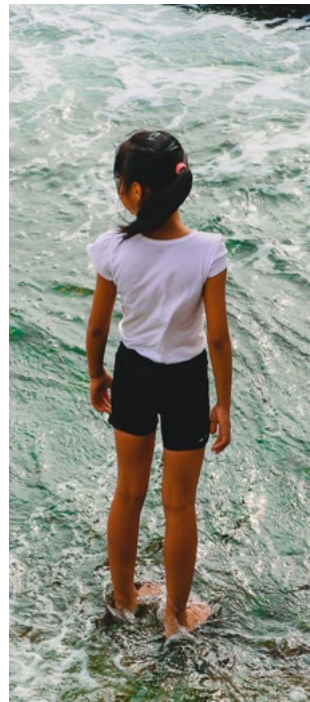


# Child and Youth Participation in Philanthropy

Stories of Transformation





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Stories of Transformation

# CONTENTS

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                       |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2  | <b>FOREWORD</b><br>“I may not know my rights,<br>but you don’t know my life.”<br>By Gerison Lansdown,<br>International Children’s Rights Specialist                                                                                           |                                                                                                       |
| 4  | <b>INTRODUCTION</b><br>Child and Youth Participation<br>as a Journey<br>By Luis Manuel Pinto,<br>Learning for Well-being Foundation                                                                                                           |                                                                                                       |
| 8  | <b>VIEWPOINT</b><br>Care About the Future of<br>Philanthropy? Then Engage<br>Children and Young People in<br>Philanthropic Decision-Making<br>By Alison Body, Senior Lecturer in Philanthropic<br>Studies & Social Policy, University of Kent |                                                                                                       |
| 12 | <b>SURVEY</b><br>Children, Young People and<br>Philanthropy: Key Findings<br>from the Philea Survey                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                       |
| 18 | <b>CASE STUDIES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 19 <b>Anouk Foundation</b><br>Art4Impact                                                              |
| 57 | <b>CONCLUSION</b><br>The End Is the Beginning.<br>The Beginning Is the End.                                                                                                                                                                   | 22 <b>Bertelsmann Stiftung</b><br>Involving young people<br>through expert teams                      |
| 58 | <b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b><br>How to Work More<br>Collaboratively with and for<br>Children and Young People                                                                                                                                       | 26 <b>Bikuben Fonden</b><br>Design-thinking with young people                                         |
| 63 | <b>RESOURCES</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 30 <b>Calouste Gulbenkian<br/>Foundation</b><br>Gulbenkian 15/25 Participa                            |
| 64 | <b>CONTRIBUTORS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 33 <b>Fondation Botnar</b><br>Young Experts:<br>Tech for Health (YET4H)                               |
|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 36 <b>Fondazione Cassa<br/>di Risparmio di Cuneo</b><br>Working with a panel<br>of peer-evaluators    |
|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 39 <b>Hil-Foundation</b><br>Girls Council                                                             |
|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 43 <b>Learning for<br/>Well-being Foundation</b><br>Intergenerational Board                           |
|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 46 <b>National Lottery<br/>Community Fund</b><br>Young People in the Lead                             |
|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 50 <b>Open Society Foundations</b><br>PEAKS (participation, education<br>and knowledge strengthening) |
|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 53 <b>Porticus</b><br>“SchoolForAll” collective                                                       |

# FOREWORD

“I may not know my rights,  
but you don’t know my life.”



**By Gerison Lansdown**

International Children’s Rights Specialist

In too many countries, and across too many communities, the issues that are afforded attention, as well as the means of addressing them, are decided by those in positions of power. The title of this piece, a quote by a 6-year-old from Pakistan, points to the shortcomings of this reality.

Traditionally, those in positions of power have been men. And while they remained exclusively in charge, the concerns of women – such as male violence, sexual abuse, childcare, rights in marriage and divorce, non-discrimination in wages, or equal access to services – simply never appeared on the political agenda. Only as women moved into politics, did that begin to change, as they forced the priorities of 50% of the adult population to be heard in the public arena. A similar pattern can be observed with many minoritised and under-represented groups, including children and young people.

It is now more than 30 years since the right to be heard was introduced in the almost universally ratified Convention on the Rights of the Child. And huge progress has been made – in small organisations working at the grassroots to major institutions such as the EU and Council of Europe, innovative practice and learning has been taking place. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go before attitudes change sufficiently to acknowledge that children, too, not only have a right to have their voices heard, but they have a serious, substantial and essential contribution to make in understanding the nature of their lives, the challenges they face and

potential solutions. And, lacking access to political, social and economic avenues of power, it is extraordinarily difficult for them to break through to seats of influence.

The barriers to change are significant. First, continuing deep-seated cultural resistance persists, denying recognition of children as social agents capable of adding value: They can’t be trusted, they have no experience, they have no relevant knowledge, it takes too much time, they will have unrealistic expectations, they will focus on trivial matters, it will expose them to ideas they are not capable of understanding, adults know best. Second, even where adults understand the importance of engaging with children, progress is stymied by the failure of too many organisations and systems to create, support and institutionalise spaces and opportunities for children’s participation. Lack of explicit mission statements, policies, time, budgets, training, supervision and monitoring hamper any sustained efforts to embed a culture of respect for children’s views. And third, all too often, where children’s participation does take place, it is limited to consultative processes in which the issues or questions, the analysis of findings, as well as the subsequent recommendations, are all defined and controlled by adults.



However, when serious investment is made to take children's views seriously, the outcomes can be profound. Only through listening have we begun to learn about the nature, scale and impact of violence against children; the lives they inhabit online; the experience of cyberbullying; the pain and loss faced due to being removed from parents and separated from siblings; the depth of their concerns about climate change; the trauma of fleeing conflict and seeking asylum; and so much more. This knowledge is vital for the creation of effective laws, policies, services and training.

And children and young people are demanding that those in power start listening more. Evidence from the recent Covid pandemic highlights the extent of frustration and anger from young people across the world that so many of their rights were denied without any consultation or involvement from them.

Accordingly, the recent developments being initiated by so many foundations towards proactive and significant collaboration with children and young people are genuinely exciting. The case studies elaborated in this report point to an imaginative and innovative commitment to taking children and young people seriously and building meaningful opportunities for influencing philanthropic practice. Not only is this of huge significance in starting a process in which children themselves can begin to shape the research and policy agenda, but foundations are also in a powerful position to generate a ripple effect through to the organisations they support.

Their approach combines an expectation that beneficiaries must demonstrate their commitment to children's participation, with a practice of actively modelling innovative approaches to its attainment themselves. These emerging practices have demonstratively led to improvement in the focus of grant-making; opportunities for young people to acquire confidence and skills; greater legitimacy to the demands for improved practice from grantees; and strengthened capacities among the foundations in evaluating project proposals. These case studies prove that it is both possible and effective to work with – and not simply for – children. And it is to be hoped that the evidence of these multiple benefits will excite and encourage many other foundations to learn from and emulate this principled approach to philanthropy. It is a win-win development.

# INTRODUCTION

## Child and Youth Participation as a Journey



**By Luis Manuel Pinto**

Learning for Well-being Foundation

### A momentum for child and youth participation in Europe

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, recently we have seen important support for children's participation rights by major international agencies. The European Commission, the Council of Europe and the OECD have all included participation as a pillar in some of their flagship policies for children and youth. This institutional buy-in is foundational for shifting the power balance towards greater intergenerational justice, and realising children's and young people's rights and well-being.

The members of Philea's Children and Youth Thematic Network share a strong interest in children's participation as a means through which children and young people promote individual and collective well-being,<sup>1</sup> address social inequality,<sup>2</sup> access better healthcare,<sup>3</sup> improve educational pathways<sup>4</sup> and foster democratic societies.<sup>5</sup>

The rise in interest for children's participation is not separate from other streams of innovation in philanthropic practice. New models of governance, stakeholder involvement, participatory grantmaking, de-colonisation —these are expressions of the changing face of the philanthropic field, undergirded by a deep reflection on who holds power in society.

### What's philanthropy got to do with it?

Systemic change can only happen through collaboration across sectors around a shared purpose. We wanted to know how the European philanthropic sector was joining this momentum towards child and youth participation. We wanted to “catch them doing it right”, celebrate the wins (big or small), but also share the doubts, the struggles and the learnings.

From the experiences shared within the Thematic Network's meetings, we knew that involving children in decision-making implied some degree of transformation: of the staff or board members initiating change; of the children and young people involved; or the

<sup>1</sup> Learning for Well-being Foundation

<sup>2</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung

<sup>3</sup> Botnar Foundation

<sup>4</sup> Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo (CRC)

<sup>5</sup> Open Society Foundations



organisation's culture and practices. So we decided to capture the micro-stories of change rooted in the power of intergenerational relationships. For this reason, this project is a contribution to the ACT2GETHER initiative, which promotes partnership between children and adults as a means to achieve children's rights.

## About this study

This study is in itself another milestone on the journey of supporting philanthropic practice in becoming more inclusive and closer to those it serves. The study comprises two major elements: 1) a survey of 40 European philanthropic organisations on their investment in children and young people, as well as whether and how children and young people are involved in decisions about programmes and grants; and 2) in-depth case studies of 11 of these organisations.

The report encompasses a wide range of profiles in institutionalised philanthropy – from operational to grantmaking, from small to large capacity. These foundations work very locally, but also run international

programmes. The organisational diversity we found in this study proved that no foundation is too big or too small to embark on the journey of child and youth participation.

The 11 case studies are based on interviews with philanthropy professionals and the children and young people they work with. These stories share the context and motivations for engaging children directly; the processes through which children were involved; some of the learnings and outcomes derived from the project; and also some of the obstacles that had to be overcome.

## Pathways to empowerment emerging from the survey and case studies

Below is a quick snapshot of the stories of child and youth participation told by the foundations involved in the study. They are roughly grouped around themes related to purpose or format of collaboration; contributing to foundation's strategic and organisation development,

including deciding on grant attribution; collaboration from design to evaluation; and building young people's knowledge and financial capacity.

## Helping foundations in their programmes and strategy

Some of the stories show collaborating with children and young people as a means to support foundations' organisational change and strategy development. For all foundations this was a way to embody the principles they uphold, but also a way to ensure their programmes are more aligned with the needs of the children and young people they serve.

With over a third of its funding attributed to children and young people, the *National Lottery Community Fund* (UK) has been working with an advisory group of young people, many coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, who work very closely to inform the foundation's policies and grantmaking cycle, but also to support staff development.



The *Gulbenkian Foundation* (Portugal) wanted to make sure the next strategy round of the foundation would reflect what young people felt was important about being young today, and how they envision the future. The foundation carried out an extensive consultation, which also resulted in guidelines for engaging youth in decision-making.

The *Learning for Well-being Foundation* (Netherlands) wanted to honour its commitment to supporting competent partnerships between children and adults. This impulse took the foundation to review its governance structures and create an intergenerational board in which half of its members are aged 18 to 24. All members of the board have equal voting rights and shared responsibilities.

### **Making decisions over resources and grants for their peers**

The case studies include stories in which children and young people were supported and given the power to decide on attribution of grants, awards or resources.

*Hil-Foundation* (Austria) has been working with Girls Councils. The councils are composed of young people who identify as girls. Its members come from all over Austria to meet over a weekend and select, through a participatory process, the recipients of the foundation's grants dedicated to youth.

The *Anouk Foundation* (Switzerland) organises an art project where children submit drawings that can win the chance of being transformed into murals in local paediatric wards by professional artists. An intergenerational jury composed of young students, art therapists, mental health professionals and artists give the award.

For one of its biggest calls for proposals, *Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo* (Italy) decided to set up a peer-evaluator panel composed of 44 individuals of which 18 were young students aged 16 to 18. The panel carefully analysed more than 100 applications submitted by schools for grants supporting health, inclusion, sport and outdoor education.

## Collaborating side-by-side, from concept to evaluation

The *Bertelsmann Foundation* (Germany) leads ACT2GETHER Germany to tackle social inequality with and for marginalised young people. A flagship part of the project is an intergenerational camp called 2GETHERLAND which is planned and implemented by young people and adults together. In another project dedicated to creating child-centred policies for families and in the education sphere, the foundation's researchers work side-by-side with both a scientific expert panel as well as a Young Expert Team to develop proposals on how to effectively address child poverty.

*Bikuben Foundation* (Denmark) worked with 18 young people (aged 13 to 30) with lived experience in alternative care, in a thorough design-thinking process to analyse the issues related to transitioning from foster care to living independently, and prototype solutions together with municipalities.

In their project "Transform Health", the *Botnar Foundation* (Switzerland) brought together actors from all sectors and levels of society to advocate for better access to education through digital technologies. The foundation created a youth council to provide independent insight on how to leverage digital innovation to address the barriers that particularly affect young people's access to health services and information.

## Empowering young people through advocacy and financial capacity

Two of the stories portrayed in the case studies illustrate cases where foundations have invested in building child and youth-led grass-roots communities, sometimes attributing financial resources to children directly so they can lead and implement their own projects.

Porticus Foundation (France) partnered with organisations with expertise in community organising to build capacity of young people in local marginalised communities to advocate directly for their own rights and concerns through lobbying and media campaigns.

The Open Society Foundations co-funded the PEAKS project (participation, education and knowledge strengthening) in central Asia, which aimed to improve the education system in Kyrgyzstan. As part of the project, youth groups were awarded small grants which they could spend for the benefit of their schools and communities. The decision on both where and how to spend the money was up to the youth groups.

## Seeds of inspiration

We hope this report and the stories it shares can inspire you to take another step in the journey of involving children and young people in your philanthropic work. If you have not yet begun that journey, may the examples give you arguments and ideas for practices that can help you begin. If you are already on the journey, then may you find new ideas and resources to make it more impactful and meaningful for all children and adults involved.

# VIEWPOINT

## Care About the Future of Philanthropy? Then Engage Children and Young People in Philanthropic Decision-Making



**By Alison Body**

Senior Lecturer in Philanthropic Studies  
& Social Policy, University of Kent

Philanthropy plays a fundamental role in civil society, with children and young people globally being one of the most common beneficiaries of philanthropic gifts. Yet children's voices are all too often absent from philanthropic conversations and decision-making: We frequently ignore their role as current social actors and, importantly, as active members of the philanthropic ecosystem.

In this piece, drawing on my own and colleagues' extensive research into children, youth and philanthropy,<sup>1</sup> I briefly consider the arguments for engaging children in philanthropic decision-making and for actively cultivating their philanthropic citizenship, and reflect on what this can mean for philanthropic foundations.

Overall, across my work I seek to present three, interconnected and overlapping arguments. First, not involving children and young people in philanthropic decision-making is counter-intuitive to cultivating their philanthropic citizenship. Second, that traditional, non-participative engagement of children and young people in philanthropic activities can perpetuate the very inequalities and inequity we seek to address as a sector.

Third, and perhaps most crucially, that the active and meaningful participation of children and young people in philanthropic decision-making doesn't just benefit those children and young people who participate, and of course the outputs of philanthropy, it benefits philanthropy itself.

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<sup>1</sup> The research papers which inform this article are available at: [www.research.kent.ac.uk/children-as-philanthropic-citizens](http://www.research.kent.ac.uk/children-as-philanthropic-citizens)



## Argument 1

### **Not involving children and young people in philanthropic decision-making is counter-intuitive to cultivating their philanthropic citizenship**

From taking part in climate change protests, fundraising through telathon appeals, donating to food-banks, participating in litter picks or helping the homeless, children and young people across the globe regularly display a multitude of formal and informal philanthropic behaviours. As well as providing vital support for many worthy causes, the hope is that engaging children in philanthropic acts helps develop “habits” of giving that stay with them throughout their lives. Nonetheless, while much of the discussion around philanthropy focuses on how to get more people to give more money more frequently, children intrinsically view philanthropy from a different perspective.

Our research shows that children's ideas of philanthropy and charity are not just an “act” to celebrate but an embodiment of a set of

behaviours, actions and values that are rooted in kindness, fairness and empathy – the very building blocks of justice, equality and democracy. We refer to this as children's and young people's philanthropic citizenship, which we define as “a dimension of citizenship behaviour, associated with intentions and actions that intend to produce public benefit, for example volunteering, social action, charitable giving, advocacy and activism”.

Nurturing this intrinsic sense of “fellow feeling” – that is the emotional connection of empathy, sympathy and concern – is important. However, when it comes to voluntary action and charitable giving, children are frequently not engaged in decisions as to who they give to, how they give or why, or indeed engaged in designing or developing the services provided. Instead, more

commonly, philanthropic decisions are imposed upon them by adults, often as part of large-scale, national fundraising or volunteering campaigns, or through acts of benevolence and the provision of services. By imposing these philanthropic decisions on children, without allowing them to critically engage in the cause area and issues being addressed, there is a risk that philanthropy is promoted as a simple economic “transactional process”, overriding intrinsic philanthropic behaviours, actions and values. As well as shifting ideas of philanthropy away from a sense of fellow feeling, this economic focus potentially reduces children's learning about philanthropy to being simply about funding, rather than the wider, holistic social change that non-profits and philanthropic institutions seek to achieve. This is counter-intuitive to cultivating active, long-term philanthropic citizens.

## Argument 2

### Traditional, non-participative engagement of children and young people in philanthropic activities can perpetuate the very inequalities and inequity we seek to address as a sector

Here lies a concern that by not encouraging and facilitating children to critically engage in philanthropic giving decisions, we promote the idea that charity can solve social ills, without considering systemic injustice which facilitates social concerns and, indeed, critically engaging with the notion of philanthropy itself. For example, we can encourage people to support food banks, but without facilitating them to critically question and challenge the social injustices and wealth inequalities which lead to food poverty, we do little to help solve the wider issue.

Consider the narratives our children commonly hear about philanthropy, through media, literature and from non-profits themselves. Philanthropic stories are often centred around a single benevolent hero, who acts as the saviour of the poor and innocent; rather than discussing the more nuanced and realistic ecosystem of individuals and communities coming together to critically question the perpetuation of injustice which underpins the situation.

As research highlights, while such stories often celebrate the hero, they equally “otherise” individuals and communities as objects of pity and charity. At best, this portrays philanthropy as simply an act of benevolence by the privileged, instead of a process which seeks to work towards making a better world “with” (rather than “for”) others; at worse it further marginalises and diminishes the voices of the very communities philanthropy seeks to support.

