

VOICES INTO ACTION

Policy documents covering the rights and voices of children, people with disabilities and families

Overview of key international and European Union policy documents covering the rights and voices of children, people with disabilities and families

Policy document	What it means for learners, people with disabilities and/or families
<p>United Nations, 1989, Convention on the Rights of the Child</p> <p>Learn more and access the child-friendly version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p>	<p>Recognises children as individuals and agents of social change and as a group entitled to protection.</p> <p>Recognises and respects parents' voices when in line with the child's best interests.</p>
<p>European Union, 2000, Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union</p>	<p>Article 24 states children's right of expression on 'matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity'.</p> <p>Defends parents' rights to ensure their children's education and teaching conform with their religion, philosophy and pedagogy, in accordance with national laws.</p>
<p>United Nations, 2006, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p>	<p>Promotes and protects people with disabilities and ensures they fully and equally enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms with respect and dignity.</p>
<p>United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009, General comment No. 12 (2009): The right of the child to be heard</p>	<p>Indicates that children's views may add relevant perspectives and experience, and should be considered in decision-making, policy-making and the preparation and evaluation of laws and/or measures.</p> <p>Underscores parents' role in guiding and giving space to children's right of expression. Emphasises the importance of informing, guiding and supporting parents to assist and nurture children's growth, development and learning.</p>

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<p>Council of Europe, 2011, Recommendation on children’s rights and social services friendly to children and families</p>	<p>Highlights the importance of partnership between children, parents and social services in improving awareness and collaboration, fostering participation and empowering children’s and parents’ voices.</p>
<p>European Commission, 2011, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: An EU Agenda for the Rights of the Child</p>	<p>Sets out the need to listen to children and enable their participation in decision-making that affects them.</p>
<p>Council of Europe, 2012, Recommendation on the participation of children and young people under the age of 18</p>	<p>Calls on countries to ensure the protection of children’s rights and the opportunity for children to participate in decisions that affect their lives.</p> <p>Highlights parents’ and caregivers’ primary responsibility for their child’s upbringing and development. Emphasises their fundamental role in affirming and nurturing the child’s right to participate.</p>
<p>European Commission, 2013, Commission recommendation of 20 February 2013 – Investing in Children: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage</p>	<p>Guides countries on how to tackle child poverty and social exclusion through measures such as ensuring access to quality services, supporting parental participation in the labour market and giving children the right to participate in decision-making.</p>
<p>United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2013, General Comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration</p>	<p>Strengthens the understanding and application of children’s right to have their best interests assessed and considered. Seeks to promote a change in attitudes leading to the full respect of children as rights holders. The Committee expects that this general comment will guide decisions by all those concerned with children, including parents and caregivers.</p>
<p>Council of Europe, 2015, Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life</p>	<p>Reaffirms young people’s right to be heard and considers them as autonomous actors capable of inter-relating with other members of society.</p>

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Council of Europe, 2016, Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)	Establishes the Council’s priorities in the areas of equality of opportunities, participation, a life free from violence, child-friendly justice and the right of all children to access online environments.
United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016, General Comment No. 20 (2016) on the Implementation of the Rights of the Child during Adolescence	Aims to guide countries on the legislation, policies and services needed to promote comprehensive adolescent development, consistent with the realisation of their rights.
Council of the European Union, 2017, Revision of the EU Guidelines for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child (2017). Leave No Child Behind	Promotes a system-strengthening approach to protect the rights of all children, including their participation.
Council of the European Union, 2018, Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027	Highlights the role of young people in society and sets objectives to foster youth participation in democratic life.
European Parliament, 2019, European Parliament Resolution of 26 November 2019 on children’s rights on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	<p>Calls on countries to strengthen children’s participation in their legislation. Encourages the creation of meaningful mechanisms for child participation, such as children’s councils, in the work of European, national, regional and local parliamentary assemblies.</p> <p>Stresses the importance of a holistic approach to education, encouraging countries to define measures to prevent early school leaving and ensure equal access to quality education for girls and boys from early childhood to adolescence. This includes children with disabilities, marginalised children and children living in areas affected by humanitarian crises or other emergencies.</p>
European Commission, 2021, Proposal for a Council Recommendation Establishing a European Child Guarantee	Aims to prevent and combat the social exclusion of children in need by guaranteeing access to a set of key services, tackling child poverty and fostering equal opportunities.

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<p>European Commission, 2021, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030</p>	<p>Aims to ensure full participation in society for people with disabilities, on an equal basis with others. This is in line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which establish equality and non-discrimination as cornerstones of EU policies.</p>
<p>European Parliament, 2021, European Parliament Resolution of 11 March 2021 on children’s rights in view of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child</p>	<p>Highlights the toll of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, further exacerbating their risk of poverty, severely affecting access to education, compromising their physical and mental health and increasing the danger of violence and abuse.</p>
<p>European Parliament, 2021, Motion for a Resolution further to Questions for Oral Answer B9-0000/2021 and B9-0000/2021 pursuant to Rule 136(5) of the Rules of Procedure on the European Child Guarantee</p>	<p>Emphasises the need to meet the EU target to lift at least five million children out of poverty by 2030. Mentions the European Child Guarantee, a proposal that should ensure access to high-quality, free healthcare, education, childcare, decent housing and adequate nutrition for every child in poverty.</p>
<p>European Commission, 2021, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child</p>	<p>A comprehensive EU policy framework to ensure the protection of the rights of all children and to secure access to basic services for the most vulnerable.</p>
<p>Council of the European Union, 2021, Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening the multilevel governance when promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes</p>	<p>Aims to ensure that all young people have equal opportunities for participation, involvement and empowerment in relevant decision-making processes.</p>