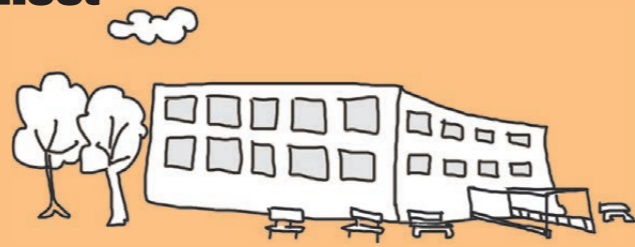


Children's participation in school

School is important for every child's growth and development. Children spend a lot of time at school, acquiring knowledge, skills and values, and meeting new friends. While learning, playing and socialising at school, children develop their social networks and themselves as individuals. School is a key place where children learn about and execute their rights, including the right to participation.



To participate at school as a student means that you receive and share information, that you are asked and consulted about issues related to classroom and school life, that you participate in curricular and extracurricular activities and in making decisions important for students, and that you propose and realise ideas and projects... – all this with the support and respect of adults and children at school and in keeping with your own interests and abilities.



How can school help?

Participation is a children's right, but it is also an educational goal. School that supports children's participation promotes the development of critical thinking, communication skills, media literacy, teamwork abilities, empathy and tolerance, and establishes good relationships and cooperation between students and teachers.

Children need adults' support to be able to realise their right to participation!

Children say that they would be most motivated to increase their school participation by better relationships with adults: fair treatment and grading, adults taking an interest in children's proposals and ideas, good humour and kindness. It is important for them to feel safe at school and to be able to express their views freely.

Children's opinions matter! Adults working with children and for children should know what children think about matters affecting them. Children told us they wanted more respect, equality and fairness in their relationship with adults – at school and in other environments.



Children have the right to participate in various activities at school and in making decisions affecting them. This means that you also have the right to:

- participate in adopting class rules;
- propose changes to school rules;
- propose projects and activities at school;
- express your opinion about class or school problems;
- ask for help for yourself or for your friend when something bothers or concerns you;
- receive feedback on what adults did with your proposals – which proposals they accepted and which they did not accept (and why)...

This is not to say that all children's proposals must be accepted, because this is not always possible (and may not be good for them), but children have the right to make proposals and to get feedback and explanations.

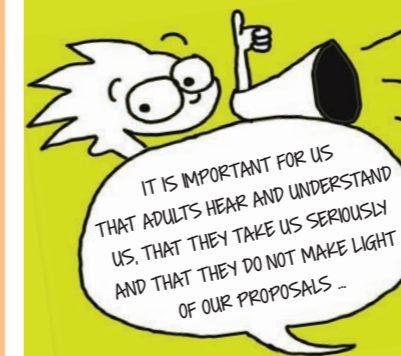
Children's participation in the community

Children can also actively participate in the society outside school, thus executing their right to receive information and answers to questions important to them, to participate in planning and designing activities for children in their local community as well as to express their views about problems and propose solutions.

It is important to know that children's presence at meetings and attending the discussions of adults do not in themselves constitute real participation, but that children should be prepared, given opportunities and provided with support in order to participate.



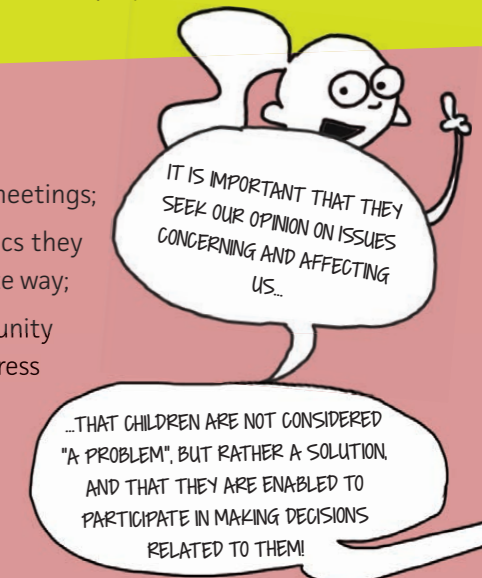
Children's participation IS:



- when children take up topics that they understand and find meaningful;
- when children, participating freely and under no coercion, can decide whether they want to participate in discussions, take part in public appearances, speak to the media, etc.;
- when participation is completely safe for children and does not expose them to any risk of negative reactions (e.g. the anger of adults) or any danger or threat to their wellbeing;
- when children receive clear guidance on why they are consulted and how their proposals will be used.

