PANDA

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

NEWSLETTER 3

September 2023

Dear

We are delighted to share this newsletter with you, which provides an update on an exciting EU funded knowledge exchange project that has focused on the participation of young children (12 years and younger) in child welfare and child protection.

For those receiving this letter for the first time, the Panda project team has been working for three years on gathering together and sharing knowledge skills, materials, and tools regarding the participation of young children (12 years and younger) in child welfare and child protection. The project which began in 2020, officially ends at the end of August 2023. The team is finalising materials produced which will be freely available on a website REACCH.

The feedback we are receiving on the project and the theme clearly indicates that the issue of young children's participation in child welfare is very appealing and that professionals are still exploring how better to collaborate with children. Because of this, the project team will consider possible follow-up once this current project has ended. A final Panda newsletter before the end of 2023, will provide a preview of the future. We hope you will share our commitment as we continue to strive towards strengthening the participation rights of young children as much as possible.

Wendy Eerdekens
Project coordinator
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Panda in a nutshell

PANDA is a KA202 EU Project funded as part of the Erasmus+ Programme. The project runs from

September 2020 to August 2023. The PANDA team is a community that comprises of academics and professionals from eight partners in four nations that seeks to educate and support social workers in their collaboration with young children to enhance children's participation rights. The PANDA team seeks to help children to find their voices in their most challenging times.

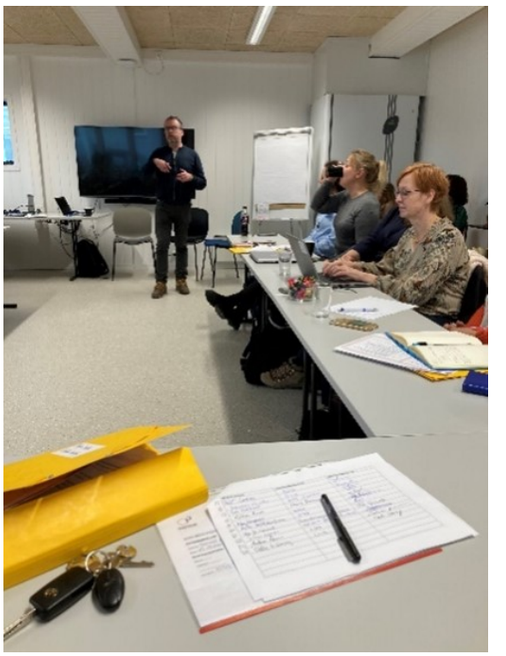
Our work takes place in a transnational context through strengthening professionals' collaboration with young children known to social services, especially in child welfare and child protection.

Consortium

The project team consists of **eight partners** comprising universities, policy makers and field partners as follows:

Together, we are a strong team from **different cultural backgrounds** and with **different expertise** which we **share together,** and which places us in an excellent position to build knowledge, approaches and methods from different perspectives and understandings.
We believe that we can achieve better results by working in a transnational context. We strive to help social workers so that they can collaborate with children introducing new insights, methods and ideas, to enable children to access their own voice and wider participation rights.

News from Trondheim, Norway



The Panda project is about to end, and the Norwegian team are thankful being part of such a great collaborative learning process. The project has had great significance regarding the exchange of knowledge and experience between universities and the field of practice regarding young children's participation in child welfare and protection as well as in children's services in general. We have been inspired to explore adults' interactions with infants and young children and to make stronger efforts to fulfill their participation rights.

We are happy to share some moments from our events.

In March 2022, we welcomed our partners from Belgium, Spain, and the Northern Ireland to Norway for a **Learning Week**.
On the agenda was a field visit to Trondheim Kommune; we learned about Marte Meo and their way of meeting the children and the families with great trust and focusing resources.

We learned about Trondheim municipality and their work with collective participation to hear the voices of young children in kindergarten.

