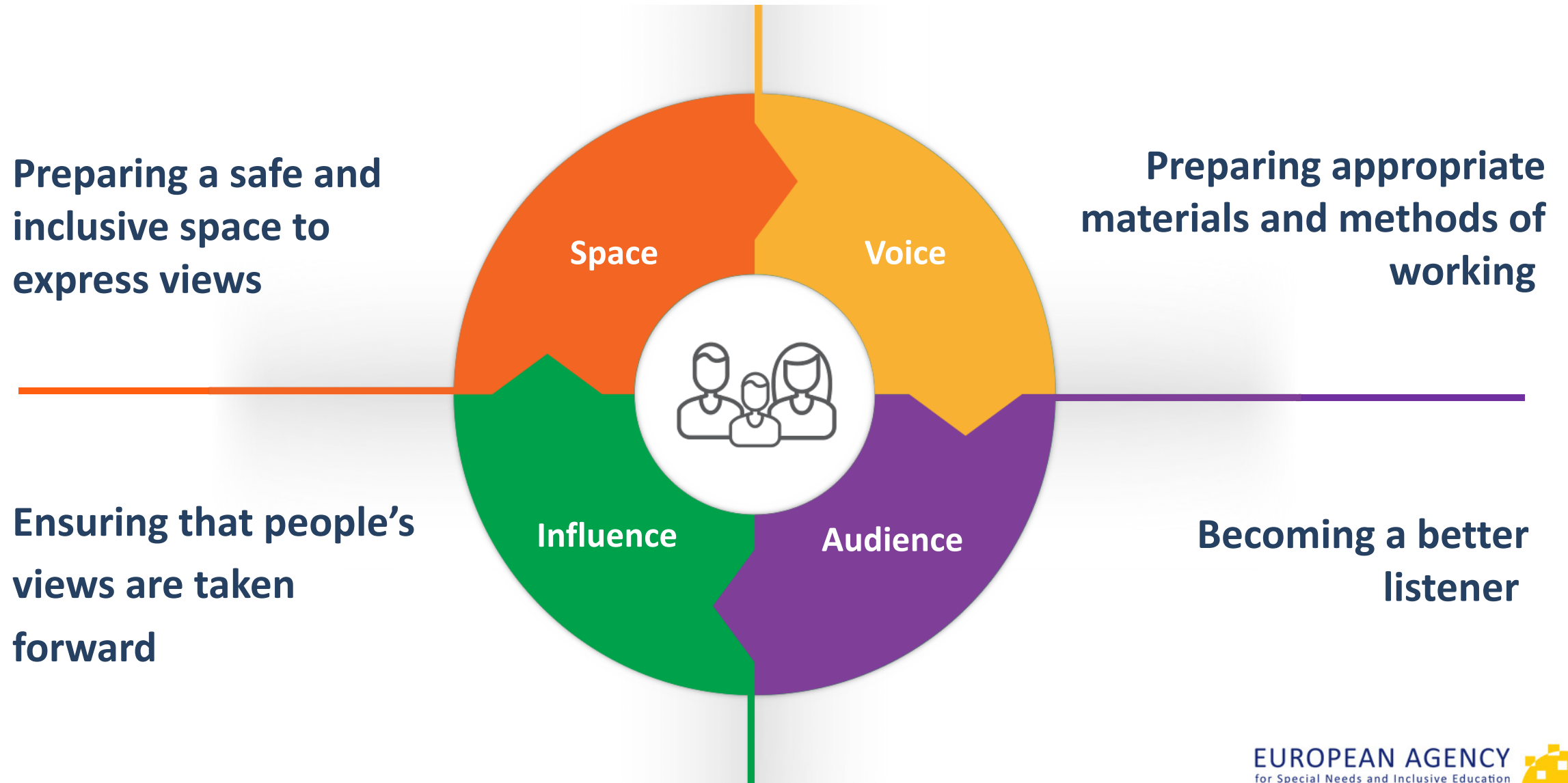


Voices into Action (VIA) Event Reflections

Simoni Symeonidou, University of Cyprus

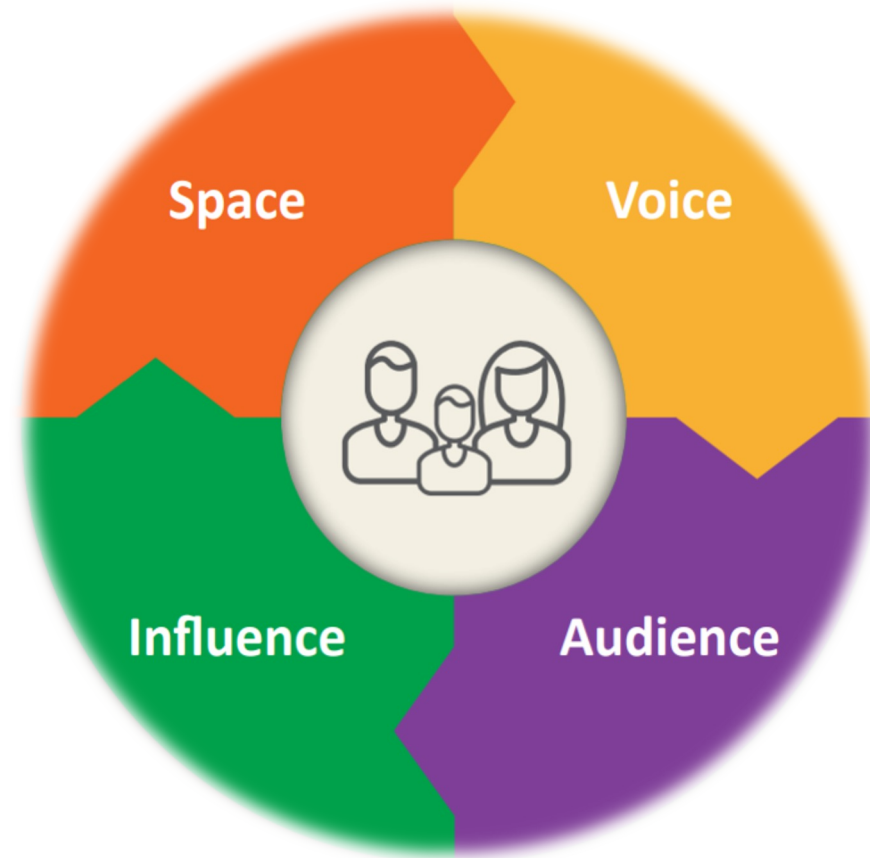
simoni@ucy.ac.cy

VIA Framework for Meaningful Participation



Parallel group discussions

- Learners
- Families
- Policy-makers



SPACE

- Mindful selection of the quality of interpersonal groups and individuals
- to put all in or stop to not to put any of them in a particular way

VOICE

- Balance, support, challenge, feedback and guidance with the variety of expression
- Language used by different people
- How and how often? Are we aware of this? Are we aware of this?

INFLUENCE

- to have a say in the way things are done
- to have a say in the way things are done
- to have a say in the way things are done

AUDIENCE

- to have a say in the way things are done
- to have a say in the way things are done
- to have a say in the way things are done

SPACE

- Plan WITH students
- Formal structures
- Unrealistic expectations
- identify risks
- Prepare learners
- Informal conversations (ie) during inspections
- Vulnerable groups → ensure understanding

VOICE

- Appropriate use of methods
- mindful use of tools
- accessible language
- Moderators/facilitators for expressing views

AUDIENCE

- Honesty around the outcomes
- prepared staff to listen
- open to criticism/comments
- low feedback

INFLUENCE

- Plans with students + activities
- Ministers need to sit & listen

SPACE

VOICE

AUDIENCE

INFLUENCE

- LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT
- ON THE SCHOOL LEVEL
- EDUCATION OF PARENTS FOR LAWS AND POLICY RIGHTS
- EDUCATION OF TEACHERS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS AND DIGNITY OF CHILDREN AND PARENTS
- DEFINING PARENTS GROUP AND DEMANDS OR ACCEPTANCE

