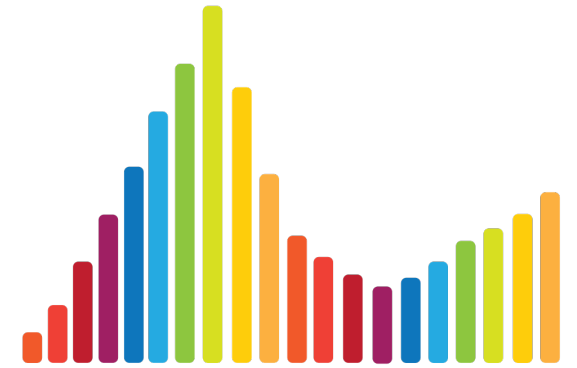


Voices into Action: Including the Voices of Learners and their Families in Educational Decision-Making



Voices into Action (VIA) event, Belgrade, 23 May 2023

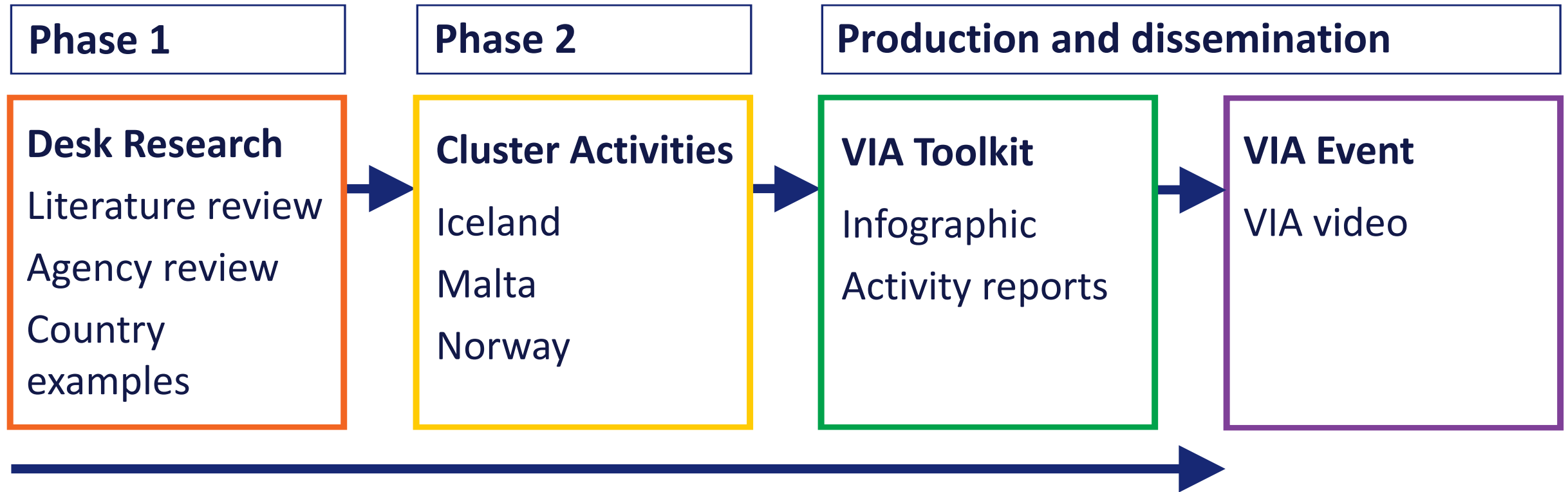
Overview of presentation

- Summary of the Voices into Action (VIA) activity
- Key findings from policy and literature reviews
- Development and validation of the VIA Framework for Meaningful Participation
- Key messages
- VIA toolkit

Purposes of the VIA activity

- **Overall goal:** indicate effective ways of promoting the voices of learners and their families in decision-making processes.
 - Explore how the voices of learners and their families can be **meaningfully** involved in education decision-making processes.
 - Examine how **future Agency work** can best include the voices of learners and their families.
 - Identify **key messages and resources** for policy-makers and other stakeholders.