As beneficiary, donor or observer in these worst-case scenario situations, the message children receive is clear, “people receiving philanthropic support do not know what is best for them and lack the expertise to contribute to new ways of being”; thus, we continue to promote ideas of inequity, inequality and paternalism. Furthermore, the focus on transactional, economic approaches within philanthropic narratives risks minimising all other, and arguably much more inclusive and just as important, acts of philanthropic citizenship needed to promote social change, such as advocacy, volunteering and activism.

Given brevity of space, I perhaps purposefully focus on the extremes of this argument, nonetheless these messages are fundamentally counter-intuitive to long-term goals of provoking social change.

Simply put, we cannot solve social ills and build a strong and just society without drawing together all parts of the philanthropic ecosystem to help change the system itself; including mobilising and supporting marginalised individuals and communities, while simultaneously recognising the deeply rooted power imbalances which underpin philanthropy and actively seeking to address these. As experts of their own lives and own experiences, children are an important part of this ecosystem, as active beneficiaries, donors, advocates, volunteers and social actors, and thus need to be invited to be part of the problem solving, along with other marginalised communities.



### Argument 3

#### **The active and meaningful participation of children and young people in philanthropic decision-making doesn't just benefit those children and young people who participate, and of course the outputs of philanthropy, it benefits philanthropy itself**

In accepting arguments 1 and 2, this 3rd argument becomes relatively straightforward. Throughout this report we witness just how important meaningful participation in philanthropic decision-making is both for children and young people themselves and the outputs of philanthropy. I want to extend this argument to say that it is also good for philanthropy itself.

Nurturing children's philanthropic citizenship matters: It matters in terms of both creating more meaningful and inclusive philanthropy now, and in terms of greater democratisation of philanthropy in the future. Drawing on findings from student philanthropy programmes across the United States and Europe for example, research consistently highlights the benefits of children and young people's active participation in philanthropic decision-making, including increased volunteering and giving; heightened awareness of social problems; greater commitment to ideas of social justice and equality; strengthened philanthropic knowledge and skills; increased leadership skills; and greater community engagement.

Indeed, a small handful of studies have also shown the longer-term effects on children and young people who have participated in student philanthropy and participation programmes, including volunteering up to two-and-a-half times the rate of the general population and serving on non-profit boards at three times the rate of the general population.

Adopting a children's rights approach to this participation, means we acknowledge children and young people as capable, social actors who are experts of their own lives and their own experiences – as current citizens who should be facilitated to help shape the world they are part of and not simply viewed as future citizens to mould into existing systems and structures. Engaging children and young people in philanthropic decision-making should not simply be about developing a rhetoric about how to grow children as future donors within these current systems and structures, but instead should question how we can support and facilitate children and young people to critically question these systems and structures and consider different ways of being; ways of being which foster ideas of equity and social justice, and promote ideas of the interdependence of all parts of the philanthropic ecosystem in achieving social change, including the role of volunteering, advocacy, campaigning and lobbying governments.

The great news is, as we see throughout this report, many foundations and philanthropic institutions are embracing children's voices in their decision-making. As we all work to continuously improve philanthropy – to increase equity, inclusivity and equality in philanthropic decision-making – the role of foundations becomes ever more important.

Indeed, foundations are well placed to counter problematic narratives and offer alternative examples of inclusive, community-centred philanthropic practices which recognise and indeed prioritise children's voices. Fundamentally improving practice in philanthropy requires cultural change, and cultural change is always a journey on which different actors will be at different points: Nonetheless, as long as we are all seeking to progress, the future is promising.

Successful participation of children and young people will look different in different philanthropic institutions but starting with some basic questions such as; are we offering transparent, informative, voluntary, inclusive and respectful opportunities for all children to participate; are these opportunities relevant and meaningful for children and appropriately supported by critical engagement with the topic; how are we engaging children (or at a minimum, moving towards engaging) as partners in decision-making which affects them; what does successful participation of children look like to us; and how are we cultivating children's philanthropic citizenship?

In summary, philanthropy provides a space for children and young people to explore social, environmental and political issues in a proactive, empowering way. If children and young people are to be recognised as the capable and powerful social actors that they are, and as current citizens operating in a complex world, then it is imperative that they are provided with meaningful and appropriate opportunities to critically explore and act on these ideas.

# SURVEY

## Children, Young People and Philanthropy: Key Findings from the Philea Survey

### Snapshot of the foundations in this study

During the first phase of the study, Philea conducted a survey that was sent to 200 philanthropic organisations. The 40 responding organisations are from 16 different countries (with 3 out of 40 respondents being from a non-European country). These organisations vary a lot in terms of size (both for their financial resources and for their number of employees), their focus areas and their different philanthropic approaches.

Of the 40 foundations in this study, 19 supplied financial information. These foundations have combined assets of €32 billion and annual expenditure of €1.2 billion, with a median annual expenditure of €56.7 million and an average of €63 million. To put these numbers in context, there are more than 260,000 foundations in the world<sup>2</sup> and over half are European foundations with estimated assets of around €500 billion<sup>3</sup> and annual expenditure of €60 billion.

When it comes to number of employees, the foundations in this study varied quite a bit, with 54% being small organisations (3-40 staff), 23% medium (41-100 staff), and 23% large (100+ staff).

The top 5 primary focus areas among the sample foundations are education & training,<sup>4</sup> arts & culture, health, civil society, science & technology, broadly corresponding to the primary working areas of foundations around the world.

Responding organisations direct their resources to their focus areas through different philanthropic approaches: The large majority of responding organisations (73%) are operating their own programmes (mostly in addition to their grant-making portfolio), while a minority of organisations (27%) are grant-making only. In terms of support provided, in addition to different types of financial support, it is interesting to note that 73% of respondents provide capacity-building support.

### Children and young people are among the top beneficiaries of foundations

Representing one quarter of the world's population,<sup>5</sup> it is not surprising that in several studies conducted in the philanthropic sector, including those by the former European Foundation Centre (now Philea, a convergence of Dafne - Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe - and the EFC), children and young people are among the primary beneficiaries of the work of foundations in Europe. For example, in "Institutional Philanthropy: A Focus on Disability"<sup>6</sup> the largest group receiving support by foundations were children and youth with disability.

In the present study, all the responding foundations have children and young people among their beneficiaries. The 19 organisations that provided financial information spent together over €440 million of their 2020 budgets – out of a total of €1.2 billion – on activities dedicated specifically to children and young people.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Global Philanthropy Report: Perspectives on the Global Foundation Sector. Paula D. Johnson, The Hauser Institute for Civil Society at the Center for Public Leadership (Harvard Kennedy School), 2018.

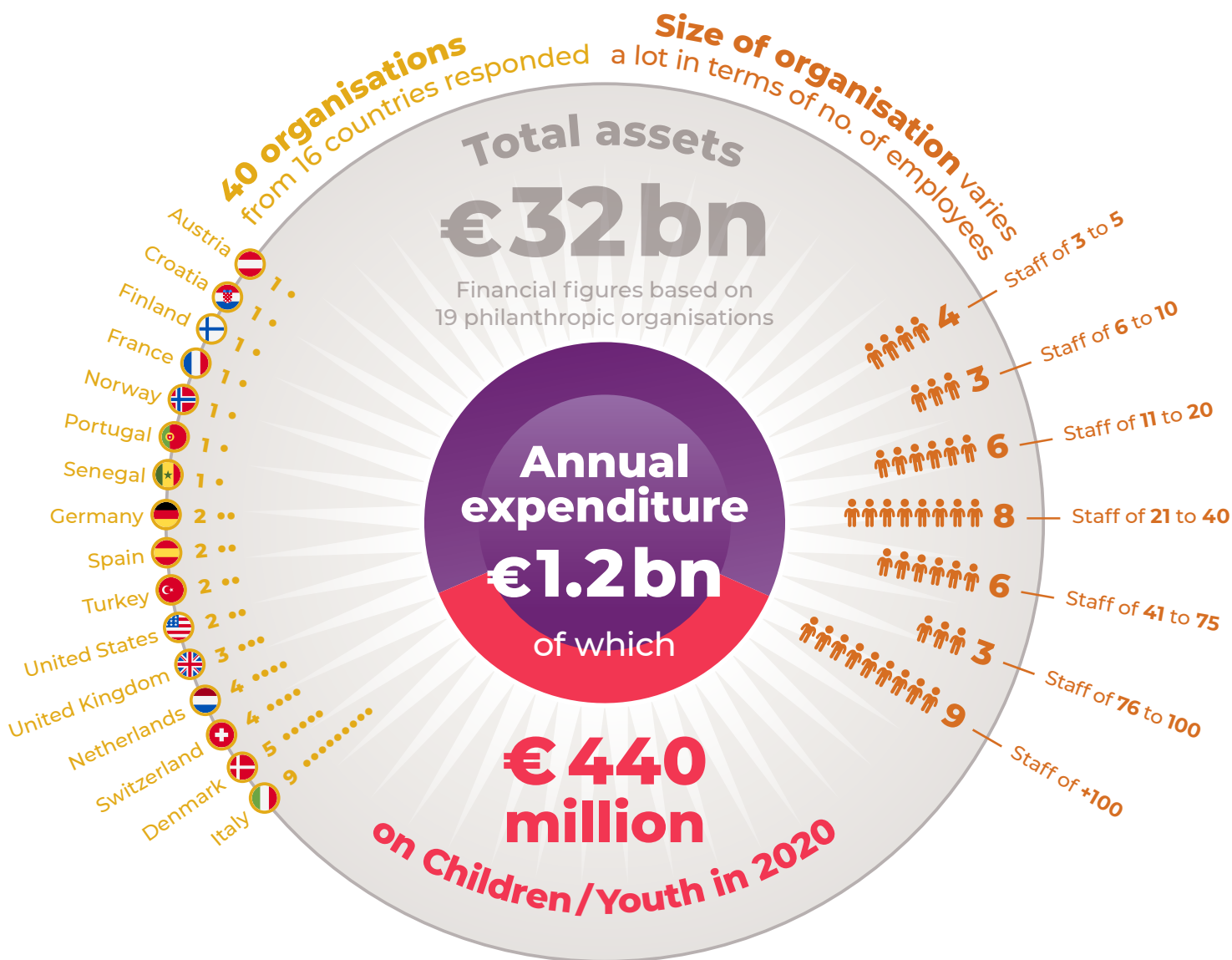
<sup>3</sup> European Foundation Sector Report 2016. Lawrence T. McGill. Co-produced by Donors and Foundations Networks in Europe (DAFNE) (Brussels), and Foundation Center (New York), 2016.

<sup>4</sup> These figures were also influenced by the fact that the target list of organisations developed for this study was composed of foundations that have children and young people among their population focus, and these are often working in the area of education.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank staff estimates based on age/sex distributions of United Nations Population Division's World Population Prospects, 2019 revision.

<sup>6</sup> Institutional Philanthropy: A Focus on Disability, European Foundation Centre, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> One of the respondents accounted for half of this expenditure.



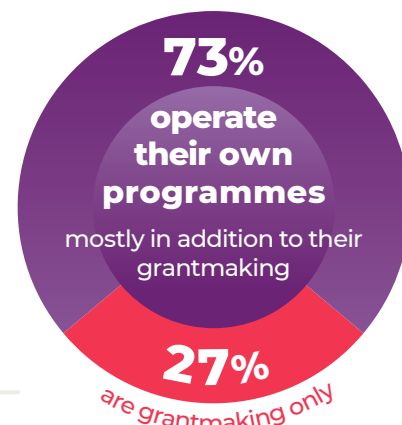
|                           | MINIMUM                       | MAXIMUM | MEDIAN   | AVERAGE  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|---------|----------|----------|
| <b>Assets</b>             | From € 300 m ..... to € 6 bn  |         | € 1.0 bn | € 1.7 bn |
| <b>Annual expenditure</b> | From € 300 k ..... to € 230 m |         | € 56.7 m | € 63.1 m |

#### MAIN TYPES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- 83%** Short-term support / grants .....
- 68%** Earmarked core support / grants .....
- 63%** Long-term support / grants .....
- 43%** Prizes and awards .....
- 33%** Fellowships .....

#### OTHER TYPES OF SUPPORT

- 73%** Organisational development .....
- 70%** Networking .....
- 55%** Expertise (leadership, research, etc.) .....
- 43%** Strategic .....
- 40%** Communications and advocacy .....



#### PRIMARY FOCUS AREAS



## Children's and young people's participation in philanthropy

But what does the above finding mean exactly? Are these ultimate beneficiaries involved in the development of projects, assignment of grants, or any decision-making process?

To understand better the roles that children and young people are playing in the world of institutional philanthropy, we asked respondents whether children and young people participate in their work. We defined "participation" as meaning that children and young people (0-21 years old) have the conditions and opportunities to express their views and influence decision-making around planning, implementing or evaluating the organisation's activities. We did not mean attending or accessing services and products, but rather impacting how such services are developed and implemented.

The survey showed that 60% of responding organisations do involve children and young people in their work to a certain degree while 40% do not.

### Barriers and drivers: From beneficiaries to participants to collaborators

#### Different interpretations and experiences with child participation

Our analysis surfaced different ways of interpreting children's and young people's participation: From having them as beneficiaries (or attendants), to having them participate at different levels of the organisation. Some foundations are experiencing a participatory process for the first time, while others have been on a learning journey for some years.

Often respondents said they are at different stages for different aspects: They might be at initial stages of involving children and young people at an organisational level, while being already advanced in involving them at

**PARTICIPATION — Definition:** "Being part of/share in"

**Etymology:** From the participle stem of Latin "participare" ("to take part in, share in, give part in, impart"), from *particeps* ("taking part in, sharing in"), from *pars* ("part") + *capiō* ("to take") (Source: [www.en.wiktionary.org/wiki/participate](http://www.en.wiktionary.org/wiki/participate))

**Paideia Foundation** organises "Estate Paideia" (Summer Paideia), a one-week holiday organised for families with children with disabilities to stimulate social participation and peer support. It's based on a family-centred holistic approach that involves all members of the family and provides them with a dedicated accessible space to take part fully in their time together without having to think about work, caregiving roles and accessibility barriers. All members of the family get to share their emotions, thoughts, concerns and dreams safely, be themselves, and create meaningful long-lasting connections. It's a unique opportunity for brothers and sisters of children with disabilities to meet with their peers and feel listened to and understood by sharing the same lived experience.

**Bernard Van Leer Foundation's** cities project, "Urban95", aims at helping city planners, urban designers, and other urbanists understand how their work can influence child development. Its goal is to encourage cities to create spaces where children can grow, learn, create, imagine and play across all neighbourhoods, reaching as many families as possible. The project helps cities increase positive interactions between caregivers, babies and toddlers; increase access to – and use of – the services and amenities families need; and reduce stresses on caregivers. Interventions are organised in two categories of policies and services:

- Family-friendly urban planning and design, including the planning, design and regulation of a city's space, land use, infrastructure and services
- Healthy environments for children, including improving air quality and access to nature

a project level. The case studies presented in this report exemplify well this variation. They also show that these steps don't always happen in a linear way but that they follow different paths in each organisation (e.g. sometimes young people involved in a project become involved in decision-making as part of the natural evolution of their role. In other cases a foundation starts different participatory processes in parallel at different levels of the organisation, etc.)

#### Roadblocks and benefits to participation

For those who have children and young people among their beneficiaries but are not currently creating opportunities for them to influence decisions about programmes or grants, there seem to be some common barriers. In particular, we identified four main issues that may be

preventing foundations from shifting to a more participatory approach:

1. Buy-in from the governance
2. Organisational mindset that is felt as traditional/conservative
3. Organisational lack of expertise in participatory experiences and methodologies
4. Blockages that are specific to a given type of philanthropic organisation (e.g. for grantmaking-only foundations, it would require a change in their internal processes).

We also asked these respondents to tell us what could be the positive or negative impact on their organisation if they were to involve children. Only two negative effects were shared: time commitment/workload and financial risk in case of failure (in particular for foundations managing large grants). A similar concern was

shared also by the foundations participating in a recent study led by Elevate Children Funders Group stating that “This is often because of safeguarding concerns, which are heightened when moving money to adolescents.”<sup>8</sup>

On the positive sides it was highlighted how this involvement could mean having a direct understanding of young people’s perspectives, bring new ideas, change the organisational mindset, lead to a full alignment with foundations’ values and, for the grantmakers, also improve their relations with grantees.

On the other hand, all of the 60% of respondents that have children and young people participating in their work are strongly recommending it to their peers. When asked about advice that they would give to foundations that are not yet involving children and young people, the 11 organisations that were interviewed confirmed that time commitment is not to be underestimated but that the financial risk is worth taking to achieve the positive effects that come with involving children and young people.

In the study mentioned above, Elevate Children Funders Group observes that hiring people with child participation expertise who can transfer their knowledge and provide training to the rest of the organisation’s staff, for example on safeguarding, is a good strategy to address the blockages to children’s participation. “(It) means that the finance team or grants team is also experienced and ready to move money to adolescents or to engage with them, their families or local partners”.

### Modes and points of participation

To regroup the answers of the 60% of respondents who have indicated that children and young people participate in their work, we have adapted two existing frameworks that help unpack children’s participation in practice: 1) the modes (or levels) of participation,<sup>9</sup> which presents different ways of sharing decision-making power between children and adults, and 2) the lattice of participation, which shows how and where the modes can be applied within a cycle of change<sup>10</sup>. We have adapted the latter to match the typical philanthropic cycle.

## HOW ARE CHILDREN INVOLVED?

**60%** of respondents indicated that they involve children and young people in their work, **40%** do not.



**40%**  
Children/youth  
are consulted

Adults seek children/youth’s views in order to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experiences, or in order to design or evaluate a programme.



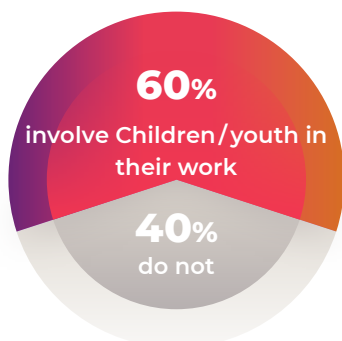
**40%**  
Children/youth  
collaborate in  
the process

Children/youth and adults, having identified a problem that needs to be addressed or having decided to set up a particular programme, together work out what needs to be done and how.



**25%**  
Children/youth  
lead the process

Children/youth are provided with the space and opportunity to initiate their own activities and carry out advocacy. Adults might serve an executive function in implementing decisions made by children.



