

Improving Justice in Child Contact: Final evaluation report

Evaluation of the project IJCC 810072 of the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme

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Matter of Focus

November 2020



Improving Justice in
Child Contact

**Matter
of Focus**
Evidence. Action. Change.

About Matter of Focus

Matter of Focus is a mission-led company based in Edinburgh.

We work with organisations, projects and programmes to explore, map, analyse and assess the outcomes that matter to them, the people and populations they care about, and their funders. We provide tools and techniques to bring together evidence, data and evaluation to ensure that projects and programmes can meet their outcomes, are successful and adaptable, and can demonstrate that success to funders, service-users and other stakeholders.

We have created an innovative and easy to use software tool, OutNav, which enables public service organisations and funders to make effective use of their data and information to learn, improve and tell the story about the difference they make.

Matter of Focus is led by Dr Ailsa Cook and Dr Sarah Morton. Both Ailsa and Sarah are internationally renowned academics, both well known for their ability to develop practical tools backed by robust evidence-based approaches, with extensive experience of delivering solutions for public service organisations.

This evaluation was carried out alongside the project and was commissioned as part of the project funding. Please note this report was completed in December 2020, and all information was up to date at that point, but there may be additional outputs and impacts from the project that have happened or been captured since then.

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Executive summary

This report is an evaluation of the Improving Justice in Child Contact Project (IJCC) which took place from November 2018 - January 2021 as a partnership between organisations interested in women and children's rights from Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania, and Scotland. IJCC was a European funded partnership project across five countries seeking to enhance children's participation in decision-making.

The project was evaluated using an approach based on contribution analysis. This report summarises the findings of the evaluation.

In families where domestic violence is an issue, similar violations of children and women's rights were identified in all 5 countries in this project, including children's views not being taken into account, contact with violent ex-partners being ordered, and both women and children being placed in danger because of a lack of coordination between court and support systems.

Ways of improving issues for families affected by domestic violence were shared and discussed across 5 countries. Models for improving the system and consulting with children and young people were developed in all countries.

- Over 180 stakeholder agencies were engaged with the project including the police, courts, social workers, local government and independent agencies with an interest in women and children's rights in contact and domestic violence.
- Across the countries, stakeholders report better understanding of the needs of women and children in families where domestic violence is an issue, and changes in attitudes around the rights of parents with a history of violence to have contact with children.
- Many new connections were made within each country, resulting in better communication and coordination potential despite very different contexts.
- Children and young people were engaged and involved in each country, and their voices were elevated to help professionals and policy-makers understand how these issues affect them and sharpen their resolve and perception of solutions
- In each country the project partners designed and developed ways of engaging with the issues that were suitable for their contexts
- There have been many policy and practice impacts across the partner countries:
 - In Bulgaria more specialist training has been developed and discussion is underway to improve children's experience in the court system
 - In Cyprus there will be a children's rights officer in the Women's House – a specialist service for domestic abuse.
 - In Scotland there is more protection for children in contact orders through the Children Scotland Act
 - In Portugal there have been widespread impacts building on the conducive environment created by the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, with several new laws that take children's rights into account in the case of domestic abuse.
- Several countries report that they will continue their work on these issues and that further impacts are likely in the future.

Introduction to IJCC and evaluation

Improving Justice in Child Contact (IJCC) is a partnership research project across five European countries, running from November 2018 – January 2021

The project's goal is participation of children and young people in decisions around child contact for families affected by domestic violence. This project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014 - 2020). Countries were encouraged to engage with national stakeholders to address the problems in each place, and to consider how consulting with children and sharing their views – those with direct lived experience of the issues – could help to influence change.

Despite hugely different contexts in the five countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania and Scotland) similar issues about children and women's rights being violated have arisen in the child contact systems in each place.

Children and young people are at the heart of the work, which has taken a systems approach to driving change for families in the child contact system where domestic abuse is an issue. The project has shared successful system mapping and child participation models from Scotland and embedded them in the partner countries – Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal and Romania.

Each country examined what might help or hinder children's views being heard in child contact decisions for families affected by domestic violence in each country, and engaged with key organisations (e.g. police, social work, judiciary), as well as children and young people. This led to agreement about what needs to be done in each place – expressed in action plans which set out an agenda for addressing the issues and working towards change

The project has been evaluated using methods based on [contribution analysis](#). Although systems change is hard and takes a long time, this report sets out how people have been engaged with the project and emerging impacts across policy and practice.

The evaluation has two components

1. Overall project evaluation
This takes place at the programme level and it includes establishing 'Outcome Maps' which are theories of change for the overall programme. These form the evaluation framework against which to test the programme activities. This testing is done through; reflections at each partnership meeting; the management team collecting and collating evidence; engagement with the young advisors and presenting the results back at the final meeting to discuss.
2. Evaluation of in-country activities
Activities in each country were evaluated through event feedback and a stakeholder survey.

The full evaluation approach is set out in [appendix 1](#). And in a blog [here](#).

This report considers the work done and emerging impacts looking in two sections at the systems level work in section one, and the child participation work in part two. Appendices show data collection methods.

Data collected

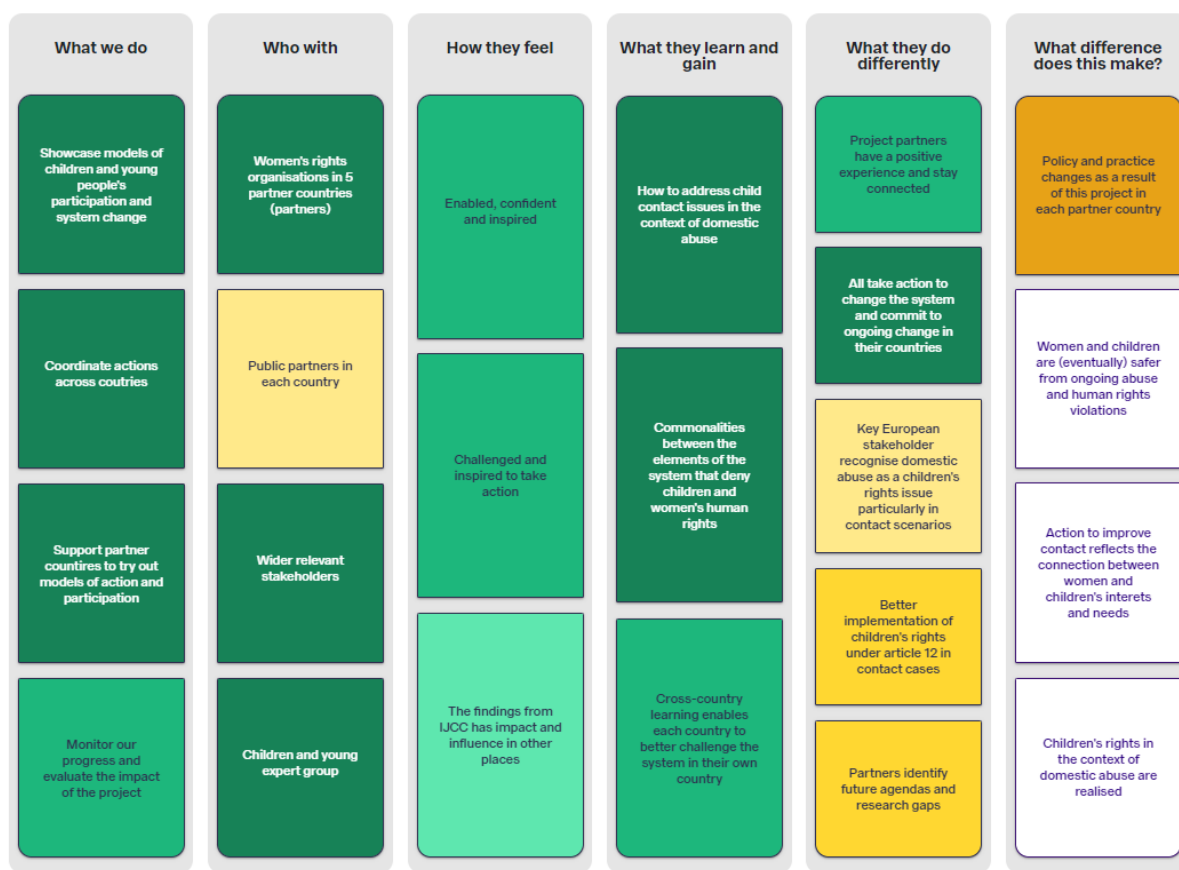
Type	Method	Collected	Number of countries
Initial country comparisons	Group reflection and discussion	Partner meeting Feb 2019	All
Stakeholder Event Feedback	Feedback survey	As required	4
Partner activity updates	Feedback form	Via email	all
Young advisors (yello) feedback from outcome mapping workshop	Feedback form	Meeting October 2019	Project-wide
Stakeholder surveys	Online surveys	November 2019 and August 2020	all
Reflective impact logs	Self-complete	Feb-August 2020	2
Partner country interviews	Video conference	October 2020	4
Action Plan analysis	Documentary analysis of action plans	Spring 2020	4