Activity timeline



Development and validation of the VIA Framework for Meaningful Participation

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

United Nations, 1989, [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#)

[Learn more](#) and access the [child-friendly version](#) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

European Union, 2000, [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#)

United Nations, 2006, [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)

Recognises children as individuals and agents of social change and as a group entitled to protection.

Recognises and respects parents' voices when in line with the child's best interests.

Article 24 states children's right of expression on 'matters which concern them in accordance with their age and maturity'.

Defends parents' rights to ensure their children's education and teaching conform with their religion, philosophy and pedagogy, in accordance with national laws.

Promotes and protects people with disabilities and ensures they fully and equally enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms with respect and dignity.

Key findings from the policy review (1)

- The right of children to be heard and considered in matters affecting them extends to **ALL children**.
- The recognition of children as agents to their effective enjoyment of this right is **not granted or systematised yet**.
- **Policy alignment** and collaboration among stakeholders are pivotal to ensure children's rights.

Key findings from the policy review (2)

- Families are **fundamental actors** in developing and affirming learners' voices in educational matters. Families must be consulted, provided that the **principle of the 'child's best interests'** is always the primary consideration.
- Families have the **right to guidance and support**.
- Countries must commit to systematising and developing **effective processes** for learners' and families' participation and interaction in synergy with all institutions and stakeholders in all matters affecting children.

Key findings from the literature review (1)

- There is no clear agreement on what is meant by ‘voice’ or ‘voices’.
- This concept is often used to mean autonomy, agency or engagement.
- ‘Voice’ is often used to represent one view from groups of people, ignoring individual voices and differences of opinion.
- There are ethical issues around how the voices of some individuals and groups are used in research. This can lead to the misrepresentation of people’s views.

Key findings from the literature review (2)

- There is research on gaining opinions, but less on active participation in educational decision-making.
- The active participation of learners and adults vulnerable to exclusion is limited in the research, despite the recognition of the need to include absent, marginalised and silent voices.
- The importance of the contribution of intergenerational voices of families, learners and community members is recognised but not developed.
- Research methods have not engaged sufficiently with the opportunities presented by assistive and digital communication technology.

Development and validation of the VIA Framework for Meaningful Participation

VIA activities



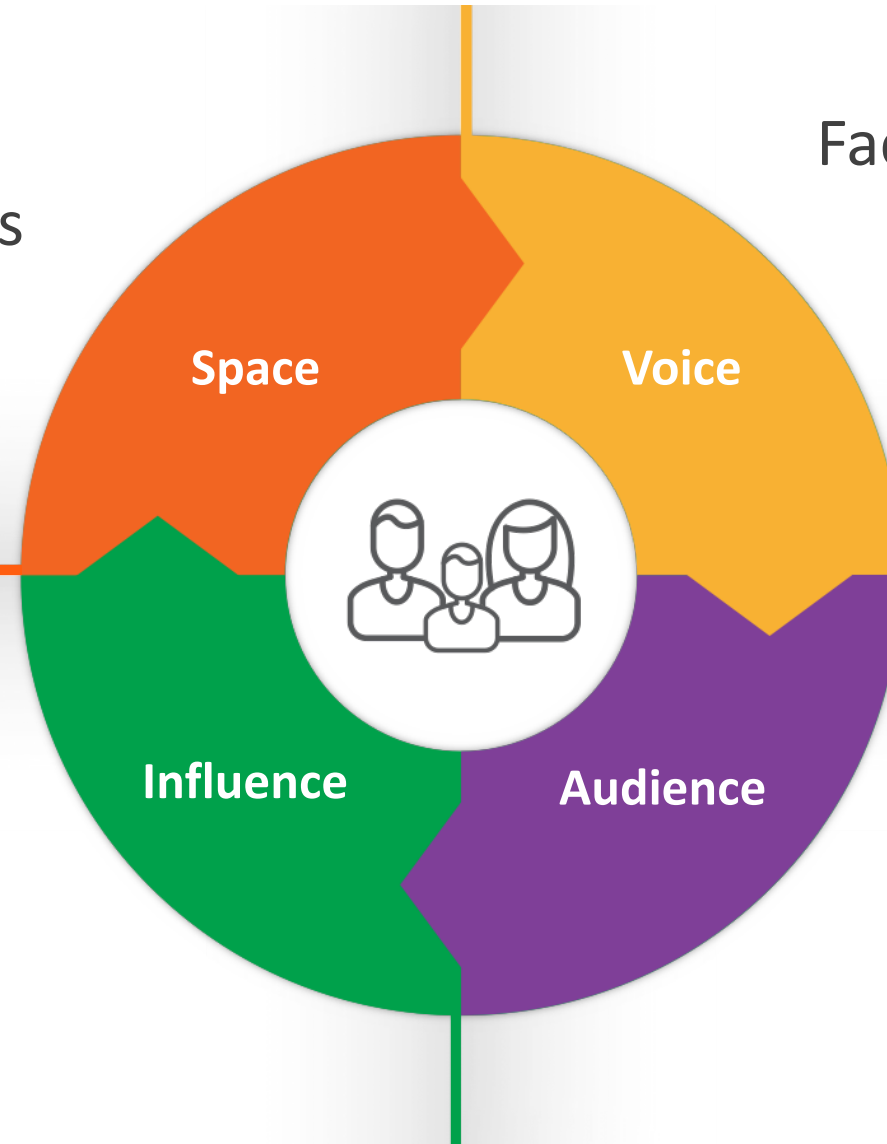
VIA Framework for Meaningful Participation