### WHY NOT? MAIN CHALLENGES EXPRESSED BY RESPONDENTS

- Buy-in from the governance
- Organisational mind-set **traditional / conservative**
- **Lack of experience** in participatory experiences and methodologies
- Difficulties related to the **specific kind of philanthropic organisation** (e.g. for grantmaking-only foundations it would require a change in their internal processes)

<sup>8</sup> Funders Toolkit for Child and Youth Participation, Elevate Children Funders Group, 2022 [www.elevatechildren.org/publications-cyptoolkit](http://www.elevatechildren.org/publications-cyptoolkit)

<sup>9</sup> Lansdown, G., & O’Kane, C. (2014). A toolkit for monitoring and evaluating children’s participation. Booklet 3: How to measure the scope, quality and outcomes of children’s participation, p.4

<sup>10</sup> Crowley, A., Larkins, C., & Pinto, L. M. (2021). Listen – Act – Change Council of Europe Handbook on children’s participation. For professionals working for and with children. Council of Europe. [www.rm.coe.int/publication-handbook-on-children-s-participation-eng/1680a14539](http://www.rm.coe.int/publication-handbook-on-children-s-participation-eng/1680a14539)

## How are children and young people participating?

We asked whether:

- Children/youth are consulted
- Children/youth collaborate in the process
- Children/youth lead the process

As can be seen in the figure above/ on page xx, according to the responses received, children and young people are mostly either consulted by adults (40%) or collaborate with them (40%), while a significantly smaller percentage are leading the process (25%). Our case studies show that even in child-led participation, adults played an important role in ensuring the right conditions for children to be able to take leadership, whether by creating space, building their capacity, or following up on decisions made by children. On the other end of the spectrum, with activities that are totally adult-led, there are creative ways through which children's perspectives can be brought into programme design (see the example of Bernard Van Leer Foundation on page 14).

The large majority of respondents who have children and young people involved in their work indicated that participation comes in the form of designing, implementing or evaluating activities (78%); while a smaller portion of respondents (38%) said children and young people participate in decision-making within the organisation's structure. They do this by taking part in the foundation's board or a consultative body (advisory board, committees, panels); by co-defining strategic or programmatic priorities; or by being in charge of designing given activities. For 42% of respondents, children's and young people's participation is a criterion for grant attribution (of one or more activities).

## At what point do children and young people participate in the philanthropic cycle?

We asked those respondents who indicated that children/youth are involved in their programming/projects to tell us in which specific aspects of the foundation's work children/youth are involved. We mapped their responses along the philanthropic cycle, showing that:

- Most foundations involve children/youth in the implementation or evaluation phase
- A minority of foundations include children/youth in governance structures
- Only a few involve children/youth in building capacity of foundation staff

## A note on methodology and sampling strategy

From June to October 2021, the EFC (now Philea) conducted a survey to learn if and how funders are involving children and young people in their work. A list of 200 organisations was developed, based on the information available in the EFC database regarding philanthropic organisations that have children and/or young people among their beneficiaries. Additional desk research and feedback from the Steering Committee members of the EFC Children and Youth Thematic Network were taken into account to form the list.

These organisations were invited to fill out a survey: The questions, terms of reference, and specific categories used for the questions have been defined in consultation with the Steering Committee of the Children and Youth Thematic Network. Financial and other data in this report refers to the year 2020. The currency conversion rate used for calculating assets and

expenditure is based on the average rate of the year of reference. In addition to the quantitative data, respondents were also encouraged to share a recent and concrete initiative exemplifying their experience of involvement of children/young people in their work (see Annex).

A total of 40 organisations responded to the survey, 24 indicating that they do involve children/young people in their work. 32 examples of involvement of children and youth were shared (in some cases, the same organisation shared multiple examples). From the sample resulting of those respondents involving children and/or young people in their work, 11 were selected for in-depth interviews focusing on their specific practice.

The selection was based on a number of criteria to ensure diversity (country of origin, focus area, size) and to cover the full scale of participation through the examples presented. Two additional philanthropic organisations were interviewed, Fondazione Paideia and BBC Children in need, to add additional perspectives and recommendations for foundations: The first one in particular regarding the involvement of children with disabilities, and the second one to share key learnings from a toolkit for Children Participation in Philanthropy that they had developed (see list of resources at the end of the publication).

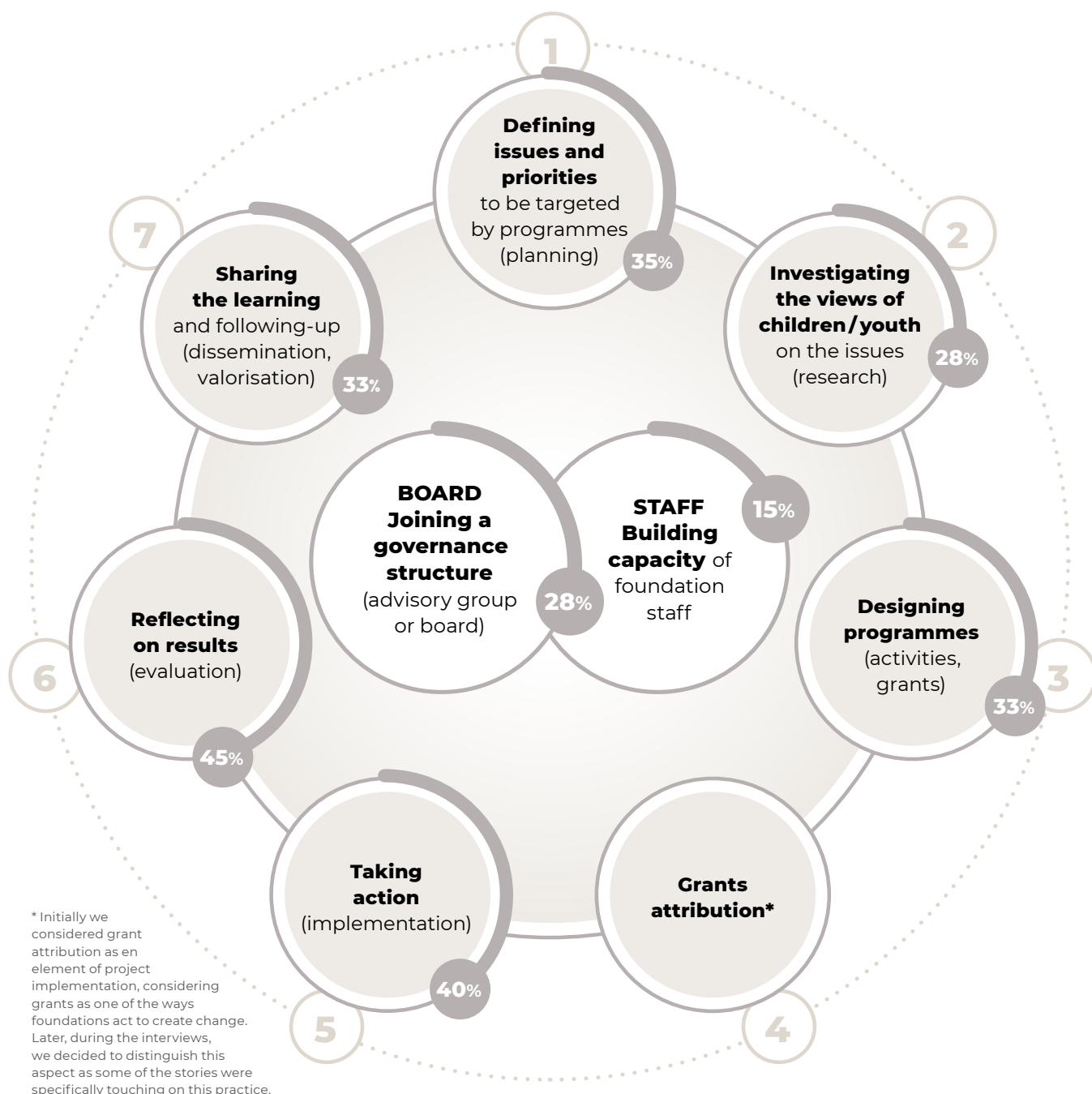
Additionally, young people involved in the projects selected for the 11 case studies were invited to join an online focus group in order to comment on the recommendations made by the foundations that were interviewed to their peers at other foundations (see Recommendations section below), and also to share their own advice for foundations and for young people who may want to work with philanthropic organisations.

A number of experts were involved in the process, including a children's rights expert, a researcher in the philanthropic field, and the network Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG).

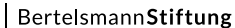
A workshop was organised during the first Philea Forum in 2022 where young people and foundation professionals that were included in this study shared their experiences of working together.

## PHILANTHROPIC CYCLE

In our survey, we sought to discover where in the philanthropic cycle foundations involve children and youth. Implementation and evaluation were the top two categories among respondents.



# CASE STUDIES

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                       |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
|    | <b>ANOUE FOUNDATION</b><br>ART4IMPACT<br> Switzerland                                                | 19 |
|    | <b>BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG</b><br>INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH EXPERT TEAMS<br> Germany               | 22 |
|    | <b>BIKUBEN FONDEN</b><br>DESIGN-THINKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE<br> Denmark / Greenland                   | 26 |
|    | <b>CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION</b><br>GULBENKIAN 15/25 PARTICIPA<br> Portugal                     | 30 |
|   | <b>FONDATION BOTNAR</b><br>YOUNG EXPERTS: TECH FOR HEALTH (YET4H)<br> Switzerland                  | 33 |
|  | <b>FONDAZIONE CASSA DI RISPARMIO DI CUNEO</b><br>WORKING WITH A PANEL OF PEER-EVALUATORS<br> Italy | 36 |
|  | <b>HIL-FOUNDATION</b><br>GIRLS COUNCIL<br> Austria                                                 | 39 |
|  | <b>LEARNING FOR WELL-BEING FOUNDATION</b><br>INTERGENERATIONAL BOARD<br> Netherlands               | 43 |
|  | <b>NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND</b><br>YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LEAD<br> United Kingdom              | 46 |
|                                                                                     | <b>OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS</b><br>PEAKS (PARTICIPATION, EDUCATION<br>AND KNOWLEDGE STRENGTHENING)                                                                                    | 50 |
|  | <b>PORTICUS</b><br>"SCHOOLFORALL" COLLECTIVE<br> France                                            | 53 |

# ANOUK FOUNDATION

## ART4IMPACT Children's participation paving the way for engagement across foundation's initiatives

| COUNTRY                                                                                       |                 | AGE                        | MODE                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Switzerland |                 | 6-16 / 16-23               | <b>Consultation</b><br><br><b>Collaboration</b><br> | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br>3. Design<br>4. Grant Attribution<br>5. Implementation<br>6. Evaluation<br>7. Follow-up<br>BOARD<br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                        | PROCESS         | ROLES                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                         |
| Healthcare<br>Arts<br>Well-being                                                              | Art competition | Contestants<br>Jury member |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                         |

An operating non-profit organisation founded in 2008, Anouk's mission is to humanise institutions and use art as a therapeutic tool to improve healing and promote well-being in social and medical institutions.

### The project

Since 2017, the Anouk Foundation has run the Art4Impact programme in partnership with the Swiss Centre for Affective Sciences at the University of Geneva. The programme invites children to submit drawings that are reproduced on the walls of a hospital by professional artists.

Anouk's mission supports the 5<sup>th</sup> standard of Children's Rights in Hospital,<sup>11</sup> which is the right to a safe and child-friendly environment. For many children and families the hospital is a source of fear and distress. A reassuring, and often therapeutic, mural allows children to cope and daydream, and can support more empathetic and positive interactions. Through Art4Impact, the foundation promotes inclusion, well-being and participation.

In addition to the call for submissions directed to children and young people aged 6 to 16, an essential aspect of the project is the intergenerational nature of the jury selecting the winning drawings. Young

people take part in a multi-disciplinary jury panel, together with art therapists, emotional specialists from the University of Geneva, and artists that work closely with the foundation. This jury follows a structured process to select, from the numerous drawings submitted, the art pieces with the highest potential to improve the emotional well-being of hospitalised children, their families and the health workers involved. Once chosen, the hospital prepares the specific room where the drawing will be turned into a mural, then the foundation's team of artists brings the drawing to life, sometimes with the help of the young patients.

The artists paint the therapeutic murals following the principles of art therapy and evidence-based design applied to hospitals, special needs institutions, psychiatric centres, refugee centres and nursing homes. It's very impactful for the children whose drawings were selected to see them realised on the walls: They can feel just how much their creativity is being appreciated as the mural is realised.

*"I think what other funders need to do is test their ideas, because there is no one rule. There is not just one way of engaging children."*

**Vanessa von Richter · Anouk Foundation**

<sup>11</sup> As defined by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and supported by the European Association for Children in Hospital.



*“It’s really nice to see that even the children from a very early age can come up with great ideas, and that we can all make a difference. We can have different cultures, different languages, ages and barriers, but if we can find ways and ideas together it will be for the best. This brings happiness in every life and everyone feels more valued.”*

**Vanessa von Richter · Anouk Foundation**

The project gives children a voice and a possibility to engage in the community. It also provides a way for families and caregivers to talk about their feelings to help cope with illness, while being a manifestation of social commitment and resilience.

## **Motivation**

The foundation began to involve children in their projects in 2012. As an initial step, the foundation started by experimenting with arts teachers in schools it already partnered with, to try to find the best formula and develop a

methodology to involve children and young people in the process. From this learning phase, the foundation has developed the concept, produced a toolkit, and established new partnerships, in particular with the University of Geneva and with public and private schools. Little by little, more young people have been involved from schools in various cities; including students from the International Baccalaureate carrying out their Creativity Action Service (CAS), and students from the University of Geneva.

Since the beginning, all parts of the organisation, from the board to

staff, embraced the idea of supporting young people’s agency, as they felt this would improve the quality of the project, and be more aligned with new generations. They realised that the paintings would be too distant from children’s perspectives without involving them, and that their inputs would bring an added value. It quickly became apparent that the programme was a win-win, as the children could develop their empathy, take action and have a voice to support the community. In addition, having children and young people involved in the project directly would also allow the foundation to present its work and mission to its beneficiaries and show them its impact.

## **Children and young people’s participation**

In Art4Impact children can participate in three main ways: Children can submit their drawings, they can be on the selection jury, and the winners can contribute to painting the murals.

*“It’s important to really make a link to your core action. Because at the beginning, you’re going to try things out, but as long as you always have that link in mind, you can continue improving what you’re doing.”*

**Vanessa von Richter · Anouk Foundation**

The selection jury is composed of a member of the Anouk Foundation, an art therapist, a representative of the medical sector, a senior artist, and 1-2 young people to represent the beneficiaries (aged 13-17). After being prepared with all the background information on the project, as well as expectations of their roles in the jury, they meet in person to review and discuss all the submitted drawings. The strength in this exchange derives from the presence of professionals with expertise in active listening and dealing with feelings, which grants them a sensitivity to appreciate different views and to give space to each member of the jury. The views shared by the young members of the selection jury are always respected and influence the decisions taken by the group on an equal footing.

### **Success factors and limiting factors**

One of the success factors of the project has been having access to art teachers or IB students who were very motivated and who became involved due to their strong belief in the project. They are the ones creating the link with the

children. In some cases, they ended up being the ones who carried out the project for several years in a row. Still, relying on the teacher’s goodwill could at times be a limiting factor, since it required adding activities to their already full curriculum.

Another challenge is the length of the project’s cycle, which differs from the rhythm of the school year. This means that often drawings end up being selected over the summer, which creates a disconnect with students who meanwhile may have changed schools, leading to a situation where they might not track their drawing’s selection or they might lose contact with the teacher who ensures the link between the students and the project. In some cases, transforming a drawing into a mural depends on a given hospital’s timeframe, so the time between selecting a drawing and producing a mural can be from a few months to two years.

The foundation intends to improve the way the results from the jury are communicated, and to ensure that the feedback from the participants is collected in a structured manner and integrated in the foundation’s learnings.

### **Learning and transformation**

The participatory engagement embedded in Art4Impact has clearly become a strong pillar for the foundation, which now runs similar projects in migrant centres, elderly homes, and special needs institutions. The foundation is also launching other participatory activities such as community days with companies. The foundation has also started working with CAS students in creating digital environments to help children who have never been in a hospital to experience clinical spaces in healthcare centres, increasing their ability to have empathy and to meet the positive challenge of Art4Impact. Some volunteer students spontaneously continued their engagement with the project by creating short documentaries, leading social media campaigns and organising fundraising events.

It was essential for the foundation to engage children and young people in its work and to always keep its core mission and values as a compass to guide the foundation along its journey. ☛

### **Links and resources**

**Anouk Foundation**  
[www.anouk.org/en/impact-en](http://www.anouk.org/en/impact-en)

**WHO’s Children’s rights in hospital - Rapid-assessment checklists (English)**  
[www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/342769/Check-list-Child-rights-in-hospital\\_layoutOPE.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/342769/Check-list-Child-rights-in-hospital_layoutOPE.pdf)



**www.anouk.org**

# BERTELSMANN STIFTUNG

## INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH EXPERT TEAMS

Creating action for social equity and putting children's needs at the heart of research

| COUNTRY                                                                                   |                         | AGE                                     | MODE                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Germany |                         | 13-21                                   | <b>Consultation</b><br><br><b>Collaboration</b><br> | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br><b>3. Design</b><br>4. Grant Attribution<br><b>5. Implementation</b><br><b>6. Evaluation</b><br>7. Follow-up<br>BOARD<br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                    | PROCESS                 | ROLES                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Intergenerational dialogue<br>Social equity<br>Education                                  | Capacity-building event | Advisors<br>Facilitators<br>Researchers |                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                              |

The Bertelsmann Foundation aims to tackle problems within society. One of its approaches is to solve them by developing exemplary models with experts from practical and theoretical fields, and to put these models into effect.

### The project

Two projects that exemplify Bertelsmann Stiftung's experience of involving children and young people in its work through the creation of Young Expert Teams are: "ACT2GETHER", and the project, "Family and Education: Creating Child-Centered Policies".

ACT2GETHER works on effective solutions to tackle social inequality with and for marginalised young people. A flagship part of the project, 2GETHERLAND, is an intergenerational camp that was planned twice, in 2019 and 2022, by young people and adults together. The Young Expert Team that co-designs the camp is composed of 15 young people aged 13 to 21 with lived experience of social inequity. 2GETHERLAND works as a strategy laboratory for

fair opportunities and enables direct exchange with disadvantaged children and young people on their problems, questions, and proposed solutions.

