- ready to question their own point of view and build new meanings in dialogue with children

Child:

- has the status of an equal interlocutor who raises issues that concern him or her and expresses own views and attitudes
- in relation with adults, develops an active role, capacity for (self)understanding and perception of their own experiences and perspectives
- investigates and reconstructs own points of view through a dialogue revealing perspectives that differ from his or her.

(Clark & Moss, 2001; Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010; Avramović 2012, 2014)

If we start from the fact that the dialogue between children and adult is a basic methodological principle of consultation with children, several principles that derive from this principle can be singled out:

Multiple perspectives - Consultations with children are directed at appreciation and understanding of different perspectives, as well as of contextual background of experiences and perspectives of children. Different groups of children, as well as individual children, often have different experiences and views on certain issues that need to be taken into account (Christensen, 2008)..

The framework of consultations as a subject of dialogue - the role of the child shifts from respondents to an equal interlocutor in the process of consultation. A child with his perspective contributes that the framework of consultations itself (a subject that is in focus, questions, consultation techniques) becomes the subject of the dialogue. Children can and should contribute to the selection of problems and issues that initiate dialogue, selection of consultation techniques and their piloting, data collection and data analysis, as well as reporting on consultations (Kellet, 2005).

Focus on the process – all stages of the process are very important in consultation with children - from building a team that will lead the consultation, selection of children who will participate in it, informing children and securing their consent to participate, through building relations/rapport with children, ensuring

a supportive environment, all the way to establishing a dialogue on all stages of consultation with children. All these phases contribute to the consultation process with the children being based on the rights of the child. In practice, the focus is placed only on individual stages of the process, most commonly the phase of data collection and analysis, while other stages are neglected, which affects the quality of the process.

Reflectivity versus neutrality of adults - Consultation with children require reflectivity of adults who lead this process, as opposed to their neutrality. Adults should not be in the role of "mute listeners" who are trying without any influence to note the views of children, according to a pre-specified procedure, but instead active participants in the dialogue, open to question their assumptions, their role and relations established with the children, selected techniques, their advantages and disadvantages (Punch, 2007).

Change as the objective of consultation with children - Listening to children in order to understand their perspective is not an end in itself for consultation with children, but rather a starting point for initiating changes (Clark & Moss 2001). This means that adults need to be ready, not only to "listen" children, but also to "hear" and acting accordingly; that is, to create conditions for the child perspective to launch a new round of dialogue and leads to a review of the prevailing views, construction of new meanings that will be embedded into new policies and practices directed at the child (Graham & Futzgerald, 2010).. Consultations with children are directed at understanding the past experiences of children, their current situation and potential changes that would lead to improving the position of children and the exercise of their rights.

Which children to include in consultations

In consultation with children, the attempt is to engage those groups of children that the issue or a problem in focus relates to. Also during the selection of children for participation in consultations, two requirements arise, namely to include "typical" representatives of certain groups of children, as well as to include children with specific experiences and perspectives on an issue (Hill, 2005). This opens the possibility for a kind of generalisation, but also for the inclusion of different perspectives.

Consultation process can sometimes involve a larger number, if not all the children from the population concerned by the relevant consultations. It is often the case when consultations are carried out within the framework of local institutions /organisations that are working directly with children and when consultations relate to everyday issues and services, or programmes in which children are involved.

On the other hand, when consultations relate to policies and programmes concerning the larger population of children, then it is possible to include a small number of children from these populations. The question of how to choose representatives of children is an organisational, but also an ethical issue (Hill, 2005; Avramović, 2014). In practice, consultation process includes children that are “easy to reach” and “easier” to establish a dialogue with. This has resulted in overlooking or ignoring certain points of view, which most commonly are views of children from marginalised groups (ethnic minorities, children who are outside the “system” ...) and whose rights are the most vulnerable (Ennew, 2009). Therefore, the adults who lead the consultation process are required to review criteria for selecting children who will participate in terms of relevance and equality.

Relation between children and adults

The request to establish partnership relations between children and adults in the consultation process has been repeatedly emphasised. This relation is characterised by equality and cooperation.

However, number of authors point to the imbalance in power and status between the child and the adult as a major challenge for the establishment of partnerships (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998; Einarsdottir, 2007). In practice it may happen that some children are not accustomed to adults who are willing to hear their opinion. They can perceive adults as an authority and strive to provide desirable answers to meet the presumed expectations (Punch, 2002). Some children may also feel uncomfortable in situations where they are “asked” to express their opinion. All this points to the potential vulnerability of children in circumstances where they have unequal power compared to adults.

Yet the question remains whether adults still have the power over the child. What also happens in practice is that some children resist engaging in consultations in a way that adults had foreseen in advance (Loveridge, 2010), or they refuse to share their experiences and visions with adults. In these situations, children are those who have the power over adults.

Based on these examples, it can be concluded that the concept of power cannot be viewed as static and irrespective of the quality of the established relations. The power between children and adults in the consultation process is constantly negotiated through the established and dynamic relations between children and adults and their co-participation (Barker & Smith, 2001). So the key question to be raised is

how to establish a relation in the consultation process in which adults share power with children.

A number of following strategies can contribute to this aim:

- building rapport and mutual respect between children and adults
- encouraging active participation of children - through the application of techniques of consultation with children respecting their competencies and interests; the involvement of children in all stages of the consultation process
- adult awareness about issues of power, their willingness to review the quality of established relations and its improvement (Avramović, 2014).

Transforming potential power of adult *over* children into power *with* children (Pavlović Breñeselović, 2012) represents a significant support to their participation. However, one should not lose sight of adults retaining responsibility for creating the framework of consultative process and opening the space where children can intervene. Adults have a responsibility to invite children to equal participation in the dialogue and provide them with support in terms of empowerment to make their full contribution.

Consultation techniques with children

Participatory approach which in essence is consultation with children means that the methods and techniques used are tailored to children (and their different competencies, experiences and interests), as well as the context in which consultations take place, and to allow children to actively participate and express their views in different ways (Avramović, 2014).

Many authors agree that this can be achieved through *mosaic approach* (Clark & Moss, 2001). This approach refers to the use of different techniques of consultation with children on the basis of which "fragments" are received and assembled into a complete picture of child's perspective as a mosaic or puzzle. This allows "sending" and "receiving" messages in different ways thereby contributing to its understanding.

Overview of consultation techniques with children

The following sections offer a brief overviews of consultation techniques with children, including some traditional, and also innovative techniques tailored for children.

Observation with participation

Observation with participation can significantly contribute to interpretation of the actions and experiences of children, as well as the context in which they occur. It is particularly useful in consultation with small children and children whose native language is different from the language in which consultations take place, because they often cannot fully express themselves verbally. Data obtained by the observation are used as a basis for dialogue and reflection with children.

Thus, for example, educators who work in accommodation centres for children of asylum seekers can apply the technique of observation in order to notice where the youngest in the centre spend most of their time, with whom and in what activities. Information obtained can serve as the basis for a dialogue with the children about the space in such centre, their activities and how their needs are met, as well as about their relations with other children and adults, etc (Clark & Moss, 2001).

Individual interviews

Interview is a technique that is often used in consultation with the children. Its advantage is that it provides a focused dialogue with children. A potential problem with this technique is that it can open up space for the dominance of adults, especially in cases where adults are not sensitised to listen to the child and the common search for meaning, or in case they have a need to adhere to predefined questions as opposed to the child's efforts to develop a deeper communication (Avramović, 2014).

Interview with a child can be especially useful technique in situations where children are not ready to speak in front of others about some of their experiences or sensitive issues. Also, in situations where some children are interested and willing to talk in detail about their experiences and thoughts.

Interview with peers can be led by children who are trained to do it. This is a possible way to overcome the potential problem of the imbalance of power between the child and the adult in an interview situation.

Focus groups and group interviews with children

The advantage of focus groups and group interviews is that they open up a space for interaction and active participation in the joint construction of meaning. Children are encouraged in dialogue with their peers to discover new perspectives, reflect on different points of view, revealing the common grounds, as well as specific experiences on issues that are important to them.

The form of focus groups and group interviews recalls the conversation that children often have in the school or in the framework of various programmes in which they participate. Multiple interactions allow for adjustment of power in the group, thus eliminating the power in relation between the adult and one child. A potential problem with this technique is that some children may be more willing than others to engage in interaction. It is therefore important to ensure that every child gets to speak and participate in the dialogue (Mauthner, 1997).

In-depth discussions on the topic

This technique is one of the variants of previously described consultation technique. Its specificity is that specific data obtained by applying some of the consultation techniques becomes the basis for an individual or a group conversation with children so as to have a detailed insight into child perspective (Clark & Moss, 2001).

Thus, for example, the data that internal migration of families and children who are involved in street work are to a great extent caused by the search for a better paid job, which could be performed by fathers and eldest boys of the family, becomes the basis for dialogue and reflection with individual children or groups of children.

This technique is inevitably combined with expressive and multisensory techniques (photography, drawing, movement ...) that the child uses to express some of his or her views, after which it becomes the starting point for in-depth discussion with children.

Structuring techniques

Structuring techniques are projective techniques that are based on the use of specific activities which should help facilitate the participation of children and their expression. Some of these techniques include:

Role-plays where they can use dolls or other means of symbolism that represent persons with identity, personal history and certain roles, that children can use as mediators in expressing their own feelings, experiences

and attitudes. Children, for example, can use puppets to enact a situation where the child migrant is stopped by border police, and play the dialogue that takes place between the social worker and the child ... The advantage of this technique is that it helps the child to express his or her feelings in and perceptions about certain sensitive situations which may be difficult for them to discuss directly (O’Kane, 2000).

Children’s narratives (storytelling, writing or finishing the story, writing letters, writing an ID card or resumes ...) are also a structuring technique (Carr, 2000). Children of migrants can, for example, write a letter or postcard to their best friend who stayed in the country from which they fled, telling them about their journey, and the good and the bad things that happened on the road. Personal narratives of children can be built around a specific framework that helps them construct their “story”, for example by means of maps showing the important points of their experiences (migration process) or a poster that shows the important aspects of services in which children are involved ...

Activities in play and the different types of games can be designed so that they are used as techniques of consultation with children. One such game is the “ranking” where children receive illustrations that represent a particular situation or services that they need to line based on the importance as they see it, or where children use cards that represent the activities in which they participate as part of a service to have these cards marked with different emoticons depending on how they feel while participating in a certain activity.

Multisensory techniques

Multisensory techniques include photographing, video and audio recording, creating maps, and various expressive techniques (Clark & Moss, 2001).

Photographing and video recording are techniques that children can use to show places, people and situations that are important to them.

Creating maps and guided tours are used in consultation with the children so that the child could show to the adult the environment where he or she stays in and is important to the child, as well as to point out their relation to the setting, an own assessment of the setting and ideas for its improvement.

Audio recording is an especially useful technique that children can use while leading an adult and talking to the adult about his or her surroundings.

Expressive techniques such as drawing, sculpting, expressing movement, etc. allow children to share their

feelings and express perspectives in a visual or kinaesthetic way, which can be a more accessible way of verbal expression for them. On the other hand, listening children as they talk about their drawing or movement can provide important insights about their understanding of the situation and their own experiences.

Documenting consultations with children

Documenting is a significant phase of consultation with children. This process takes place at two levels - through documentation of the process of consultation with children, as well as documentation of the data obtained and analysed.

When it comes to process documenting, it is important to describe the baseline, key topics and issues that were the subject of consultation with children, explain their relevance and importance from the viewpoint of children, describe the process and all stages of the consultation process. Process documenting should include the reflection of adults and children, as well as remarks on the possible modification of procedures and methods during the consultation process. It is particularly relevant to look at the established relation between children and adults, its dynamics and adjustment between children and adults regarding the purpose and course of consultations (Ennew, 2009).

