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Empowering Young Carers across Europe “OUR VOICES”: From Mapping to Action

Over the past months, the OUR VOICES project has reached an important milestone. After completing the mapping and analysis phase, the project is now moving decisively into implementation, translating evidence into practical tools and capacity-building activities that support the meaningful participation of young carers across Europe.

OUR VOICES continues to place young carers’ voices, experiences and rights at the centre of decision-making processes at local, national and European levels.

WP2 completed: Understanding participation gaps and opportunities

Work Package 2 (WP2) has now been successfully completed. This phase focused on mapping existing participation mechanisms for young carers and other vulnerable children across Europe, through a rapid realist review of scientific and grey literature.

The review confirmed that, while participation frameworks exist in many countries, young carers remain largely invisible within them. Participation is often consultative rather than meaningful, adult-led rather than child-centred, and unevenly implemented across regions and sectors. Structural barriers such as lack of recognition, insufficient resources, limited accessibility and the absence of feedback mechanisms continue to prevent young carers from influencing decisions that affect their lives.

Importantly, WP2 also identified transferable practices and enabling conditions for meaningful participation, including the role of trusted adults, flexible formats adapted to caring responsibilities and systemic organisational and policy support. These findings now provide the evidence base for the next phases of the project.

WP3 underway: Developing tools for meaningful participation

Building on the evidence gathered in WP2, the project has now entered Work Package 3 (WP3), which focuses on the development of practical tools to support the meaningful participation of young carers.

WP3 will lead to the development of a Participation Toolbox, designed to help professionals, organisations and decision-makers engage young carers in inclusive, ethical and non-tokenistic ways, following stakeholder consultations and co-design activities.

Initial drafting work has already begun, and partners will be actively involved in reviewing and refining the tools in the coming months to ensure they are grounded in real-life practice and responsive to young carers' needs.

WP4 in progress: Strengthening professionals' capacity

At the same time, Work Package 4 (WP4) is now being implemented. This phase focuses on the development of training materials for professionals working with and around young carers, including educators, social workers, healthcare professionals, youth workers and staff from civil society organisations.

The training materials will address:

- identification of young carers
- the specific challenges they face
- effective support strategies
- participation and self-advocacy
- ways to create young-carer-friendly environments

These materials will be tested through national workshops and/or online sessions in each partner country, with evaluation mechanisms in place to assess their relevance, accessibility and impact.

WP4 is closely linked to WP3, as the training activities support and inform the stakeholder consultations and engagement mechanisms developed under WP3.

What is coming next?

In the coming months, OUR VOICES will continue to:

- refine and validate the WP3 Participation Toolbox with partners and stakeholders
- pilot and evaluate WP4 training activities at national level
- strengthen cooperation between young carers, professionals and policymakers
- prepare the ground for stronger advocacy and policy impact at EU level

By moving from research to action, OUR VOICES aims to ensure that young carers are not only heard, but actively supported to shape the decisions that affect their lives



For more information and updates on OUR VOICES project,
please visit <https://ourvoicesproject.eu/>
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OURVOICES_PROJECT_EU



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