



NEWSLETTER 5 | September 2026

Empowering Young Carers across Europe “OUR VOICES”: Engagement Framework & Reports from the Training Workshops

The hands-on phase of the OUR VOICES project has continued over the past months. In Work Package 3, *Establishment of YCs Engagement and Participation Mechanisms*, the Stakeholder Consultations have been successfully completed. The findings, coupled with international child participation standards, have been integrated into an Engagement Framework for Young Carers Participation and Advocacy. This Engagement Framework will help organisations and public authorities develop effective and inclusive opportunities for Young Carers to participate in decision-making.

Work Package 4, *Training and Capacity Building*, is now also successfully completed. The Training Programme, based on findings from Work Package 2 and materials collected from partners, have reached a total of 116 participants across all partner countries. The evaluations from the Training Workshops show that the Training Programme has reached its core objectives and learning outcomes.

WP3 update: consultations completed, Engagement Framework underway

Since our last newsletter, WP3 has moved from data collection to analysis and design.

The stakeholder consultations in Italy, Bulgaria, and Belgium have been completed. Through surveys and interviews, we gathered insights from Young Carers, their families, professionals, and policy and institutional stakeholders, with a focus on identifying effective engagement strategies and understanding the specific barriers Young Carers may face when participating in advocacy or participation initiatives.

These results have now been analysed and brought together in *D3.1: Stakeholder Consultation Report*, which has been completed and submitted in June 2026. More than 200 stakeholders contributed to the consultation process, providing valuable insights into the barriers and enabling factors for

meaningful participation. Curious to read the full findings? The report is public and available in all six project languages (English, Italian, Bulgarian, Dutch, Swedish, and Slovenian) on our website: [OUR VOICES Stakeholder Consultation Report](#).

The consultations confirmed much of what WP2 had already signalled: Young Carers often remain largely invisible within existing child and youth participation structures, and the barriers to participation are structural rather than individual. Three findings stood out across countries and stakeholder groups. First, a recognition gap: participation mechanisms for children and young people exist, but Young Carers are rarely identified or engaged as a distinct group. Second, a gap between being asked for an opinion and genuinely being heard: many young people report rarely seeing visible change come from their input. Third, stakeholders agreed on what meaningful participation requires: privacy and confidentiality, flexible and low-burden formats, peer-based environments, and access to trusted adults for support.

Those findings now form the direct basis for D3.2: the Engagement Framework, due to be finalised by the end of September, and once published will be available on the OUR VOICES [website](#). It's a practical guide for schools, municipalities, service providers, and organisations, setting out the principles, strategies, and mechanisms for Young Carers' participation and advocacy. It ranges from identification and flexible, safe formats, to trusted adult and peer support, and real influence on decisions that affect Young Carers. It is expected to include five participation mechanisms: peer support and participation groups, school Young Carer panels, municipal Young Carer advisory groups, digital participation, and links to existing youth structures like the EU Children's Participation Platform.

After the Engagement Framework is published, we'll put it into practice through three pilots in Italy, Bulgaria and Belgium. Partners will run pilot programmes in selected schools or city councils, adapted to each national context, developed and tested in co-design with Young Carers themselves. The piloting will also gather feedback from participants such as educators, social workers, healthcare providers, professional and voluntary youth workers, and relevant NGOs. Their insights and all the lessons learned along the way will be captured in pilot implementation reports, so we can pass on what works for Young Carers' participation and advocacy.

WP4 completed: Training and Capacity Building

In Work Package 4 of the OUR VOICES project, the Training and Capacity Building Programme has been fully implemented. The Training Programme is designed to strengthen professionals' ability to identify, support and promote the participation of Young Carers in decisions affecting their lives. The Programme, which was informed by findings from Work Package 2 and existing training resources collected from partners, focused on seven key themes:

- Introducing the concept of Young Carers.
- Challenges facing Young Carers.
- Identification mechanisms.
- Effective support strategies for Young Carers.
- Participation mechanisms.
- Self-advocacy strategies.
- Guidelines and techniques for creating Young Carer friendly establishments.

The training combined evidence-based knowledge and examples from Young Carers' lived experiences with discussions, reflection and practical exercises. While the shared framework of the Training Programme was maintained, each country adapted the content to reflect national legislation, local research, existing resources, and examples of good practice. The structure and duration of the Workshops were also adapted according to local conditions.

Across the five participating countries, 13 workshops were delivered to 116 professionals from sectors including education, healthcare, social work, youth services, NGOs, and policymaking. Evaluation findings were highly positive. Of the 116 participants, 97 completed the evaluation questionnaire (84%

response rate). Participants consistently reported that the Training Programme has led to increased knowledge of Young Carers, greater awareness of their challenges, improved confidence in identifying them as well as effective support strategies. Participants also indicated that the Programme has enhanced their understanding of participation mechanisms, self-advocacy, and the conditions required to create Young Carer-friendly establishments.

Overall, the programme successfully strengthened awareness, knowledge, and professional capacity regarding Young Carers across all partner countries. Future developments to the Programme should focus on flexible delivery formats, tailored content to specific professional groups, expanded country-specific resources, and opportunities for ongoing professional exchange to further strengthen support for Young Carers across Europe. The report will be published in due course on the OUR VOICES [website](#).

What is coming next?

In the coming months, partners will focus on implementing Pilot Programmes of the participation mechanisms established in the Engagement Framework for Young Carers' participation and advocacy. This will include:

- Selecting and testing mechanisms based on local contexts and conditions
- Gathering feedback from participants
- Refining and optimising participation mechanisms ahead of full implementation

Through this, the OUR VOICES project will continue to work to empower Young Carers across Europe to participate in decisions that affect their lives.



For more information and updates on OUR VOICES project,
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*OUR VOICES is co-funded by the CERV programme under the Grant Agreement number
101190125 - OUR VOICES - CERV-2024-CHILD*

Co-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 granting authority can be held responsible for them.