Documenting data obtained by using different consultative techniques means collecting transcripts of dialogue, child narratives, as well as photos, images ... with explanations of children. It is important that children understand the purpose and process of documenting, and to have the opportunity to participate in this process - both in the selection and structuring of data, as well as in the critical discussion of the data collected.

Documenting is building a puzzle from the data obtained by different techniques. It usually involves the analysis which includes determining the addressed topics and key messages of the children, data analysis, and interpretation of their structure. Adults need to be aware of the interpretative nature of this analysis, which entails a requirement for a valid argument and testing the conclusions of the children.

Documenting raises many ethical issues such as preserving the authenticity of views of the child, protecting their privacy and protection of children against risks which they could potentially be exposed to.

It should also be borne in mind that documentation makes the consultation process public, as well as child perspective. Documentation is also a tool that should contribute to a new cycle of dialogue, this time between those who are responsible for making decisions concerning the children - professionals who work with children or create policies and programmes that are intended for them (Graham & Fitzgerald, 2010).

PRACTICAL GUIDELINES FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN ON THE MOVE

The following Chapter provides a number of practical guidelines, ideas and advice for planning, organising and implementing consultation with children on the move. These guidelines are based on the conceptual basis and principles set forth in the preceding chapters, and arise from the practical experience and examples of good practice in consultation with the children on the move.

Guidelines for planning consultation with children

Regardless of the institutional and organisational framework for planning of consultations with children, including children on the move, there are several key steps in the process that should be kept in mind:

- **Adopting child participation as a principle**
 - Participation of children should be the basic principle and value in all aspects and stages of the consultation process
 - Inclusion of children should be in accordance with the principles of meaningful participation, always guided by concern for the best interests of children
 - All stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in the consultation process with the children, should have the children introduced to as equal partners. They should ensure that they understand the objective of consultation with children, as well as the importance and benefit of child participation
- **Ensure resources for the consultation process with children**
 - It is necessary to provide supplies and structural resources that are needed to organise the consultation process with children
 - It is essential to provide expert guidance for the process
- **Establishing the objective and thematic framework of consultation with children**
 - Define the objectives and expected outcomes of consultation with children - to answer the question about why are children consulted and what is expected of the consultation process
 - Identify key topics and issues that children will be consulted on

- **Establishing a group of children for whom consultations are relevant**
 - Identify children who are directly, but also indirectly, concerned by the defined objectives and topics, that is, children affected by the problem that has been identified, who have the experience in connection with the issue that is in focus, which children might be interested to participate in consultations
 - Establish whether it is possible to reach specific groups of children – are there any relevant groups of children who are already involved in specific programmes, projects or services, whether it is necessary to establish a partnership with certain organisations or institutions, whether some groups of children need additional support to engage in the consultation process ...
 - Define a framework structure, as well as the size of the group of children who will be consulted, making sure to involve representatives of all relevant groups, including children and those who need extra support
- **Establishing the team to lead consultations with children**
 - Establish a team to coordinate and conduct consultations with children, with the requirement that team members have the necessary knowledge and expertise, that they are reliable and dedicated to advocating the rights of the child
 - Introducing the issue that is in the focus of consultation with children to team members, as well as the specifics of a group of children for whom consultations are relevant - their social and culture characteristics, specifics of their life situation ..., with previously conducted consultations on similar topics, relevant literature
- **Defining the framework plan for consultation with children**
 - Determine a timeframe of consultation with children, potential partners, roles and responsibilities of team members, establish a methodological framework for consultation with children, all stages and the ways in which children will be involved, the principles and procedures that will ensure ethical approach and the protection of children, the ways to document the process and results of the consultation, all target groups to which the results will be presented and in what form, which aspects of the evaluation will be applied

- **Forming a group of children and informing children**
 - Establish a list of children who will be invited to participate in consultations based on the defined structure and size of the group
 - Inform selected children about the purpose and subject of consultations, as well as about all stages of the process and the principles to be complied with in the work
 - Inform parents/guardians of children on consultations with children, inform them about the way to ensure respect for the rights of the child and protection of children
- **Voluntary participation of children**
 - Present to children that the voluntary nature of participation of one of the key principles in consultation with children and give them an opportunity to decide whether they want to participate based on the information obtained
 - Parents/guardians of children who have expressed a willingness to engage in consultations must give consent for the participation of children
 - Children need to be informed that they can quit also during the consultation process, if they so desire
- **Building partnership between children and consultation leaders**
 - It is important to take time for the children and the consultation leaders to get to know each other
 - Consultation leaders should inform children about their value framework that will guide them during the consultation process, with an emphasis on the importance of building rapport and partnership
- **Expectations of the consultation process**
 - Introduce to children the role that they will have in the consultation process, to emphasise what is expected of them, as well as to introduce the ways and extent to which the results of the consultation may influence the advancement of children, making decisions that concern them
 - Ensure that children perceive a realistic level of influence that consultation may have

- Listen to and respect the expectations of children related to their participation in the process and the results of consultations
 - Negotiate with children the rules to be adhered to by children and adults; it should be born in mind that certain rules must be introduced by adults from their positions of responsibility for a meaningful and ethical participation of children
- **Empowering children to participate**
 - Ensure equal access to participation for all children, which may include additional support needed some children
 - Identify the knowledge, skills and attitudes that children may require to be more actively involved in the consultation process - it can, for example, include knowledge about the subject of consultation, different skills for expressing, positive attitudes about the participation of children ... Allow time for the exchange of new information, becoming familiar with new concepts and problems, developing the necessary skills, fostering the adoption of certain attitudes
 - Allow time for children who participate in the consultation process to get to know each other, build positive relations and a network of solidarity amongst themselves
 - Recognise that children can have different views on some issues, support them to express their views and ideas and encourage them to respect different opinions and respect diversity
 - In case some of the children are expected to represent their peers, it is necessary to plan additional activities where children could be helped to prepare for this role
 - **Involving children in the design of the consultation process**
 - Consult children on key topics that are the focus of the consultations, encourage them to draw attention to various aspects of topics from their own perspective
 - Pilot the selected consultation techniques with children
 - Encourage children to direct the consultation process - a dialogue with leaders and its limits, activities organised within the consultation process, interpretation of the results of the consultation, etc.

- **Implementation of consultation with children**
 - Ensure adequate and pleasant place to work, time dynamics which is in accordance with the needs of children
 - Mode and outlining of the activities to apply different consultative techniques ... should be interesting and inspiring for children, consistent with their competencies and interests
 - The atmosphere is to be pleasant, open and supportive
 - Activity leaders should be authentic, supportive, "set" to the individual child and the group of children with whom they work (their dynamics, energy, what is important for them at a given time), flexible and creative ...
 - It is necessary to ensure the protection and safety of children - assume and prevent risks to which children may be exposed, introduce mechanisms for their protection, delegate a person to whom the children can turn to if they have a problem
- **Documenting the consultation process**
 - The process and the results of consultation with children should be documented in consultation with children and a reasoned interpretation
 - Report on the results of the consultation should point to the child perspective and significance that it may have to improve the status of children and the quality of policy and practice in relation to children
 - Results of consultations with children need to be available and presented to all relevant stakeholders , including decision makers, relevant professionals and other adults who are in contact with children, relevant groups of children, as well as public
- **Feedback**
 - Children should participate in the evaluation of the consultation process
 - Children need to be given feedback on their participation, as well as about how their participation contributed to a broader dialogue on the issues that were the focus of the consultation and impact on decision-making
 - Children should also to be thanked for participation

Things to keep in mind when consulting children on the move

It has been noted earlier that children on the move are not a homogenous group. However, the experience of migration, which is common to this group of children, exposes a large number of children to specific circumstances, challenges and risks. These specificities should be kept in mind when organising consultations with children on the move.

Children on the move often **belong to different cultures than the majority culture** and it should be taken into consideration when planning and organising consultations with children.

- It is necessary that the members of the team that plans and leads consultations with children on the move are familiar with the specific culture which children belong to, including knowledge about culturally adequate practices relating to children (expectations and aspirations in relation to children of certain ages and genders, how do adults treat children, how are children expected to behave towards adults ...)
- One should not forget that children who come from the same country or region may belong to different cultures because of different ethnic origin, religious affiliation or significant local specificities
- One can learn about different cultures from literature, but in order to gain insight into the cultural practices, it can be significant to talk with members of a particular culture. Professionals who are in direct contact with children could also have a lot to say about cultural practices of children.
- Consultation with children on the move should take into account the specificities of culture which children belong to and be tailored to cultural practices of children
- For example, when organising consultations with children, one should bear in mind that in certain cultures, boys and girls do not talk to each other on many subjects or avoid physical contact until they reach a certain age; activities should be planned accordingly, while also being mindful that some children pray several times during the day or have obligations taking care of younger siblings and align all this with the schedule of activities ...
- Cultural mediators can be an important support to the consultation process with children on the move

Language barriers can be a significant obstacle to the participation of children on the move in the consultation process. Therefore, it is important to take all measures to eliminate this barrier, and support children to fully express their perspectives and attitudes.

- It is necessary to ensure that all children have equal access to all information, both oral and in writing. Good translation is an essential prerequisite to ensure that all children, including those who do not speak the language of the majority, understand the consultation process and equally participate in discussions.
- It should be borne in mind that children can feel marginalised if the discussion is dominated by the language that they do not understand or if their language is not used equally.
- Interpreters play an important role in the consultation process with children. It should be borne in mind that the majority of children are not used to having to rely on translation, but also a large number of interpreters had no experience working with children. It is therefore essential that children establish good contact with the interpreter, to feel free to ask the interpreter to clarify the translation and the translator is ready to seek clarification if the child is not understood. Consecutive interpretation has the advantage over simultaneous as it allows dialogue between the interpreter and children.
- If children do not speak their mother tongue during consultations, it is necessary to take into account that often they will not be able to fully express themselves. Therefore, they should be given enough time and also opportunities for non-verbal ways of expression and support through the use of structuring techniques.
- It should be borne in mind that children who speak more than one language can be a great support in translating to their peers.

Children on the move can be **facing difficult life situations and/or traumatic experiences** while the consultation is taking place. It is important to ensure all prerequisites so that the consultation process itself does not put additional stress on children, but is instead a positive and empowering experience.

- Before children get involved in consultations, those who lead this process should be mindful of the life situation of each child. Data on the stage of the migration of the child, the circumstances under which he or she migrates, whether the child migrates accompanied by a parent/guardian or unaccompanied, the living conditions of the child, physical and psychological condition, if the

child was subjected to some form of violence, etc., all these data can be obtained from professionals who work directly with children. These data on children are essential to leaders in the consultation process to be able to anticipate which of the topics and situations may be particularly sensitive to children. On the other hand, the situation in which they are may indicate that the participation of the child in the consultation will not contribute to the child's well-being, and hence the child should not be included currently.

- Children should be the ones determining the extent to which they want to talk about his or her experience or a topic that is particularly sensitive. On the other hand, the consultation process should help children see their experience and reconstruct it from the perspective of own strengths to cope with difficult life situations.
- Projective techniques of consultation can help children to talk about sensitive issues.
- It is essential to build rapport between children and adults, as well as to provide support to children when they talk about sensitive issues. Consultations may stimulate emotional reactions of children and adults should be able to respond with empathy.
- It is necessary to bear in mind the requirement for the protection of the privacy of children, especially when it comes to children on the move who are in the process of seeking asylum or any other form of protection, or if disclosure of the identity could put them at risk in any way. It is essential that those conducting consultations know the situation of each child from this aspect as well.
- The consultation process should be an interesting and stimulating experience for children that can help them to become aware of their strengths and contribute to the process of recovery from traumatic experiences.