Children's participation IS NOT:

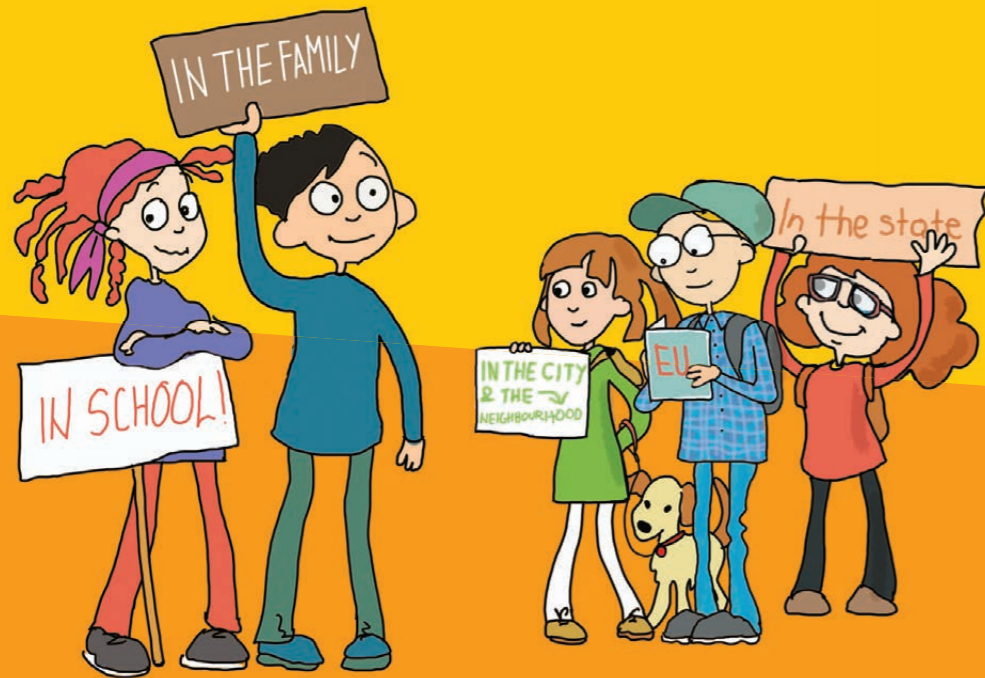
- when children only serve as decor at adults' meetings;
- when children attend discussions about topics they have not been briefed on in an age-appropriate way;
- when children are neither given a real opportunity nor provided with support from adults to express their views;
- when children are expected to act as messengers for adults... or to accept all proposals made by adults.



It is important that my voice be heard, too!

Where do children exercise their right to participation? In their families, at school, in children's and students' homes – where they live or spend most of their time. They also exercise it where decisions affecting their lives are made: in their neighbourhoods or cities, counties, states, European Union bodies and international organisations...

Children's participation is also realised through **the Network of Young Advisors to the Ombudsman for Children - NYA**.