In the project "Family and Education: Creating Child-Centered Policies", the needs, rights, interests and well-being of children and adolescents are put at the heart of the research. The foundation's project managers

work side-by-side with both a scientific expert panel as well as a Young Expert Team to develop proposals on how to effectively address child poverty in Germany and fulfil children's rights and participation sustainably.

*"Children who are living in precarious situations usually have other priorities than participating in a Young Expert Team. Their mindset can be survival oriented. And sometimes it tends to also be short-term oriented and functional, which makes sense once you understand the circumstances in which they have grown up."*

**Alexa Meyer-Hamme · Bertelsmann Stiftung**

### Beginning

Over the years, the foundation has had several experiences involving children and young people in decision-making, in particular in projects within the focus areas of democracy and civil society. The



principle of involving children and young people was already part of Bertelsmann Stiftung's culture, but at one point the foundation decided to explore different youth participation models and their particular impact. The intention was to shift the approach from doing things "for young people", to doing it "for and with them".

In time, it became evident that for its research on child-centred policies (one of the foundation's most renowned projects) to gain legitimacy and become more impactful, it had to also consult with children and take into account their opinions and lived experiences. Children and adolescents are the experts of their own lives, which is why they must be heard when (political) decisions that have an impact on their lives are made. It was felt that to be authentic and not perceived as a

simple branding effort, their involvement had to start from the design phase of the project and continue throughout its development. This meant accepting that the way

*"You should always ask yourself the question: Does it make sense to include young people here and to make them active participants here? Be clear in what you expect from them, and what they can expect from you."*

**Alexa Meyer-Hamme · Bertelsmann Stiftung**

the project was operated had to change, which would also change the way decisions were taken.

A similar reflection happened with ACT2GETHER, an international project founded by the Learning for Well-being Foundation that the Bertelsmann foundation intended to replicate in Germany. In doing so, Bertelsmann's team could rely on the expertise of the Learning for Well-being Foundation, one

of the project's core partners, and also build from the experience gained by the colleagues working in the child-centred policy research. Initially, a Youth Expert

Team was created with the goal to help organise a 2GETHERLAND camp in 2019, to co-create the programme for the different strands, and to think about the content and different formats of the event.

For both projects it was decided to create Youth Expert Teams that would have a consultative and collaborative function, and would be involved in the project's design and strategy.

## **Outreach and forming Youth Expert Teams**

To have meaningful participation, the foundation judged it essential to have a diverse and representative

group of individuals with a balance of genders and lived experience of social inequity, but also a direct interest in the project, both in terms of topics and in terms of required skills (organisational or research skills/interests, depending on the project).

Although the group compositions matched these requirements in the end, reaching the right target groups and ensuring the desired representation was one of the challenges experienced by the foundation (e.g. watching out for selection bias during the application process, etc.). The foundation relied on its partners for the outreach, as they were the ones in direct contact with young people, and they utilised social media as preferred channels for this purpose.

### Profiles and involvement of children and young people, and interaction with adults

For ACT2GETHER, the young people selected for the Young Expert Team were very much programme-oriented but not necessarily topic experts, while the team involved in the child-centred policy project was formed by young people who either had an interest in the research subject and/or had already acquired some knowledge on the topic.

*“There’s a nice saying with the fisher and the fish that basically says that the worm is not supposed to be delicious for the fisher but for the fish. And this is the same old story with our target orientation: It is not important if we like TikTok or a really cool group of rappers. The question is if the message is getting through to our target groups.”*

**Alexa Meyer-Hamme · Bertelsmann Stiftung**

In both projects, the Bertelsmann foundation hired external moderators who were recommended from experienced project partners beforehand since it did not have competence in youth participation within the organisation. The Bertelsmann Foundation acts as a think tank research centre, and its team is normally composed of researchers or policy advisers rather than frontline professionals working directly with young people. Additionally, the moderators hired were social workers and in some cases also came from the same background as the young experts. This was essential to create a connection, sharing the same language, codes and comparable life experiences. The moderators proposed different engaging formats both for online and offline contexts. They were also essential in resolving potential conflicts since, ideally, the

foundation wanted the young experts to actively oppose, be critical, and bring different, new perspectives rather than being neutral in their interaction.

There were three complementary roles played by the project’s stakeholders: The foundation brought its subject matter expertise, the moderators brought process and methodical expertise, and finally the young people came in with expertise coming from lived experiences, be it from personal experience or involvement with the topic. Such roles have no rigid boundaries, and each participant brought their unique contribution to the table.

### Learning and transformation

Along its journey, the Bertelsmann foundation acknowledged the importance of going through a self-awareness moment to identify its own strengths as well as the missing skills and perspectives that were needed to realise the intended shift. Working in partnership with those organisations and/or external moderators that could bring those missing elements was fundamental.

The experiences with the Young Expert Teams have taught invaluable lessons to the foundation, and have transformed its organisational culture in numerous ways. It encouraged a culture of opposition, which gave the foundation





unexpected perspectives. In an organisation whose nature and style is very research-based and focused on policy advice, working with young people has instilled a more multisensorial approach where feelings and emotions are equally valued in the process. This also required that workshops and learning opportunities were organised differently, allowing participants to feel comfortable and free to express themselves through all their senses. Learning from these experiences, the Young Expert Teams have initiated, or are planning to initiate, several other projects with the foundation. They also assumed new roles over the years from being consulted as Young Expert Teams to being experts on youth participation and child poverty themselves, organising workshops with

other children and adolescents on what makes a “good” life for them (“Peer2Peer”-project in the “Family and Education” project since 2020)

For an impact-oriented organisation, this type of work has also generated a reflection around the practice of evaluation and the need to adapt it in order to find innovative ways to learn from these participatory processes involving young people.

In terms of organisational development, the Bertelsmann foundation has introduced a new strategic theme, “next generation”, among the six societal challenges that guide its work. It will revolve around how the next generation of young people co-creates, influences and participates in the society we live in and in all its different sectors (e.g. education, economy, etc.). ●●

## Links and resources

Bertelsmann Stiftung  
[www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de)

More information about  
 ACT2GETHER  
[www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/unsere-projekte/act2gether](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/unsere-projekte/act2gether)

ACT2GETHER main website  
[www.act2gether.world](http://www.act2gether.world)

2GETHERLAND  
[www.act2gether.de/de/startseite/2getherland](http://www.act2gether.de/de/startseite/2getherland)

Family and Education: Creating Child-Centered Policies  
[www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/family-and-education-creating-child-centered-policies/project-description-1](http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/en/our-projects/family-and-education-creating-child-centered-policies/project-description-1)

# BIKUBEN FONDEN

## DESIGN-THINKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people living in alternative care as co-creators and advocates

| COUNTRY                                                                                               |                                       | AGE      | MODE                                                                                                | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Denmark / Greenland |                                       | 13-30    | Consultation<br>  | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br>3. Design<br>4. Grant Attribution<br>5. Implementation<br>6. Evaluation<br>7. Follow-up<br>BOARD<br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                                | PROCESS                               | ROLES    | Collaboration<br> |                                                                                                                                         |
| Social inclusion<br>Housing<br>Fostercare<br>Local governance                                         | Design-thinking for social innovation | Planners |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                         |

The foundation's mission is to make lasting improvements to the societies of Denmark and Greenland through the promotion of culture, education, natural resources and social work. Bikuben Foundation has a specific strategic focus on young people aged 13 to 30, particularly targeting individuals at the edge of society or facing complex social issues. The foundation has recently shifted from being a more traditional grantmaking foundation towards working more strategically with partners through building a dialogue and finding different ways to support them financially, but also through knowledge sharing, network building, and supporting their organisational development.

### The project

As part of its programmatic area on social work, the foundation involved 18 young people aged 13 to 30 with lived experience in alternative care, in a thorough design-thinking process to analyse the issues related to transitioning from foster care to living independently. This particular field touches on many different areas, from justice to education to social services. In Scandinavian countries, not much support is provided for this transition either financially, structurally or psychologically. The aim of the study was to gain a deeper understanding of the problem in order to come up with recommendations from those directly concerned for policymakers so they can find better solutions and change the underlying system in place. The whole

journey consisted of a research phase, followed by an open call to Danish municipalities to involve young people in a co-design process, and then test small but concrete solutions at a local level.

### Motivation

In 2018 the foundation launched a major report that had a focus on young people on the edge of society and outside the education system or labour market. The study included all the latest research and involved qualified practitioners and researchers, who had contributed to exemplify different ways to tackle the issues. However, at the time of the launch, a question arose regarding the absence of voices from the young people concerned. During that time, the foundation was already reflecting on ways and opportunities to involve young people in



its work, but that remark served as a definitive wake-up call for the foundation to start an internal strategic reflection that changed its way of working.

A new study was launched, but this time involving young people with lived experience as central players in this work, having the target group of the research speaking for themselves directly. The foundation recognised that working professionally involving young people demands an expertise on methodologies, which was a critical criterion for choosing our consultancies that helped produce the study. In addition to the results of the study, during this analytical phase it was decided along the journey that it would be important to also produce a paper on the process itself that the foundation had embarked on, sharing some learnings and suggestions on the key elements to consider when deciding to involve young people in a similar process. The involvement process formed a method of how to involve this target group, which has inspired other important actors to include and involve

*“You cannot always just read a report, you have to feel it or be in the process yourself, because it does something to you, it opens your eyes in a different way to hear lived experiences. It gives you a more holistic view on the challenges they face.”*

**Christina Diekhöner · Bikuben Fonden**

this target group – for instance other foundations (Lauritzenfonden), national actors (The Council for children) and organisations (The Home for All Alliance).

### **From national study to local design-thinking**

The study was launched at an event in the presence of the Danish Ministry of Social Affairs. The young people involved in the research were also present and had a central role in the event, together with the organisation that represents them. On one hand, the young people were empowered and reclaimed their centrality in the dialogue, and at the same time the foundation gained its legitimate space in the

discussion thanks to this process. For the foundation, this has created a very strong basis and a really different dynamic when building partnerships, since it now bases its evidence on solid research on and recommendations from the target participants of its programmes. The foundation has used the report to bring together the different stakeholders active in this area to create a new and “neutral” strategic vision for a systemic change on the matter, and to express concrete recommendations aimed at policymakers.

After completing the study, the foundation launched a call for proposals directed to any Danish municipality willing to start an innovative design-thinking process to

propose solutions, together with the young people, to tackle the problems concerning young people in foster care. The headlines of the call were not about having a proposal ready to be implemented but rather explaining why the municipalities were interested in working with the foundation, what were their challenges and how they intended to work together with the different partners concerned.

Together with the three municipalities selected and through a series of workshops with the young people, all actors involved in the project gained a deep and authentic understanding of the problem and its specificity at a local level. The conclusions drawn from the process were along the lines of those in the foundation's study. However, it was felt that rather than providing them with those conclusions directly, it was much better that they experience the process themselves, as the emotional component and real understanding could only be gained through directly participating in this kind of immersive process. This process was a real game changer for the foundation and influenced all partners and people involved in their different roles.

For the social worker for example, it revitalised their strong connection with the young people. For the politicians, it allowed them to work at a systemic level, and influence policies. Indeed, while often political discussions are about structures and law-making, having brought the human dimension of

*"I think that this process showed us how powerful it is, when you invite the target group to speak for themselves."*

**Christina Diekhöner ·  
Bikuben Fonden**

the issue proved very effective in discussing systemic change. The foundation saw these kinds of processes as tremendously powerful in evoking emotions and enriching each other's views, often in unexpected ways; and it could not have achieved success without including the individuals directly concerned.

## Involving young people

During the study-phase, 18 young people were invited to work together with researchers and practitioners to tell them about their direct experience living in foster care and highlight what were the main barriers in the transition to independent living from their perspective. During this phase, three level of knowledge were brought together to build the study: from researchers, from practitioners, and from young people with lived experience.

For the design-thinking process, the Danish organisation representing people in alternative care helped identifying a group of young people that could be involved. Their aim was to collect and share their experiences, give them a voice, and build their capacity to collaborate with media, participate in public debates and influence policymakers. Their involvement was an essential element in the process: These young people were already recognised and trusted by the young programme participants who came from vulnerable backgrounds, thus creating a safe space for them to feel protected and respected, and



*“If there’s one thing that we’ve learned working in this process, it is that you always have to push boundaries, because you get surprised at what kind of new knowledge it brings you. You get new answers and perspectives that you couldn’t have seen without involving the youngsters themselves.”*

**Christina Diekhöner · Bikuben Fonden**

therefore willing and open to share their stories. This turned out to be even more important during the time of Covid-19 when the meetings had to be moved online: It was essential to build from an existing trust with all the required sensitivity to maintain that safe space in a virtual environment.

The three municipalities involved have tested different ideas on a small scale for addressing the difficulties signalled by the young people in the reflective phase. Involving the young people in the test phase and activating a regular feedback loop with them is essential for the foundation to be respected by the municipalities when implementing the project. Indeed, the foundation sees their involvement as an integrated way of working. As this is seen as a learning journey also for the municipalities, the foundation is ready to support them throughout the process, including by providing additional financial means to hire a consultancy that could help achieving the project’s aims.

## **Learning and transformation**

For the foundation, the young collaborators became the “guiding stars” that helped navigate the main barriers and explore possibilities to solve some of the issues that they face in society. This new way of thinking led the foundation to a different working culture.

After the design-thinking process, the foundation launched a call that had among its main criteria the request to specify how the applicant would involve young people in the development of the project submitted.

In addition to sharing their stories and points of view throughout the journey, the young participants became advocates for the issues affecting them. They became more outspoken, they started participating in other fora, and it was clear that this involvement had strong side effects in their personal development. Their story gave them meaning, because they helped change

the way other young people would be going through the same system, which was incredibly rewarding. The foundation helped raise the voices of young people in alternative care and strengthen the focus on the needed structural changes. The foundation is now focusing on how it can work with not only involving young people but also giving them more decision-making power in the process. In the next innovation process the foundation is keen to implement this.

The small-scale testing brought the foundation a bedrock of evidence and key learnings that helped in planning further strategic collaborations, larger-scale projects and investment in scalable solutions. ☛

## **Links and resources**

**Bikuben Fonden**  
[www.bikubenfonden.dk](http://www.bikubenfonden.dk)

**BikubenFonden,**  
**Creating New Opportunities**  
[www.bikubenfonden.dk/uk/creating-new-opportunities](http://www.bikubenfonden.dk/uk/creating-new-opportunities)

**The Alliance, A Home for All**  
[www.bikubenfonden.dk/uk/alliance-home-all](http://www.bikubenfonden.dk/uk/alliance-home-all)



**[www.bikubenfonden.dk](http://www.bikubenfonden.dk)**

# CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION

## GULBENKIAN 15/25 PARTICIPA

Children informing the foundation's strategy development

| COUNTRY                                                                                    |                      | AGE      | MODE                                                                                                                                                                                      | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Portugal |                      | 15-25    | Consultation                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>1. Planning</b><br>2. Research<br>3. Design<br>4. Grant Attribution<br><b>5. Implementation</b><br>6. Evaluation<br>7. Follow-up<br>BOARD<br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                     | PROCESS              | ROLES    | <br>Collaboration<br> |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Organisational development<br>Inter-generational justice                                   | Strategy development | Advisors |                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                       |

The foundation is a Portuguese institution set up in perpetuity with charitable, artistic, educational and scientific statutory aims. It is committed to full independence and the preservation of its heritage, and its main priority is defined as the development of a sustainable society that provides equal opportunities.

### The project

The foundation carried out an intensive consultation process involving a group of young people selected among the beneficiaries of its grantees.

Under the title "Gulbenkian 15-25 Participa" (literally "take part"), the initiative aimed at gathering young people's perspectives and recommendations that could inform the foundation's next round of strategic planning. The multi-faceted process consisted of a series of boot camps, facilitated by the team of ComParte, a youth participation project from Maria Rosa Foundation.

The boot camps had three main aims: First, to understand what it means to be young in today's world, and specifically in Portugal, and to uncover the main opportunities and the challenges faced by younger generations. Second, the foundation wanted to align its priorities, policies and ways of working with the needs of current and future generations. Third, the foundation wanted to identify some innovative ideas that could be implemented immediately to address the needs of young people.

After the boot camps, a number of meetings were organised between the participants in the project and each programmatic team at the foundation, as well as the Board of Trustees. These meetings were an opportunity for foundation staff and governance to engage directly with young people.

In 2018, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation launched a movement called Gulbenkian Academies for Knowledge to promote social and emotional skills for children and young people, from 0 to 25 years of age, with 100 projects around Portugal. With the initiative Gulbenkian 25<25 (targeted to young people aged 13 to 25), in partnership with Ashoka Portugal, the foundation intends to demonstrate the potential of joining an Academy and contributing to solving problems in the community, but also at a global level. In a guided process through 5 areas of the SDGs, 25 young winners and 14 projects were selected and got mentorship and funding from private partner companies.



## Motivation

The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has developed several participatory initiatives, from projects including youth programming,<sup>12</sup> to involving young representatives in steering committees guiding specific projects.

The idea of a consultation with young people originated with the board members, who wanted to increase youth participation. There were three main motivations behind this intention: intergenerational justice, inclusion and sustainability.

In recent years, the foundation has been paying close attention to intergenerational justice, one of the strategic priorities set forth by the foundation in 2018. Through a dedicated project, it produced a number of forecast studies and policy papers that have received public attention and have been debated in the Portuguese parliament. Intergenerational justice is a topic of real concern to the trustees who

*“If we want to be relevant, we have to plan far, far ahead. And if we want to plan far ahead, where shall we invest? What are our critical areas of contribution to the society? What should be our role? So these kinds of questions were in the minds of our trustees. And the answer was, okay, let’s involve the youngsters in the life of the foundation.”*

**Pedro Cunha · Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation**

want to include young people who are directly impacted in this reflection. The board also wanted to make the foundation more diverse and inclusive, not only considering cultural and social background but also generational differences.

Finally, the board was concerned with long-term impact and sustainability, looking into the future and understanding where investments should be made. They wanted to identify the critical areas of contribution to society, and the role the

foundation could play in supporting them. Indeed, as social impact is a long-term investment, it was fundamental for the foundation to start collaborating in the present with the generation that will be most affected by its actions in the future.

## Profiles and involvement of young people

The programme directors were asked to identify which of their grantees had young people aged

<sup>12</sup> “Gulbenkian 15-25 Imagina”: An initiative of cultural programming and curatorship for the young which took place at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation between January and July 2020 [www.gulbenkian.pt/en/project/gulbenkian-15-25-imagina](http://www.gulbenkian.pt/en/project/gulbenkian-15-25-imagina)

15 to 25 among their beneficiaries. From this list, a convenience sample of 51 individuals was created, ensuring a diverse representation in terms of regions of origin, and social and cultural background. This selection was made by the grantees, who identified young people that knew about the Gulbenkian Foundation and were able to express their ideas confidently.