A large number of children on the move have been **exposed to situations of violations of their rights**, including the right to life and the best interest of the child. These children were often “interrogated” within procedures covering migrants, and their opinion was often disregarded when decisions concerning their lives were made.

- In the consultation process, it should be borne in mind that some children on the move may have doubts about whether their participation will have any impact, while others may have a strong motivation to share their perspective and point out the vulnerability of the rights of children on the move.

- It is important to talk openly with the children and show them the real extent of the impact that the consultation process may have on the situation of children, and ensure that the consultation process for them is an experience in which they are respected and listened to.

Migration experience usually **exposes children on the move to uncertainties about the future** that children deal with in different ways. They mainly set off with the hope of a better future, often leaving behind very adverse life circumstances, but also their home, community and loved ones. Depending on the stage of migration, these children can be found in the struggle for survival accompanies the search for the ultimate destination; they may face the uncertainties of their position in a new community, with unfulfilled dreams...

Migration experience has a great impact on the children - their attitude towards life, self and others. Children are changing in the process of migration. Their living conditions are extensively altered.

- Consultation process should take into account these changes and bear in mind the time dimension of experiences of children. The attempt in consultation with children is to "catch" key points in the life of children, particularly significant moments, processes and relations that can contribute to a fuller understanding of the child perspective.
- It can be significant and empowering for children to perceive their experience of migration in consultations as a process in which circumstances are changing, and perceive their power that have helped them to overcome the difficult moments.

Guidelines for developing objectives, topics and methodological framework of consultations with children on the move

When planning consultations with children, it is important that objectives, key topics and methodological framework are all aligned. These should also contribute to enforcement of ethical principles of meaningful participation of children, acknowledge the experience, interests, competencies and interests of children.

Objectives of consultations with children on the move

Objectives of consultation with children on the move may be related to viewing and understanding of child perspectives on:

- migration experience - in various stages of the process, a variety of situations involving children

migrants (travel, crossing borders, inclusion in the social welfare system ...)

- relevant phenomenon, problem or issue (e.g. on causes of migration of children, readmission process, child labour as a factor of migration, forced displacement ...)
- fulfilment and violation of the rights of children in the migration process (e.g. on the exercise of the rights of children in their original place of residence, in various stages of migration, upon arrival at the temporary destination; on exercising the right to protection from violence, the right to health care, education ...)
- programmes and services in which children are involved (e.g., the availability of services, quality of various aspects of the programme, proposals for their improvement ...)
- procedures, regulations, laws relating to children on the move (e.g. whether they are consistent with the rights of the child, whether their application can improve the situation of children on the move ...)
- on policy concerning children (e.g. on the priority issues, outlined action plans ...)

Consultations with children can be focused on one or more goals, whereby it is important that the various objectives are mutually complementary.

Thematic framework of consultations with children on the move

Thematic framework of consultation with children stems from the established goals of consultations. In the planning process of consultations, it is necessary to define a few key themes. Key topics need to be elaborated further to the level of questions that consultations should provide answers to. Children can significantly contribute to elaboration of topics, by pointing to its important aspects from their perspective that adults can overlook. Therefore, efforts should be made to involve children in this planning phase.

Example: If a key theme of consultations is the child perspective on migration, those questions might be related to how do children see the causes of migration; how do they migrate, with whom and under what circumstances; what are the key stages of the migration process that they recognise; what are the consequences of migration in their opinion...

Developing a methodological consultation framework

In developing the methodological framework of consultation with children, it is useful to start from the

key settings which will serve as future basis for active participation of children. These settings indicate the aspects that should be kept in mind when selecting consultation techniques and designing activities with children. Methodological assumptions were discussed in the second Chapter of this manual, and hence will not be repeated here.

Selection and combination of consultation techniques with children should ensure that their application provides as detailed answers as possible to questions that are the focus of the consultation, as well as to enable children to fully express their views and feel good at the same time.

What should be kept in mind is that techniques often do not entail a direct answer to the question, since children generally are unable to answer to questions directly. Therefore, the advantage is given to having projective and multisensory techniques, as well as structuring techniques, whereby their application “demands” an upgrade, or contextualisation, which is crucial to their success. The above-mentioned techniques should be adjusted to children and their experience. And also, it should not be forgotten that the answers to most questions are to be “assembled” from pieces obtained by using several selected techniques.

When choosing the technique, it is necessary to develop a brief guide to their use in the context of topics that are the focus of the consultation and the group of children who participate in it. This guide may be designed to include activities in which children participate. It should be noted that each technique is adapted to its application with a certain number of children (e.g., group interview is appropriate to a group of 6 to 8 children). Also, in the consultation process, sometimes not all the techniques would be applied with all groups of children or some will be modified depending on their specificity.

And finally, whenever possible, conditions should be provided that selected techniques are piloted with relevant groups of children. This will ensure that the techniques correspond to the children and are meaningful in terms of the goal of consultations.

Developing a framework scenario of consultative meetings with children

Consultations imply one, and usually several consultative meetings with the children. These meetings are organised through a series of activities that aim to provide not only collecting data through the use of selected techniques of consultation, but also to contribute to ensuring the prerequisites for the meaningful participation of children. It is necessary to develop a framework scenario of consultative meeting which includes an elaborate plan, flow and description of activities, indicating links between activities, as well as their usefulness. The form of consultative meetings with children often fits the form of a workshop.

A number of aspects to be taken into account when planning consultative meetings with children have already been discussed. These may be summarised as follows:

- Consultative meetings with children should include familiarisation activities and establishing trust, as well as activities aimed at building a positive atmosphere and “energy boost”
- It is important to allow time for dialogue with children about the goals and expectations of the consultation, as well as an agreement on the rules to be respected by both adults and children
- Consultative meetings, if necessary, should include activities through which children will be able to acquire the knowledge and skills they need for full participation in planned activities
- Central activities should be devoted to dialogue on key topics of consultation through the use of selected techniques
- As a part of the consultative meetings, activities should be planned to evaluate the process, and consultation about the results of the consultation, which will be presented by adults, and also feedback on the child participation

Guidelines for developing a strategy for the safety and protection of children

One of the key prerequisites to ensure the welfare of all children who participate in the consultation is to prevent that children are exposed to risks and to take all measures for their safety and protection. This should be kept in mind when planning a consultation with children.

Here are some guidelines that can be helpful in planning strategies for the safety and protection of children:

- Institutions/organisations conducting consultations with children should have adopted politics for the protection of children which are based on respect for the rights of the child, to be complied with by everyone involved in the consultation process
- It is necessary to identify potential risks to which children may be exposed and that can lead to violations of the rights of the child (e.g., the risk of invasion of privacy, abuse, violence, disrespect and inequality ...). Additional or specific risks to which children on the move may be exposed should also be kept in mind.
- All adults involved in the consultation process with children should be familiar with the issue of protection of children, their role and responsibilities

- Children should also be informed about protection issues and policy to protect children
- Designated adults that children can turn to in all situations and who will be responsible for the safety of children and support their needs
- It is important to establish work rules that would be respected by both children and adults, as well as a code of conduct for adults
- It is essential to build culture of openness that encourages an addressing all issues and an open dialogue on these issues, as well as the sense of responsibility among adults and value orientation which condemns any form of disrespect and an inappropriate behaviour towards children

Guidelines for organising consultations with children

The following section offers a series of guidelines that may be helpful in the process of organising consultations with children on the move, with a special focus on a few key issues.

Establishing a team

One of the first issues that arises is who should be included in the team that will lead the consultation process with the children at all stages - from the planning process, through organisation and actual consultations with children and reporting.

A few guidelines that can help in forming a team:

- It is necessary to have a person who will coordinate the consultation process in all its phases and report on the consultation
- Developing a thematic framework and methodology of consultation with the children should be done by an expert or a team of experts in child participation
- Someone should be responsible for the preparation of information materials, calling and informing children and their parents/guardians, as well as collecting consents and approvals for participation of children

- A person or a team who will organise consultative meetings with children (providing and preparing the premises and supplies for work ...)
- It is necessary to form a team that will conduct consultative meetings with children
- Consultation with children will usually necessitate involving persons who will assist the children so as to ensure their equal participation. They can be interpreters, people who know the children and whose presence will be a sort of support for children ...
- A person or persons for documenting the consultation process
- It is important to note that one person or a team can perform multiple tasks during the consultation process.

In summary, consultation process with children should include:

- *an expert team* comprising a consultation coordinator, expert(s) developing thematic framework and methodology of consultations, as well as a team of moderators in consultative meetings with children
- *associates to support the child participation* who contribute in informing children and adults about consultations, support the active participation of children during the consultative meetings and are responsible for documenting
- *organisational team* of associates who deal with logistic support in conducting consultation with children

Role of partner organisations

Consultations with children are often organised in partnership with various institutions and organisations, which significantly facilitates its organisation. When it comes to children on the move, those can be centres housing migrant children or other children on the move, day care centres where these children gather, organisations with programmes or services that included children on the move, NGOs providing assistance and protection to children on the move and their families, etc. It is essential for the consultation process that colleagues from partner organisations support the concept of child participation, understanding the importance of consultation with children on an issue and are willing to support the inclusion of children.

- Children are invited to participate in the consultations often through partner organisations or institutions that provide programmes or services that include children. If this is the case, it is necessary that associates with these organisations are informed and consulted about the principles, objectives, thematic framework and plan of consultations with children. It is also important to actively participate in the selection of children who will be consulted, including the provision of data on children who are relevant to the team in charge of planning and conducting consultations (e.g. age, immigrant status, life circumstances, etc.)
- During the process of informing children and their parents/guardians about consultation, the presence of associates from the partner organisations supporting consultations is important since children are familiar with them and trust them
- Availability of a person of trust, and if that child wants so, the person's presence during the consultative meetings can significantly contribute that the child feels safe

Inviting children and their consent to participate

Significant organisational, and programmatic question in the consultation process with children relates to the selection of children for participation. Previous sections have already discussed the need to be guided by the principle of relevance and equality in selection of children.

- In order to involve all relevant groups of children on the move in the consultation process, it will often be necessary to simultaneously organise consultative meetings with various subgroups of children. Criterion for grouping may vary (e.g. similar experience of migration, cultural affiliation, established relations of trust among the children ...). Children are often grouped according to their age (e.g. aged 7 to 10, 11 to 14, 15 to 18 years of age).
- When it comes to the size of the group of children who are invited to participate in the consultation process, it varies depending on the characteristics of the target (or relevant) group of children - their numbers and homogeneity, as well as availability. Generally, the attempt is to include "typical" representatives of the group, but also those with specific experience. It should also take into account of the balance of sexes, different ages, inclusion of marginalised groups, etc.
- One thing to be kept in mind when it comes to children on the move is that the aforementioned characteristics vary in this group, compared to the trends of migration in one area. This will be

significantly reflected when it comes to availability of children, including the number of children participating in consultations. It should also be noted that the available resources in the consultation process can affect the size of the group, as well as design methodology.

- What is important is that the established criteria for the selection of children are transparent and presented to everyone involved in the process.

Inviting and informing children

- Children can be invited to participate in consultations through an invitation letter that should contain all relevant information about the consultations that are written clearly and understandably. Invitation letter should be written in the native language of the children.
- The usual practice is to organise an informative meeting with the children. The advantage of this kind of information dissemination is that children have the opportunity to ask and receive information about everything that interests them about the consultation process, as well as to get acquainted with the team that will lead the consultations.
- It is important that children receive all relevant information in a timely manner (on the objectives and topics of consultation, the principles to be respected, as well as the plan of consultation) and plenty of time to think about whether they want to participate.
- Informing parents/guardians of children on the consultation process is equally important as informing children. In addition to the aforementioned relevant information, it is particularly important to inform them how is the respect for the rights of the child to be ensured, as well as the safety and protection of children in the consultation process. It is also necessary to leave room for their questions and dilemmas.