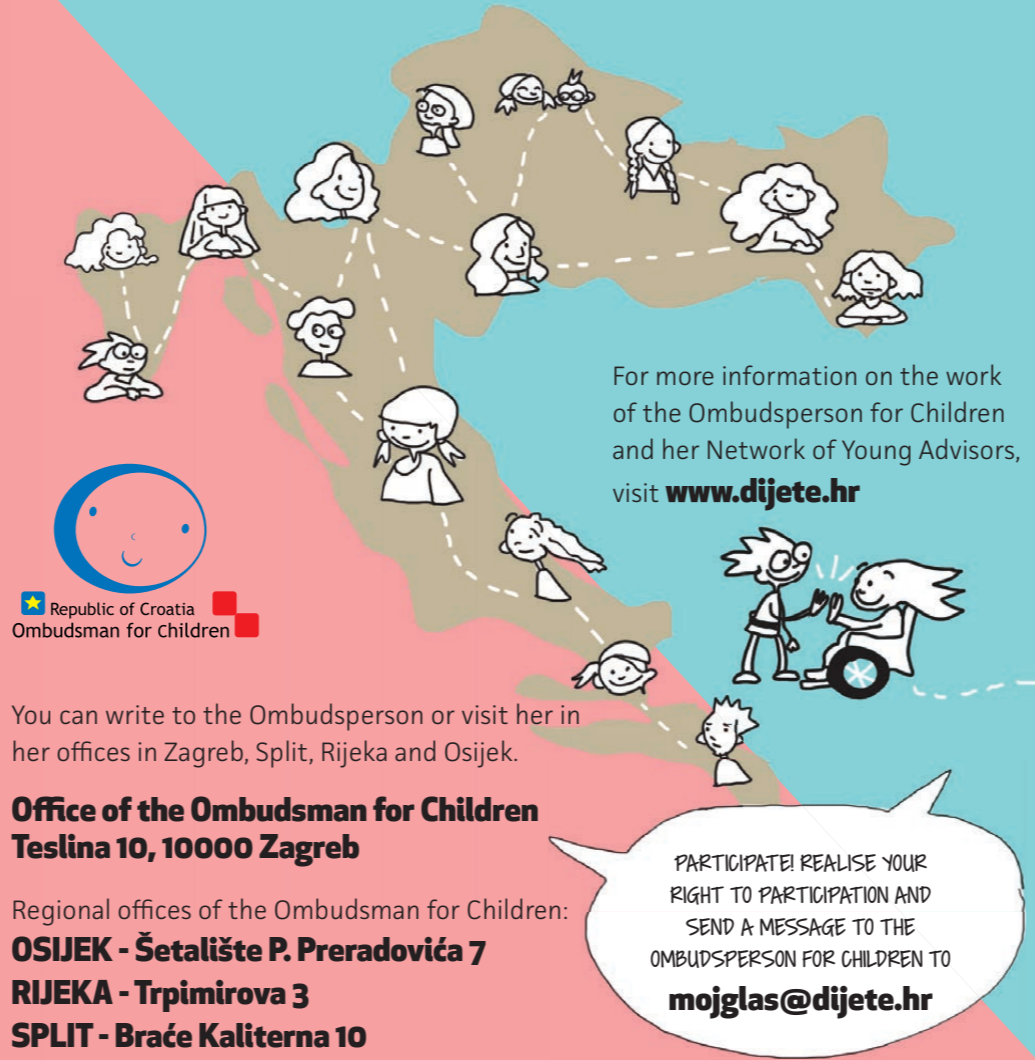


Network of Young Advisors to the ombudsman for children – NYA

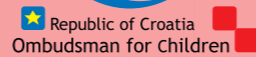
The NYA is an advisory and cooperative body of the Ombudsman for Children consisting of 25 members – children and young people aged 12 to 18 from the whole of Croatia.

The NYA discusses topics that are important for the lives of children and young people, advises the Ombudsman, gives proposals for her work, informs children and adults of its activities and presents its initiatives for the improvement of the protection of children's rights at conferences and in the media.

Every three years, the Ombudsman for Children publishes a tender for NYA membership, inviting application by all children above the age of 12. New members are elected by the NYA in cooperation with the Ombudsman for Children.



For more information on the work of the Ombudsman for Children and her Network of Young Advisors, visit www.dijete.hr



You can write to the Ombudsman or visit her in her offices in Zagreb, Split, Rijeka and Osijek.

**Office of the Ombudsman for Children
Teslina 10, 10000 Zagreb**

Regional offices of the Ombudsman for Children:
OSIJEK - Šetalište P. Preradovića 7
RIJEKA - Trpimirova 3
SPLIT - Braće Kaliterna 10

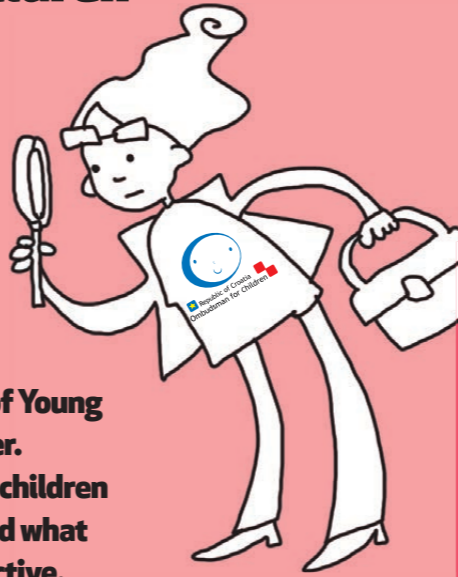
The ombudsman for children protects children's rights

The Ombudsman for Children monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Croatia, gives recommendations for better protection of children's rights, proposes amendments to laws, visits places where children live, encourages children to express their views and ensures that the children's voice is heard.

The Ombudsman is assisted by the Network of Young Advisors and all other children who contact her. Children's participation is important because children know best what it is like to be a child today and what the adults' world looks like from their perspective.