Questions for learners

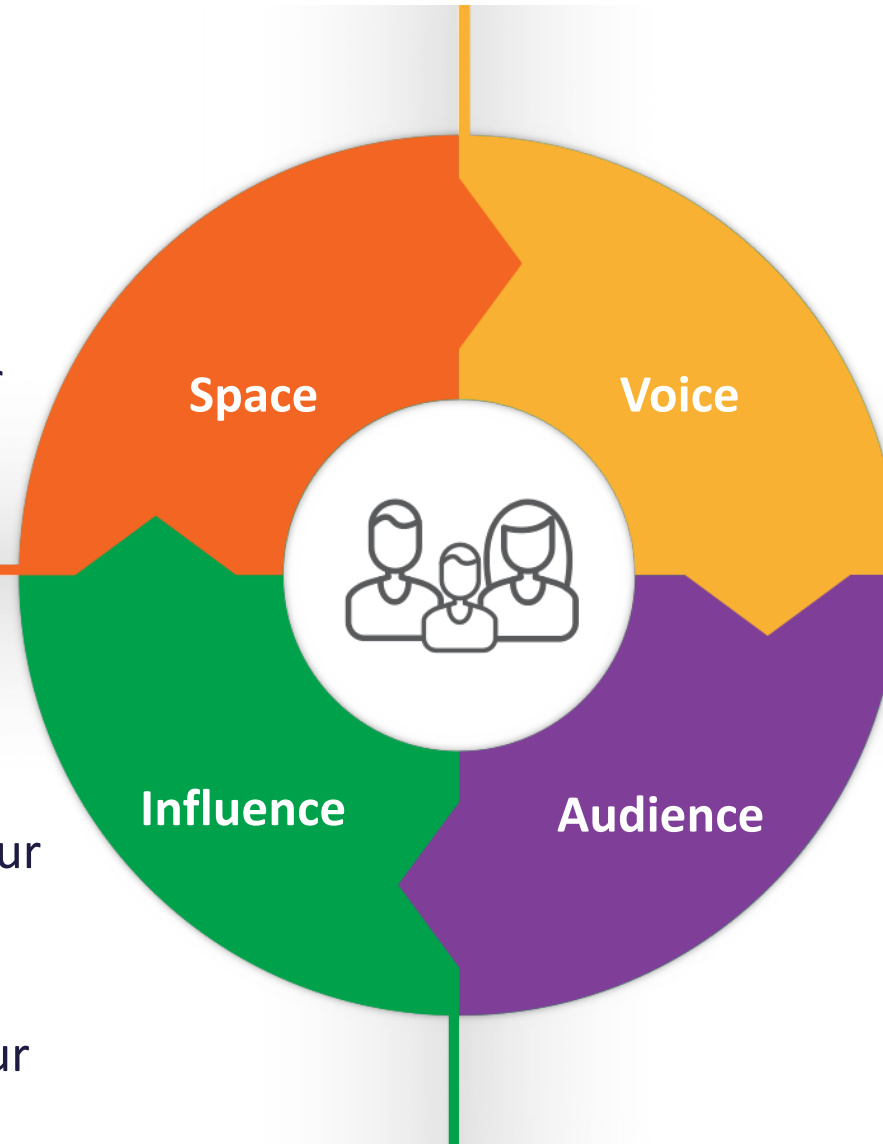
Think of your previous experiences of participation (at school, community, on other occasions, e.g. BRIES project).

- What helps you give your opinion?
- What do you find difficult about giving your opinion?
- How does it feel to have your voice heard?

Learners

- Learners need information in order to express their opinion
- They need support to understand where different opinions come from
- They feel safer to express their opinion when people with similar views participate

- ‘Action is more important than being heard’
- ‘We want to help others who might need it if we can, with our opinion’
- We don’t want to fear the consequences of expressing our opinion



- Learners are sometimes afraid to express their opinion because they may contradict what other groups suggest
 - Learners fear being criticized
 - ‘Other’s voices are louder, and often wrong’
- When learners feel respected and safe, then they provide their opinion
 - ‘Society doesn’t take us seriously enough. We miss being accepted, respected, appreciated, but they could get many things from us’