Consent of children to participate and consent of parents/guardians

- children who have decided to participate in the consultation process should give their consent in a form that is appropriate for them
- it is important that parents/guardians of these children give a written consent for their participation

Time organisation of the consultation process with children

Time organisation of consultations with children largely depends on the broader framework of consultations (e.g., project dynamics, available resources, etc.). In addition to the need to be realistic in relation to the existing framework, it is also important to plan enough time for all stages of the consultation process with children, which is a prerequisite for successfulness of consultations.

When it comes to the timing or time planning of consultative meetings with children, it is important that it be adapted to children and in line with their obligations. When it comes to children on the move, one should take into account the dynamics of migration and avoid periods when it is expected that children will leave the place of residence.

Duration of consultative meetings should also be adapted to children, their needs and daily activities. It largely depends on the planned activities and its dynamics, as well as the circumstances in which the meeting is organised

Facilities for consultative meetings with children

Facilities where consultative meetings are taking place can significantly contribute to the active participation of children. Some of the important aspects to be taken into account in the selection and organisation of facilities to house consultation with children are the following:

- availability and accessibility
- the size and flexibility
- light and temperature
- safety
- comfortable and cosy
- equipped

Supplies and equipment

Ensuring materials/supplies and equipment for the work is also one of the important items in organising

consultative meetings with the children. For the application of some of the consultation techniques, it will be required to prepare specific materials that may require additional time and resources.

Refreshment

It is important to provide refreshments for the children and serve it during a break or during work unless it interferes with the activity. Refreshments should take into account the needs and preferences of the children.

Accompanying activities

Although consultations with children are aimed towards a specific goal, these are also an opportunity for children to gather and spend time together. Therefore, in addition to central activities, accompanying activities should be organised for children whenever possible to enable them to socialise in an informal atmosphere and new venues. This can be especially important for children who live in a certain isolated or closed environment, which is often the case with children on the move.

Accompanying activities may include:

- various games and sports activities
- gathering over serving (e.g. lunch or cake)
- walk in the countryside or in the city
- visits to cultural and tourist attractions ...

These activities are adapted to the size and structure of the group, as well as the circumstances. One thing that needs to be kept in mind when organising the supporting activities that involve relocation from the premises where consultative meetings took place is the issue of security and the necessary logistical support.

Closing activities

Whenever possible, at the end of the consultation process with children, closing activities should be organised with the final aim to enable children to perceive the results of their work and thanked for their contribution.

These activities can be conceptualised as “small ceremonies” to present selected visual and written products of consultations, and distribute certificates of appreciation to children for their participation and contribution

to the consultation process. This can be very significant for children. Also, if they so wish and if possible, children should be given the opportunity to showcase their work and the process in which they participated to adults and peers who are close to them.

After completion of the consultation, children can take with them something to remember their participation in this process. Those could be messages sent by other participants, a piece of work done during the consultations, a token of appreciation, etc.

Guidelines for budget planning

When planning the budget for consultations with children, one should bear in mind some of the general categories of expenses:

- Fees for a team that is engaged (e.g. coordinator, senior associates, moderators of consultative meetings with children ...)
- Material costs (printing, material to work with children, communication costs ...)
- Costs for renting or furnishing
- The cost of refreshments for participants
- Cost translation and interpretation
- Costs of documents (audio record and transcription, video record ...)
- Travel costs (for expert associates and consultation moderators, children ...)
- Miscellaneous

Guidelines for facilitating consultative meetings with the children

Moderators of consultative meetings play a key role in achieving the preconditions for dialogue with children and understanding their perspective. With their expertise, personal characteristics, and building partnerships with children contribute to their participation to be ethical and meaningful.

The moderator who tries to build partnerships with children:

Respects every child as a person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> respects the individuality of the child <input type="checkbox"/> takes into account the needs of the child <input type="checkbox"/> interested in what happens to the child <input type="checkbox"/> respects the abilities and strengths of the child <input type="checkbox"/> takes into account the vulnerability of the child <input type="checkbox"/> follows and respects the interests of the child <input type="checkbox"/> respects the privacy of the child
Respects every child and the opinion of every child	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> recognizes the child as an equal interlocutor <input type="checkbox"/> leaves time for the child <input type="checkbox"/> ready to listen and tries to understand, knows how to put himself or herself in the position of the child <input type="checkbox"/> respects the competence of the child (with support if needed), makes the choice, gives children the opportunities to make choices and respects their choice <input type="checkbox"/> does not condemn the child because of attitude or doings
Actively participates in a dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> actively listens, asks questions, reacts to what the children are saying, shows understanding <input type="checkbox"/> negotiates and agrees with children <input type="checkbox"/> checks with children his or her understanding of their perspective <input type="checkbox"/> nurtures open communication - open and honest with children <input type="checkbox"/> aware that there are no answers to all the questions and is ready to say so
Creates opportunities to overcome the potentially unequal position of children and adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> has confidence in the ability of children <input type="checkbox"/> speaks a language that is understandable to children <input type="checkbox"/> negotiates with the children about activities <input type="checkbox"/> allows room for children to direct discussion and individual activities <input type="checkbox"/> accepts whatever happens as relevant <input type="checkbox"/> intervenes as little as possible <input type="checkbox"/> encourages children to take responsibility for their participation and sets the limits of their participation
Gives support and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> encourages children to dialogue and helps them develop their ideas, recognise the importance of their own perspective, and to perceive their strengths and abilities <input type="checkbox"/> acknowledges what children are saying and gives them support <input type="checkbox"/> respects the opinions and suggestions of children and gives feedback on how they influenced the decision <input type="checkbox"/> gives feedback on involvement of children in different ways (individually or in groups, formally or informally)
Builds a conducive atmosphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> creates a pleasant atmosphere and a safe environment <input type="checkbox"/> introduces interesting activities and ways of work <input type="checkbox"/> motivates participation <input type="checkbox"/> encourages mutual respect <input type="checkbox"/> authentic, straightforward, brings in energy, has a sense of humour

The following are some of the important elements of effective conduct of consultative meetings with the children:

- expertise, experience and preparedness of the moderator
- well-chosen topics and techniques of consultation with children
- established agreement on work rules
- a good start of the meeting is significant
- established agreement on rules
- interactive guidance
- use of questions and suggestions, seeking approval
- flexibility and adaptability
- creativity and improvisation
- settling disagreements and conflicts

Interpreters, documenters and other assistants

As already noted, good translation is essential for the participation of children who do not speak the language of the majority.

A good interpreter:

- shows respect for children
- interprets exactly what the children are saying
- checks with the child if not sure that he or she understood well
- conveys to the child not only what was said, but also the manner in which it was said (with emphasis, conveying mood, tone ...)

It is necessary to provide a sufficient number of translators. There is a recommendation that one interpreter or a pair of interpreters taking turns works with 6 to 8 children.

It should also be borne in mind that children prefer to work together with the same interpreters, with whom they can establish a relation of great understanding.

Documenters

Sometimes, consultations with children will include associates who will document the process in different ways, as well as statements or “products” made by children during consultations. It is important that children are aware of the role of documenters and to be explained the ways in which documenting will take place (recording or noting statements of children, photographing, video recording...). It is essential that recording does not disturb the consultation process and that it takes place in accordance with the policy of ensuring privacy of children.

Assistants

It will happen during consultations that assistants, if children so desire, include people that children trust and whose presence they see as a support to their participation. In this case, it is crucial to agree on rules that imply that assistants primarily have the role of observers and will join in the activities and dialogue only if invited by moderators or children. This will mainly occur in situations where children need their help with practical activities in which they participate, or when a child needs help for example to recall an event, or support to express or formulate a thought, etc.

Guidelines for the evaluation of consultation with children

As already mentioned, evaluation should be an integral part of the process of the consultations with children. In planning, the evaluation should be based on established goals and expectations of children that should be made clear at the beginning of the process.

In the evaluation process, the achievements should be considered from several aspects:

- personal benefit for the child (experiences, knowledge and skills, changing perspectives, empowerment of children ...)

- group outcomes (interaction and exchange with peers and adults, forming relations and networks...)
- understanding of the child perspective (whether to gain insight into child perspective on relevant issues, whether children pointed to certain aspects of problems and priorities, whether they agree with formulated products of consultations ...)
- consultation process (planning, developed methodologies, techniques applied, conducting consultative meetings ...)
- impact (how and in what sense will the experience and suggestions of children have an impact, how will it contribute to decision-making, influence the attitudes of adults ...).

CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN ON THE MOVE – ONE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The following Chapter will present the methodological approach that has been developed for the purposes of consultations with children on the move in the framework of the project SCORE – Setting an Agenda for Child Oriented Social Reform as discussed at the beginning of this publication⁹.

One of the starting points of this project was child rights-based approach, according to which the system of social protection of children is founded on respect for the rights of the child, which ensures that relevant policies and practices are “tailored for our children”. Accordingly, in all stages of the project, it was necessary to ensure the inclusion of the child perspective in dialogue about the current system of protection, its positive aspects and disadvantages, as well as guidelines for improving the system.

As a first step in the project, aimed to provide the basis for its subsequent phases, a comprehensive study was conducted in order to: 1) identify and contextualise the complex phenomenon of children on the move; 2) identify and analyse the existing policies and practices in the field of protection and support for children on the move; 3) give recommendations to improve the system of social protection of this group of children.

In order to review and understand the child perspective on these issues, consultations were conducted covering children from the most frequent categories of children on the move in Serbia.

The following sections will describe the methodology that was used in the process of consultation with children in greater detail.

Objectives and topics in consultations with children on the move

The first step in planning consultations with the children was to define the objectives and key topics. In accordance with the objectives of the study involving consultations, the objectives of such consultation with children were related to the review and understanding of child perspectives on:

- migration process and experiences of children on the move
- exercising the rights of the child in the process of migration
- existing programmes of support and protection of children on the move and their quality
- recommendations for improving the system of protection of children on the move

⁹ This chapter is written in cooperation with Nina Stamenković who was co-facilitator and documenter of consultations with children within mentioned project.

In addition to the objectives, the aim of consultations was set in relation to children - their empowerment to view their experiences and life situations from the perspective of their own strengths and support mechanisms to overcome adversity faced in the process of migration.

Consultation with children is supposed to create room for dialogue, exchange of experiences, views and ideas of children on the following topics and issues:

Key topics	Relevant issues
The process of migration from the child perspective and experiences of children on the move	<p>What are the views of children on the move on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the causes of migration and which are the most common causes why they (and their families) leave the place of residence - how does the process of migration go - mode of travel, choice of final destination - the outcome of migration – what it can be, what is it dependant on ... - what are the aggravating and alleviating circumstances in the process of migration - what are the dangers the children face in the process of migration - their experience of migration and the impact that the experience of migration can have on children
The rights of the child in the context of migration	<p>What is the assessment of children on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attainment, that is, violation of their rights in the process of migration - threats to the right to life, survival and development, non-discrimination, the best interests of the child and participation in decisions that affect them - if and in what forms of violence were they subjected to in the process of migration - if they have the necessary health and social protection (secured accommodation and meals, available social services ...) - fulfilment of the right to education and quality leisure time

<p>Protection of children on the move</p>	<p>What are the views of children on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the role of individual systems and services of child protection, as well as relevant professionals, in relation to children on the move - a system available to them during the process of migration - with a special focus on services within the local centres for alternative accommodation of children (and their families), institutions of social and health care, educational institutions, non-governmental organisations ...
<p>Recommendations for improving the system of protection of children on the move</p>	<p>What are the views of children on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - how to improve the existing services and the work of professionals so as to ensure the exercise of the rights of the child

Baselines in developing the methodology

An important aspect in planning consultations with children on the move was to define the foundations and principles on which to base the methodological approach.

