PANDA

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

NEWSLETTER 1

September 2021

Dear

Welcome to the first newsletter from the Panda Project. We are pleased to be able to tell you more about this exciting project, supported by Erasmus+. Panda stands for 'Participation and Collaboration for Action'. More specifically, it has the participation of young children (12 years and younger) in youth care as a central theme.

The project will run from September 2020 until August 2023 and is supported by partners from Belfast, Flanders, Madrid and Trondheim.

In this newsletter, you will find more information about the project and the project partners. We will take you through the first virtual year of the programme and our plans for the year ahead.

If you want to know more, or if you see a link with what you are doing, please contact us.

We hope that this project will support practitioners, organisations and policy officers in their participative practice with young children.

Wendy Eerdekens
Project coordinator



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1 What is Panda?

PANDA Project seeks to promote the participation of young children (aged 12 years and under) in decision making through strengthening professionals' collaboration with young children involved in child welfare/child protection services.



2 What is the aim?

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

The overarching aim of this project is to promote the participation rights of young children (aged 12 years and under) in decision making. Progress in social work law, policy and practice notwithstanding, the participation rights of young children (aged 12 and under) known to and/or in the care of social services remains an ongoing concern across Europe because professionals experience shared difficulties and barriers regarding implementation.

3 What are the objectives?

- Help to create the **collaborative conditions** for participatory social work with young children
- Increase the **competence** of social workers/ professionals
- Support the **implementation** of a participatory approach to social work
- Provide trainers with **post-initial training** to teach new tools and methods

4 What will be the outputs?

With the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Sustainable Development Goals as our compass, we focus on practitioners, organisations, policymakers and trainers of professionals.

- We will share inspiring practices for practitioners.
- We will develop a framework for policy and organisations to implement participatory social work with young children and to create the necessary conditions.
- Finally, we will create a toolkit for trainers.

We will present all this via reports, podcasts, short films, etc.

Step by step, these outputs will be available for everyone on our website.

5 Who are the partners?

Belgium, region of Flanders

Belgium is a federal state with three communities and three regions. In this project, the partners are situated in the region of Flanders, the Northern part of the country. The official language is Dutch. Flanders has approximately 6.600.000 habitants. Among other things, Flanders has jurisdiction of 'aid to people in need'.



Artevelde University of Applied Sciences (AUAS) is the lead partner of the Panda project. It is situated in the city of Ghent. Wendy Eerdekens and Eva Heirbaut represent AUAS in this project. They are lecturers and researchers of the Department of Social Work. They are both family therapists. One of their main interests is the participation of clients in care.

Growing Up is the Flemish agency responsible for preventive family support, childcare, foster care, adoption, youth support and the approach to youth offending. Nele Haesbrouck, Linda Aerts and An Rommel, all policy officers working for the agency, connect the activities of PANDA, to the different kinds of support we organise for young children with the goal of improving the participation of our young clients in care and child protection.

Opgroeien

Vlaanderen
In beweging opgroeien

Associated partners Cachet vzw, an organisation from and for young people with experience in youth care
Centre for Child and Family, Open Poortje
Flemish Commissioner of Children's Rights
One Family, One plan

Northern Ireland, Belfast

Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom that is variously described as a country, province, territory or region. Located in the northeast of the island of Ireland, Northern Ireland shares a border to the south and west with the Republic of Ireland. It has a population of 1.8 million. The project partners are based in the capital city, Belfast.



Queen's University Belfast, School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work. Karen Winter represents the social work team in this project. She teaches and researches on issues regarding children in care, communication and relationships and their rights. She focuses particularly on young children and their rights.

Voice Of Young People In Care (VOYPIC) is a charity that works in partnership with children and young people to promote their rights and voice. Central to their work is protecting the participation of children in decisions affecting their lives in care. VOYPIC provides independent advocacy support, coaching and mentoring support, and participation activities to children in care and young people leaving care. Alicia Toal and Geraldine McGuigan represent the agency on the Panda Project.

Norway, region of Trondheim

The Norwegian section of the Panda project is situated in the middle of Norway. We are a group of scholars, practitioners and managers living and working in Trondheim city.
Trondheim has a population of 200 000 and is the third largest city in Norway. The city's history goes way back and is particularly known for its role during the Viking era. Trondheim's beautiful cathedral is the end station for pilgrims, and the city is also known for its great musical and food festivals and for its sports achievements.