Evaluation of a complex multi-country system change project like this is challenging and it is not possible to attribute direct cause and effect to how impacts have emerged in different places. The context for each country varies hugely and, while some of the problems are similar, the systems in which they sit vary to great extents. In addition this project sought to inspire countries to take action, and to offer tools and resources to help, but allow each place to decide what action would work best for them, and to work closely with stakeholders to develop and embed action plans. This means that there are few measurable outcomes for the project as a whole, as the action that emerged across places has come from an interaction between place, people and programmes. Any systems change project needs a flexible evaluation approach that aims to capture emerging impacts

Secondly the timescales for this project are very short for an initiative of this kind. Although there are impressive impacts emerging across the project, it is only 18 months since the project inception. It would be expected that the project would continue to have influence. By raising the important issues of child contact and domestic abuse in this way in these places it is apparent that it is being given more focus than before the project started – further impacts will emerge over time.

Outcome map for the overall project

The outcome map below represents the overall project theory of change. It is colour coded (see key) to demonstrate where progress has been made and confidence in the data.



	Great Progress	Some Progress	No Progress
High Confidence			
Some Confidence			
Low Confidence			

The rest of this report looks at the data collected and reflects on the project activities and outcomes across the different levels of the outcome map.

Section One: Overall Project Coordination and contribution

Overall coordination

A number of activities and events were coordinated centrally for the project

Partnership meetings

Four partnership face to face meetings were scheduled, but this was adapted due to the impact of COVID 19 in 2020. Two meetings took place:

Edinburgh February 2019 – Introductory meeting to share aims, get to know each other and identify key issues to be tackled

Iasi November 2019 – Second meeting to update on progress and share learning

A further 2 meetings were planned including a final conference open to stakeholders. This is being held as a series of open webinars instead.

Virtual coordination meetings took place via zoom from the start of the project on a monthly basis to provide opportunities to share issues and ensure coordination.

Other coordination activities

The following activities took place during the project by November 2020. Full details and links can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

Project website established	To provide overview of project
Project Blog	21 blogs were published on a range of topics, including perspectives from different partners, practitioner's views, and what was happening in each country.
Partner websites established	Portugal, Romania and Scotland
Virtual Event	Domestic Violence and Child Contact: European Perspectives and two others
Podcases and Videos	From Bulgaria, Romania and Scottish teams
Policy Responses	To the UN Special Rapporteur on the increase in domestic violence against women in COVID-19 And the Children (Scotland) Bill

Benefits of cross-national coordination

There were many comments and reflections on the benefits of cross-national coordination. These included that the issue received more focus because of EU funding, that examples of good practice could be shared, and that people felt they had to do something because of international attention.

Partners also commented on the solidarity they felt in meeting other women who experienced and wanted to tackle the same issues as them.

“It has been good to recognise the issue and share the problems and barriers to get it on the agenda, to discuss the backlash – the sessions where we can moan and discuss and help each other to think about what the problem was and how to overcome challenges. Really really important” (Partner country interviewee)

The learning across countries was also important to the partners.

“Gave us the perception of our history and different stories, big value of this partnership is to learn from each other about political history and the contextual advantages that were taken and what's missing, what can be done about specific resources etc by comparison you think this we have, why is this happening here but missing from other countries? Helps in reflection of project to do this bigger picture thinking. (Partner country interviewee)

Influencing the system in 5 European Countries

Common issues across the systems

Despite different contexts, a number of similar problems were identified by the partners taking part in this project for families where domestic violence was an issue, and contact cases were taken to the courts.

Discussion of country comparison on Child Contact and Domestic abuse issues	
SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Civil and criminal courts exist in all countries and there are problems between the two systems in each• There is an issue with fathers being seen as ‘good enough’, even when their behaviour suggests otherwise• Women are blamed for not protecting their children• Lack of legal access for women, lack of funds, lack of competent legal representation, and lack of strategy for representation• Urban/rural differences in service provision (and lack of services)• Gender inequality• Judges’ attitudes to domestic abuse and lack of awareness of the issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children’s access to legal representation• Resources• Access to services• Structures and legal frameworks• Training for judges• Children considered witnesses or victims• Assumed share of parenting• “Parental alienation syndrome” used more or less often• Availability of social services• Norms around gender

Activities

This project built on a successful previous project in Scotland, where a multi-stakeholder forum had worked together to identify both issues and actions to improve the problems with domestic violence and child contact orders.

Every country held a multi-stakeholder event and,-- whilst there were some differences between the number and type of events, and what activities happened at them -- some core components were the same:

- They brought together where possible any stakeholder agencies whose work has a bearing on domestic abuse and child contact through the courts
- Each group worked towards an action plan that identified what would need to change to address the problem
- In some cases this action plan was ratified by the stakeholders

The rest of this section of the evaluation report pulls together data about the events and the action plans to demonstrate the impact of the project. Further detail of the activities in each country can be seen in Appendix One.

Engagement and involvement, reactions

Number and type of stakeholders engaged in events

Bulgaria Cyprus, Portugal and Romania and have provided feedback from in-country events. A total of 10 events have taken place across four countries. The number of stakeholders engaged per country is illustrated in the table below:

Country	No. of stakeholders engaged
Bulgaria	28
Cyprus	27
Portugal	90
Romania	45
Total	190

Stakeholders engaged in the in-country events were from a range of sectors. Stakeholders from NGO's/Charities, Police and Legal sectors were represented at events in all four countries. The table below illustrates the type of representation each country has had:

Stakeholder group	Bulgaria	Cyprus	Portugal	Romania
NGO/Charity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Central Public Administration			✓	✓
Regional Public Administration			✓	✓
Local Government		✓	✓	
National Government	✓	✓		
Police	✓	✓	✓	✓
Legal	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Services	✓		✓	✓
Health		✓	✓	✓
Education		✓	✓	✓
Independent Authority		✓	✓	

- In Bulgaria, two events took place with feedback from a total of 28 respondents representing 3 stakeholder groups
- In Cyprus, one event took place with feedback from 27 stakeholders across 9 stakeholder groups
- In Portugal, a total of 90 stakeholders from across ten sectors engaged in 5 events and a 6th is planned.
- In Romania a total of 45 stakeholders from across nine sectors engaged in 3 events

Number of women and children affected by those services in each country from event feedback

Event feedback required stakeholders to provide an estimate of the number of women and children they had worked with directly over the last year, in order to estimate the overall reach of the project. A table below shows an estimate of the figures of direct engagement in the last year with children and women by country:

Country		No. of organisations working directly with women and children	Women	Children
Bulgaria	Event 1	1	200	100
	Event 2	4	-	-
Cyprus		16	3,140	1,690
Romania	Event 1	12	-	
	Event 2	11		
	Event 3	12		
Portugal	Event 1	10	41,419	
	Event 2	10		
	Event 3	6		
	Event 4	7		
Total			46,549	

These figures should not be recognised as reliable as they do not account for the nuances in work with women and children across stakeholders and countries involved, or indeed the stakeholders who did not engage in feedback or were from the same sector and country as another involved.