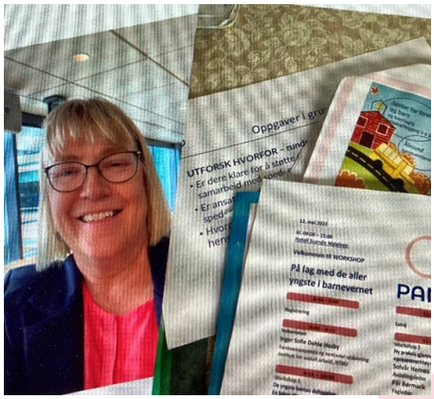
Peace-painting was another inspiring session which is an art-based method to facilitate child participation.

The Norwegian multiplier event took place on May 12th 2023 with over 40 participants. Child welfare workers and scholars from the university meet in Trondheim city. The reflections highlighted the need to put younger children's participation on the agenda. Several dilemmas and questions emerged related to the very youngest children's participation in the child welfare and protection field and, we recognized that there is no simple answer as to how the very youngest and pre-verbal children's "voice" should be heard.

The Norway team are looking forward to carrying on exploring young children's rights. Great thanks to all our partners and contacts.

Warm greetings
Panda project Norway

Inger Sofie Dahlø Husby, Solvår Hernes,
Randi Juul, Pål Børmark,
Elin Hassel Iversen



Sharing knowledge from the PANDA project at a learning event in Northern Ireland

Our PANDA team all spent a week in Belfast in October 2022, learning about the importance of context in relation to facilitating the participation rights of the youngest children.

We heard from Professor Joe Duffy about the impact of conflict on social workers and from Professor Paul Connolly about the impact of conflict on the attitudes and views of very young children. Professor Paul Connolly and Eileen McClean, a colleague from Early Years, talked to us about the development of the Media Initiative and introduced us to materials used with very young pre-school children to explore their attitudes and enhance their appreciation of other cultures and traditions.

Together, these presentations, combined with a Black taxi tour of some of the most affected areas of Belfast, provided deep insights into the unique context of Northern Ireland and what is possible in working with young children to enhance their participation rights. In this regard, we also had the privilege of listening firsthand to Professor Laura Lundy and the impact of the Lundy Model (2007) on international policy and practice regarding participation rights.

The week also included a visit to Stormont to hear from politicians, policy makers and care experienced children and young people connected with VOYPIC about how and in what ways they have collaborated to ensure that the voice of children and young people remains at the centre of everyone's efforts. It was inspiring to hear from all these experts and the successful work undertaken to change policy and practice.

Lundy L. (2007)

The team in Belfast enjoy extensive regional networks with practitioners, policy makers working in statutory and voluntary organizations and through these networks our materials are being disseminated.

Celebration of the multiplier event in Madrid – 30th May 2023

On 30th May, 2023, a multiplier event entitled: "Participation and childhood: challenges and opportunities for the future" was held at the Faculty of Social Work of the Complutense University of Madrid as part of the Erasmus+ Project Participation and Collaboration for Action (PANDA).

The event, organised by professors from the Faculty of Social Work of the Complutense University of Madrid and members of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano and whose aim was to contribute to improving the skills and tools of professionals working in child welfare and protection services, was attended by 80 people from various children's NGOs in Madrid, staff from the Madrid City Council, professionals from Social Services, and from other universities and research centres.

The day began with the opening of the Vice-Dean of Quality of the Faculty of Social Work, Ms. Mª Ángeles Cuadrado, the director of the project in the Spanish team, Ms. Esther Mercado and the Territorial Director of Madrid of the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Ms. Rocío García.

This was followed by a main conference entitled "Experiences of Child Protagonism from the Global South. Lessons and practices to broaden the right to participate of girls, boys and adolescents" by Dr. in Sociology and expert in childhood, Ms. Marta Martínez, moderated by Professor Begoña Leyra.

After the break, two interesting panels were held. The first panel, entitled "Approach to child participation from a political and strategic perspective" and moderated by Professor Ana I. Corchado, counted with the participation of José Antonio Plantón from the Fundación Secretariado Gitano, Javier Pomar and Gabriela Ibáñez, from the Dynamisation and Participation Service of the Madrid City Council and Leticia López and Pablo Loriente from Las Alamedillas Association.