Space

Create safe and inclusive opportunities to form and express voices

Voice

Facilitate free expression of voices in the medium of choice



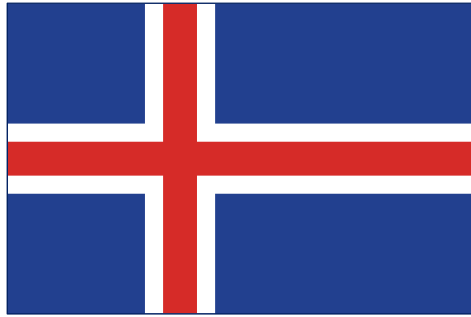
Influence

Act on the voices

Audience

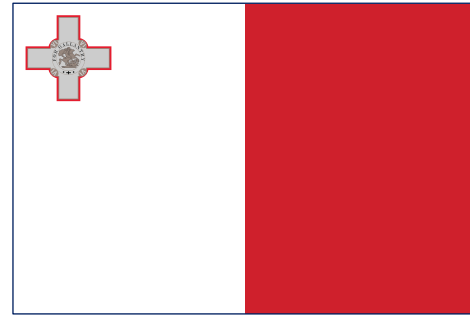
Listen responsibly to the voices

Cluster activities



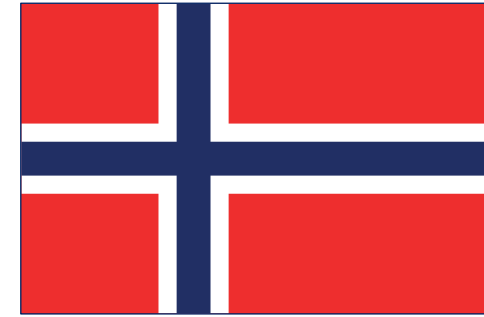
Iceland

Learning walks and focus groups with learners



Malta

Interviews with families
Activities with learners



Norway

Observations
Survey with learners
Interviews with policy-makers



Examples of resources (1)

- ✓ Reflective questions for every stage:
before, during and after the activities
- ✓ Advice for working with families
- ✓ Guidelines for working with vulnerable learners (e.g. non-verbal children)
- ✓ Advice on several ethical issues
(e.g. consent of individuals with complex needs)



Learning Walks and Talks

Examples of resources (2)

Statements

Feelings

1. I feel welcome at this school
2. I feel proud to be a learner in this school
3. The school makes it easy for learners with different backgrounds and abilities to come to this school
4. When I have a problem, I ask the teachers for help
5. Other learners help me when I am stuck with my work

Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
		
		

VIA key messages (1)