Questions for families

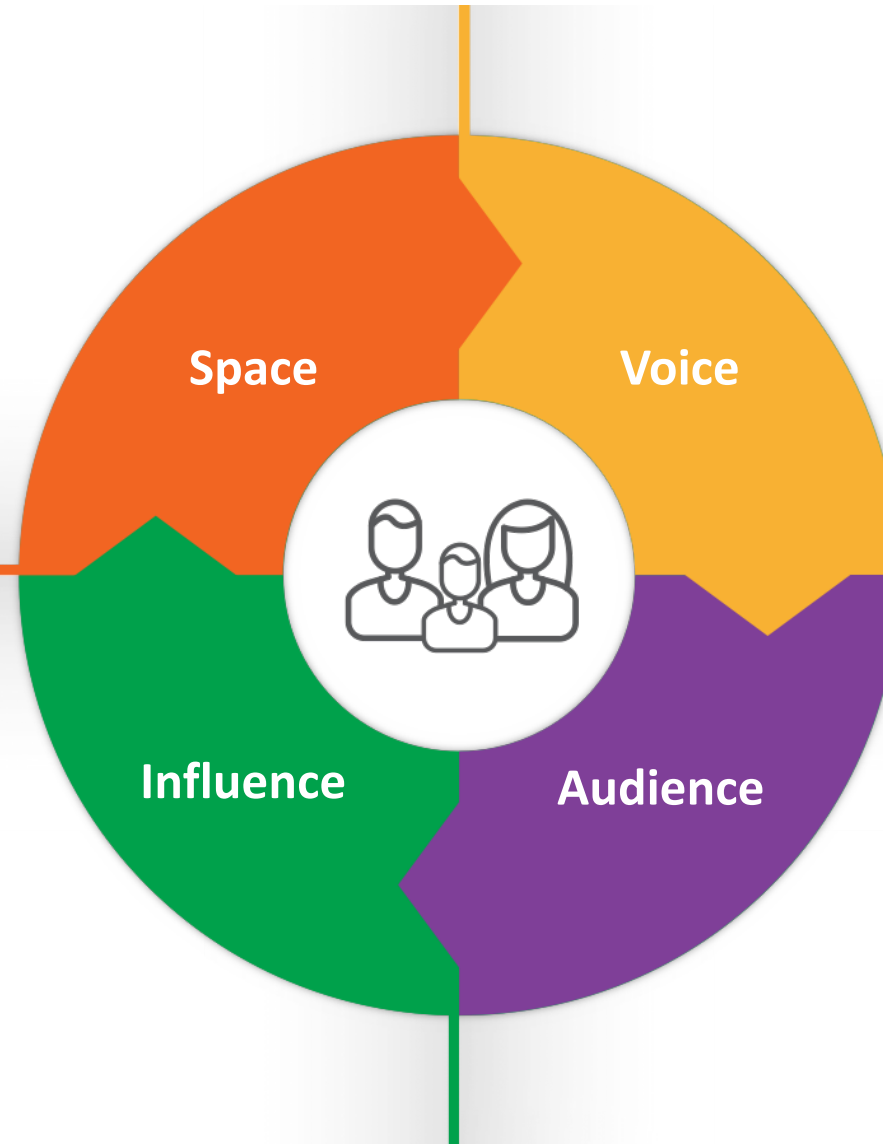
There are several challenges / barriers to participation. The VIA infographic includes key messages that might address some of those challenges.

- What is your (or other families') experience of participation?
- Which of the key messages do you consider more important/helpful for your participation in decision-making processes?

Families

- Parental organisations are helpful in finding the space to express the challenges families face
- Parents need to network with other parents (e.g. even under difficult circumstances)
- Parents' experiences differ and this is a strength

- Parents ask for 'active listening' from other stakeholders
- Need to have representatives from families with different experiences



- Families need to know the national policy framework because this is a strength when they campaign for specific issues
- Parents need to have a collective voice and take responsibility in prioritising their needs
- Parents need to be heard when personal assistants are hired
- Educating teachers could be a way to make changes at school level
- It is important to make sure that the head teachers know the challenges that the families face