Additionally, some stakeholders did not provide figures even though they indicated being part of organisations working directly with women and children. There may be some double counting due to people reporting from the same organisations.

Initial reactions from attending events

Overall people felt that they had benefitted from

- Meeting other agencies with shared interests
- Learning about child contact and domestic abuse
- Learning from other countries
- Taking part in system mapping
- Hearing about how to involve children and young people

Other specific reactions following the events included:

- In Bulgaria, attendees planned to take away internal sharing of good practice within social services and stated new connections were made between police and social services
- In Cyprus, several people commented that they will share what they learned with colleague and stated they would develop and build on new collaborations
- In Romania, attendees reported making new connections at all three events. People reported the need for coordination between the police, social services, and judiciary at two of the events.

- In Portugal, across four events, a total of 26 respondents stated they had made new connections. Feedback around staying connected included; sharing of experiences between organisations/entities and sharing of contacts and plans to collaborate on discussion groups.

Key impacts of the IJCC project

Learning and capacity building

Across data sources people report improvement on the following issues:

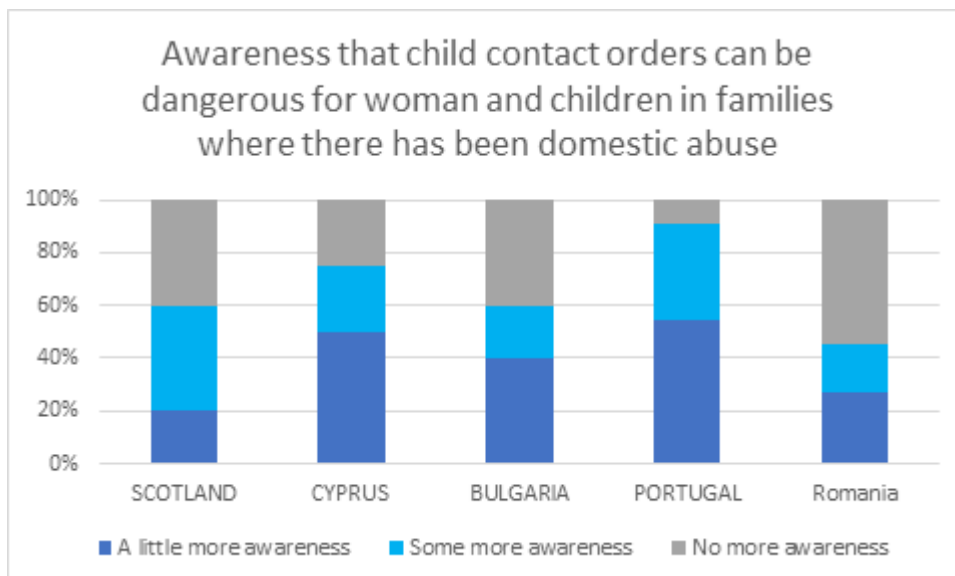
- Getting child contact issues in the context of domestic abuse on the agenda
- Cross country learning – especially learning from good practice in Scotland and having links with other countries who are trying to take action
- Spending time with other agencies diagnosing the system problems
- Connections with the agencies that can help move the agenda forward

In the survey respondent were asked:

Since November 2018 have you seen any increase in awareness of the following issues?

In Portugal, most respondents felt there was a little or some more awareness

In Romania, most respondents felt there was no more awareness.



In Portugal, one stakeholder commented that their main learning was around, having a "better understanding of the children's needs as victims of domestic violence" and a second participant stated that going forward they would have "more sensitivity in identifying children exposed to domestic violence." (Event feedback - Portugal)

In Cyprus, five people referred to learning about children's rights or children's involvement, including that children's and women's rights are connected.

Several stakeholders commented on a change in attitudes about the rights of parents to have contact with children. Some had not considered that parents with a history of being violent towards their ex-partners might be harmful if they are granted contact via the courts. The balancing of fathers' rights to see their children, with the views of women and children, and the potential harm that contact could cause, was something many had not previously considered.

Cyprus

- Five people referred directly to the concept of coercive control, with three talking about following up with further reading.
- Three people commented on the issue that separation does not mean safety.
- Five people referred to learning about children's rights or children's involvement, including that children and women's rights are connected.
- Several people commented on general raising of their awareness of domestic violence and the services offered by other organisations.
- Two people commented on the networking opportunity
- Several people commented that "everything was useful"

Many new connections were made across sectors, and these connections will result in better capacity for the system in each country to deal with contact in the context of domestic abuse.

2020 survey respondents were asked whether there had been increases in awareness since November 2018 on a number of issues relating to child contact. The majority of respondents from all countries felt there was a little or some more awareness on the following issues in their country:

- Children have a right to express their views about contact with their parents
- Children are harmed by living in families where there is domestic abuse between their parents
- Children are safer when their mothers are helped to be safe

Changes in policy and practice

Changes in policy and practice can be seen from the survey data and from other data collected from action plans and partner interviews.

In the survey respondents were asked if the following issues had changed over the life of the project:

Survey 2	Bulgaria	Cyprus	Portugal	Romania	Scotland
Children's safety during contact sessions with abusive parents	No improvement	No improvement	A little improvement	A little improvement	No improvement
Children's views being taken into account when ordering contact with abusive parent	No improvement	No / a little improvement	A little improvement	A little /some improvement	A little improvement
Women's views are taken into account when ordering contact with abusive ex-partners	No improvement	No / a little improvement	Some improvement	A little improvement	A little improvement
Women are safe when arranging contact sessions with abusive ex-partners	No improvement	A little improvement	A little improvement	A little improvement	No/ A little improvement
Criminal and family courts work together to protect women and children	No improvement	No improvement	Some improvement	A little improvement	No improvement
Children's rights are protected in the child contact system	A little improvement	A little improvement	A little improvement	Some improvement	No improvement
Women's rights are protected in the child contact system	A little improvement	No improvement	A little improvement	Some improvement	No improvement

- Respondents from all countries felt there was improvements to laws and policies to protect women and children in the context of domestic abuse.
- In Scotland, Portugal and Romania respondents reported improvements to training for professionals working with cases of domestic abuse and child contact. Half of respondents in Cyprus and Bulgaria had also seen improvements.

They were also asked to reflect on specific changes in policy and practice on the following issues:

Changes in policy and practice since November 2019

	Scotland	Portugal	Romania	Cyprus	Bulgaria
Systems for routinely and meaningfully consulting children about their views on contact with abusive parent	No change	Do not know	No change	Do not know	No change/ do not know
Laws and policies to protect women and children in the context of domestic abuse	Improved	Improved	Improved	Improved/ do not know	Improved
Access to affordable legal advice for parents in the context of domestic abuse	No change	Do not know	Improved	Do not know	Improved
Coordination and information sharing between family and criminal courts	No change	Do not know	Improved	Do not know	Do not know
Training for professionals working with cases of domestic abuse and child contact	Improved	Improved	Improved	Improved do not know	Improved do not know

It is notable that every country identified improvement in laws and policies to protect women and children. This is partly influenced by the Istanbul Convention¹ being adopted at

¹ The Council Of Europe Union Istanbul Convention Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/>

a similar tome as the project. Training for professionals has also improved, and this is specifically in relation to child contact and domestic abuse so the IJCC project has probably made a contribution here.

In Portugal stakeholders identified the following actions as a result of being involved in the project:

- Implement in a effective way the measures already regulated.
- Implementation of the measures included in the health section of the national action plan.
- Disseminate the results of the national action plan.
- Introduction of specialised training for practitioners.
- Discussion within the working group (local forum).

