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## **Connecting, collaborating and communicating with children across Europe**

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## **Abstract for EUSARF symposium.**

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### **Social Connections – Child welfare and the participation rights of young children**

It is internationally widely accepted in child welfare that empowering children to access their participation rights positively supports their development and wellbeing. And yet, despite a raft of policy and practice developments, there is clear international evidence that the participation rights of young children are still overlooked by professionals working with this group. In the context of this shared concern regarding the inconsistent application of the principles of the UNCRC (in particular articles 2, 3, 5, 6, 12, 13 and patchy attention to the supporting UN General Comments No. 7 (2005), No. 12 (2009), academics and partner agencies from 6 countries (Belgium, Spain, Norway, Northern Ireland) under the auspices of an EU KA2 grant have worked together to collate existing legal frameworks, knowledge, practices and resources which focus on the participation rights of very young children. The papers in this symposium focus on these differing aspects that impact on the participation rights of young children and in so doing reflecting on developments, challenges and some implications for professionals working in this area. The symposium will also feature a website developed by partner countries and the freely available resources which have been translated into different languages and which can assist in the training and daily practice of professionals working in this area. Paper One focuses on commonalities and differences in legal frameworks that define professionals work with young children, highlighting barriers to full implementation. Paper Two focuses on approaches to addressing barriers in the implementation of young children's participation through better understandings of theories, tools and their application. Paper Three focuses on an innovative method in practice. Paper Four focuses on the development of a sustainable training approach introducing the website and its multi-dimensional approach to improving professionals knowledge and practice in the area of young children's participation rights. From this overall reflections on progress and impact will follow mindful of recent developments in digital technology and children's rights in relation to this with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) General Comment No. 25 (2021) on the Rights of Children in Relation to the Digital Environment as an analytical lens.