Baselines in developing the methodology include:

- ensuring ethical and meaningful participation of children in all stages of the process
- empowering children as opposed to their potential re-traumatisation
- creating a process “tailored for children”
- contextualising migration experiences in space (“there” and “here”) and time (inclusion of dimensions of past, present and future)
- dialogue as a basic methodological principle - understood as a process based on listening to and understanding of children through the joint construction of meaning
- the use of a mosaic of consultative techniques

In the process of creating a methodology, a group of children on the move was consulted. Discussion with children included issues such as whether it is important that their experiences in the process of migration are “heard” and why, what are the issues that they deem relevant for the topics that are the focus of the consultation process, what are the experiences and situations that they find it hard to speak about, whether

and in what way do they think should these “serious” topics be addressed, how can consultations for children be a positive and empowering experience for children ...

The children stressed that it is important for them to have the opportunity to talk about what happens to them during the process of migration, emphasising that it is very important to them that those whom they talk to respect and understand children, and also that they are prepared to act in order to improve the position of children on the move.

Consultations have also indicated that the movement for many children is a long-term condition accompanied by a series of traumatic experiences. One common implication of such circumstances is the inability of children to comprehend each phase of the migration, as well as spatial and temporal dimensions of individual experiences. Children sometimes do not have a clear idea of how much time they had spent on the way, or have no perception of the entire journey. They are mainly focused on “here and now” or “there” where they want to arrive. That is why one of the assumptions was that the “space” where consultations with children take place should provide them with support in the reconstruction of their own experiences of migration, by being built around recognisable situations and circumstances of movement, and be flexible enough to incorporate individual experiences and experiences of children who participate in this process.

“Map of children on the move”

From the intricate maze of requirement that are set as a starting point in creating a methodology of consultation with children on the move, the idea emerged of a symbolic “road map” of children on the move, which involves the use of a mosaic of consultative techniques within meaningfully related activities. The Map, as an interactive space, structures the dialogue with children and allows the integration of their experiences and perspectives. It becomes a space that “remembers” and integrates the experiences of every child, as well as certain groups of children, pointing out both to the aspects of experience that are common to their children on the move.

Initial assumptions were that the “Map”:

- its design and interactivity, as well as topics and issues that drive the map, may be an incentive for active participation of children

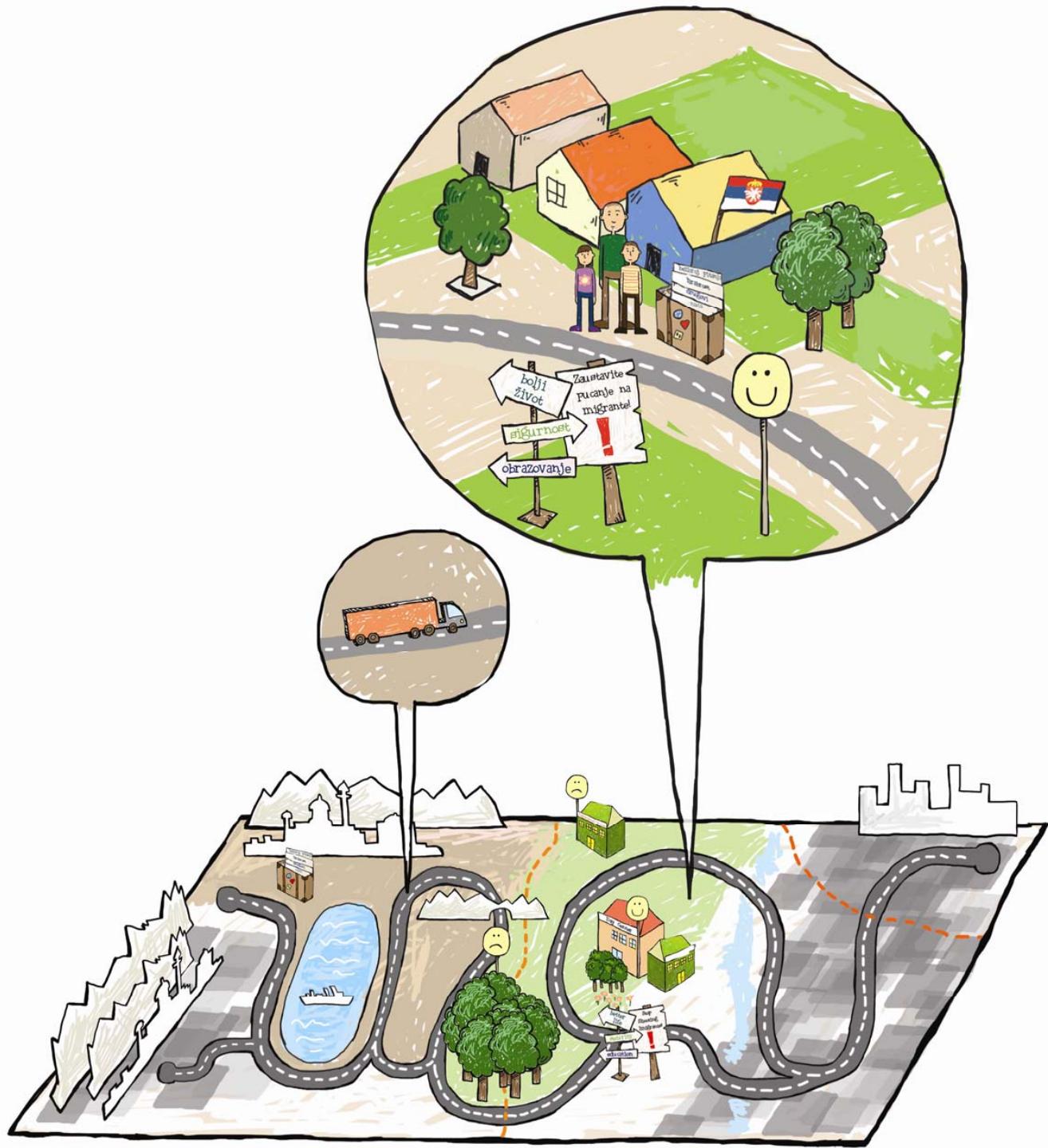
- may open space for creative engagement of children which is supported by a range of activities through which they intervene on the map by making it a reflection of their own experience
- leaves space for children to “adjust” their participation, choosing when and how to take part by sharing their own experiences and perspectives
- may encourage children to exchange their views and seek common experiences of migration, as well as those that are different, revealing the factors that contribute to this
- allows the contextualisation of migration experience in space and time; its perception and understanding within the limits of own life, but also in the broader context of migration
- contributes to building an active attitude towards the experience of migration, enables its restructuring in the direction of identifying own strengths and active position

Framework of the Map

The Map of children on the move is designed as a “space” where consultations take place, that is, the dialogue and exchange of experiences related to the process of migration. All activities are related to this space and rely on some of the elements of the map.

The map is designed as three-dimensional, so that it symbolically represents the geographic area within which children migrate. It consists of three parts that bind the three key points in the process of migration. These are the point where the journey begins, the point of the current place of residence and the point which marks the final (or desired) destination.

In our case, the first part of the map represented the countries of origin and transit that children traveled through as asylum seekers residing in Serbia (e.g. Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Greece and Macedonia). The second part of the map shows Serbia and the third part of the country is the desired final destination (mostly Western and Northern Europe). In consultations, it is not necessary to use the map in its entirety. With children who are internal migrants, only the central part of the map that refers to Serbia was used, while consultations with the children in the readmission process took place within the second and third part of the map.



Illustrations by Ana Petrović based on the map model developed by NGO PROCES Educational Architecture

Although the “space” of the map is semi-structured, it includes individual segments that clearly associate to a particular country, stages or circumstances of the journey. Thus, the map shows roads, relief (mountains, seas, deserts), as well as the border between the states. Children have a set of elements at their disposal to intervene within this space.

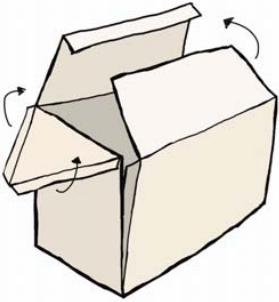
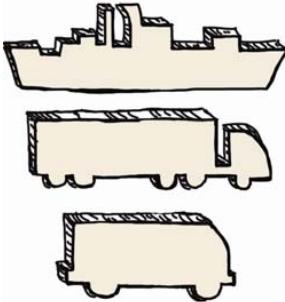
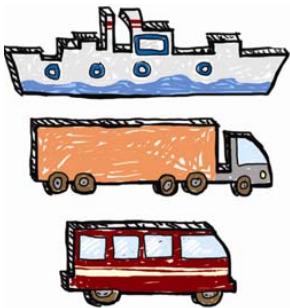
Elements of the Map

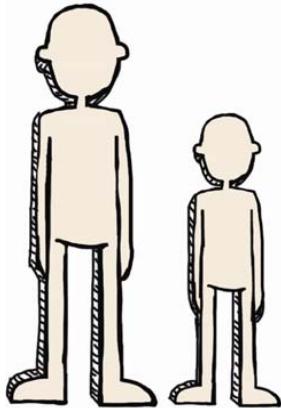
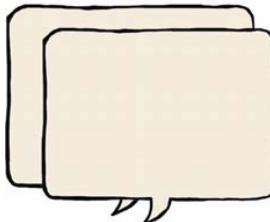
Children intervene on the map adapting it to their experiences by using different elements. Map adjustment or customising takes place over several consultative meetings, within a range of activities where children have a set of different elements at their disposal.

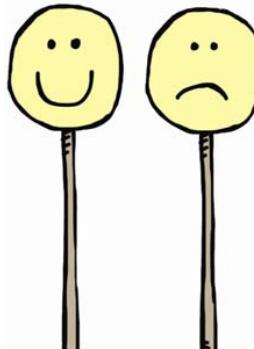
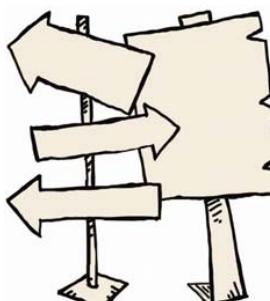
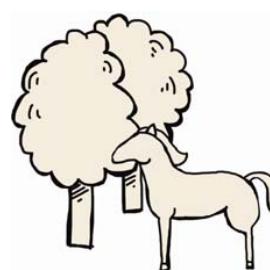
Common features of these elements are:

- *associativity* - all elements are easily correlated with the experience of migration and help children to describe in detail their experience and express their views
- *flexibility* - the same elements within different activities can symbolise different concepts (e.g. model of a house set close to the border can be a symbol of the border police, while in the area of final destination, it may represent a new home for the child and his or her family)
- *interactivity* - each element leaves room for interventions by children; children can combine them, make additional drawings, dye, or write messages on them ...
- *mobility* - most of the elements are not fixed on the map, but children can place these on different parts of the map and move it within certain activities

The table shows graphic representations of different Map elements:

Map elements	Possible meanings and ways to use Map elements	Map elements after the intervention
	<p>House models that may symbolise different housing, institutions or organisations, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - House where the child lived in the country of origin or a house that he/she imagines to live in in the desired destination country; detention centre for asylum seekers... - Centre for social welfare, non-governmental organisation - Outpatient clinic, school, deportation station, library <p>Children place models in different parts of the Map depending on what they wish them to represent.</p>	
	<p>Symbols of different means of transportation: bus, truck, ship, car, airplane..., used by children to show the means of transport they used in different stages of their migration...</p>	