The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, department of Social Work and Trondheim Municipality Section Growing up. Randi Juul and Ingrid Sofie Dahlke Husby represent NTNU, Department of Social Work. They teach and do research at the university, and write about children's involvement in child welfare and child protection practices. Their passion is to learn more about how children can become real collaborative partners in the child welfare service sector.

Solvår Hernes, Pål Barmrark, Ingvild Dahl and Sture Warmes are working respectively with policy processes and planning and practical or hands-on work with young children and their families. All of them are employed by Trondheim Municipality.

TRONDHEIM MUNICIPALITY

Associated partners Ålesund and Fjord Child Welfare Service (Lene Solheim (leader), Vilde Årnes and Rammona S.S. Tønnesen)
Forandringsfabrikken (The Change Factory) - a foundation and a knowledge centre working to improve schools and help systems for children. In 2017, Forandringsfabrikken was named one of Europe's best social entrepreneurs for vulnerable children by the international organization Accelerating Change for Social Inclusion (ACSI). They build their advice on children's experiences, especially children who had been in contact with social services.

Spain, region of Madrid

Spain is a social and democratic state with a parliamentary monarchy as its political form, territorially organized into seventeen autonomous communities. In this project, the partners are situated in the city of Madrid. The official language is Spanish. The city of Madrid has approximately 6,745,591 habitants. The city of Madrid is recognised as a Child Friendly City.

Complutense University of Madrid (UCM) is one of the partners of the Panda Project. It is located in the city of Madrid. Esther Mercado, Marta Blanco, Ana Isabel Corchado, Ana Dorado and Begoña Leyra represent UCM in this project. They are lecturers and researchers from the Faculty of Social Work. The Interprofessional Spanish Team belongs mainly to the Department of Social Work and Social Services and one of them to the Department of Civil Law.

Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG) is an intercultural social non-profit organization that provides services for the development of the Roma community in Spain and in Europe. The FSG advocates an intercultural society where Roma persons freely and fully exercise their citizenship and contribute to the enrichment of universal culture. Carmen Roncal, Manuel Ortiz and Rocio Garcia represent FSG in this project.

Associated partners Madrid City Council, through Dynamization Services for Child and Adolescent participation and Municipal Social Services for the care and the protection of minors (CAI-1)
Las Alamedillas Fundation
ASPASI (Association for the healing and prevention of sexual abuse in childhood)
Sirio Project, Nuevo Futuro Association

6 What about the first project year?

We are very eager to learn from each other. As for all exchanges, we also have searched for an online alternative. Each region has facilitated a webinar to explain the regional politics regarding the theme. In addition, each region has given an insight into one or more practices.

Flanders presented Signs of Safety, both the framework and the translation into concrete practice with young children.

Trondheim presented the Norwegian child welfare system and the new growing up strategy named Rock Paper Scissors. Welfare is a matter of joint working between employees, researchers and citizens.

Madrid presented and contextualized the exciting world of participation of young children in Spanish context, navigating between laws, regulations and experiences in the field of social intervention, focusing on degrees of participation with levels of protection and social participation.

The Belfast webinar set out the legislative and policy context for the participation of young children in decision making in social care, social work, and policy development in Northern Ireland. Participants also had the opportunity to learn more about practical examples of tools and resources to support good practice with children.

More information from these webinars will be posted on the website soon.

7 What is on the agenda this year?

If everything goes well, we will have the first physical transnational learning in **November in Ghent** and in **March in Trondheim.** That will allow taking a closer look at local practices. We will discuss what is inspiring for the other regions and what are needed conditions for this.

8 Where can you find more information?

Take a look at the Panda **website**: https://www.ucm.es/pandaproject/.
The website is still under construction. All information will be available step by step.
Everything we develop as part of the project is available free of charge.

In addition, we would like to keep you informed through our **newsletters**, 4 in total.

For all questions or suggestions, you can contact
the project coordinator, coordinator of Belgium: wendy.eerdekens@arteveldehs.be
the coordinator of Northern Ireland: k.winter@qub.ac.uk
the coordinator of Norway: inger.s.husby@ntnu.no
the coordinator of Spain: emercado@ucm.es

www.ucm.es/pandaproject/
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