In Bulgaria stakeholders reported the following actions

- Two state experts declared that they are part of state commission from State Agency for Child Protection and they participated in a working group for legislative amendments of Bulgarian Law for Protection against DV and system for child protection
- 1 representative of NGO – service provider also declared actions in the direction of protection and prevention from domestic violence enriching their everyday work taking into consideration of Scottish experience

In Cyprus

- The project has put a foundation in place for changing policy and practice around children's rights and domestic abuse – particularly around the right of children to express their opinions and participate in decisions.
- The continued engagement of the Commissioner for Children's Rights and the placement of a Child Advocate in the Women's House will be instrumental taking the results of the project forward both in policy and in practice.
- Training and capacity building among first responders and front-line professionals are being put in place

In Romania

- Policy and practice impacts are less visible in Romania as work there has been slower to take off due to a very challenging context but the project continues and hopes to influence local policy in the future.

Section 2: Engaging children and young people

Activities

What was done where and why

Children's participation had been a key influencing factor in changing policy in Scotland and was included in the project design. A previous project in Scotland (Power-Up Power-Down) had

resulted in children creating resources including videos and a Super-Listener poster describing what children want in the adults who help them. (<https://womensaid.scot/project/power-up-power-down/>) These resources have been used across several countries as ways of engaging children and young people or to educate professionals. The Super-Listener poster was translated into all of the languages in this project and has been used in each country.

A new young expert group was formed in Scotland to advise the project overall, and to continue the influence work in that country. They named themselves 'YELLO!' and provided support and advice to the project partners in other countries about the role young people can play. This included

- Presenting to the partner meeting in Scotland
- Created a guide to forming a young expert group that was shared with other countries

In addition YELLO:

- developed a child friendly comic or booklet with information about rights and got it translated into all languages;
- had team building activities;
- had check ups and evaluate the work being done;
- created a website/blog about the project- X number of blogs.
- co-developed a presentation for the Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE) conference, speaking directly to the Scottish Minister for Community Safety

Engagement/Involvement

In each country slightly different approaches to engaging children and young people have been taken. These reflect the needs of the context. Despite early challenges about the idea of involving children and young people, every country has done some work on this with important outcomes.

Scotland	YELLO group advised the overall IJCC project and influenced the passing of the Children (Scotland) Bill
Bulgaria	Interviews with young people who have experience of the court system have been undertaken and will be shared with judges to help improve the system and recognise children's rights in the courts
Cyprus	15 young people have advised the formation of children's services for the Woman's House
Portugal	Established a young advisory group that has worked alongside the main organisation and will continue to advise key agencies. These young experts made recommendations to the action plans, gave their opinions on the briefing in Portugal and have participated in some bilateral meetings with some members of the Forum, namely with the court and National Commission for the promotion of children's rights and children and young people's protection. They have received invitations to contribute, in particular, with their opinion regarding the spaces for hearing children in the judicial spaces.

Romania	Collected testimonials from girls about their experiences of the court system and sent these to judges before they met together. This helped to focus on how to improve the way the system works.
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Longer term outcomes and legacy

In Bulgaria there are plans to bring international experts to help develop this area of work in the future, including the use of Power-up Power-down, and further cooperation with the Police and Courts. Given the challenging context for this work in Bulgaria, these are important steps forward on the issues. This includes a successful application for European funding to support the work

In Cyprus young people are engaged with the Children's Commissioner as they develop services for children experiencing domestic abuse in their families

In Portugal the young expert group will continue to advise the key agencies

In Romania there will be improvements in the physical spaces that children are taken to in the courts to allow them better interaction with the system.

Conclusions

This was an ambitious project, acknowledge the tenacity of the issues of children's rights in the context of domestic abuse and contact orders. It set out with a complexity-informed model that aimed to inspire and empower countries to take action appropriate to their own context and needs.

There were remarkable similarities in the way that the court systems in family law affected children's rights. However, because of different systems, levels of awareness, resources and professionals involved, each country has taken an appropriately different route to tackling the issues.

It is remarkable how much has been achieved in a short space of time with this project (under 2 years) and it seems clear that there will be further impacts to follow. Policy and practice changes are evidence across the partner countries, many people have been engaged, and thinking is shifting to help protect children's rights.

Appendices

1. Partner activities across the project
2. Evaluation Plan
3. Data collected
4. Stakeholder survey questions
5. Partner meeting feedback questions (meeting 1, 2)
6. Event feedback questions

Appendix 1: Activities across the 5 partner countries

Coordination activity (led by Scotland)

Project website

This was established to share learning across the project:

<https://www.ed.ac.uk/education/rke/centres-groups/childhood-and-youth-studies-research-group/research/ijcc>

The Blogs can be viewed here <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/ijcc/>

This also shares the participation resources, including the films from Power-Up Power Down translated into relevant languages.

Partner websites

Project partners have dedicated websites for the project

[Visit UMAR's \(Women's Union for Alternative and Response\) dedicated website for the project \(Portuguese language\)](#)

[Visit the Community Safety and Mediation Centre Foundation's \(CMSC\) dedicated website for the project \(Romanian language\)](#)

[Visit Scottish Women's Aid's dedicated website for the project \(English Language\)](#)

Virtual event

IJCC hosted a webinar "Domestic Violence and Child Contact: European Perspectives" in partnership with the [European Women's Lobby](#) (EWL) and the [Women Against Violence Europe](#) (WAVE) Network on 10 June 2020.

The webinar was chaired by [Professor Kay Tisdall](#), Improving Justice in Child Contact, with presentations from

- [Laura Albu](#), on behalf of EWL
- [Professor Shazia Choudhry](#), on behalf of WAVE
- and [Dr Marsha Scott](#), on behalf of Improving Justice in Child Contact

Video: Domestic Violence and Child Contact: European Perspectives

Recording of webinar hosted by Improving Justice in Child Contact, Women Against Violence European and European Women's Lobby, 10 June 2020. Hosted by Professor Kay Tisdall, University of Edinburgh. Speakers: Ms Laura Albu, Vice President, European Women's Lobby; Professor Shazia Choudhry, Queen Mary University of London, Women Against Violence Europe; Dr Marsha Scott, CEO Scottish Women's Aid, Improving Justice in Child Contact Project.

A child's experiences of child contact processes

‘A’ is a young woman supported by a Women's Aid group in Scotland; this briefing contains her words about how she experienced child contact court processes.

- ‘A’ did not feel listened to when she was going through the court processes in Scotland. The court decided when and how she would communicate and spend time with a parent that she was not living with.
- ‘A’ felt that she understood a lot more than the adults in the systems around her thought that she did.
- ‘A’ felt that the court systems made assumptions about what was happening because they and the people in them operated with gendered stereotypes.

Podcasts and videos

The Bulgarian partners, BGRF, have made a short podcast describing their work through the project to change the Law on Protection from Domestic Violence in Bulgaria.

> [Listen to Elena Krasteva, a lawyer at the Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation, talk about the project success in Bulgaria \(English language\)](#)

[Read the transcript of Bulgaria's podcast \(English language\) \(187.97 KB PDF\)](#)

The Portuguese partners, [CESIS](#) and [UMAR](#), have made a short film about their experiences of the IJCC project. UMAR have also designed a website with further information about their work on children's participation through the project.

> [Watch the Portuguese film: As crianças também têm que ser ouvidas](#) (Subtitles currently available in Portuguese, soon to be available also in English)

> [Visit UMAR's website dedicated to the IJCC project](#)

Professor Kay Tisdall and Dr Marsha Scott recorded a podcast for IRISS, Scotland's Social Services Podcast, on why the Improving Justice in Child Contact (IJCC) project is needed and what we have learned.

> [Listen to the IRISS Improving Justice in Child Contact podcast episode](#)

[Visit the IJCC's media channel to view further films connected to the project.](#)

Policy Responses

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women issued a call for submissions on the increase in domestic violence against women under COVID-19. In June 2020 the IJCC project contributed a response detailing some of the particular impacts of COVID-19 on domestic violence in the context of child custody/contact.

[Read the IJCC response submitted to the UN Special Rapporteur on the increase in domestic violence against women in COVID-19 \(452.05 KB PDF\)](#)

The Children (Scotland) Bill is legislation considered by the Scottish Parliament in 2019/2020 with aims including to ensure the views of the child are heard in contact and residence cases. In

November 2019 IJCC project partners in Scotland contributed evidence to the Justice Committee scrutinising the Bill. In August 2020 IJCC project partners in Scotland provided a briefing for the final debate on the Bill.