The 51 selected participants attended a number of experiential residential events or virtual meetings, facilitated by youth participation experts who designed the whole process. Each boot camp had its own programme revolving around a specific issue to be tackled. The central issues were designed and negotiated with young people.

Although initially planned to take place in person, some of the boot camps had to be readapted to virtual gatherings due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This adaptation was challenging, but also brought opportunities. Through a mixed approach of online meetings accompanied by physical elements (e.g. boxes and mails that were sent to the participants between the online sessions and contained tasks and activities), these events in the end succeeded in their intent.

From this process, the foundation expected not only ideas as an outcome, but a real involvement, going further than a light consultation. For this reason, the board, the programme directors and their teams built on the results of the boot camps with a series of in-depth discussions with a smaller group of 14 young people, selected among

*“If anybody thinks about, shall I involve kids in the way I manage my organisation? If you have this question, you should read this book and its checklist, because this is the answer to your question. That’s why the title of the book is ‘Is this for me?’. So if you think, shall I consult or shall I involve children and youth? The answer is, first, I have to think about if this is the right call for me, if I’m really interested or motivated to do something.”*

**Pedro Cunha · Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation**

the larger group of participants, and connected with specific areas of interest.

## Learning and transformation

In addition to supporting some of the project’s concrete ideas through the programme “Gulbenkian Knowledge Academies”, the foundation published a book which includes testimonials, a description of the process, and a checklist for participation based on young people’s recommendations. This resource is directed at organisations that may want to embark on a similar journey, as it helps them to assess how participatory their organisation or event is, and what some of the elements are to consider in order to make their activities more meaningful.

As the process is ongoing, it is premature to analyse in which way this experience has transformed the foundation. Some of the foreseeable changes we might attribute to

this process are the fact that participation, as a transversal theme, will be placed at the heart of the foundation’s work; the foundation launched three pilot projects on youth participation and democracy in Portugal; and last, this experience has created even more willingness to consider beneficiaries of all ages not as recipients, but direct agents of the foundation’s work. ☞

## Links and resources

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation  
[www.gulbenkian.pt](http://www.gulbenkian.pt)

Project page: Gulbenkian 15/25 Participa  
[www.gulbenkian.pt/en/project/gulbenkian-15-25-participa](http://www.gulbenkian.pt/en/project/gulbenkian-15-25-participa)

Publication: “Será que isto é para mim - O que leva os jovens a participar”  
[www.comparte.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/caderno\\_15\\_25\\_af\\_02\\_online.pdf](http://www.comparte.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/caderno_15_25_af_02_online.pdf)

Partner page  
[www.comparte.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/caderno\\_15\\_25\\_af\\_02\\_online.pdf](http://www.comparte.pt/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/caderno_15_25_af_02_online.pdf)

# FONDATION BOTNAR

## YOUNG EXPERTS: TECH FOR HEALTH (YET4H)

Establishing a youth advisory council to impact global advocacy

| COUNTRY                                                                                       |          | AGE      | MODE                                                                                                      | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Switzerland |          | 10-24    | <b>Consultation</b><br> | 1. Planning<br><b>2. Research</b><br>3. Design<br>4. Grant Attribution<br>5. Implementation<br>6. Evaluation<br>7. Follow-up<br>BOARD<br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                        | PROCESS  | ROLES    |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                |
| Technology<br>Access to healthcare<br>Digital innovation                                      | Campaign | Advisors |                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                |

Fondation Botnar works to improve the health and well-being young people living in growing intermediary cities around the world. Advocating for the inclusion of youth voices and the equitable use of AI and digital technology, the foundation invests in and supports innovative programmes and research, and brings together actors from across sectors to create dialogue and partnerships. It has supported a number of projects in its different programmatic areas, engaging young people from design-thinking to decision-making, and including activities on youth leadership and mentoring, among others.

### The project

The establishment of the “Young Experts: Tech for Health” (YET4H) advisory council to inform “Transform Health”, a global advocacy coalition supported by Fondation Botnar, exemplifies well how the foundation concretely includes young people in its projects.

Transform Health brings together community leaders, healthcare professionals, the private sector, civil society, research institutes, international organisations and governments to advocate for the adoption of digital technologies and data to transform health systems so that countries can achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC) commitments by 2030.

Young people aged 10 to 24 – who make up one-quarter of the world’s population – and in particular young women and girls, are facing structural barriers to accessing

health services and information. Responding to this critical reality, the foundation created a youth council to support Transform Health, aimed at providing independent insight and advice on how to leverage digital innovation to address these barriers. YET4H was conceived as an independent young experts’ advisory board that contributes to all aspects of Transform Health’s work through strategic guidance and technical inputs.

### Motivation

Fondation Botnar focuses on young people and it is part of its core commitment to involve them in its work. The foundation has been through a learning journey and has been reflecting on how to engage young people in its work, not simply as classic beneficiaries but rather as active agents of change. As a result, the projects supported by the foundation have seen a growth in



young people's participation in decision-making. YET4H is a concrete example of how this commitment translates into the different initiatives supported by the foundation.

The idea to involve young people came from staff members together with the project team that was working on the early concept of Transform Health, including the other early Transform Health partners PMNCH, PATH and Women Deliver. Fondation Botnar contracted Plan International Canada for around two years to help set up the youth council – in collaboration with the selected young experts – including

deciding on aspects such as the name of the council, governance and policies, strategy and work plan, and brand and messaging,

### **Involving young people**

Young Experts: Tech 4 Health comprises 12 people aged 18 to 30 who are experts in policy and advocacy, health, digital technology and youth engagement. Members actively engage in the Transform Health coalition's network governance and co-lead working circles (campaign, policy, resource and investment, networks and engagement).

*“Young people are one element in a system, and the system is always reacting and has loads of unintended consequences. So, you have to be able to steer the work in a direction so that at the end of the day, you have a city where young people are really taken as a serious partner, and as a serious stakeholder in a youth-centred way.”*

**Susanna Hausmann · Fondation Botnar**

YET4H works to advance the global health agenda in two core ways: First, by designing independent initiatives and campaigns to highlight the intersections of youth, digital technology and global health. They do this by building networks of young people globally, drawing attention to best practices and generating opportunities for engagement. Second, they support the coalition's core working groups as co-leads and members, bringing forward their unique perspectives and supporting the development of inclusive policies and campaigns.

At a project or programme level, Fondation Botnar has been supporting organisations that include youth voices in different ways (e.g. youth budgeting, youth leadership, etc.). Also, at a project and programme level, the foundation regularly collaborates with experts in children and youth participation in order to continue to improve the level and quality of engagement of young people in its initiatives.

At an organisational level, through the development of its theory of change, the foundation has clearly

defined meaningful youth engagement as one of its key principles. Nonetheless, translating the principles into practices and organisational structures is not an immediate shift. The foundation has started a reflective process to evaluate thoroughly the different options and existing practices to involve young people in grantmaking decisions.

## Learning and transformation

Learning from the experience of involving young people at programme level, the foundation's intention is to continue taking steps to improve the way it promotes youth participation. To do this, it has recently started a strategic development process which involves reflecting on some key questions such as, *"How do we define young people? Who constitutes that group? How do we reach these individuals, including those excluded digitally? What does meaningful participation actually mean? What kind of principles should the foundation adopt in order for the whole organisation to achieve this?"*.

In a consultative process that also includes young experts, the foundation is seeking answers to some

*"I think one totally underestimated aspect in all of the youth engagement or young children participation is the aspect of ideology. We often think that when young people say something of course, they are always right, because they are young people and they are experts of their young age, but they are actually not because they are also digesting what they hear and therefore there is a lot of ideology and that's something which troubles me very much to see how we can overcome this."*

**Susanna Hausmann · Fondation Botnar**

of these questions by exploring distinct models of young people's participation and different possibilities to integrate them into the existing decision-making structures. This helps the foundation see better how meaningful youth participation can be translated into the different levels of the foundation's structure, and reflect on what is more advisable for the foundation – whether it should continue integrating these participation structures only at a project level for the time being, or move to the organisational level. Ultimately, the foundation seeks to

establish the fundamental architecture needed to grow into working more intentionally, collaboratively, and equitably with young people. ☛

## Links and resources

Fondation Botnar  
[www.fondationbotnar.org](http://www.fondationbotnar.org)

Project page: Young experts:  
Tech for Health (YET4H)  
[www.fondationbotnar.org/project/young-experts-tech-4-health-yet4h](http://www.fondationbotnar.org/project/young-experts-tech-4-health-yet4h)

Transform Health Coalition  
[www.transformhealthcoalition.org](http://www.transformhealthcoalition.org)

*f o n d a t i o n*  
**BOTNAR**

**[www.fondationbotnar.org](http://www.fondationbotnar.org)**

# FONDAZIONE CASSA DI RISPARMIO DI CUNEO

## WORKING WITH A PANEL OF PEER-EVALUATORS

Youth perspectives and expertise enrich the grantmaking process

| COUNTRY                                                                                 |                   | AGE        | MODE                                                                                                                                                                                                      | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Italy |                   | 16-18      | Consultation<br><br>Collaboration<br> | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br>3. Design<br>4. Grant Attribution<br>5. Implementation<br>6. Evaluation<br>7. Follow-up<br>BOARD<br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                  | PROCESS           | ROLES      |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                         |
| Education<br>Schools<br>Teachers                                                        | Grant attribution | Evaluators |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                         |

The mission of Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Cuneo (CRC) is to improve the quality of life for its community's citizens, working in the areas of social cohesion, welfare, education, culture and sustainable local development.

### The project

The foundation has recently, for the first time, directly involved young people in one of its activities: It has invited a group of students to contribute to the selection process of one of its biggest calls for proposals. The foundation decided to set up a peer-evaluators panel composed of 44 individuals, among which 18 were young students aged 16 to 18. The call was directed to schools in south Piedmont, Northern Italy. The peer-evaluators had to analyse carefully and evaluate more than a hundred proposals submitted by the schools.

Schools could submit proposals for the different areas of the foundation's interventions such as, wealth, inclusion, sport activities and outdoor education. The latter theme was included as a result of a process of active listening that the foundation tested in 2020 during the summer break immediately after the first Covid-19 lockdown when schools were closed for a long period of time.

The foundation launched a challenge for children and young people to share the kind of school they were dreaming to go back to after confinement. The foundation received more than 300 inputs from this challenge,

and the majority proposed "outdoor schools". Hence, these ideas influenced directly the themes of the calls for proposals and also demonstrated to the foundation how listening to those directly impacted could shift the foundation's thematic priorities.

### Beginning

The idea of involving young people in the selection process of one of the largest calls for proposals at the foundation was inspired and stimulated during one of the meetings of the Children and Youth Network of the former European Foundation Centre (now Philea, a convergence of Dafne and EFC) of which the foundation is part. Indeed, listening to experiences from other organisations involving children and young people in their work, the foundation felt that it would be appropriate for it to try something similar, since children and young people are among its key beneficiaries.

On another occasion, during the EFC annual conference in Amsterdam, a very enthusiastic programme officer of a European foundation presented its experience in having young people evaluating the projects of their peers: this increased the interest of Fondazione CRC in regards to this peer-evaluators idea.



The governing bodies of the foundation were already convinced of the key importance of supporting young people and schools in building a better future, but this had not translated into any real step in their direct involvement until that moment. Hearing other foundations' experiences represented a definitive wake-up call for the foundation and pushed it to try something similar. Being a grantmaking foundation and not properly operating, Fondazione CRC had to reflect on ways to implement some direct involvement of youth in its work, and the peer-selection process seemed to be an ideal one to start with. It also represented a continuation of the journey of active and direct listening that it had previously tested through the "dream school challenge".

### **Profiles of the young people and outreach**

One of the challenges underlined by the foundation was related to the outreach process, and specifically the communications channel used to connect with a younger

*"This was already something that our general council was concerned about. And they were always talking about how important it is to invest in the young generation, how much it is important to support projects that involve students, children or youth. But then, apart from investing money, there wasn't any step forward in their involvement and participation."*

**Irene Miletto · Fondazione CRC**

population target as it had not had sufficient experience in this. To overcome this, it decided to link up with the local schools and their teachers to circulate the call to participate in the panel. The foundation also approached the local office of the Ministry of Education to be connected with the president of the student's council. The president of this kind of board is typically a young student, and when informed about this opportunity she was immediately on board about promoting it. The students could apply for

this Fondazione CRC proposal as part of their academic curricula that requires a proved work experience during their studies.

### **Involving young people**

As a first step, the foundation had the chance to meet with the students and teachers that constituted the peer-selection panel, and to give them an introduction about its work. Then, in preparation for the peer-review process, the staff

of the foundation in charge of the call for proposals organised a dedicated moment with the peer-evaluators, to give an introduction and train them on a number of specific matters. These included, for example, project management cycles, and programming and selection processes and systems. After participating in this training phase, the peer-evaluators were split into groups in order to allow the students to be in a separate space rather than together with the teachers and other adults, in order to really feel free to express themselves, comment and share their honest opinions on the different proposals.

Throughout the process, some challenges arose when setting up the appropriate means to communicate with the students involved, not only to select the right tools that would be most effective with them but also to learn all the safeguarding aspects to take into consideration (e.g. privacy regarding their personal data, etc.).

## Learning and transformation

Being fully immersed in a job experience has helped the young people involved to better understand what it means to be in a working environment, and it has helped to guide their professional choices and expectations for the future. They reported in particular having learned about evaluation processes, time tracking, organising workloads,

*“One of the things I loved is that after the project we had a short evaluation done by the students on the peer evaluation process. And they were happy of being involved again, even though reading projects etc. is not such an enjoyable activity, it is not a party! It’s a lot of work. But everybody said, ‘Yes, I would like to be involved again’.”*

**Irene Miletto · Fondazione CRC**

taking responsibility and focusing on objectives. In addition, they gained an increased understanding of how a school functions internally and learned for example that certain activities require fundraising in order to be implemented.

For a foundation such as Fondazione CRC which is active and rooted in a given territory by mandate, this experience was a unique opportunity to show from the inside what its mission is and how it works to achieve it, and what the foundation brings in terms of human capital, knowledge and skills beyond the financial support it provides to its partners. The participants could grasp from this direct experience the complexity and values of working in partnerships with different stakeholders. For the teachers, this constituted an alternative professional development opportunity and led to the recognition of the foundation as a knowledgeable

partner which transformed their relationship.

Throughout the process and different meetings, students would also raise important and interesting points about the education system in general, and the fact that there is little space for them to shape it and be more empowered in the decisions about what they want to learn. As Fondazione CRC works actively around education in its territory, these reflections, together with the whole experience of direct involvement and listening, have opened a door for future changes. ☛

## Links and resources

Fondazione CRC  
[www.fondazioneccrc.it](http://www.fondazioneccrc.it)

Bando Nuova Didattica – Misura  
Valutazione tra Pari  
[www.fondazioneccrc.it/index.php/educazione-istruzione-e-formazione/nuova-didattica](http://www.fondazioneccrc.it/index.php/educazione-istruzione-e-formazione/nuova-didattica)

# HIL-FOUNDATION

## GIRLS COUNCIL

Young people deciding on support for their peers

| COUNTRY                                                                                   |                   | AGE        | MODE                                                                                                       | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Austria |                   | 14-25      | <b>Collaboration</b><br> | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br>3. Design<br><b>4. Grant Attribution</b><br>5. Implementation<br>6. Evaluation<br>7. Follow-up<br><b>BOARD</b><br><b>STAFF</b> |
| THEMES                                                                                    | PROCESS           | ROLES      |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                              |
| Gender equality<br>Women's empowerment                                                    | Grant attribution | Evaluators |                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                              |

Hil-Foundation focuses on education, equal opportunities (especially for children and young people), gender diversity & equity, as well as mental health. With the girls and boys councils Hil-Foundation intends to strengthen the ecosystem for gender-sensitive child and youth work in Austria with a participatory approach. In cooperation with other non-profit organisations, the organisation develops projects that promote equal opportunities and supports the implementation of existing programmes.

### The project

Every year since 2014, the Girls Council decides which projects Hil-Foundation should support. The Girls Council consists of 5 to 12 young people who identify as girls, aged 14 to 25. The girls come from all over Austria to meet over a weekend and select, through a participatory process, 5 projects that are going to receive Hil-Foundation's support in the following year. The projects are dedicated to youth and receive up to €5,000 per selected project. Organisations submitting project ideas are targeting young people in Austria. The project submission criteria are defined by the organisation. The Girls Council then defines together additional

selection criteria during the weekend dedicated to the selection process.

### Motivation

Hil-Foundation's CEO, Susi Hillebrand first learned about the concept of a "girls advisory board"<sup>13</sup> when she participated in a conference in Germany together with representatives of filia.die frauenstiftung ("the women's foundation"). She got to know some very powerful girls who were part of the project and had stepped up to share their experience with the audience. Susi became very enthusiastic about it and decided to replicate the idea in Austria where she cooperated with Teresa Lugstein, a pioneer of

*"These projects are targeted for people their age. So the idea is, well, adults probably don't know so well what girls and young women want and need. So why not let their own peers decide."*

**Christina Purrer · Hil-Foundation**

<sup>13</sup> See filia Mädchenbeirat - filia.die frauenstiftung [www.filia-frauenstiftung.de](http://www.filia-frauenstiftung.de)



girls youth work in Austria, to adapt and implement the concept.

Teresa's networks and expertise, and Susi's knowledge in building organisations and project management, as well as a steady collaboration with Filia, gave the project a head start.

### Selection and involvement of young people

To reach out to interested participants, Hil-Foundation uses its newsletter, social media and its own networks. Flyers distributed in places where young people meet, and word of mouth also play a role. Over the years, Hil-Foundation has cultivated connections with youth organisations that prove very helpful in reaching different socio-economic backgrounds, in particular children in disadvantaged situations. The selected participants – young individuals who identify as women and are aged 14 to 25

*“I myself was first a participant. Initially I was extremely surprised how much youth work there is. I don't know how I was never really exposed to any of that growing up. So that was really a very positive surprise, to see, wow, there's actually so many people doing and putting so much effort into these great things. And that really broadened my horizon, I think, to these kinds of things.”*

**Parissa Abdolvahab · Hil-Foundation**

– come from different locations in Austria and have very different profiles, which brings an enormous diversity of ideas and perspectives during the weekend. The participants change every year but a few of them return, ensuring some continuity and playing a mentoring role towards the newcomers.