Map elements	Possible meanings and ways to use Map elements	Map elements after the intervention
	<p>Figures of children on the Map may represent children on the move, their siblings or peers who accompanied them in various stages of their migration.</p> <p>Adult figures may symbolize numerous adults that children come into contact with: parents and other caretakers, various professionals: social workers or pedagogues from the detention centre for asylum seekers, policemen...</p>	
	<p>Thought clouds may be used to write down thoughts, feelings or reactions of children and adults shown on the Map, to send messages or clarify what individual elements represent on the Map.</p>	

Map elements	Possible meanings and ways to use Map elements	Map elements after the intervention
	<p>Emoticons are used to mark places and situations that children relate with positive or negative experiences or perceptions. Children may place them in certain places on the Map or use them to tag specific objects.</p> <p>For example, the centre for asylum seekers and non-governmental organisation may be tagged as places connected with positive experiences, while borders, deportation stations, forests children passed along the way, etc. may be tagged as places of negative experiences.</p>	
	<p>May be placed in different parts of the Map, or together with certain elements. Children use them to write down important messages, warn of dangers along their journey, state reasons for leaving certain countries or what they expect to find in their final destination countries...</p>	
	<p>May be placed in different parts of the Map or with specific objects so they more closely represent the children's experiences.</p>	

Map elements	Possible meanings and ways to use Map elements	Map elements after the intervention
	<p>Flags of the countries of origin of the children taking part in consultations, countries they travel through and their desired destination countries may be placed in different parts of the Map to mark the 'space' of these countries. They may be attached to specific objects to indicate that the child's experience is related to their stay in a particular country.</p>	
	<p>Suitcases symbolically represent things children take with them when they leave their original place of residence (from material through to immaterial things, memories, feelings, thoughts...), what they gain during the migration process and what they 'carry into' their future lives.</p> <p>Children write or draw the contents of their suitcases on cards they insert in the suitcases.</p>	
	<p>The familiar form of a picture postcard gives children an opportunity to draw or write about their journey and their stay at a certain place. The postcard may be addressed to different persons – those close to them in a previous place of residence, those they've yet to meet...</p>	

Stages of work on the Map and relevant activities

The following section outlines the stages of work on the Map and the relevant activities within the process of consultation with children. Phases and activities applied in consultations are mentioned here, while it should be born in mind that they can change and adapt to the specific conditions of work and a group of children.

These phases are taking place within several consultative meetings. Some of them include a number of activities. Activities mainly include a combination of practical work on the Map through the use of various consultation techniques and dialogue on issues that have been raised. Most of the stages take place in small, pre-formed groups of children, while in some cases these can be conducted with only one child. It should also be noted that some of the intervention of a group of children on the Map can be used as a discussion starter with subsequent groups.

In practice, the aforementioned stages of work on the Map are always preceded by activities aimed at mutual understanding of the participants and moderators of the consultative meeting, a dialogue on the objectives and expectations of consultation and agreement on work rules. Time in-between the above phases or activities within the individual phases can include activities aimed at building a positive atmosphere and “energy boosts”, as well as activities that will allow relaxation and a break from discussing the complex issues raised during the consultations.

Phase 1. – Map as an experiential space for each child

The first phase is focused on the observation of the child perspective on the process and the experience of migration.

Suggestion and description of relevant activities:

- **Introducing the Map and its elements to children**

The moderator introduces children to the Map as a symbolic space that needs to showcase their entire movement and experience during migration. The moderator explains that, among other things, one part of the Map should represent a country or place from which the children left,

the second place is the place of their current residence, while the third one is the final or desired destination. The moderator starts a conversation with the children about whether some of the segments of the Map are associated to specific countries or places during the journey and where would they place these three key “points” on the Map. Based on the proposal of children and the activities that follow, the moderator suggests adopting certain “spatial division” on the Map.

Once everyone agree on the proposed structure, the moderator introduces children to the basic elements of the Map, shows each of the elements and discusses with the children the possible meanings of these elements.

- **Children “build” their way on the Map**
- 1) Every child first chooses how and which items to use on the Map to show important spots on the Map as a part of the key points of their journey, then they make these structures by using a variety of elements and materials that are available to the child.

For example, children could make:

- their old house and other important places in their original place of residence: school, park ...
- their current “home” and the environment in which it is located, a day centre run by an NGO where the child spends a lot of time
- place of their desired destination - the house and the environment in which they want to live, the school they would like to go to ...

In work, children place structures that they have made on certain parts of the Map.

Practical notes:

- If there is less time foreseen for this activity, children can make only one structure or item that for them symbolises the place which they see as one of the most important.
- Also, through discussions within a small group, children can single out several important structures, and in consultation with the moderator, decide who of them will make the object.
- Depending on the course of the next activity, the children can go back later and make some structures if they wish.

2) Every child shows on the Map some circumstances that had marked his or her journey. Children, for example:

- mark the countries or places through which they travelled
- place the means of transport used in their travel
- place figurines of important people with whom they travelled or had encountered during travel or stay in certain countries/places

• **Proposed questions to start the dialogue based on:**

- Why are some children leaving their homes? Why are they trying to go to another country / city?
- How are the children who migrate travelling? How do they choose where to go? What does that depend on?
- Who are the children travelling with? Who are the people they meet along the way?
- What is important to them during the travel?

If children want to talk about their personal experiences and specific situations during the migration process, and supportive atmosphere is established within the group, the dialogue on personal issues can be continued:

- Why are you going on this trip? Who decided about that? Whether and to what extent can children influence the decision? What do you think about the decision to leave your place of residence?
- In what way did you travel? With whom? Have any of people important to you remained behind?
- Which countries / places have you previously lived in? For how long? How was it there for you?
- How and why did you come here? How do you find it here?
- Would you like to stay here? Where would you like to go and why there?

Elements used: toy houses, figurines of people, trees and animals, means of transport, countries' flags

Supplies needed: pencils, decorative paper, cardboard, scissors, glue

The second phase - Map as a common space of migration experience

The second phase is still focused on the observation of a child's perspective on the process of migration and experiences of children, with particular focus on the risks and dangers faced by the children, as well as protection and support they need.

The proposal and description of relevant activities:

- **Journey through the map**

- 1) Moderator encourages the children to use the elements set on the map in trying to reconstruct the process of migration. He sets the figure that symbolizes the child at the starting point. While directing the telling of the "story" about the journey, the moderator relies on the findings that were obtained during the previous activity and encourages children to actively participate, involving various perspectives.

Example:

Moderator sets the figurine of a child at the "starting position". He begins the story of the journey. For example: *All children who go on this type of a trip have their own reasons for that. Some children are leaving Somalia because... Moderator invites the children to state the reasons. The dialogue can further continue: Some children left Afghanistan because they cannot go to school there... What other countries do children come from? From Syria? Why? They all travel in different ways: some children travel by trucks, some by boats, some of them mostly walk... Let's put it all on the Map... Some children travel with their families, some travel alone, with their peers. Let's put them on the Map too. All children reach a certain border at a certain point. And how do they normally cross the border? Some cross by hiding, the others have the documents. Those who hide themselves go through the woods, so we need to find the woods near the border. Who checks the documents at the border? Let's place a policeman here. Can someone show what that looks like? What happens when they cross the border? Many of the children stay in Serbia during the trip, they submit the asylum applications here. Figurines are placed in the area of the Map representing Serbia. Where did you stay when you came to Serbia? What is provided for the children at the Asylum Centre? Let's place that on the Map. Some children have already left. What do you think, where did they go? Some are still here, but they want to go to Sweden. Or Germany. Let's mark those places where the children want to go.*

- 2) If some of the children want to tell the story of their journey by using parts of the Map, the Moderator can support the children in telling of the story by asking them different questions.

- **Additional questions to launch the dialogue:**

- What's the journey like?
- What impression did the children have of certain phases of the travel / countries they passed through?
- How do children (and their families) cross the borders? What dangers do they face when they cross the border without documents?
- What bad things vs. good or positive things can happen to them along the way?
- How do those children find it in Serbia? What positive and what negative impressions do they connect to their stay in Serbia?

- **Locations of positive and negative experiences**

Moderator invites the children to think about the feelings that accompany such a journey: what situations they feel safe and happy in, when do they feel sad, scared, anxious, etc. Moderator announces to the children that during the following activity they will mark on the Map the locations of the positive and negative experiences of children who are travelling, explaining that they can relate to certain situations, but also to meeting people who have had influence on their experience.

At the beginning of the activity, the Moderator places several emoticons on the Map, based on the data from previous activities. Each child then receives a number of positive and negative emoticons to place on the Map, starting from your own experiences or the experiences of their peers.

Example:

Emoticon ☺ can be placed close to the border because “That's where you can get caught by the police, so the children are afraid”; “They fired at us at the border and some of us were injured”.

😊 emoticon be placed on the box that represents a day centre for street children, where they can stay.

Both emoticons, 😊 😢, can be placed on the box marking the asylum centre, because “Here children can be happy because they have food and shelter, but also sad because they have not yet arrived to the place they’re going to.”

The children then explain why they placed emoticons on certain parts of the Map. Other children, who have had similar experiences, have the opportunity to add their emoticons, with an explanation. If there are children who have had a different experience, they can add different emoticons.

Practical note:

It is good that there are additional emoticons that children can subsequently take and place on the Map, if they remember something later on. Also, children should be reminded that they can generally talk about certain places and situations faced by children on the move, and only if they wish they can directly talk about their personal experiences.

- **Additional questions to launch the dialogue:**

- What is the most difficult thing for children during this journey?
- What are they most afraid of during the journey?
- What worries them?
- How do they deal with such situations?
- Who is their biggest support?
- When do they feel safe?
- In which situations are they happy? When do they have fun?

Elements used: emoticons, elements previously placed on the map

The third phase - On circumstances of movement and rights of children on the move

The third phase is focused on how children assess the fulfilment of their rights in the process of migration

The proposal and description of relevant activities:

- **On risks and dangers**

Every child gets the signpost where they should write or draw one of the dangers the children on the move face during the process of migration. The Moderator helps the children to choose the danger they will present, reminding them of earlier discussions and places marked by negative emoticons. When finished, children present their signposts to the group and set them in specific places on the Map. The Moderator directs the discussion on the dangers.

The questions to launch the dialogue based on:

- What are the dangers faced by the children during the journey?
- Can they avoid them and how?
- Who can help them in this and how?
- What can children do to avoid the danger?
- Do they have any experiences to share with the others?

- **On the rights of children on the move**

In the following discussion the Moderator seeks to encourage children to identify examples of violations of the rights of children on the move. Children receive additional signposts that they can present in the already established way when, during the discussion, they recognize examples of violations of children rights. They can indicate on the signpost which particular right of theirs has been violated, but also the specific situations and the circumstances in which certain rights are violated.

Example: *On some borders, children are being shot at! Your right to life can be threatened while crossing the border! Children of migrants are often unable to go to school!*

Moderator relies on previously presented experiences of the rights' violations, citing them as examples and suggesting their presentation on the signposts.

It should be borne in mind that a number of children have some knowledge of their rights, which can be a significant support to the discussion. It is also important that the Moderator, during the discussion, informs the children in detail about the children's rights and initiates the dialogue with the children about their understanding of some of their rights.

The questions to launch the dialogue based on:

- Can some circumstances of the journey be life-threatening for the children?
- Do children on the move have encouraging conditions for development?
- Whether and in what sense the life of children on the move is different from the lives of other children?
- Can the children exercise their right to health care during the journey and upon arrival to the temporary place of residence?
- Do children in the process of migration exercise their right to education?
- Do the children have the opportunity to play and socialize with their peers?
- Do the children exercise the right to express opinions in the decision-making processes related to their lives?

Elements used: signposts, comment bubbles, elements previously placed on the Map

Supplies: markers

The fourth phase - Dialogue on the support and protection of children on the move

The fourth phase has to do with how the children see the role of the individual systems and services of child care and how they assess the quality of services and programs available to them.