[Read the evidence submitted by Yello!, the IJCC young experts \(690.47 KB PDF\)](#)

[Read the evidence submitted by Dr Fiona Morrison, Dr Ruth Friskney and Professor Kay Tisdall \(281.56 KB PDF\)](#)

> [Read the evidence submitted by Scottish Women's Aid](#)

[Read the briefing for the final Bill debate \(Joint from Children 1st, Scottish Women's Aid, Dr Fiona Morrison and Professor Kay Tisdall\) \(718.97 KB PDF\)](#)

News coverage about the IJCC project

The IJCC project and partners have been working to raise awareness about the issues for children affected by domestic violence in terms of child contact:

- [Read the Cyprus news article](#), where Susana Pavlou talks about the need to recognise the impact of domestic violence on children (Greek language).
- [Read or listen to The World radio broadcast](#), where Laura Albu talks about supporting women affected by domestic violence during COVID-19 (English language).
- [Read the Children's Participation in Family Law blog](#), where Dr Fiona Morrison and Professor Kay Tisdall talk about ongoing reform of family law in Scotland and the importance of providing infrastructure for children's participation as well as making legislative change (English language).

Scotland

[Scottish Women's Aid](#) works with a network of 36 Women's Aid groups across Scotland, learning from their work with women and children affected by domestic abuse, to influence effective response to domestic abuse in legislation and practice

Together with:

The [Centre for Research on Families and Relationships](#) (CRFR) and the [Childhood & Youth Studies Research Group](#) jointly lead the University of Edinburgh's work on the IJCC project. CRFR is a consortium research centre with partners across Scotland and covering a variety of disciplines (Public Health, Social Sciences, Rural Studies). A key aim of the centre is to make research accessible, including by working collaboratively with voluntary and statutory organisations. The Childhood & Youth Studies Research Group is a new research group in the Moray House School of Education, with researchers covering areas across Child Protection, Youth Studies, Childhood Policy.

The Scottish team provided overall coordination across the four countries

Scotland had previously worked using both system mapping and child participation projects to influence change in child contact in the context of domestic abuse. This was the basis for sharing across the projects.

The YELLO project was run from Scotland – a group of young people who advised the overall project and evaluation. YELLO also carried out their own policy-influencing work and advised the Scottish Government particularly in relation to the Child Law Bill

Being seen as leaders of this work internationally has helped to keep issues on the agenda in Scotland and conversations between Scottish Women's Aid, other agencies and the government have informed recent policy developments especially the Children (Scotland) Act.

Cyprus

Who leads the work?

The [Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies](#) (MIGS) is a Cyprus based NGO affiliated to the University of Nicosia, which promotes and contributes to social, political and economic projects related to gender equality and women's rights, with a focus on the Mediterranean region. MIGS seeks to eliminate discrimination against women through research, lobbying and advocacy, education and training, awareness-raising, and other activities.

Context

When this project started child contact and domestic abuse had never been framed as an issue. There was a 'good enough father' model, rights of parents to see children given precedence. The Istanbul Convention had been ratified and there was a process of revising laws underway with lots of amendments. There was an intention to strengthen children's rights, but no strong child participation mechanisms. There is only one NGO and then shelters in terms of existing service provision. However there was a backlog of issues slowing down the family law changes that made the policy context slightly challenging.

What they did and who with

Held multi-stakeholder forums and carried out systems mapping. The impact of COVID meant that the work came to an earlier halt than intended.

Commissioner for the Rights of the Child, the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family and MPs who have come into contact with these issues were engaged. It was harder to engage social welfare services.

Child Participation: MIGS, through its Director who is President of the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combatting of Violence in the Family, have taken part in a technical working group for the 'Women's House' development in Cyprus which has been the main activity around child participation. They had no direct children's services so this has been an appropriate route to develop the work.

About 15 young people were engaged. The materials from PUPD were translated and there were four online sessions with young people.

How they felt and what they learned and gained

After the initial push people have been engaged enthusiastically with the project and there has been a lot of learning, particularly around:

- Getting child contact issues in the context of domestic abuse on the agenda
- Cross country learning – especially learning from good practice in Scotland and having links with other countries who are trying to take action
- Spending time with other agencies diagnosing the system problems
- Connections with the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child

It has made a massive difference having children involved in the project

What they do differently

The establishment of a Women's House including a child advocate role, ie a form of the Children's Rights Officer model. The role will be part of the core team of the Woman's House and was approved by the Council of Ministers.

Specialist services from various disciplines including social workers, psychologists, medical staff, legal professionals, and police will work under the same roof to provide appropriate support and treatment to women and their children. The Woman's House will also include a Child Advocate within its core team, in order to provide specialised support to children experiencing domestic violence. The role will also ensure that the rights of the child are taken into account in all procedures and processes, and that they are child-friendly and safe, including in civil and criminal procedures.

Implementation of this work would be dependent on timings for taking the whole Women's House project forward across Cyprus and therefore may not happen within the lifetime of this project. The Woman's House is expected to be operational by the end of November 2020. The model approved by the Council of Ministers is available on the website of the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, The Committee has been appointed Coordinator of the project. <http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/20200506/1588765852-03622.pdf>

As part of the implementation of the obligations under the Istanbul Convention, on 27.11.2019 the Council of Ministers of Cyprus approved the operation of a "Woman's House" (WH) which will function as a multi-agency multi-disciplinary crisis centre for women victims of violence and their children. The Woman's House is based on the Family Justice Centre (FJC) model, and will operate as a 'one-stop-shop' providing integrated services for victims of violence against women. The mission of the WH is to provide safety and protection, crisis management and support women victims of violence and their children through quality, specialized, accessible and coordinated services, all under one roof.

Specialist services from various disciplines including social workers, psychologists, medical staff, legal professionals, and police will work under the same roof to provide appropriate support and treatment to women and their children. The Woman's House will also include a Child Advocate within its core team, in order to provide specialised support to children experiencing domestic violence. The role will also ensure that the rights of the child are taken into account in all procedures and processes, and that they are child-friendly and safe, including in civil and criminal procedures.

However, this is a key sustainable change from the project that will provide support for children's rights beyond the lifetime of the project. MIGS also piloted the Power Up/Power Down model, in cooperation with the Officer of the Commissioner for the Rights of the Child, involving 15 young people through online sessions.

What difference has the project made?

The establishment of the children's rights officer will mean that we can build evidence about the impact of domestic abuse on children

There will be further engagement with children and young people, and there is a meeting with the Children's Commission about how to take this forward

The issue of child contact and domestic abuse is firmly on the agenda in Cyprus

Portugal

Who leads the work?

The [Centre for Studies for Social Intervention](#) (CESIS) is an independent organisation of researchers covering areas such as poverty, social exclusion, gender equality, migration, children and young people and gender based violence. A key purpose is to effectively disseminate research to support better policy making.

Together with:

[UMAR – the Women’s Union for Alternative and Response](#) – is a feminist association entering its fifth decade of work, uniting women of all generations around issues such as tackling domestic violence and seeking equal participation of women in political decision-making

Context

In Portugal, children who experience domestic violence are often seen as the ‘invisible population’. There was a lot of interest among stakeholders in the justice system to think about and improve on the spaces available to listen to children. In early 2019, there were two specific events that pushed towards this attention to topic

1. The Council of Europe published its first report on Portugal regarding implementation of Istanbul convention, many issues dealt with during this project were highlighted as important gaps to be addressed
2. UMAR published an annual study on femicide that found there was an increase in the number of women murdered in a domestic violence context. This raised interest in the national media, and a garnered a new push from civil society dealing with the problem.

The Istanbul convention provided a new push for the policy makers; from then on new legislation came out which facilitated our intervention on this project. The team felt the combination of having two partners in Portugal with different experiences and approaches was a good thing for the success of the project.

What they did and who with

UMAR have completed a trial of the Power Up/Power Down model with five children aged 9-11. This was successfully delivered over six sessions.