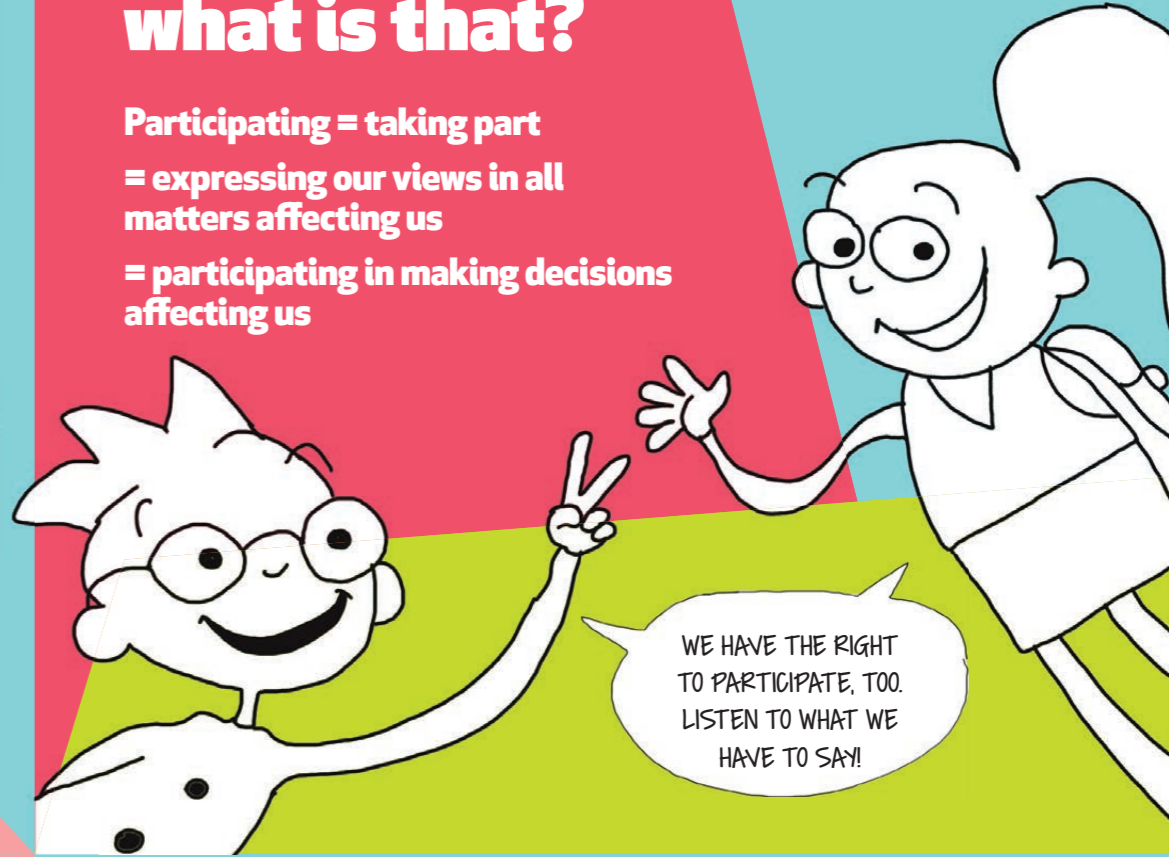


WE SOMETIMES LOOK AT THINGS COMPLETELY DIFFERENTLY THAN ADULTS!



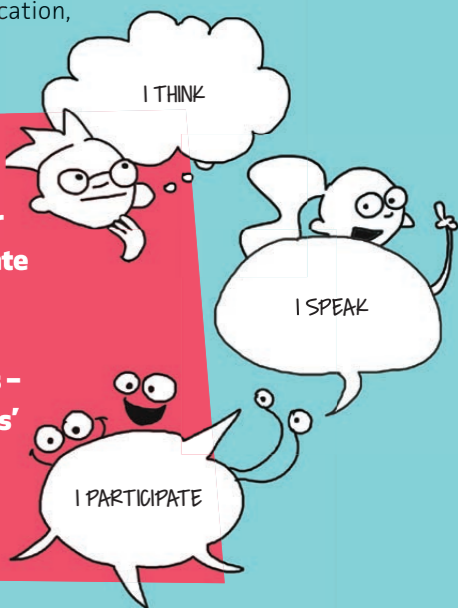
Child participation – what is that?

**Participating = taking part
= expressing our views in all matters affecting us
= participating in making decisions affecting us**



According to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them. Adults have to listen carefully to those views and give them due weight when making decisions concerning children. This right, called **the right of the child to participation**, is described in Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The participation principle informs all areas of children's rights: the right to live with their parents, the right to education, the right to health, the right to protection from violence and all other rights.

Participation includes children's right to: receive and impart information, express their views on all matters affecting them, participate in making decisions concerning their lives, proposing and realising their own ideas and projects, participate in representative bodies – school student councils, children's or students' homes or children's city councils – and in the work of organisations representing children and children's rights.



The right of the child to participation also includes other fundamental civil rights described in the Convention on the Rights of the Child: the right to freedom of expression (Article 13), the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14), the right to freedom of association (Article 15), the right to the protection of privacy (Article 16) and the right to access to information (Article 17).

