

## **Steps and recommendations to organize a round table**

A round table session focuses on the dialogue between policy makers, community members, professionals and children. The objective is that children, policy officers and professionals learn about each other's world and ideas about the issue. Children learn to give and substantiate their opinion. Several policy makers from the municipality and professionals in the field of the issue will join this meeting as 'guests'. After the dialogue, the children will know more about the municipal policy surrounding the issue and the work the experts do.

### **Steps**

1. Preparations are made together with the children / school / local authorities to discuss the content of the round tables (based on earlier sessions) and what kind of preparation is needed for the children. They also discuss what type of professionals are relevant to be invited as guests. Logistics are sorted and need to allow for plenty of space so everyone can move around and not be static.
2. The first part of this meeting focuses on preparing all participants for the actual conversations. For children, it focuses on developing good interview questions and conducting a good interview. The children will receive tips and tricks, formulate their own interview questions and practice the interview. The 'guests' are also briefed about the objectives of the meeting, and are given tips how to engage with the children. For ex. refraining from using technical knowledge that is difficult to understand.
3. In the second part, the children will enter into small-group discussions with policy makers and professionals using discussion tables. This is kicked off by introductions and children asking the guest for ex. where they work, what they know about the theme.

Depending on the skills and knowledge of the children and guests, the set-up of the round tables can be adjusted.

### **Recommendations and suggestions**

#### **Preparations**

- Provide children before the session with basic knowledge about the topics in advance through simple explainer videos, comics, or storytelling.
- Children can be supported with ready-made interview questions to help them get started, as well as supported by trainers joining their group.
- It is helpful to have precise conversation subjects ready (instead of a general subject) before the activity so children can feel comfortable by asking concrete questions (especially practically educated children).
- Brief guests to avoid complex jargon and speak in a way that children can understand; stimulate use of real-life examples, help them relate to topics by using familiar scenarios from their daily lives

- Discuss the presence of teachers or other persons familiar to the children during the session, as it can stimulate or hamper their will to speak freely and motivation to actively participate.
- Children should be given more training on how political decision making processes work to better engage with the guests.

## Logistics

- Arrange seating in a way that is inviting, such as sitting in a circle or using colorful materials to make the space feel warm and engaging.
- Adjust the duration of the conversations to the target group, for ex. 30 minutes can be sufficient or extend to 1,5 hours. Depending on the age of children, facilitators can structure the meeting and keep time management to a more or lesser extent. While the activity should be “child led”, facilitators could still dictate its pace.

## Programme

- Adult guests can be introduced to children by the facilitator; an ice-breaker activity is advised, so that children feel more comfortable speaking to policy makers in smaller groups
- Have a well-defined schedule but allow flexibility based on children's engagement levels and interests.
- Children can rotate between discussion topics, as well as the guests to ensure they can gather information from various professionals and to get re-energised.
- During the dialogue, children can make a word web by noting down what they have heard. This serves as input for next sessions and creating an action plan.
- Pair younger or shy children with a peer who can help them feel more confident in participating.
- Allow children to submit questions on paper if they feel shy speaking up.
- Give certificates, stickers, or small rewards to recognize children's contributions.
- Allow children to express their thoughts through drawing, drama, or storytelling instead of only verbal discussions.