

Technical description

Preparation of guidelines for increasing children's involvement in child protection casework and decision-making processes

1. in July 2024, Estonia will take over the presidency of the Baltic Sea Council (BSC). The Social Insurance Board is represented in the Baltic Sea Council's expert group for children at risk (CBSS EG-CAR). During Estonia's presidency, the main focus of the expert group on children at risk is the involvement of children, prioritizing the active involvement of children in the design of policies and practices that directly affect them.

During the Norwegian Presidency in 2022, CBSS EG-CAR organized a comprehensive mapping of child protection systems in BSC countries. The final report of the mapping revealed a common challenge for all countries: difficulties in effectively including children's voice, perspective and participation in their case management, planning and decision-making processes.

The CBSS EG-CAR Strategy 2020-2025 lists children's participation as an important priority. One of the roles of the expert group is to explore specific methodologies for the ethical and meaningful participation of children in the context of the work of the expert group, promoting the involvement of children from different backgrounds and situations. Creating guidelines to increase children's involvement in child protection casework and decision-making processes meets the priorities of the CBSS EG-CAR Strategy 2020-2025, especially the priority "Partnerships for Children's Rights and Protection," as it promotes the development and implementation of tools and practices to ensure that children's voices are integrated into decisions that affect their lives .

Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and Article 5 of the [Estonian] Child Protection Act both emphasize the importance of putting the best interests of the child first when making decisions in matters concerning children. Also, both the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12) and the Child Protection Act state that every child has the right to express his/her independent opinion in all matters concerning him/her and the right to have his/her opinion taken into account. These frameworks ensure that both individual rights, such as the expression of personal opinion, and collective rights, which concern the well-being and interests of groups of children, are respected and integrated into all relevant decision-making processes.

The purpose of the tender is to obtain prepared guidelines that describe the best practices and tools for involving children at both individual and collective levels, taking into account experiences and lessons learned from BCS countries. .

The guidelines must provide clear guidance to a) child protection workers and professionals working with children on how to involve children in case management, and b) other decision-makers to ensure that children's views and voices are taken into account when shaping policies, services and practice.

The contracting authority must prepare instructions that:

- provide child protection workers and professionals working with children with tools and methodologies to involve children in making decisions that affect them;
- direct that children are able to express their opinions, preferences and concerns in a meaningful, age- and developmentally appropriate way, and that their opinion is taken into account at all stages of the decision-making process, both on an individual and collective level;

- promote the integration of the principles of child involvement in the design and implementation of child protection policy and practice;
- rely on the best practices, lessons learned and needs of CBS countries (hereafter work).
- has been delivered to the contracting authority in Estonian and English by May 2, 2025.

Content of the instructions

The instructions must include, but are not limited to, the following components:

- an overview of the importance of involving children in child protection work and in the design and implementation of child protection policy and practice;
- key principles and ethical considerations in promoting children's involvement;
- practical tools and methodologies for involving children in decision-making processes in a manner appropriate to the child's age and development;
- examples from CBC countries based on successful practices;
- recommendations for policy makers, practitioners and professionals working with children to increase children's involvement in policy development, service delivery and case management.

The activities are carried out under measure 21.4.7.9 of the 2021-2027 Cohesion Policy funds. "Services aimed at children and families are of high quality and meet the needs of families" within the framework of the conditions for granting support (TAT) "Supporting children and families".