The proposal and description of relevant activities:

- **Mapping of the support**

Moderator of the group opens the discussion about who protects the children on the move and supports them along the way, focusing on identifying the services that are available to these children.

He encourages the conversation with children by mentioning concrete examples of violations of the rights, specifying various dangers and situations which were discussed, stresses the need for special protection of children on the move. During the discussion, the children place on the Map the objects that represent institutions of child care with which they had contact during the process of migration, as well as figurines of people as representatives of these systems.

Example: Police building, safe houses, accommodation centre for asylum seekers, ambulance, etc. or police officers, social workers, doctors, representatives of non-governmental organisations ...

Moderator invites children to describe these encounters and, by using the figurines that are available to them, "play" or depict some of the situations that have occurred between the children and the representatives of the system.

The questions to launch the dialogue based on:

- Who helps the children on the go during their journey?
- What is the role of the police in relation to children on the move? Do the police protect children who migrate?
- What is the role of the Centre for Social Work? Do social workers help children on the move, and in what way?
- Can children on the move always get help from the doctors? What experience do children have with the health care services?
- How do children describe various accommodation centres for asylum seekers? And employees of these centres? How do children spend their time in the centres?
- Do children on the move have contact with any organizations along the way? Which ones? When and where? Do these organizations help them and how?

Note: If this is of importance for the process of consultation, specific activities can be dedicated to a more detailed discussion of individual protection systems and services.

For example: Discussion about the accommodation centre for asylum seekers where the children who participated in these consultations stayed at, along with making postcards.

- **Children's recommendations**

- 1) Following the previous discussions, the Moderator initiates a dialogue on improving the existing systems of protection and the role of their representatives in relation to the children on the move.

Children place their recommendations for the improvement of individual systems next to the certain elements on the Map.

For example:

Sign post near the border: Children suffer when illegally crossing certain borders because the police shoot at them.

Comment bubble 1: Shooting at children should be prohibited.

Comment bubble 2: Children on the move need to be informed of the possible dangers during the journey.

- 2) Depending on where they meet with representatives of the different systems, children place the figurines in a designated area on the Map. For example, a figurine of an adult person near the centre for social work represents a social worker. Moderator begins the discussion with children of what the adults who work with children are supposed to be like.

The questions to launch the dialogue based on:

- How different institutions and their representatives can make travel safer and easier for the children?
- How can they prevent violence against children on the move? How can they protect children from various forms of abuse during the travel?
- What do children think the professionals who work with children on the move are supposed to be like: police, social workers, doctors, teachers?

Elements used: figurines of people, comment bubbles and elements previously placed on the Map

Supplies: markers

The fifth phase - How children see their own experience of migrations

The fifth phase is focused on how children see their experience of migrations and the impact it has on their lives, with a special focus on the strengths and abilities of children to cope with difficult situations they face in the process of migrations.

The proposal and description of relevant activities:

- **Postcard from the journey**

Remembering different phases of the journey, children choose “the location” from which they will send a postcard to a person who is important to them, but is not with them. Children draw on one side of the postcard, and write text on the other.

When all the children make their cards, Moderator starts the conversation about who their cards are made for and what are the messages to the people who mean something to them, which location they decided to send the postcard from and why.

This may be a good time to raise the issue with the children on how they see their full experience of migrations and how it affected them and their lives.

- **What do take with me from this journey**

Reflecting on all three points of the journey (past, present and future) children draw or write on their cards what they brought with them when they left their place of residence and what they are “taking” from this journey. It can be both material and non-material things such as memories, friendships, new habits, new views of themselves and the world, etc.

Children put the cards in the “suitcases” and place those on the appropriate part of the Map.

Example:

What can be packed in the suitcases - *The memory of the old house in Somalia, Recollection of a more normal life that I had Norway, Friends that I met during the journey, Innumerable questions, Uncertainty, Hope for a better life, Becoming more mature and brave, Becoming a better person*

Moderator starts the discussion to sum up the experiences of children, with special emphasis on the strengths and capacities of children to cope with the difficulties experienced during the process of migrations.

- **The questions to launch the dialogue based on:**
 - With what thoughts, feelings, hopes and fears do children embark on the journey?
 - What are the memories the children want to preserve from their original place of residence?
 - Does the experience of migrations affect the children? Do they change during the journey?
 - What can children “get” from the experience of migrations?
 - In which situations can children be proud of themselves during such a journey?

Elements used: postcards, suitcases with the cards, elements previously placed on the Map

Supplies: markers

Reflection on the application of the methodology

Planning and organising consultations

- The practice has shown that the preparatory activities in order to gain insight into the life stories of children on the move by researching literature , but primarily through discussions with professionals who have been in direct contact with them, as well as informal meetings and conversations with children, were indeed of essential importance in the planning process. They have served as inspiration to create the Map of children on the move, determining its “key” points and elements. On the other hand, consultation with the children in the process of developing a methodology enabled the consideration of child perspective on issues that are relevant, and how to determine the principles of “boundaries” of dialogue in the consultation process.
- An important aspect of preparation of consultations also involved negotiations with a number of professionals who are in direct contact with the children on the move, who took the position that consultations inevitably expose children to re- traumatisation. This debate has shown how

important it is to explicitly define the baseline and ethical principles of consultations with children, as well as procedures for the safety and protection of children. Further, an agreement was reached that the consultations should not include children who are in the condition of acute stress, and that the process itself should be conceived and run so that it offers support to children in terms of strengthening the power to control the process of their participation. More generally, the debate stressed the interdependence of methodological and ethical questions that should always be kept in mind when it comes to consultation with children.

- Parents or guardians of children on the move, especially the children of asylum seekers, have largely been interested in detailed information about the consultation process, in particular regarding the modes and procedures to protect the privacy of children. In addition to information in writing provided to parents/guardians in their own language, a significant opportunity for the exchange of information and clarification of the dilemma was given in a meeting that was held with them.
- In preparation of a schedule of consultations with children, it is important that the time between the two consultative meetings is not too long (preferably about a week). Furthermore, there should be some room left for organising additional meetings with children, if necessary. Also, it may be a good strategy to invite a somewhat greater number of children than originally planned, since it happened in practice that children leave or do not appear at the meeting for various reasons.
- When it comes to forming smaller groups of children to participate in consultative meetings, significant contributions has been made by professionals who know the children, pointing to the importance of considering the dynamics of already established relations among children. Groups were formed in such a way that children will be supportive to each other. The practice has shown that children would feel the most comfortable in a familiar group of peers, as well as those with similar experiences. Although mindful of the fact that groups are of approximate ages, age was not the most important criterion for the formation of the group. Far more important criteria included previous acquaintance and familiarity of children, language and cultural background, as well as gender. It also became evident that it should be avoided to have children in some sort of conflict gathered in the same group. Consultations included 24 children of asylum seekers, in four sub-groups, 2 groups (a total of 12 children) from the readmission process, and the two groups (a total of 6 children) of internal migrants.
- It should be noted that due to a series of circumstances, consultations with two girls who are victims

of human trafficking took place individually, which proved to be a good approach.

- In our case, the time that led consultations with children consisted of a lead moderator and his assistant, as well as a documenter. Where appropriate, support was provided by interpreters, as well as a representative of the partner organisation that works directly with children and already has rapport built with children. In practice, this structure proved to be a good solution.
- The presence of a person who is in direct contact with children and already has a rapport built with them was a true incentive, particularly in those first meetings, until children had built a closer relation with the consultation moderators. Later, the presence of these persons was not necessary, but s in agreement with the moderators, the person remained close by and accessible to children.
- It is especially important that adults who lead consultations are well trained and prepared to work with children on the move. Relevant knowledge and experience in the application of participatory techniques, value orientation that supports “listening” to the children, as well as mutual support of team members, including supervision, if necessary, are all essential. Meetings of the team after consultative meetings with the children where they exchanged experiences, raised dilemmas and reviewed procedures, opened the space for mutual support and were an important part of the process.

Developing the “Map of children on the move”

- In design and preparation of the *Map of children on the move* based on the defined methodological principles, the dialogue and cooperation with a team of designers was of particular importance, as well as with those privy to the cultural contexts in which children live (experts who are in contact with the children and their families, interpreters ...)

Safety and protection of children

- Signing of child protection policies of Save the Children by all who have in any way been involved in the planning, organisation and implementation of consultation with children, proved to be a very good solution as it secured a consensus on the key values and the adoption of clear procedures.

Activities in the framework of consultative meetings

- The practice has shown that in addition to the importance of having a plan and a general scenario of consultative meetings with the children, it is also necessary to be flexible in its implementation and deviate from the plan when it is in the interests of children or required so, due to unforeseen circumstances. Moderators of consultations faced a series of unforeseen circumstances in their work.
- It is essential for children to get to know the moderator of consultative meetings and vice versa, in addition to building relations of mutual trust, and should be given sufficient time. In practice this meant that much of the first meeting with the children was dedicated to this aim.
- Initial activities on the Map also open up room for mutual familiarity and building a positive atmosphere. Almost all of the children enjoyed making elements and placing them on the Map. It is important to emphasise that the size of the Map and the place where it is put, should allow a larger number of children (6-8) working on it at the same time.
- One of the observations is that the process of interventions on the Map is initially mainly led by adults. However, as the process progresses, children gain a more active role, and often initiate the introduction of certain changes on the Map themselves and raise the relevant issues in a dialogue with their peers and moderators.
- An advantage of the Map is that it allows a quick shift back to the conversation or its recap, which is important after a break in work or when moving onto another activity and topic. It also facilitates the connection between various activities. Interventions on the Map within one activity often become the basis for a dialogue within the next activity. On the other hand, the intervention of a group on the Map can become a starting point for working with another group of children.
- Quality interpretation is very important in the process of conducting activities. It turned out that in addition to correct interpretation, interpreters also convey the atmosphere created by the moderator - by ways of posing a question, tone of voice, intonation, etc. In practice, it is also often necessary for interpreter in interpretation to seek the right choice of words together with the child.
- In practice, it was agreed with children that details relating to their personal experiences will be discussed to the extent of their choosing. After the initial general scope of the level of conversation about the experience of children on the move, almost all of the children voluntarily proceeded to the level of conversation about personal experiences. Building of confidence and encouragement

from their peers contributed to this process. It should also be noted that a number of children skilfully used their right to set boundaries in the dialogue, by letting the moderators know that they do not want to talk about certain issues. This mainly related to the issues that were already addressed when the children were interviewed by appropriate authorities (mostly police officers) and they fear that they would say something that could jeopardise their position.

- It proved to be a good solution that the children were given the opportunity to initiate a break during work if they find that multiple difficult topics have been addressed, or that the conversation lasted a long time and that they were exhausted. During breaks, initiated at several meetings, the children especially enjoyed the non-verbal games that imply movement.

Documenting

- Explaining the role of documenter to children, as well as the manner in which he or she is to record data, proved to be significant in two ways. One is that children can greatly assist in this process, and the second is that by gaining insight into documenting, children can recognise the importance of their role and the things they are saying.
- In addition to audio recording, it was very useful that the statements of children were noted by a documenter who was present at all times. It was easier to follow what children were saying and noting as particularly important, but also allowed the documenter, in coordination with the moderator, to ask the children for further clarification of something they said, if deemed necessary. In this way, the documentor significantly contributed to listening to children.
- Visually documenting took place in practice in the course of certain activities, mainly those in which a greater number of children participated. There were several reasons for that decision. One is that documenting requires the presence of a large number of adults, and it was avoided that adults outnumber the children, and the second is an attempt to provide the conditions where the children would feel less “exposed”. It is also important to note that it was ensured that video recordings do not jeopardise the safety of children, which especially applied to the children of asylum seekers and victims of human trafficking.
- And finally, the very Map and interventions on the Map gave significant opportunities for documenting. Therefore, at the end of the consultation process, a short animated film was made, depicting interventions on the Map.