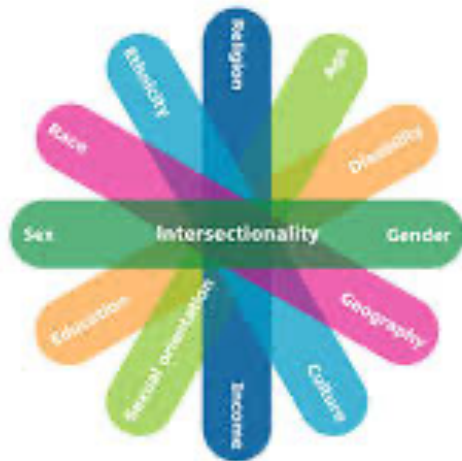
1. Systematise processes



2. Use ethical approaches



3. Increase participation in shaping policy



4. Be aware of the complexities of diverse groups and identities

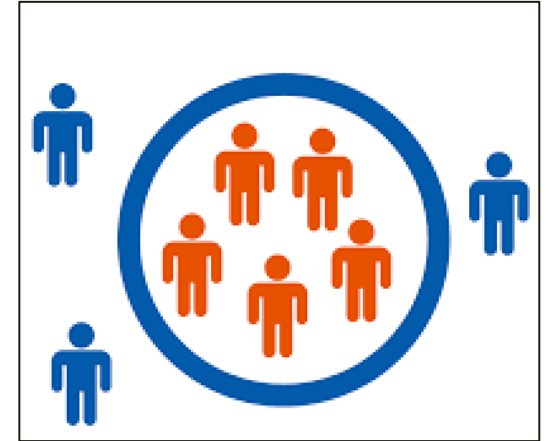
VIA key messages (2)



5. Build capacity for participation



6. Use various models and approaches



7. Identify and include marginalised, unheard and silenced voices



8. Create synergies with NGOs and civil society

Activity outputs

2021

- **VIA interim report (internal)**

2022

- **VIA literature review**
- **Agency internal review ('living' document)**
- **Infographic**
- **VIA synthesis report**

2023

- **VIA toolkit**
- **VIA video**
- **Final summary report**

The VIA toolkit

VIA toolkit (1)

An open-access, dynamic resource

The screenshot displays the website interface for the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. At the top, the agency's logo and name are on the left, and a navigation menu with 'Home', 'About us', 'Country info', 'Activities', 'Resources', and 'News' is on the right. A search bar and a language selection dropdown are also present. Below the navigation, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Voices into Action Toolkit'. The main content area features a large banner with a colorful, abstract background of hands and the 'VOICES INTO ACTION' logo. The title 'Voices into Action (VIA) Toolkit' is followed by the subtitle 'A digital resource supporting learner and family participation in educational decision-making'. A secondary navigation bar includes 'Home', 'Background', 'The VIA Framework', 'Examples', and 'Resource Library'. The main text block states: 'Everyone benefits when learners and families have power to influence decisions that affect their lives.' and describes the VIA activity. To the right, there is a section for 'Voices into Action Infographic' with a thumbnail image of the infographic.

EUROPEAN AGENCY
for Special Needs and Inclusive Education

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Home About us Country info Activities Resources News

Home > Voices into Action Toolkit

VOICES INTO ACTION

Voices into Action (VIA) Toolkit

A digital resource supporting learner and family participation in educational decision-making

Home Background The VIA Framework Examples Resource Library

Everyone benefits when learners and families have power to influence decisions that affect their lives.

The Agency's [Voices into Action](#) (VIA) activity explores educational decision-making approaches that centre on learners and families. It proposes the VIA Framework for Meaningful Participation in Inclusive Education, which outlines practical and ethical considerations for planning, implementing and evaluating learner and family participation programmes.

Voices into Action Infographic

VOICES INTO ACTION
A Framework for the Meaningful Participation of Learners and Families in Educational Decision-Making

REAL PROGRESS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SYSTEMS CAN ONLY HAPPEN WHEN WE ...

RECOGNISE LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND ACT ON

VIA toolkit (2)

Introduction:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=5n2t2T5tg0A

How-to Guide:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=FzPrF1WBsGE

Contact

www.european-agency.org

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