Since Jan 2020, UMAR have been working with a young expert group, made up of young people who have experience of domestic violence and the judicial system. They hope this expert group will continue to advise the organisation and wider stakeholders when the project comes to an end.

Although there was positive engagement from stakeholders, the project did not manage to fully engage with the health sector, only one nurse attended their events, and no one attended from the Education sector.

How they felt and what they learned and gained

From beginning, invitations sent out to different organisations to take part in the forum got a very positive response, organisations were very engaged in the projects and provided good input.

The project team hoped to gain more knowledge about instruments and methods that allow participation with children and they felt this was achieved. There is more information and awareness among stakeholders about what the issues are and there has also been an increase in public interest e.g. items on the news which focus on children's rights within the Justice system.²

What they did differently

There is still work to be done in ensuring children's participation within the legal system. However, this project has brought attention to the issue for professionals in the legal sector working with children. Partners are keen to try and understand what they can do, may not yet know what to do inside orgs, but trying to look to apply participation methodology.

What difference does this make?

Below are some examples participation projects with children which have been developed since the start of the IJCC project:

- Project ADELIA, of the Comissão Nacional de Promoção dos Direitos e Proteção de Crianças e Jovens (National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and Protection of Children and Young People), including the creation of a National Council of Children and Young People: <https://www.cnpdpcj.gov.pt/adelia-apoio-a-parentalidade-positiva>
- Project JUST – Justiça Amiga das Crianças (Child Friendly Justice) of the Comissão Nacional de Promoção dos Direitos e Proteção de Crianças e Jovens (National Commission for the Promotion of Rights and Protection of Children and Young People), including the creation of a Group of Young Experts (no link available yet)

Evidence of new policies relating to child contact in cases of domestic violence:

- Resolution of the Council of Ministers 139/2019, approving a set of priority measures and actions to prevent and combat domestic violence: <https://dre.pt/home/-/dre/124044596/details/maximized>
- Publication of a Guide for an Integrated Intervention with Children and Young People Victims of Domestic Violence (Guia de Intervenção Integrada junto de Crianças ou Jovens vítimas de Violência Doméstica): https://www.cig.gov.pt/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/170-20_Guia_Intervencao_Integrada.pdf
- Creation of Domestic Violence Specialised Integrated Sections (Secções Especializadas Integradas de Violência Doméstica) – pilot project in four regions of the country articulating criminal and family courts: <http://www.ministeriopublico.pt/pagina/criacao-de-seccoes-especializadas-integradas-de-violencia-domestica>

² News story about children's rights and women's rights both in domestic violence context <https://rr.sapo.pt/2019/12/04/pais/vitimas-silenciosas-testemunhas-silenciadas-as-criancas-sao-completamente-esquecidas-pelo-estado/especial/148197/>

Bulgaria

The [Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation](#) (BGRF) leads the work in Bulgaria – it was founded in 1998 to promote social equality and women’s human rights. BGRF has a range of expertise – crossing law, research, advocacy, education.

Context

The context in Bulgaria at the beginning of the IJCC project was fraught. This was due to the due to the public campaigns against the human rights and women rights and the Istanbul convention within Bulgaria. BGRF had to be very cautious with organising public events, any events which were organised were not publicly announced, instead invitation were sent to institutions, to confirm and give names of participants. When the status of Bulgaria changed to signing (but not ratifying) the Istanbul Convention, the context became much more stable.

BGRF felt that the IJCC project was very important for their organisation and it was presented to them during a very hard moment in Bulgaria’s political landscape. However, they felt is presented hope for many orgs which were under increasing pressure at the time.

There is a need to educate judges because although children have a right to be heard; often the judges do not acknowledge this right.

There is an active fathers’ rights movement which provides some challenges to the project.

What they did and who with

They engaged with multi-stakeholders including the police, but they were not allowed to be involved which was a challenge to engagement.

Before the pandemic they engaged with survivors of domestic abuse but now are not able to work with schools or anyone else face to face.

It has been hard to engage with medical experts.

However social workers and legal professionals engaged positively with the project.

They conducted interviews with children to create stories which will be shared at an event in October where engagement with court judges will be the focus. Children were consulted about how best to communicate with parents. They used the Power-up Power Down toolkit and used the translated ‘Super Listener’ poster with organisations who are in contact with children.

How they felt and what they learned and gained

They have seen attitude changes, especially amongst social workers in Sofia, and there are improved connections between BGRF and social and legal professionals.

There have been very positive discussion, ideas, exchanges of good practice and improved networks who can support each other as they move forward.

What they did differently

Two working groups have been formed that will use the Power-up, Power Down methodology – therapists, lawyers working in the sphere of services and representatives of state and municipal institutions – police, court, state agencies

There will be further actions following this project to move the issues on.

International experts are going to come and present at an event.

Sofia regional court have indicated they are open for cooperation in child contact cases.

They are developing a handbook together with the Police.

What difference does this make?

A follow on from the IJCC project is the Ministry of Justice Working Group for Amendments of Bulgarian Law for Protection against Gender Based Violence. They have developed proposals based on the principle of more protection for victims and sensitive approach for parental rights, more protection for children witnesses of domestic violence and holistic approach to victim and child.

Romania

Who leads the work?

The [Community Safety and Mediation Centre Foundation's](#) (CMSC) mission is to develop community safety models, multi-institutional cooperation and services to the highest standards, in order to protect the victims of abuse and vulnerable persons, through integrated, multi-disciplinary, professional approach and respect for every person.

Context

The challenges in the context in Romania included that the courts were overloaded, dealing with too many cases per day. There are not specific services for women and children. There was no tradition of consulting or involving children so this idea was challenging at first.

What they did and who with

A total of 45 stakeholders from across nine sectors engaged in 3 events

They already had relationships with many of the organisations and were used to working together on policy issues. The project provided a platform to build on these and work towards action at the national level.

The focus on children and the courts was new and resulted in good discussion about a range of difficult issues.

They collected testimonials from girls about their experiences of the court system and sent these to judges before they met together. This helped to focus on how to improve the way the system works. They are collecting and collating solutions and proposals from therapists and lawyers.

How they felt and what they learned and gained

The discussion of the child contact system highlighted that there were physical constraint in consulting children in court, and most people had no training in domestic abuse.

What they did differently

Plans are underway for several of the girls to share their story with parliament. Romania has been in contact with the national agency about making this happen.

What difference does this make?

- Improving physical spaces where children are taken to be interviewed
- Ensuring children are able to attend therapy to support them in telling their story in court without fear
- Using current legislation in line with Istanbul convention, articles which ask the states to develop special measures for children who are DV victims

Appendix 2: Evaluation Plan

Improving Justice in Child Contact (IJCC) Project Evaluation Plan- March 2019

By Sarah Morton, Matter of Focus

Matter of Focus are the evaluation partner for the Improving Justice in Child Contact (IJCC) project. Matter of Focus will work with the IJCC project to set up and implement a robust monitoring and evaluation framework

This report sets out the evaluation plan

The Improving Justice in Child Contact project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020)

Matter of Focus will:

- Work with stakeholders and project staff to collaboratively build an evaluation framework that reflects what matters to the project and project partners, including shared agreement of key risks and assumptions
- Develop monitoring criteria for the project and building on existing data, information and feedback collected by the partners, and audit and develop this to ensure consistency across the projects
- Develop implementation and collection of relevant data, information and feedback to inform progress towards outcomes across all of the projects. This will include:
 - Data about numbers of practitioners and policy-makers directly engaged through all channels, and secondary reach through projects, social media and other means.
 - Qualitative data about engagement, reactions, learning, knowledge and skills development and how the project has contributed to wider outcomes
 - Key comparators across all partners
 - A software platform to coordinate the data
 - Work with partners to ensure feedback fits with their context and work plan
- Conduct collaborative analysis sessions with key partners to build capacity across organisations and to improve data quality
- Pull together a report that reflects progress and learning across the countries.

Method

This method is evidence-based and built on our combined extensive experience and understanding of complex interventions and environments, evidence to action, improvement work and action research.