Results obtained from consultations

- The process of consultation with children allowed consideration of child perspective on all the issues raised as relevant. More data was obtained than expected by the team that lead the consultations. Children were exhaustive and very motivated to talk about their experiences and visions.

Feedback from children

- As part of the evaluation of the consultation process, almost all children have highlighted that the experience of participation in consultations was very important for them.

Many children had found consultations as a support to cope with a life situation in which they found themselves, a possibility to tell what is happening to them and to be heard, as well as a possibility to influence their own position to a certain extent.

“In these workshops, we received a lot of support.”

“If someone is going through rough times, they should tell their story. We had chance to be heard.”

“Through all these questions and the map, we got out something that has long been kept inside. And now it’s somehow easier.”

*“It helped me to think about everything that was happening to me. Before that, it just happened.
Now it became clear why I sometimes feel dissatisfied, unhappy, sad ...”*

“We talked about sad things, but in another way that helped me realised how strong and brave we are because of what we had survived.”

“I want to tell our story to everyone. It is important for those who have a power to change something to hear it.”

“I believe that we can to help children like us to be in a better position.”

“We are often questioned, but not asked. This was an opportunity where someone asked us.”

Recommended reading

Children's participation and consultations with children

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APPENDIX

The following section will attempt to provide a brief overview of the situation for the most common groups of children on the move in Serbia. The overview is based on the study Children on the move - programmes of support and protection of children on the move in the Republic of Serbia, conducted in 2012 as a part of the project SCORE – Setting an Agenda for Child Oriented Social Reform, as discussed previously.

Children on the move in the Republic of Serbia

In the area of the Western Balkan, including Serbia, during the last few years there has been a significant increase in the number of children on the move (Galonja et al, 2012). Bearing in mind the specific context of the migration of these children, as well as the different phases of movement which they most often found themselves in, the biggest groups include:

- migrant children and asylum seekers in Serbia,
- children migrants from readmission process,
- children who migrate within the country's borders.

Children migrants and asylum seekers in Serbia

Most children who live in Serbia as immigrants originate from conflict areas of Asia and Africa, mostly from Afghanistan, Somalia, Eritrea and Syria. Certain number of children travels with family members, while others, mostly boys aged 15 to 18, travel unaccompanied by adults. On this journey, some children, under different circumstances, separate from their families and continue to travel alone or in the company of strangers, which exposes them to the risk of various forms of violence, exploitation and trafficking. Most often they travel without passports, using illegal channels and services of smugglers.

During their stay in Serbia, almost all children (and their families) seek asylum and acquire the status of legal migrants. For most of them, Serbia is a temporary destination on the road to European Union countries.

When it comes to primary causes of migration, children note threats to safety and difficult living conditions in their countries of origin affected by war and internal political conflict. They also referr to the impossibility of excercising the rights of the child, especially the rights of girls to education, as one of the primary causes of migration.

Upon arrival in Serbia and obtaining the status of asylum seekers, these children live in accommodation centers for asylum seekers. They have secured legal assistance, guardianship if unaccompanied by adults, health care and some of the informal support programmes.

Children immigrants who were returned to Serbia in the readmission process

Children who in the process of readmission were returned to Serbia are commonly those who migrated with their families to the European Union countries by using legal means of travel. Most of these children are of Roma origin, and before going abroad, they lived with their family, mostly in illegal settlements in the larger cities. There is also a significant percentage of children who were displaced from Kosovo after 1999 with their families, after which they lived in refugee camps. It is notable that most of the families mentioned had close or extended family members in the country of the desired destination, which is a factor contributing to their migration.

Upon refusal of their asylum application in Western Europe, children and their families are mostly returning to Serbia voluntarily, where they continue to live in the same settlements and similar life circumstances.

For most of these children, the reason for leaving Serbia lies in the overall very unfavourable living conditions, characterised by poverty, lack of access to housing, employment and providing a minimum income for a decent life for the family, as well as multi-fold discrimination. A significant number of these children had the experience of working on the streets, that exposed them to risks of various forms of violence and exploitation, as well as trafficking.

Upon their return to the country, most of these children continue face the same problems, but also the lack of support in the process of reintegration. Although there are those who initially did not want to leave the country among these children, most of them agree that this decision of their parents was the right one and they see it as the only solution in the given circumstances. Almost all these children note that their stay in Western Europe, at least in the short term, allowed them better living conditions and more importantly, “the sense of prospects”.

Children internal migrants

This group consists of children with experience of migration within the country mainly with families moving from smaller towns to major cities. A significant number of these children are of Roma origin. Upon arrival to the city, they often live in illegal settlements from where they are often forcibly displaced. For many of

them, forced displacement means the return to the places from which they moved out, and then again, the return to big cities and accommodation in other illegally built settlements.

Most of these children belong to socially vulnerable groups. As for the reasons for moving to larger cities and living in certain areas of the city, they primarily see these in relation to work opportunities and providing secure income for the family.

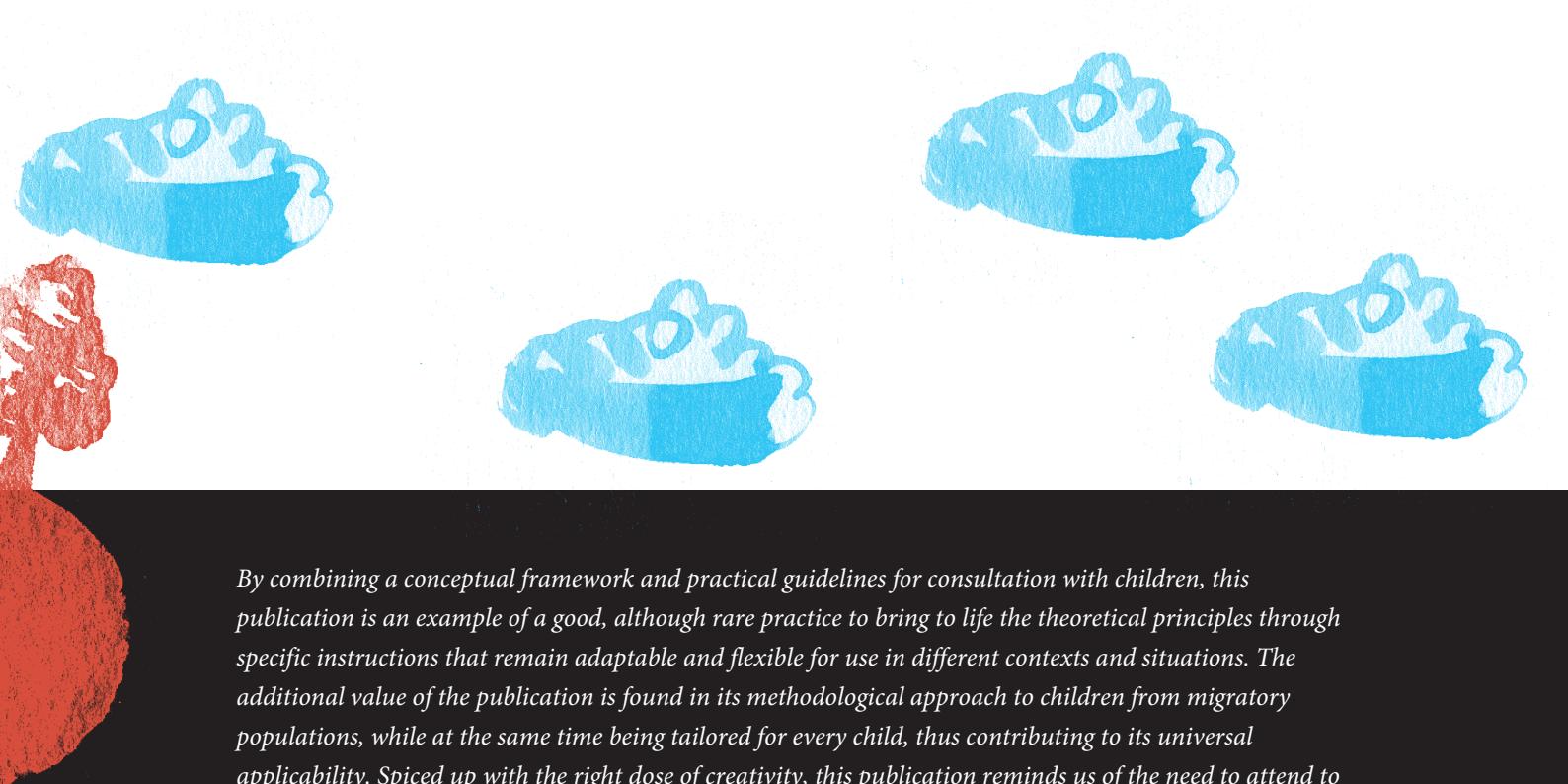
Many children who migrate internally perform various tasks in order to support themselves and their family. Most of the work takes place on the street or is seasonal. A large number of children note that they are occasionally involved in begging. This way of life often prevents them from exercising their rights to education, but also brings them into immediate danger from different forms of violence and exploitation. In addition, many of these children do not have basic documents, thus being unable to access health and social care.

Children on the move in Serbia between social exclusion and the opportunity for a better life

Social exclusion is commonly a consequence of the position of a significant number of children on the move in Serbia. It is reflected through the inability of these children to exercise their rights due to the hampered access to resources of the system and the community. Unresolved civil and legal status of children, the lack of mechanisms to overcome language and cultural barriers, difficult access to the system of social and health care, as well as education, lack of support in acquiring the necessary life knowledge and skills, support to their multiple marginalisation and discrimination. In such circumstances, the risk that children are exposed to various forms of violence and exploitation is further increased. Under such conditions of life and growing up, resilient strengths of children are particularly significant - their internal capacity to cope with difficult life circumstances, the support they receive in the immediate surroundings through close relations with adults and peers, as well as in the framework of different programmes.

Finally, it cannot be ignored that migration is an active pursuit of these children and their families to overcome the difficulties they face and ensure opportunities for a better life. During the process of migration children take on many roles and responsibilities, gain life experience, they become more mature. A significant number of children emphasizes that this experience strengthens and influences their attitude towards themselves and the world.

The very experience and maturity of these children, their vision of a better future and a willingness to take an active role in their life is a strong potential that should not be ignored in efforts to improve the situation of children on the move.



By combining a conceptual framework and practical guidelines for consultation with children, this publication is an example of a good, although rare practice to bring to life the theoretical principles through specific instructions that remain adaptable and flexible for use in different contexts and situations. The additional value of the publication is found in its methodological approach to children from migratory populations, while at the same time being tailored for every child, thus contributing to its universal applicability. Spiced up with the right dose of creativity, this publication reminds us of the need to attend to child development and care in a lively and appropriate fashion, beyond strictly academic framework, while remaining faithful to scientific and methodological postulates.

Raša Sekulović, Plan International Regional Advisor, Office for Asia

Evidently, the views of children, especially those with hampered access to education, health and social protection, and the like, still do not reach those who contribute the most to the development of policies and practices that affect the daily lives of children. The author rightly points out that it is very important to “hear” children and that the integration of the child perspective should “become a part of the culture of institutions and organisations that deal with children, with a continuous dialogue on outstanding issues and the exchange of good practices”. Adults become “experts” when they listen to and learn from children. Only then they are able to choose and create techniques (together with the children!) which are tailored for children, enabling them to express themselves as fully as possible and to participate actively. Meaningful child participation is not only the right but also the ethical task of adults who take care of them, for it contributes to the development of children, and the development of the society as a whole. Therefore it is necessary to find ways to learn from children and with children, in order to build them a better world. This book is a contribution to this end, and is my pleasure to recommend it for publication.

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