The second panel, moderated by Professor Ana Dorado and entitled "Practical experiences on child participation processes" included presentations by César Martínez from the Asociación Nuevo Futuro, Proyecto Sirio, Margarita García from ASPASI and Irene Beltrán and Mónica Gamero from the Child Care Centre I of the Madrid City Council.

Throughout the morning, there were interesting debates and questions from the audience, enriching the approaches and points of view presented by the speakers. Finally, the day ended with a presentation of results and conclusions by Professor Marta Blanco.

From the Spanish PANDA team we are very satisfied with the event, which was a space for dialogue and meeting of different professionals linked to children and which offered a fantastic contribution to the theoretical and practical frameworks of child protection and child participation. We would also like to thank the Faculty of Social Work, the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology, its authorities, its service staff, the Department of Social Work and Social Services and the volunteers who supported us in the organisation and logistics to make the event a success.

Panda Project Spain

Panda event 'Speak as you are' in Brussels, Belgium

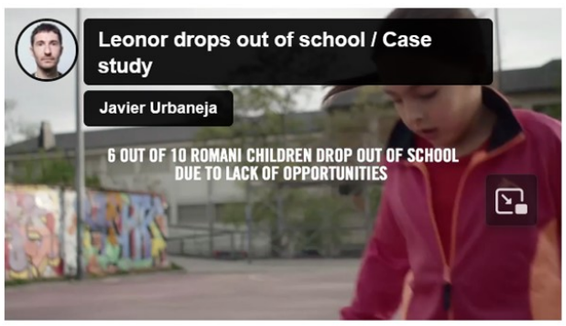
The Belgian team organised a two-day event on the 27th and 28th of June. We had a first day in Dutch for the Flemish professional field. With Brussels as the European capital, on the second day we wanted to reach actors in the field of youth care from other European countries too. The morning session could also be attended online, and the afternoon consisted of on-site workshops. This day was organised in collaboration with ENSA.

Ms. Caroline Vrijens, Children's Rights Commissioner, provided the child's perspective. Mr. Bruno Vanobbergen, Acting Director-General of the Flemish Agency for Growing Up, discussed the role and importance of supportive policies.

On the European day, Professor Karen Winter from QUB, Belfast, presented insights from scientific research on home visits. We had an interesting debat with policy officials, a client representative from Cachet vzw, practitioners, and researchers. During both days, participants could choose in the afternoon from a diverse range of workshops. The online part with presentations and debate will also be made available on the website.

Closing Meeting in Madrid

In early June, the final in person meeting of the Panda team took place. After 3 years of intensive collaboration, final agreements were made for the outputs. Of course, we also took the time to discuss what comes after Panda. The theme remains relevant and requires ongoing attention. Details about upcoming plans will be revealed in the very last newsletter.



One of the highlights during the three-day event in Madrid was the visit to **Fundación Secretariado Gitano**. FSG is one of the Panda partner organisations. They work with and for Roma families in Spain. We learned about their efforts towards social participation and advocacy for Roma inclusion. You can find the experiences and compelling stories shared by FSG on our website.

Letter to the European Commission

In the Panda project, our focus is not only on practitioners but also on organisations and policies that create the necessary conditions for participatory practices involving young children in youth care.

As a European project aligning with the European Pillar of Social Rights, we wrote an open letter to the European Commission. We outlined what is needed from Europe and regional administrations to strengthen the participation rights of young children. This letter is also published on our website.

REACCH Website

Reacch

PANDA

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https://reacch.eu/
#avoice4children

We frequently refer to the website where all our outputs and products are available. We chose a name for the website that more accurately reflects our project and that allows for wider inclusion of information beyond the Panda materials. Our website is known REACCH. The acronym stands for **Resources for Engaging And Collaborating with Children** and the link is https://reacch.eu/.

On the website, you can find **freely available**, texts, podcasts, and videos on methodologies and tools in the **media library.** You can find guidelines for policy makers and organisations. Also available are training materials and a toolkit for use in professional training. These materials are all available in the 4 languages of the Panda partners.