The Matter of Focus approach is a theory-based approach to outcome monitoring and evaluation that builds on contribution analysis. Such theory-based approaches have been successfully deployed internationally for more than 20 years; however, many organisations find it challenging to integrate this way of working into their day to day work. Over the past four years Matter of Focus co-founders Dr Sarah Morton and Dr Ailsa Cook have been working together to refine and test an approach that addresses some of the common issues faced. In this work we have built on our expertise in participatory methods, action research and evidence into action.

The resulting Matter of Focus approach is tailored especially to the needs of organisations delivering people-based interventions in complex environments, where standard approaches to outcome measurement are difficult to apply. Our approach is theoretically robust and evidence based, informed by the research literature and our experiences of working with public service organisations over two decades to focus on outcomes and use data and evidence effectively for improvement.

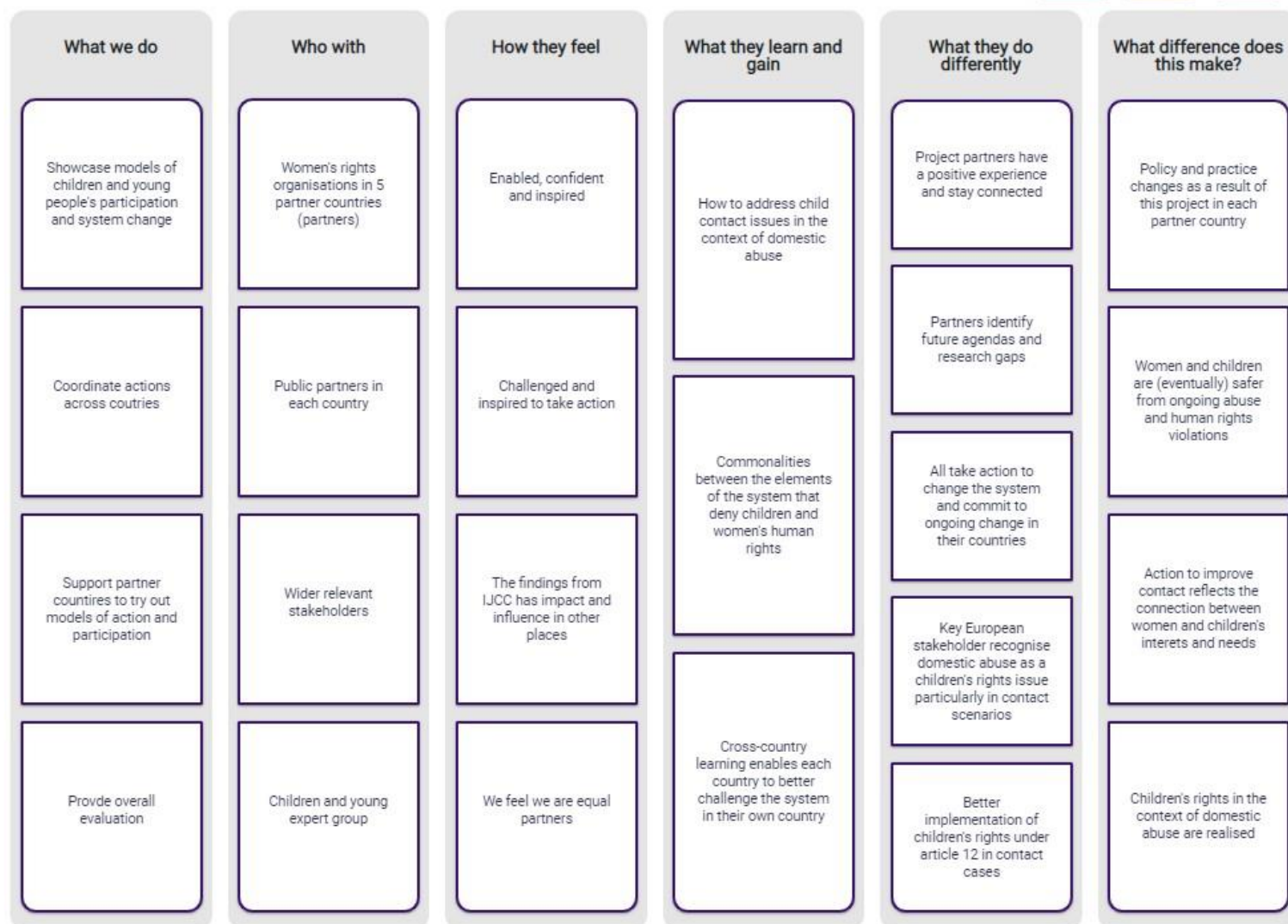
We bring to the process a range of tools and methods, along with extensive experience of using these. We can design, deliver and analyse data, information and feedback in a robust way that will help tell the story of what difference the project makes to people and communities.

Overall Evaluation Framework

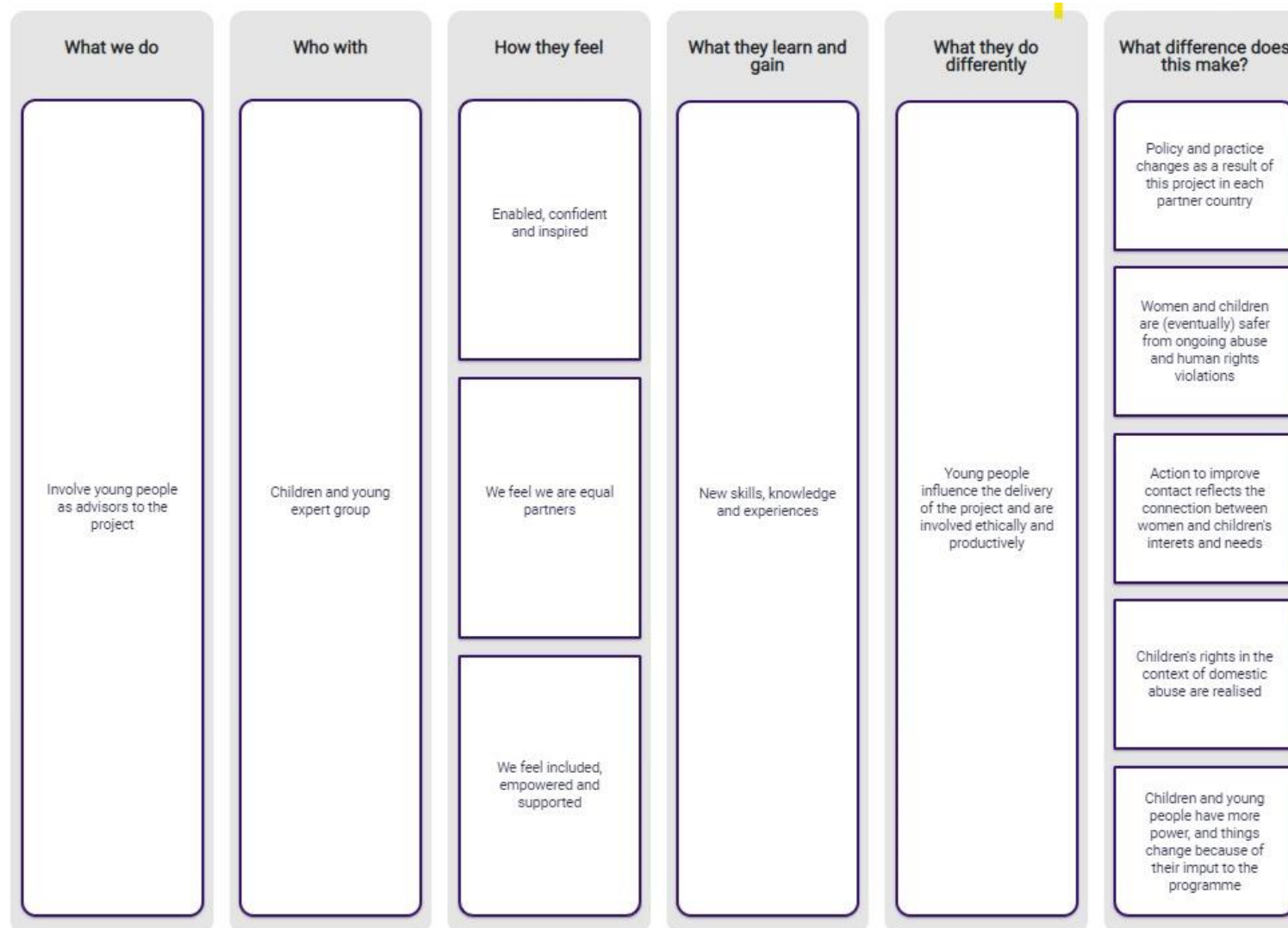
We have worked together to produce the following outcome maps that set out the overall project level evaluation. This has two pathways, one for the overall project and one for involving young people as experts.