Questions for policy-makers

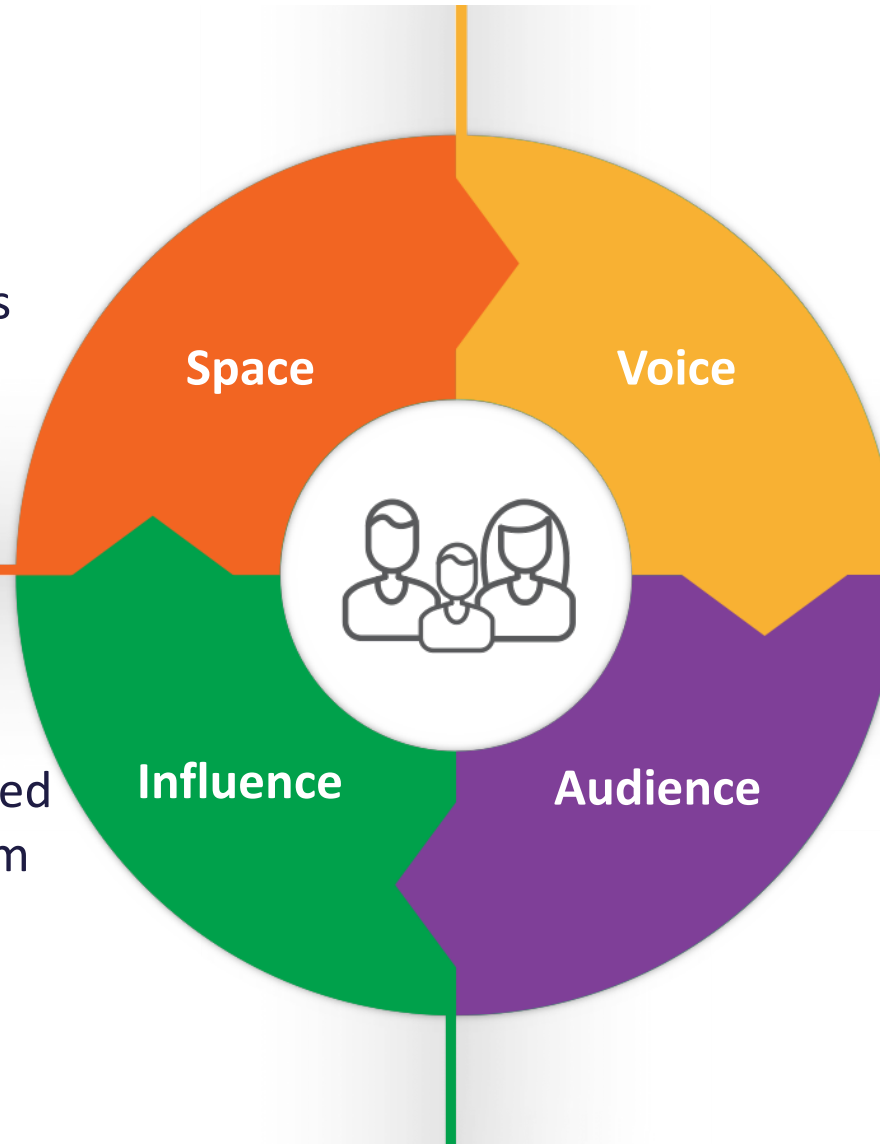
There are several challenges / barriers to participation. The VIA infographic includes key messages that might address some of those challenges.

- Which of those do you consider more important for your context and current work? Why?
- Can you relate this to something you are currently doing / have done?

Policy-makers

- Minimise selection bias by ensuring that learners from marginalised groups are represented
- Policy-makers need to find ways to listen to silent voices and provide them the space to do so

- Learners can influence national strategic plans
- Policy-makers should be prepared to listen and be open to criticism
- Are we able to 'hear' what learners want us to hear?



- How to reach the different perspectives of learners?
- How to reach the voices of learners at risk of exclusion?
- Appropriate use of methods (e.g. surveys, other tools)
- Need for moderators who will facilitate views to be heard
- Learners to be involved from the start
 - Need to set a process for learners' participation
 - Is the Ministry a good audience?

Thank
You :)

Contact

www.european-agency.org

European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education
Østre Stationsvej 33, DK-5000 Odense C, Denmark

secretariat@european-agency.org

Tel.: +45 64 41 00 20



Co-funded by
the European Union

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.