The weekend starts with an introductory day. First some framing is provided to the group regarding

the purpose and expectations from the Girls Councils, then the project coordinators facilitate ice-breakers and participatory activities to get to know each other and to co-define some rules for the group to form a safe (and brave<sup>14</sup>) space where participants can feel at ease in expressing themselves and setting their boundaries. The project coordinators also provide the participants with background on Hil-Foundation and an introduction to

<sup>14</sup> Network-wide, GlobeMed has adapted the “Brave Space Agreements” from #LetUsBreathe Collective and Showing Up for Racial Justice-Chicago. They use these agreements as the basis for setting norms for their group spaces. Hil-Foundation uses this model during the Girls and Boys councils meetings. [www.docs.google.com/document/d/1NzvYaQ9mXCHMONn6wpmjhFyXQBAQnbToYY-4MqRov8/edit](https://www.docs.google.com/document/d/1NzvYaQ9mXCHMONn6wpmjhFyXQBAQnbToYY-4MqRov8/edit)

feminist topics. These differ every year to ensure that returning participants not only don't repeat the same content, but also are able to explore diverse realities experienced by women (e.g. women with disabilities, queer women, migrant women, etc.). This serves to build a foundation of awareness and sharing on some of the essential challenges faced by women, and to bring an intersectional view in the selection process, which takes place the following day. It also enables participants to embark on a learning journey about themselves and others, by being exposed to different narratives and perspectives.

On the second day the girls proceed to define together their own criteria to select the projects, in addition to the criteria pre-set by Hil-Foundation. Hil-Foundation also builds on the criteria identified by Girls Councils from previous years. The selection process runs through the whole second day and is concluded with the selection of five projects by the Girls Council, each of which will be supported with an amount of €5,000.

The last day is dedicated to celebrating and thanking participants for their contributions and enjoying some fun activities that fit the theme of the weekend (e.g. visit to museums, music workshops, etc.),

*"In my own experience, when I was 16, some things were the most important things in the entire world. And then I was always surprised by some adults, like my parents, who wouldn't find it as important. I'd be like, how? And now I'm like, well, okay, I get it. So you just have to understand that for that young person those things are important, but you have to approach them differently and do your best to give them a background. And providing them the tools to make that distinction, because if they haven't been prepared, or if things that they find important haven't been taken seriously, then you really run the risk of losing them."*

**Parissa Abdolvahab · Hil-Foundation**

allowing the group to integrate their experience and make a transition to their usual lives.

After the weekend, and during the year of implementation of the selected projects, Hil-Foundation organises field visits so that the members of the Girls Council can meet the organisations that are supported in person and get an idea of how the projects turned out and what impact they are having on their peers.

## Learning and transformation

One of the girls who used to take part in the Girls Council is now working at Hil-Foundation as one of the project coordinators of the project. For other participants who were exceeding the age limit, Hil-Foundation created an alumni group that meets before the Girls Council weekend and helps the project coordinators in co-creating the activities, in particular proposing ideas for the closing day.

A few years after the creation of the Girls Council, Hil-Foundation realised that it was not possible to work on female empowerment and gender equality without including multiple gender identities. This reflection led to the creation of a Boys Council, whose focus is on addressing gender stereotypes, privilege held by boys and men, expectations from society of them, and acknowledging and expressing feelings. Hil-Foundation involves professionals with expertise on such issues in implementing the project.



The team of Hil-Foundation is now in a deep reflection on whether these two councils might actually be reinforcing binary views of gender, and how to move beyond these. As support, Hil-Foundation held a staff training on diversity led by an organisation composed of young people, mostly identifying as queer and including non-binary members. Hil-Foundation also organised a workshop led by a beneficiary organisation that provides peer-to-peer counselling for intersex people and their relatives. The aim was to broaden the team's knowledge, and build more awareness of their facilitation of Girls and Boys Council weekends, so that spaces can continue to be safe (and brave) for everyone to participate.

In 2019 Hil-Foundation co-created a new organisation together with other organisations and the Innovationsstiftung für Bildung (ISB) (the Innovation Foundation for Education of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research) called "Sinnbildungsstiftung" (SBS) which supports innovative ideas in the education sector. Sinnbildungsstiftung is currently

*"So one time, for example, we had some materials to make some boxes that would represent ourselves and that we could decorate the outside of them and the inside of them. And then we introduced them to the group and said, well, this is my outside and this is the inside, but maybe I don't want to show the inside to everybody else."*

**Parissa Abdolvahab · Hil-Foundation**

working on establishing a youth council in order to receive young people's feedback on their projects. Hil-Foundation actively contributes its expertise in this process.

Apart from this, another co-foundation of the ISB called "Stiftung für Wirtschaftsbildung" (foundation for economic education) reached out to Hil-Foundation because it wanted to include a young person in its advisory board. Hil-Foundation suggested a name from its participants on the Girls Councils and the young woman is now a highly motivated advisor for the Stiftung für Wirtschaftsbildung. In conclusion, the project has led to an interesting combination of inner and

outer change, for the team of Hil-Foundation but also for the young members of the councils. ♡

### Links and resources

Hil-Foundation  
[www.hil-foundation.org](http://www.hil-foundation.org)

Project page: Girls Councils  
[www.hil-foundation.org/project/madchenbeirat](http://www.hil-foundation.org/project/madchenbeirat)

Girls Council website  
[www.maedchenbeirat.at](http://www.maedchenbeirat.at)

Boys Council website  
[www.bubenbeirat.at](http://www.bubenbeirat.at)

Sinnbildungsstiftung  
[www.sinnbildungsstiftung.at](http://www.sinnbildungsstiftung.at)



**[www.hil-foundation.org](http://www.hil-foundation.org)**

# LEARNING FOR WELL-BEING FOUNDATION

## INTERGENERATIONAL BOARD

Involving young people in foundations' governance structures

| COUNTRY                                                                                       |                   | AGE           | MODE                                                                                                | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  Netherlands |                   | 14-24         | Collaboration<br> | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br>3. Design<br>4. Grant Attribution<br>5. Implementation<br>6. Evaluation<br>7. Follow-up<br><b>BOARD</b><br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                        | PROCESS           | ROLES         |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                |
| Governance                                                                                    | Board development | Board members |                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                |

The Learning for Well-being Foundation cultivates the capacities of children, and the adults who support them, so that together they are able to contribute to creating well-being in their communities, while realising their unique potential throughout their lives. The foundation's approach combines well-being and personal development with social change through partnership between children and adults (an intergenerational approach to child participation).

### The project

In 2020, the Learning for Well-being Foundation embarked on a process of reviewing its governance structures by creating an intergenerational board in which half of its members are aged 14 to 24. All members of the board have equal voting rights and shared responsibilities. The younger members of the board are nominated cyclically, as young people outgrow the determined age range.

### Motivation

Since its origin, the Learning for Well-being Foundation has been involving children

and young people in its work. At the beginning through research on child well-being, then as collaborators in programming and advocacy efforts. With the creation of the new initiative – ACT2gether – the foundation further strengthened its intergenerational approach to implementing child participation and felt that it needed to take further steps in the journey by modelling its own message and involving children and young people in decision-making.

In 2019, to explore possibilities for intergenerational collaboration in governance, the foundation invited a group of young people who had been previously involved in several of the

*“Daniel talks about riding a bike: you can read all the books you like on riding a bike, but good luck riding that bike. At some point, you have to get on the bike, and you have to ride it.”*

**Darren Bird · Learning for Well-being Foundation**



foundation's activities to join a 3-day strategic planning weekend with the foundation's board members. The aim was to create an experience of partnership between younger and older people that could support a board decision of whether to include young people in the board, and how.

Prior to the planning weekend, the participating young people were prepared by the foundation staff, who were also responsible for ensuring that all safeguarding requirements were met. They wanted the younger members of the group to feel comfortable in their interactions, and to be able to express their views in a meaningful way. The meeting was the beginning of a journey for older and younger participants to understand how to create a space where everyone can thrive.

Based on its own experience and having reviewed other organisations' practices, the foundation decided to adopt the model of an intergenerational board rather than having different bodies (e.g. "shadow boards" where a secondary board of young people feeds into an

adult board). The planning weekend and the adopted governance model were steps based on several years of reflection and learning from children's participation in defining and creating well-being.

### **Young people selection, and interaction with adults**

Once the governance model was approved and translated to its by-laws, the foundation reached out to young people who had already been directly involved in the foundation's work and had experience in participatory processes.

All those interested were asked to express their interest through a

letter, voice or video recording. They were asked to state why they felt they were good candidates for the board, what qualities they believed they could offer, and what they felt they would gain from the experience. Like all board members – regardless of their age – the young people were chosen through a discussion between the current board members and the chair, who holds veto power.

### **Age-related misconceptions**

A few of the initial board members voiced concerns in relation to the potential new young members' competence: for example, understanding the complex financial

*"It was definitely a very individualised and personalised experience. And I do feel that in the future, as different young people will come into the board, it will change again, and it's a very natural and organic process, which is also one of its success factors."*

**Andri Pandoura** · Learning for Well-being Foundation

information presented at board meetings. Such fears were soon put to ease as one of the candidate younger members was studying finance, and was potentially more equipped than most to grasp financial information. This anecdote proved how resistance to involving young people in decision-making is often coming from generalised misconceptions that can be easily debunked by mapping actual interests and competences.

On the other hand, the young candidates had their own misconceptions. They feared not being able to meet the expectation of what they thought was going to be a rigid adult structure. With the ongoing support of the foundation's staff and capacity building, the younger members were able to overcome their fears and realise there was a genuine interest from the older board members to engage with them.

## Creating the conditions for meaningful interaction

Prior to each board meeting, a preparatory meeting for the younger members is facilitated by the foundation staff. Its purpose is to provide a safe space to go over supporting documents and ask questions without fear of judgement. The preparatory meetings with the younger board members are essential to facilitate their meaningful contribution and ensure that child safeguarding policies are applied. Having an intergenerational board emphasises the need for communication and information that is friendly, accessible and transparent for all members alike. Older board

*"I would say if you and your organisation think it's too difficult, then it probably is. But I think you need to be asking a bigger question as to why."*

**Darren Bird · Learning for Well-being Foundation**

members end up benefiting from the effort of adapting what and how information is shared.

## Learning and transformation

The process of adding the 5 new young board members ended just as Covid-19 entered our lives. This led all board meetings to take place virtually, which created some difficulties, but also opportunities.

Board members are stating that with every additional board meeting that takes place, they feel more integrated as a group. Working in mixed-age groups became part of the organisational culture, applied also in smaller discussions and meetings. The younger board members have brought new perspectives into governance discussions, not simply due to their age but also in light of their lived experience and the intersectional identities they represent. They have observed that the preparatory meetings organised for them are becoming less necessary – although they still appreciate connecting with their peers in a separate space. The older board members also express a sense of appreciation for the renewed dynamic in the board which now feels more human, and more meaningful for each contributor. Having young people on the board brought an organisational discipline

and working culture that everybody benefits from.

For an organisation working for children's rights and well-being, giving decision-making power to children and young people is a matter of earning legitimacy by translating the Convention on the Rights of the Child into reality. Placing decision-making power in the hands of young people is often perceived as a risk in terms of accountability. The Learning for Well-being Foundation defends the notion that when each person in an organisation is recognised and empowered in their role, accountability becomes the result of a collective effort to which different parts of the organisation contribute from their own unique perspective (i.e. programme and/or grants managers, accounting and finance officers, board members, etc.). Because no decision is made by only one person, accountability is held by the whole organisation, and nobody – younger or older – can really go completely "off the road". ☹️

## Links and resources

Learning for Well-being Foundation  
[www.learningforwellbeing.org](http://www.learningforwellbeing.org)

Governance in Partnership: The Learning for Well-being Foundation Story  
[www.learningforwellbeing.org/about-us/the-board](http://www.learningforwellbeing.org/about-us/the-board)

Learning for  
Well-being Foundation



[www.learningforwellbeing.org](http://www.learningforwellbeing.org)

# NATIONAL LOTTERY COMMUNITY FUND

## YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LEAD

A strategy to embed youth participation in the whole organisation

| COUNTRY                                                                                          |                                                | AGE      | MODE                                                                                                                                                                                                               | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                                             |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  United Kingdom |                                                | 16-25    | <b>Collaboration</b><br><br><b>Leading</b><br> | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br><b>3. Design</b><br>4. Grant Attribution<br><b>5. Implementation</b><br><b>6. Evaluation</b><br>7. Follow-up<br><b>BOARD</b><br><b>STAFF</b> |
| THEMES                                                                                           | PROCESS                                        | ROLES    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Participation<br>Social Inclusion                                                                | Multi-level<br>involvement /<br>culture change | Advisors |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                            |

The National Lottery Community Fund distributes over £600 million a year to communities across the UK, from money raised by the players of the National Lottery. The National Lottery Community Fund has a critical role to play in supporting communities to unleash their energy and potential so they can get to where they want to be.

### The project

With over a third of its funding attributed to children and young people, the foundation has developed a “Youth Voice” strategy to embed youth participation across the organisation, and ensure its grantmaking reaches the communities it aims to serve. The model adopted by the foundation is a stratified “pyramid of involvement” that maps out the means through which young people’s voices influence different aspects of the organisation and its work along the whole grantmaking cycle.

### Motivation

In 2019 TNLCF was strongly guided by the principle of “people in the lead” and hired a staff member – Head of Youth Voice – a person with expertise in children’s and young people’s participation and

someone who had a clear mandate to embed participatory work across the whole organisation.

As an initial step, the new team member conducted a stakeholder analysis from staff and communities they aimed to serve to understand what “young people in the lead” meant to them. This active listening process served to build strong arguments for why the foundation should be working in a participatory way, and specifically with young people: first, because the fund’s

mission is to serve its community in a reactive way, and one third of its reactive funding goes to young people; and second, because these young people are not only representative of their age segment, but also of their own diverse communities. They bring lived experience, foresight capacity and innovative ideas on issues that the fund aims to solve through its grantmaking (e.g. mental health, climate action,

*“It is all about shifting perceptions of how young people can be embedded and not just involved and participating.”*

**Joanne Rich · National  
Lottery Community Fund**



unemployment, etc.). And finally, they represent the future generation of applicants, staff and leaders and they should be part of shaping their own future. By bringing more youth participation in its strategy, the foundation wanted to ensure that its resources were reaching the communities it meant to serve.

## Involving young people

Building on the stakeholder analysis, the dedicated team member developed a strategy for young people's involvement in the fund's work. The "Youth Voice" strategy identifies the following areas through which the foundation engages young people in its decision-making:

- 1.** Through its grantmaking practice, from having young people involved in assessments to decision-making, in order to understand how inclusive processes can become if adapted slightly through the eyes of young people.
- 2.** Through collaboration with grantees, facilitating capacity-building, peer-exchange and

*"I always think my role has been this kind of translating role from young people up, but also down, because obviously, young people need to be involved, but they need the knowledge to be involved. So it's very much a translating role."*

**Joanne Rich** • National Lottery Community Fund

networking (e.g. organising best practice workshops, producing impact reports and creating learning hubs across portfolios, etc.). Also through collaboration with other funders and stakeholders that influence the sector by setting examples.

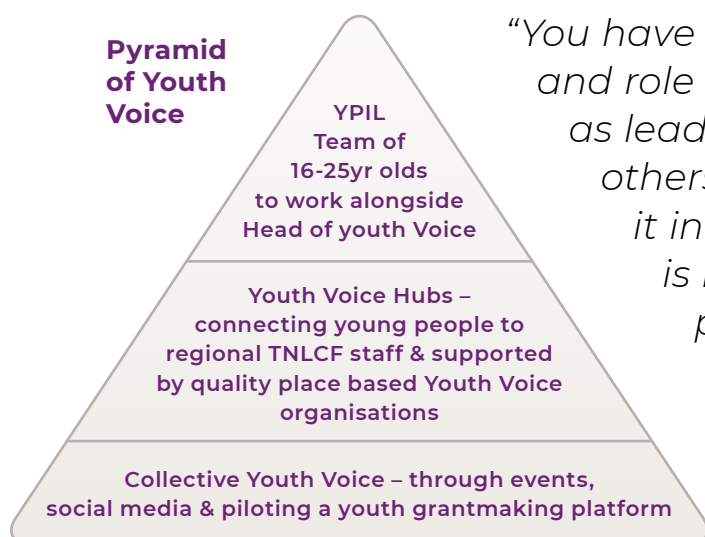
- 3.** Celebrating the achievements and championing the work of youth voice and involving young people; encouraging others to do the same; and continuing learning and improving (e.g. through dedicated newsletters, celebratory events and social media strategies).

A pyramid model was proposed to organise this multi-tiered youth involvement. According to this model, adapted from previous work by the

Head of Youth Voice, young people influence the foundation's work at three different levels:

- 1.** At the top (and strategic) tier of the pyramid, the head of Youth Voice works alongside a Youth Advisory Panel. Members of the panel were recruited from the pool of 7,000 projects funded by the foundation. Interested applicants were invited to attend selection days where they had to demonstrate their collaborative skills and desire to help other young people, while engaging in team activities. Ten young people (aged 16 to 25) were selected to join the panel. The name of the panel, "Young People in the lead" (YPIL), was decided by panel members themselves.

## Pyramid of Youth Voice



*“You have to live and breathe engagement and role modelling within the organisation, as leaders, before you’re doing it to others, or before you’re expecting to see it in others. And what I mean by that is having fair and open recruitment processes to attract youth voice representatives, because then you’re naturally embedding within the work that you do.”*

**Joanne Rich · National Lottery Community Fund**

Panel members committed to one year followed by six months of peer-mentoring where they passed their knowledge to incoming panel members. Each young person on the panel is linked to a National Lottery-funded project and is dedicated to changing an issue they are passionate about.

**2.** The middle tier is where the foundation takes its deeper dive into youth voices and ensures that it reaches different regions, needs, themes and groups across the UK. For this purpose, it is organised around Youth Hubs that connect young people with lived experience with the regional staff of the foundation and its thematic work. The model of young peer-researchers has been utilised to achieve this through recruiting 60 young people across regions to undertake research with their peers.

**3.** The bottom tier represents the “Collective Youth Voice”: This is where the foundation monitors and draws knowledge from what young

people are saying at events, on social media, in surveys conducted in the UK and other indirect sources.

