

Appendix One

Information sheet on social/group participation

The creation of Local Child and Adolescent Participation Committees are participatory bodies and are attached to the Local Councils for Child and Adolescent Care.

They are constituted as spaces for coordination that facilitate the exchange between public administrations, state, regional and local, as well as social entities involved in the welfare of children and adolescents, to inspire and enrich the actions developed by the public authorities.

Following the recommendations of UNICEF Child Friendly Cities, it is recommended that the methodology implemented for the creation of the Local Committees be participatory and active. It is necessary that the professionals involved in this process play the role of companions and facilitators rather than monitors of the activities and actions to be carried out (Aranda y Malagón, 2013; Cabrerizo et al., 2018).

According to Hart: “A nation is democratic to the extent that its citizens are involved, particularly at the community level. The confidence and competence to be involved must be gradually acquired through practice. It is for this reason that there should be gradually increasing opportunities for children to participate in any aspiring democracy, and particularly in those nations already convinced that they are democratic. With the growth of children’s rights, we are beginning to see an increasing recognition of children’s abilities to speak for themselves. Regrettably, while children’s and youths’ participation does occur in different degrees around the world, it is often exploitative or frivolous. This Essay is written for people who know that young people have something to say but who would like to reflect further on the process. It is also written for those people who have it in their power to assist children in having a voice, but who, unwittingly or not, trivialize their involvement” (1992).

The aim is to promote citizen participation from early childhood under the responsibility of the local administration in collaboration with social entities.

The working sessions between children and professionals must consider the particularities of each child as well as their own views.

In this sense, the professionals jointly plan and create their participation activities for the creation of the Local Committees and the election of representatives.

This activity will reinforce citizenship status and the process of building democracy, from predefined roles (by adults) to decision-making (by children and adolescents) through concrete projects that will help adults evaluate their attitude towards children and their advocacy (Hart, 1992).

It will also encourage the levels of participation considered by Shier (2001):

Level 4. Children are involved in decision-making processes reflect on:

- Are you ready to let children join in your decision-making processes?
- Is there a procedure that enables children to join in decision-making processes?
- Is it a policy requirement that children must be involved in decision-making processes?

Level 5. Children share power and responsibility for decision-making reflect on:

- Are you ready to share some of your adult power with children?
- Is there a procedure that enables children and adults to share power and responsibility for decisions?
- Is it policy requirement that children and adults share power and responsibility to decisions?

This activity will have an impact on the development of different social skills as well as values. Regarding children, in terms of basic social skills, both group awareness and the feeling of belonging to a group are developed. In terms of complex social skills, empathy, emotional intelligence, assertiveness, listening skills, the ability to communicate feelings and emotions, the ability to define a problem and evaluate solutions, negotiation, recognition, decision making and the defence of one's own and others' rights are developed.

This is why the impact is materialised in values, in their socialisation, decision-making, citizenship, leadership, training towards the future for their participation as adult citizens. Also, taking into account intersectional approaches favours a much more inclusive and holistic approach, addressing issues such as gender equality, age, diversity/disability, sexual identity, environment, etc.

Concerning professional level, the professional skills that stand out from this activity would be the following: creativity and curiosity; empathy; assertiveness; active listening; unconditional acceptance; congruence; authenticity and knowledge of child participation.