## Learning and transformation

The foundation has been evaluating the experience quantitatively and qualitatively by analysing available metrics (e.g. number of stakeholders reached at events), collecting anecdotal quotes from key partners involved, and using the outcomes of the workshops and toolkits developed.

At the time of writing, and a couple of years since the beginning of the process, there is one Youth Voice team [formerly YPIL] established for each UK country. One young person is shadowing the board, two on their England committee, and a Youth Voice Apprentice has been created to support the work further. One positive unexpected outcome of the involvement in the advisory panels, was that two young people

have been employed by the fund, building on the competence they developed as a result of their work in the YPIL. Among the next steps, the foundation intends to embed youth voices more in its staff structure (e.g. through an apprenticeship/internship programme).

The way the young peer researchers’ role has shaped up differs in each country. For example, in Wales young people were trained in conducting and analysing research, and they carried out a research project across their country, and finally designed a £10 million fund for Wales called “Mind our Future” whose priorities were based on the research results. The adults and young people designed together

*“You don’t reach everyone with the same entry point. Basically, it’s by having this multi-dimensional approach that you can really reach different kinds of profiles and people.”*

**Joanne Rich · National Lottery Community Fund**





the decision-making process, criteria and assessment questions for the funds.

As a result of the work from the Youth Voice Hubs, a knowledge bank was created and a set of toolkits with recommendations (e.g. what to look for in a good quality youth programme, what to look for in a mental health project, etc.) were produced and transformed into questions to be used by the foundation's staff in their funding assessments and to be embedded in the teams' meetings and strategic learning (e.g. through "Lunch and Learn" sessions). Thanks to the knowledge built, the foundation was able to advise the UK parliament in three submissions.

The young people involved have been asked to evaluate what they have found valuable as part of the process, what impact this experience had on them, and what they appreciated in their roles. They've also been asked if they think their participation has transformed the

*"I think in any of this work, especially philanthropy, empathy is a really key word. And actually, if we haven't got that, why are we in philanthropy? If empathy underpins everything, then we'd all be so much further along in the world."*

**Joanne Rich • National Lottery Community Fund**

fund and made a difference, and whether they see their involvement being put to use to achieve the fund's aimed impact.

Such feedback was used by the dedicated team member to confirm to the foundation's Senior Management Team the importance of continuing to offer a variety of roles and levels of engagement, in order to be really effective in understanding where the funding is going and where the representation is needed. This way, the foundation will naturally reach those with lived experience and the whole spectrum of its communities. 🍷

### Links and resources

National Lottery Community Fund  
[www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)

Project page: Young People in the Lead  
[www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/about/our-people/young-people-in-the-lead-advisory-group](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/about/our-people/young-people-in-the-lead-advisory-group)

My Year at the National Lottery Community Fund  
[www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/news/blog/2020-10-22/my-year-at-the-national-lottery-community-fund](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/news/blog/2020-10-22/my-year-at-the-national-lottery-community-fund)

Young People in the Lead YouTube channel  
[www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQdx-VdhEbn7vUMLrIYXNBHMRoZBckKieC](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQdx-VdhEbn7vUMLrIYXNBHMRoZBckKieC)



[www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk](http://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk)

# OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS

## PEAKS (PARTICIPATION, EDUCATION AND KNOWLEDGE STRENGTHENING)

Equipping children with knowledge and money to create their own solutions

| COUNTRY   |               | AGE             | MODE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Worldwide |               | 6-18            | <div>Collaboration</div> <div></div> <div>Leading</div> <div></div> | <div>1. Planning</div> <div>2. Research</div> <div>3. Design</div> <div>4. Grant Attribution</div> <div>5. Implementation</div> <div>6. Evaluation</div> <div>7. Follow-up</div> <div>BOARD</div> <div>STAFF</div> |
| THEMES    | PROCESS       | ROLES           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Education | Social action | Project leaders |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

The Open Society Foundations, founded by George Soros, is the world's largest private funder of independent groups working for justice, democratic governance, and human rights. They provide thousands of grants every year through a network of national and regional foundations and offices, funding a vast array of projects.

### The project

As part of its former Education Support programme<sup>15</sup>, and together with USAID, the Academy for Educational Development (now FHI 360), Save the Children and other partners, the foundation co-funded the PEAKS project (participation, education and knowledge strengthening) in central Asia, which aimed to improve the education system in Kyrgyzstan. PEAKS offered teacher training, provided learning materials, and looked for ways to improve schools. As part of the project, youth groups implemented directly a number of school and community-based initiatives, and were granted an amount of around \$5,000 per project that they could decide how to spend.

### Beginning

Open Society Foundations has worked with children and youth since the 1990s. When it started out as a network of foundations in central and eastern Europe, in the wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the education systems – schools and universities in particular – were viewed as key institutions for the creation of an open society. They were considered as the very first place where children came into contact with a community outside their family and where they could continue developing their critical thinking skills as adults. It is for this reason that the foundation had large programmes on education and started to support schools and universities. Additionally, after meeting the neuroscientist James Mustard Fraser, the foundation's founder, George Soros, was convinced about the importance of the early years in brain development and health. Therefore, the foundation created an early

<sup>15</sup> OSF has stopped its Education programme in its current form but the foundation is still very much committed to education work: [www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/the-future-of-the-open-society-foundations](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/the-future-of-the-open-society-foundations)  
[www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/the-open-society-foundations-move-ahead-on-transformation](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/the-open-society-foundations-move-ahead-on-transformation)



*“The challenge is that the adults are less prepared to interact with the young people than the young people are with the adults. In my experience, the young people are actually very clear about what they want to accomplish. They might not know all of what they might need, such as additional resources to figure that out. But they’re very clear about what they want to do, and why they want to do it and why it needs to be done. The adults actually are the ones who feel unprepared for that level of enthusiasm and clarity.”*

**Kate Lapham** · former Deputy Director, Education Support Program, Open Society Foundations

childhood programme to address the essential needs for children and their families during this delicate phase, and to advocate for global support for early childhood programmes, including kindergartens and maternal and child health.

From the 1990s and through the mid-2000s, the foundation was

also providing ground funding for schools to develop community-based projects, which were often youth-led or proposed by young people. The entire school community was involved and the voice of youth in developing projects was very valued. With these formative experiences, the students involved have often become lawyers,

human rights defenders, NGO leaders, teachers and professors, and they remain involved in the alumni network of the foundation. It is in this context that a project such as PEAKS was funded and developed.

## Challenges

Among the projects’ partners there was initially some scepticism and resistance to giving young people the possibility to administer small grants and decide how to use the money. Additionally, school principals and local education departments had questions about the risks of providing these sums to the young people, also considering that in Kyrgyzstan they were not considered small grants when converted to the local currency. This required some advocacy efforts with the partners and with local staff to negotiate young people’s spaces in order to make everybody comfortable, and reassure the different adults that money wouldn’t be mispent and that the schools’ needs would be met, while reaffirming that the children’s agency would be preserved.

## Involving young people

Among the examples of initiatives supported, a group of children decided that they wanted to purchase two cows with the grants received, in order to milk the cows and produce some cheese that could then be sold to collect money for some large renovations that the school required. Additionally, they wanted to also use the cows in science classes, connecting their project with an existing health programme from a neighbouring village, that would allow them to gain knowledge about brucellosis and unsafe livestock practices, which is a huge problem in Kyrgyzstan and has a lot of consequences for their health and community. For this purpose, the foundation found a science teacher who could help them to incorporate this programme in their standard curriculum. The science teacher participated in the teacher training, and got profoundly inspired by the Waldorf pedagogy and its way of exploring nature and basing learning around projects. It turned out to be a very transformative process for both the adults and young people involved, recognising the importance of each one's contributions and roles.

Other projects were commonly looking at infrastructure in the city where the children lived (e.g. local parks, recreation areas, etc.). Often children wanted to raise money from the community and start renovation processes where they needed the support of adults to sign financial documents, building permits or other legal documents.

*“There’s a whole constellation of people who face barriers in participation. But I think, for us if our programming is to be truly about human rights and open society, we need to figure out ways of creating space for authentic, meaningful participation from those groups.”*

**Kate Lapham** · former Deputy Director, Education Support Program, Open Society Foundations

Parts of the grant could be spent on things such as hiring a lawyer or an adult with the needed expertise to take care of these aspects: This necessity created an interesting intergenerational dynamic for all actors and demonstrated that even in child-led initiatives, adults of reference always play a role. For the project to work out, everyone had to be on board and convinced about the value of the students' projects.

## Learning and transformation

A company that specialises in monitoring and evaluation for large aid projects was brought in to evaluate the different elements of the project: the activities involving youth, the school improvements, the teacher trainings and the policy work around the whole project. Responding to stakeholders' assumed expectations, this work revolved more around the adults' frameworks and considered less legitimate the quality of knowledge that young people could bring in such an evaluation. It did not include a view on how young people perceived their participation and how it contributed to their learning,

their sense of belonging to their school's community, and their academic success.

According to the foundation, the PEAKS project gave the young students an opportunity to actively participate in the life of their community, learn how to manage small funds directly, and learn how to develop a project from start to finish. It was a way to put the people most affected by the school system (teachers and young students) in the driver's seat, and this generated a sense of community and clear transformation that made Open Society Foundations' larger investments in this area worthwhile. ♡

## Links and resources

Open Society Foundations  
[www.opensocietyfoundations.org](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org)

Open Society Foundations Annual Report 2003  
[www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/7372c97f-8df5-4878-b400-19930e7ddc08/ar\\_2003\\_0.pdf](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/uploads/7372c97f-8df5-4878-b400-19930e7ddc08/ar_2003_0.pdf)

Open Society Foundation's history  
[www.opensocietyfoundations.org/who-we-are/our-history](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/who-we-are/our-history)

**[www.opensocietyfoundations.org](http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org)**

# PORTICUS

## “SCHOOLFORALL” COLLECTIVE

Working with communities to support those in need

| COUNTRY                                                                                  |          | AGE       | MODE                                                                                                                                                                                                               | POINT IN CYCLE                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  France |          | 13-24     | <b>Collaboration</b><br><br><b>Leading</b><br> | 1. Planning<br>2. Research<br>3. Design<br>4. Grant Attribution<br><b>5. Implementation</b><br><b>6. Evaluation</b><br>7. Follow-up<br>BOARD<br>STAFF |
| THEMES                                                                                   | PROCESS  | ROLES     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Education<br>Social inclusion<br>Community organising                                    | Campaign | Advocates |                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                       |

Porticus is a family philanthropic organisation with offices in 12 locations around the world. The organisation works with a network of local and global partners to improve life for individuals, to strengthen communities and to change systems for a more just and sustainable world, focusing on four key areas: Earth, Society, Education and Faith. Porticus has started to move away from individual projects and proposals to take a more programmatic approach, identifying partners whose work aligns with the organisation’s strategic vision for systems change.

### The project

When it comes to changing systems, meaningful participation can bring about effective and long-lasting social change. To truly be effective and understand the issues, it is essential to include those affected or with lived experience and ensure they have a voice and seat at the table.

As part of the work Porticus does within its Education portfolio, the French office recently partnered with NGOs who are experts in organising communities, capability-building and empowering individuals from informal and formal collectives to advocate for their own rights and concerns.

One of the initiatives identified for this work was “SchoolForAll” which provides support to networks of young advocates from diverse backgrounds to help them address the challenges they face in the education system that prevent them from reaching their full

potential. Members of the “SchoolForAll” collective are children, adolescents, and young adults within vulnerable populations, in particular, including travellers, inhabitants of slums and squats, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and unaccompanied minors.

Through its work, Porticus also tries to change the mindset of more traditional NGOs and guide them through their journey towards more meaningful youth participation.

### Beginning

Porticus itself started on this journey by embarking on deep organisational reflection, laying the foundation for more participation of beneficiaries in its work. Starting from programmatic areas, in particular Education, Employment, and Human Rights, it embraced the concept of “meaningful participation” as a key approach for supporting different target groups, including vulnerable youth.



The design of a 10-year plan was the goal to increase the current level of participation, encouraging programme managers to advocate for and contribute to the creation of spaces for youth participation (and that of beneficiaries generally) beyond its programmatic areas, at the organisational level. This represents a significant time commitment requiring the review and transformation of internal processes and working habits as the organisation intends to do this authentically and thoroughly. A dedicated working group was created to see the process through, engage in active listening, and discuss with different parts of the organisation what constitutes meaningful participation, how it translates into their work, and what the risks and opportunities are by taking this approach.

The Porticus France office specifically was keen to support community participation as a way to build the agency and influence of youth networks, particularly for youth who face strong adversity. This work started in 2018 when the organisation was contacted by

*“We want to make meaningful participation our daring goal. But what does that mean? It means that in the future, I won’t be able as a manager to say to young people, ‘just listen to me’. If you want to see that outcome, it’s really about putting people first. Creating the collectives can take six months, one year before they become strong enough. So you have to know that during one year, maybe nothing happens in terms of changing the system. And then it’s really about giving the power to the children so they are able to do whatever they want to do.”*

**Lucie Corman · Porticus**

Romeurope, a network of NGOs working with Roma communities in France. They wanted to launch a children’s rights campaign to tackle the issue of the numerous children in France without access to schools. The initial idea was to use

the financial support to hire a campaign coordinator who would help identify young spokespeople (and also some parents) from affected communities and bring their voices to the media’s attention.

## Involving young people

A campaign coordinator from the Roma community was hired and within a few weeks, many children reached out, keen to be involved in the campaign. The campaign coordinator started a deep dive process of listening to the people involved, trying to identify their real needs, and to reflect on how she could engage them meaningfully and enable them to continue doing their work independently in the future.

As a result, Porticus brought together community organisers, one already working with Roma communities and two others with experience working with victims of police violence, and those living under other vulnerable conditions. Together, they identified three groups of children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds

to collaborate with: the first, which emerged from the campaign initiated by the Romeurope, "SchoolforAll" collective, is made up of more than 100 young people aged 13 to 18, from Roma communities, travellers, unaccompanied minors and youth with a migration profile. A second group, "Different Leaders", is made up of more than 150 people aged 18 to 24, who have experienced discrimination in their education and/or work environment based on their socio-economic backgrounds, gender identity, or religious beliefs. And the third group is the NGO Repairs75!, made up of young adults aged 16 to 22 who have lived in foster care or who have a migrant background, and who are now being left with no means of support to live independently nor to access their rights.

These three groups are advocating for change in the education and

*"And for me, it is important to show that participatory approaches like these can really foster the well-being of young people and individuals who are engaged in this kind of community organising work."*

**Lucie Corman · Porticus**

child welfare systems in France, together with the community organisers who provided them with support so they could create their own structures; helped define the issues they want to address together; framed their campaigns and activism; and worked to build their agency and influence. The community organisers shared their own networks (such as professionals and activists with media training, access to policymakers etc.) with these groups. For those already registered as formal organisations or NGOs, financial support was also able to be provided.

## Evaluating the impact of participatory processes

Porticus is committed to evaluating the evidence of its work and to adapting its strategy and approaches so that impact is maximised in a long-term cyclical process. As the project presented in this case study directly involved beneficiaries in decision-making, the evaluation method usually adopted had to be remodelled to match the participatory nature of the project. The programme manager in charge started by having a transparent discussion with all involved to understand how an evaluation process could bring value to them, and how it could



*“I feel like I’m way more aligned with my values.”*

**Lucie Corman · Porticus**

become part of the ongoing participatory practice. Each stakeholder group had their own interests. The community organisers felt this evaluation could be an opportunity to collect evidence of work that is insufficiently documented in France. The young individuals in the collectives thought it could be a way to tell the story of their involvement in this process and how it transformed them; and to reach other people who might be in a similar position and would want to join the movement. In the end, the evaluation framework would benefit the full group and address the interests of individual stakeholder groups.

One of the challenges for the project manager at Porticus was finding the right person to lead this work. It was not only important to have expertise in evaluation methodology, but also the right mindset, a deep understanding of those affected, and a sensitive, empathic attitude.

Initially, the programme manager could only find suitable researchers and evaluation professionals outside of Europe, making them unavailable. They still provided

fundamental guidance and food-for-thought that served as a basis of the work on evaluation.

Eventually, the project managers at Porticus decided to put the evaluation on hold until they could identify the best fit. They finally succeeded, and, at the time of writing, the researcher had just started to co-design an evaluation reference framework with all stakeholders involved, in particular with the young people. The objective of this participatory evaluation is threefold: provide information on which methods of participation lend themselves well to engage with those affected; capture the more subtle effects of these processes such as empowerment, social fabric of communities/collectives and their contribution to whole child development & civic engagement; and capture the way this kind of work is changing the organisation's way of working, internally moving from an outcome-oriented to a process-oriented approach.

## Learning and transformation

After the first years of seed-granting for groups of young people, there is a real shift in youth involvement, the use of participatory approaches, and placing those affected at the centre of their own dialogues and challenges. In addition, the first group mentioned above has

created its own organisation after putting together their own legal structure, processes etc. and will now be able to receive direct support. Other, more traditional NGOs appear to be more invested in engaging youth through participatory approaches and being guided by community organising experts.

Given this is a rare professional profile in France, it has become important for Porticus to train new professionals that can do this kind of work and support young people in building their agency and influence for the future. It has fuelled a virtuous cycle which is moving faster than anticipated. It has also become clear how these participatory approaches are directly linked with and can foster the well-being of young people and those engaged in community organising work. ☘

## Links and resources

Porticus  
[www.porticus.com](http://www.porticus.com)

“SchoolForAll” collective  
[www.ecolepourtous.org](http://www.ecolepourtous.org)

Different Leaders  
[www.different-leaders.com](http://www.different-leaders.com)

Repairs75!  
[www.repairs75.org/qui-sommes-nous.html](http://www.repairs75.org/qui-sommes-nous.html)

Romeurope  
[www.romeurope.org](http://www.romeurope.org)

# PORTICUS

**[www.porticus.com](http://www.porticus.com)**

# CONCLUSION

## The End Is the Beginning. The Beginning Is the End.

We wanted this study to tell stories of a journey, but the effort ended up being a journey in and of itself as well. At the beginning we thought we would only find a few examples to share, that a small number of foundations in Europe were sharing decisions with children and young people about their work. We also thought that we would encounter reluctance among those foundations we identified to sharing the tougher parts of their stories. We were happy to be proven wrong.

One year on, we are concluding this study with a suitcase full of learning, stories of transformation, honesty, self-criticism and emotions. We have met incredible champions along the way, younger and older, all of them generously sharing their successes, but also their challenges, and reminding us that on this road, you need more than your head: You must make space for feelings and relationships. We learned that the journey starts from an exercise of deep listening that brings about change, and that while change is risky, so is not changing. Those most impacted by the actions of philanthropy targeting children and youth are already here with us today, so they should be part of our decision-making. It is our duty to find the most appropriate means to decide with them, not for them.

### Three messages kept surfacing over and over:

- 1.** We must recognise the value of different sources of knowledge: knowledge from research, knowledge from the field of practice, and knowledge from the lived experiences of children and young people.
- 2.** Everyone involved in participatory processes benefits: children and young people, their families, communities, philanthropic organisations, and professionals. No professional involved in this study regretted it. In fact, they all recommended it.
- 3.** The best version of philanthropy is participatory. It is human-centred and embodies the values of equity and transparency that philanthropy wishes to promote.

*"By the time we will have reached the deadline for the 2030 agenda, the now 15-year-olds will be starting their careers, paying taxes and hopefully running for office – not those who originally came up with the framework of the SDGs 7 years ago," says Delphine Moralis, Philea CEO. "As such, having them involved in creating the solutions and approaches they will have to sustain beyond the current generation 'in power' is essential to make sure these solutions and approaches are viable and truly owned. I feel that this is particularly relevant for the philanthropic sector, which prides itself on being in it for the long haul, thus working in a way that will need to be intergenerational!"*

If you are considering embarking on this transformative journey, you want to make sure you ask yourself and your organisation the right questions before you start. Or if you already involve children and young people in your work, and you want to reflect on how you are doing it, below is a list of recommendations for you.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## How to Work More Collaboratively with and for Children and Young People

This section provides recommendations which were sourced during the course of this study from philanthropy professionals and the young people working with them.

The recommendations, which are tailored for foundation professionals thinking about working with children and young people, are grouped into three broad categories:

1. From foundation professionals to their peers
2. From children and young people to foundation professionals
3. From children and young people their peers

### 1. Advice from foundations to foundations

The following three sets of recommendations were collected from the survey and interviews with philanthropy professionals who have worked collaboratively with children and young people (often between the ages of 10 and 30). The first set focuses on working with children; the second set focuses on dealing with organisational change and management of participatory projects with children; and the last set gives recommendations on how to engage other stakeholders.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has produced a General Comment on Article 12 of the UNCRC—the right to be heard and be taken seriously. The document gives guidance on how to realise children's participation rights and includes a set of 9 requirements for ethical and meaningful participation<sup>16</sup> which have been widely adopted. Many of the recommendations coming out of the interviews and focus groups with young people and philanthropy professionals echo some of these requirements, therefore we have referenced them here, where relevant.

### A. On working intentionally with children and young people in philanthropic decision-making and programing

#### Question power structures and attitudes

RESPECTFUL

VOLUNTARY

INCLUSIVE

Sharing decision-making with children challenges well-entrenched, often unconscious, aged-based power dynamics. To bring them to consciousness, question yourself – both your beliefs and actions. Assess if you're being tokenistic, maintaining the status quo, or simply not viewing children as equal partners. A simple question may help: Will children's and young people's input actually change the direction of the work? Or is there limited opportunity for influence?

#### Discuss what you can expect from each other

TRANSPARENT

Expectations should be a "two-way street". Discuss and agree on expectations – the aims and process in which you are collaborating. Make sure to be transparent about how decisions are made, which decisions can be influenced by children and what are the means through which they can contribute with their views.

<sup>16</sup> UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment 12 on the Right to be Heard, p.30

## Give all the information in a friendly way

### INFORMATIVE

### CHILD-FRIENDLY

Make sure that you give your young collaborators all the information that is required for them to make a meaningful contribution. Also make sure the information is offered in a way that is relevant, but also adequate for their preferences and capacities. If a lot of background information is needed for them to participate, it is likely a sign that you've brought them in at a very late stage and may need to revisit your approach.

## Allow room for feelings, they are real, too

*Make sure that you consider* – and allow space for – feelings to be experienced and expressed safely. Collaboration between children, and between children and adults, can produce a full range of emotional experiences that can be the basis for trust and achievement, but also disconnection and failure.

## Respect time and space

### RESPECTFUL

### CHILD-FRIENDLY

Children often have different needs relating to time and space in order to build trust, to be available, and to be productive. Understand what these are when you design your project, and be careful not to impose your own deadlines and schedules.

## Make it meaningful

### RELEVANT

There are a variety of ways in which meaning can be found: in contributing to positive change, in living an exciting experience, in developing skills or in forming relationships and a place of belonging. Make sure the experience is meaningful in the lives of the children and young people you work with.

## Make sure it's safe

### SAFE & SENSITIVE TO RISK

Participation must be safe. This means ensuring physical and psychological safety for the children that are participating. This also requires safeguarding expertise and making sure that there is a policy in place that guides your choices. However, it is important to mitigate overprotecting and underserving. Safety should enhance participation, not limit it.

## Consider multiple ways of engaging

### CHILD-FRIENDLY

Not all children engage in the same way. You must consider age, social background and communication preferences. Consider different roles for children to play, and different means of communication (including non-verbal ones) to attract different profiles.

## "Walk the talk". Be accountable

### ACCOUNTABLE

In theory, foundations are ultimately accountable to those they seek to serve, including children and young people. In practice, those foundations seek to serve are rarely represented in our accountability systems and structures (board, grantee feedback surveys, etc.). In lieu of more formalised accountability, at a minimum, share with them your views and what you do, and find less burdensome and anonymous ways for them to provide feedback to you.

## B. On building your organisation's capacity to work with children and young people

## It's a journey. It has to start somewhere.

*Children can be engaged in different stages of your project, but don't wait for perfect conditions, or until your project is fully formed to involve children. Start the conversation about working with children with your colleagues and children themselves as soon as you can. Find multiple entry points, and also, don't forget to reflect, learn, and iterate. Celebrate "failure" and "success" – both are critical.*

## Learn from those who came before you, but find your own way

While there is no blueprint or recipe, there are principles, frameworks (like the UNCRC) and communities of practice that can help you to become more participatory. You can take inspiration from good practice, including from those working with other communities and populations. However, you'll likely also have to adjust and iterate based on the dynamics of your own organisation.

## Take a deep dive into learning

Child participation can have a transformative effect. Be sure that your heart is in the right place, and that you are ready to deeply reflect on your organisation's values and practices. Explore with your team what it means to work with young people, and map your values against your practices. It can be an intense but rewarding learning experience.

### **☞ Align your intention to your actions**

Understand your organisation's core intention, where it's coming from and where it wants to go before you engage children in decision-making. Keeping your current strategy as a backbone can help you implement activities in a more participatory way without losing track. You might need to adjust your strategy to give room for shared decision-making, or you might adjust it based on the learnings of a participatory process.

### **☞ Measure your capacity**

Meaningful involvement of children in decision-making requires commitment, time, resources, and capacity from the whole team. Be realistic about what you can do, and where you need support. If you don't feel ready, work on the next small step that will get you there and determine what you need to do to secure the capacity you need for the longer term.

### **☞ Re-think reporting and evaluation**

Classic ways of establishing and measuring outcomes are not designed to support children who are given power over the process or outcomes of philanthropic activities. Explore participatory and process-oriented approaches to reporting and evaluation. Remain flexible and ready to be surprised.

## **C. On working with other stakeholders**

### **☞ Count on support from experts**

#### **SUPPORTED BY TRAINING**

Child participation requires specific competences. There are many professionals and organisations with whom you can partner to help you design, implement and evaluate your activities so that they are participatory, meaningful and effective.

Don't forget that young people can be experts, too.

### **☞ Think of the whole system**

Your organisation's activities do not happen in a vacuum. Think collectively with others. Reach out to other actors working with and for children and young people. Collectively learn what influences children and young people's choices. Most critically, learn and listen to children and young people themselves. We're all part of a wider system and community.

### **☞ Connect local action with global agreements**

As much as possible, make links between your local participatory projects and larger frameworks and policies such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, or the SDGs. Use these frameworks as common language and guidance for your work. Help those you work with to understand that children's and young people's participation is not just something good to do, it is a basic requirement for fulfilling rights. It is the floor, not the ceiling.

### **☞ Learn with your peers in philanthropy**

There are others like you that are venturing into sharing decision-making with children. Connect to like-minded networks of organisations practising child participation and participatory grantmaking to find inspiration, resources and support.

## **2. Advice from young people to foundations**

The following recommendations to foundation professionals come from young people who have had experience working with philanthropic organisations. These pieces of advice were collected in focus groups for this study.

### **☞ Nurture personal relationships**

"When you notice people are just there for you, and there is honesty and trust, there is a free flow of communication." "It is more than the partnership between an organisation and a random young person."

### **☞ Children are not all the same**

Avoid generalised ideas about children and young people. Acknowledge the diversity of identities, histories, interests and capacities within the same age groups. Intentionally discover the uniqueness of each child and young person involved.

### **☞ "We are not a project to be managed"**

Conversations with young people cannot only be about milestones and outcomes. Ask me how I am doing, and where I am in my thinking.

### **☞ Consider power dynamics when making requests**

Many children and young people don't need to be told what to do, especially when they have grown up with difficulties. When the foundation asks to do something with children, it is great, but it can feel forced. Young people's ideas are not always aligned with the way foundations operate.

### **☞ "Do it! Work together with young people"**

Too much thinking about how to do it makes it even harder. Just start and don't see it as something you have to do to be "a good foundation", but as an opportunity to learn. Consider working with children as a normal practice, rather than as an exception.

### **☞ "Think about when it's not helpful to involve children"**

Support creating the space, capacity and confidence for children to

be able to contribute. Think whether you've gathered the conditions for children to be involved, but also whether there are matters where involving children will make them feel insufficient or unsafe. If you're too far along in a process or decision-making, don't include children or young people just for the sake of it.

### **☞ Honour the space given to young people to decide**

If you have chosen to work "bottom-up" and give children and young people power to decide, stick with that commitment. Work with them, listen to them, support them, give them confidence. Be careful with the promises you make and avoid creating "fake freedom".

### **☞ Recognise young people's expertise**

Who decides what knowledge is? If you are working with children and young people, acknowledge their paths and interests. Value expertise coming from their lived experiences, as well as expertise from a professional field or from research. Put more than "young person" or "student" and their country next to the description of young people speaking at your events.

### **☞ Support groups and organisations long term**

Focusing on short-term projects hinders children's and young people's right to be organised so they can develop their capacity and become more impactful. Invest in longer-term relationships.

### **☞ Compensate involvement appropriately**

Many children and young people are balancing school, work and home care responsibilities. Their time is valuable. Consider children's livelihoods and make sure they are gaining (not losing) value by working with your foundation. Compensating them, not just for their expenses but also for their time, is critical. Compensation can

be financial, but not the sole type. Some children and young people may prefer skill development or sponsored education. Define with your young collaborators what fair compensation means.

## **3. Advice from young people to their peers**

These recommendations, also collected during the study's focus groups of young people who have worked with philanthropic organisations, are aimed at other young people who might consider collaborating with foundations in the future.

### **☞ "Be the most authentic self you can be"**

"Trying to be someone else won't work long term." The best results come if you are honest with yourself and others.

### **☞ "Ask yourself: 'Is it good for me?'"**

Before you start collaborating with a foundation, and all the way along, respect your own boundaries. It can be good to step out of your comfort zone. You have to try something new to find out if you like it. But never to the extent where it feels bad or impacts you negatively.

### **☞ "Create rules together with adults"**

How you work together is as important as the result of your work. Take the time to create the rules of how you will make decisions and communicate together. If your foundation collaborator doesn't set rules, you should suggest you do so together and revisit these rules along the way.

### **☞ "Not all ideas can fly"**

Participating in making decisions means everyone has a chance to have their say: young collaborators, professionals, experts. But not all ideas can be implemented, even good ones.

This happens for a variety of reasons. Make sure you ask for a transparent explanation for why some ideas are chosen and others not.

### **☞ "Pick your battles. Learn to make compromises."**

"If you are trying to decide on something together, then you need to see what works and what doesn't work. If you have to pick between two things that you really want, but you can only have one of them, you've got to learn how to let go of some things and put more energy behind something else."

### **☞ "Don't be afraid to have your own ideas"**

"It's alright to expect something from a foundation, because they expect something from you." "Don't let older people do the talk for you."

### **☞ "If it's not in the budget, it's just talk"**

*Foundations operate on budgets. Once they are closed and approved, it's very difficult to make any changes. Think about everything you need in detail: transport, training – even buying water – and make sure it's part of the budget.*

### **☞ "You shouldn't invalidate your own feelings"**

If you don't understand something or feel frustrated, it does not mean there is something wrong with you. There might be differences in the ways decisions are made or communicated. "Sometimes all you need is that little extra clarification."

### **☞ "There is no bad or stupid question"**

There is a reason why they want to work with you. Your experience might be different but it is also refreshing. "You're young, but not dumb." "You have the right to be respected, safe, listened to, and not feeling judged if you ask any question."

# Three toolkits to guide you along your journey to involving children and young people

## Funders' toolkit for child and youth participation

By Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG)

Elevate Children Funders Group (ECFG) is the leading global network of funders focused exclusively on the well-being and rights of children and youth. In 2022 it developed a toolkit<sup>17</sup> (to be published in June 2022) with and for its members and other philanthropic funders who want to better understand how to support child and youth participation. This Funders' Toolkit includes research findings; a new adaptable model for participation tailored specifically for funders; an overview of current known participatory mechanisms for children and young people; and practical activities to help funders as they embark on this journey or seek to deepen their existing initiatives. The toolkit builds on an ECFG study published in 2021, "Shifting the Field: Philanthropy's Role in Strengthening Child- and Youth-Led Community Rooted Groups", which maps current practices in philanthropic support for child- and youth-led work at the community level and provides strategic advice to donors on how to strengthen their funding modalities through participatory approaches. The co-chair of Philea's Children and Youth Thematic Network, the Learning for Well-being Foundation, took part in the advisory group of the study.

[www.elevatechildren.org/publications-cyptoolkit](http://www.elevatechildren.org/publications-cyptoolkit)

## We Are Here. A Child Participation Toolbox.

By Learning for Well-being Foundation and Eurochild

Developed by the Learning for Well-being Foundation together with Eurochild, "We Are Here – A Child Participation Toolbox" takes a children's rights perspective to provide the tools needed to implement meaningful child participation in a variety of settings, and to prepare children to play leading roles in participatory events. It builds on an understanding that participation can come in many forms, and through a variety of engaging activities, helps prepare children for these different situations. Uniquely, this Toolbox also offers tools to help find meaningful ways for children and adults to work together. Throughout the 6 modules, the user is guided on how to run sessions with children and adults on topics including participation, representation, facilitation and evaluation, while also giving explanations of different aspects of child participation. Activities in the Toolbox use a creative approach to help answer questions children might ask themselves as they prepare to play a role in a project, and the activities explain the important conditions for children to participate meaningfully and safely.

[www.eurochild.org/uploads/2021/01/We\\_Are\\_Here\\_Toolbox.pdf](http://www.eurochild.org/uploads/2021/01/We_Are_Here_Toolbox.pdf)

## Involving Children in Decision-Making at the Strategic Level in A Million & Me

By BBC Children in Need x Queen's University Belfast

BBC Children in Need has developed a toolkit<sup>18</sup> in partnership with Queen's University in Belfast for those who are planning to involve children and young people in their initiatives and projects. It draws on BBC Children in Need's experience of establishing and managing a Children's Advisory Panel for their project "A Million & Me". Feedback on the process was gathered from the children, partners and key stakeholders, which is presented throughout, to share what worked well and highlight key learning points. It is informed by a children's rights-based model of child participation – The Lundy Model – and contains information on establishing a Children's Advisory Panel (including safeguarding and ethical procedures for recruiting and working with participants); creating a supportive environment; and incorporating children's views (giving children's views due weight and developing child-friendly outputs). The appendices include a number of concrete documents such as useful samples of information sheets (e.g. consent forms and evaluation forms); information to set up meetings; and examples of activities, among others.

[www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/CCRFilestore/Fileupload,987535,en.pdf](http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/CCRFilestore/Fileupload,987535,en.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> See more at Elevate Children Funders Group: [www.elevatechildren.org/publications-cyptoolkit](http://www.elevatechildren.org/publications-cyptoolkit)

<sup>18</sup> Involving Children in Decision-Making at the Strategic Level in A Million & Me, BBC Children in Need, Queen's University Belfast. [www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/CCRFilestore/Fileupload,987535,en.pdf](http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforChildrensRights/CCRFilestore/Fileupload,987535,en.pdf)

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## SPECIAL THANKS GO TO Young experts

- Bianca Băluță
- Sude Baydar
- Richard Dzikunu
- Fransiska Elisabeth
- Amina Kamolova
- Johanna Lutz
- Sophia Schwager

## SPECIAL THANKS GO TO Researchers and specialists

- Alison Body, *University of Kent*
- Gerison Lansdown, *International Children's Rights Specialist*

## Philanthropic organisations involved in this study

- Aga Khan Foundation Portugal
- Anouk Foundation
- Aydin Dogan Foundation
- BBC Children in Need
- Bernard van Leer Foundation
- Bertelsmann Stiftung
- Bikuben Fonden
- Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
- Compagnia di San Paolo
- Egmont Fonden
- Finnish Cultural Foundation
- Fondation Botnar
- Fondation de France
- Fondation de l'Orangerie
- Fondazione Alta Mane (Italia)
- Fondazione Cassa dei Risparmi di Forlì
- Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Padova e Rovigo
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- Joachim Herz Stiftung
- Karel Komarek Family Foundation
- Koç University
- Learning for Well-being Foundation
- National Foundation for Civil Society Development - Croatia
- National Lottery Community Fund
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- UniCredit Foundation

## About Philea

Philanthropy Europe Association (Philea) nurtures a diverse and inclusive ecosystem of foundations, philanthropic organisations and networks in over 30 countries that work for the common good. We unite over 10,000 public-benefit foundations that seek to improve life for people and communities in Europe and around the world.

## About the Philea Children and Youth Thematic Network

Launched in December 2019, this network of philanthropic organisations involved in children's issues works to support the Convention on the Rights of the Child, helping to put children's rights onto the international agenda, and taking a collective step towards the actual realisation of those rights. Another priority will be enhancing children's and young people's participation, and raising their voices within organisations that work on behalf of them.

## About design

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