For each outcome map we will define a measure of success for each level of the map. These will be collected by the team and the evaluator

Outcome Framework for overall project



Outcome framework for the IJCC Young Expert Group



Actions for project evaluation and work with young expert group

The core team will develop indicators for the overall evaluation outcome map and consult with the partner countries to ensure these reflect their view of the project

The evaluator will meet with the young expert group in September to further develop the outcome map for that work, and to agree with them what data and feedback will adequately track their involvement and to what extent they want to be involved in the collection, analysis and reporting of that data.

Evaluation criteria and indicators

At the inception meeting in February 2019 the following evaluation criteria were agreed. We also agreed that each partner would:

- Collect data from all events
- Monitor and reflect on action plans
- Collect feedback from children engaged (via practitioners)
- Help conduct the stakeholder surveys at months 6 and 20 (organised by evaluation team centrally)
- Take part in partner meeting reflection sessions for comparison

Indicators to be used:

- 1) Engagement and reach
 - Number of partner agencies
 - Number of agencies engaged by each partner
 - Number of women and children supported via those agencies
 - Reach via web traffic and social media
 - Children and families reached through participation project
- 2) Knowledge and skills (identified via action plans and events)
 - Key learning points from events
 - Key learning from action plans and what was done to address these
- 3) Capacity building
 - Event data on new connections
 - Survey data on new connections
 - Team reflections on capacity building
- 4) Changes in practice and reducing harms
 - Reflections on action plans
 - Online survey June 2020

Timescale

Phase One November 2018-February 2019

- Establish an evaluation framework for the project through attendance at the initial project meeting, agree indicators, data collection methods and discuss these with all project partners (as above)

Phase Two Months 5-12 (March -October 2019)

- Monitor and assist with data collection and collate into an interim report deliverable in month 12 (October 2019)
- Run stakeholder survey 1 at month 6 (April 2019)

Phase Three Months 12-18 (December 2019- June 2020)

- Continue to oversee data collection from partners, collate all data,
- Run final stakeholder survey Month 20 (June 2020)

Phase Four Months 19-21 (July – September 2020)

- Collate and analyse all data
- Produce final report and present to final conference

Appendix 2: data collected for evaluation

Data collected to November 2020

Type	Method	Collected	Number of countries
Initial country comparisons	Group reflection and discussion	Partner meeting Feb 2019	All
Stakeholder Event Feedback	Feedback survey	As required	4
Partner activity updates	Feedback form	Via email	all
Young advisors (yello) feedback from outcome mapping workshop	Feedback form	Meeting October 2019	Project-wide
Stakeholder survey	Online survey	November 2019 and August 2020	all
Interviews with partners	Interviews via virtual conference	October 2020	all

Appendix 3: Stakeholder survey questions

Stakeholder survey one

You have been sent this survey as part of Improving Justice in Child Contact (IJCC) - a partnership research project across five European countries, running from November 2018 - November 2020

This survey is available in [Bulgarian, Greek, Portuguese, Romanian] and English.

If you have any questions about this survey please contact the evaluation lead Sarah Morton sarah@matter-of-focus.com

Introduction

The Improving Justice in Child Contact project is working across 5 European countries to be better at upholding children's rights in child contact systems. We are working together on [Improving Justice in Child Contact](#) for children affected by domestic violence. The project has two main goals:

- to find out what we can do better to listen seriously to children; and
- to work together on what we need to change in our child contact systems to make children and women safer.

We are asking stakeholders working in each of the 5 countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania and Scotland) to give us their views in this short survey. Please fill up this survey if your work includes women and/or children affected by domestic abuse in any setting (e.g. support agencies, the police, courts).

We are asking for stakeholder input at this stage to help us understand the key issues in each place, identify the key agencies, and highlight what action should be taken. Your views will be anonymous. We will process the information to help inform the project and run another survey at the end of the project to help us understand change.

Section A About You

1. What is your work role?
2. What organisation do you represent?
3. Which sector is that organisation in (please tick) ?
 - NGO/Charity
 - Local Public Administration/Government
 - Regional Public Administration/Government
 - National Public Administration/Government
 - Police
 - Judicial system
 - Social Services
 - Health
 - Education
 - Academic
 - Other (please specify)
4. Have you attended any meetings as part of the IJCC project?
 - Yes - please provide number of meetings attended
 - I was invited but was unable to attend any meetings
 - No

Section B: About domestic abuse and child contact issues in your country

The IJCC project has been established because we recognised some of the same issues across different countries. We are looking at the issues when children are living separately from an abusive parent, and the

court system intervenes because one of the parties wants to gain or refuse contact with the non-resident parent.

6) To what extent do you see the following occur in your country in relation to child contact in the context of domestic abuse (never, rarely, sometimes, often)

- a) Child contact is ordered in families where there has been domestic abuse
- b) Children's views about contact with an abusive parent are taken into account when ordering contact
- c) Children are safe during contact sessions with abusive parents
- d) Women's views are taken into account when ordering contact with abusive ex-partners
- e) Women are safe when arranging contact sessions with abusive ex-partners
- f) Women are blamed when children do not want or refuse contact with an abusive parent
- g) Criminal and family courts work together to protect women and children
- h) Children's rights are protected in the child contact system
- i) Women's rights are protected in the child contact system
- j) People who perpetrate domestic abuse are viewed as harming their children

7) In your experience which of the following organisations are important to tackling issues around child contact in the context of domestic abuse in your country: (Essential, quite important, a little important, not relevant)

NGO/Charities working with domestic abuse

NGO/Charities working with children

Local Public Administration/Government

Regional Public Administration/Government

National Public Administration/Government

Police

Public Prosecutors

Courts

Social Services

Health

Education

Academic

Other (please specify)

8) In your view, which of the following are important to tackling issues around child contact in the context of domestic abuse? Please tick all that apply (already exists, important, not important)

- a) Raising awareness of the issues that families face around child contact in the context of domestic abuse
- b) A system for routinely and meaningfully consulting children about their views on contact with abusive parents
- c) Laws and policies to protect women and children in the context of domestic abuse
- d) Access to affordable legal advice for parents in the context of domestic abuse
- e) Coordination and information sharing between family and criminal courts
- f) Training for professionals working with cases of domestic abuse and child contact

8b) Is there anything else that should be done in your country to tackle this issue?

8c) Is there anything your organisation is currently doing to tackle this issue?

g) Any other comments?

Finally – please could you provide an email address so we can send a follow-up survey? This email will be removed from your responses to ensure anonymisation. Please also tick here if you would like to see the final evaluation of this project.

Thank-you

The Improving Justice in Child Contact Project

Survey 2 questions (Summer 2020)

This survey was translated into relevant language for each country

1. Introduction

The Improving Justice in Child Contact project is working across 5 European countries to be better at upholding children's rights in child contact systems. We are working together on Improving Justice in Child Contact for children affected by domestic violence. The project has two main goals:

- to find out what we can do better to listen seriously to children;
- and to work together on what we need to change in our child contact systems to make children and women safer.

We carried out a stakeholder survey in each of the 5 countries (Bulgaria, Cyprus, Portugal, Romania and Scotland) in 2019 to investigate their views on issues for children affected by domestic abuse in the contact system. This is the second survey for this project.

Please fill up this survey if your work includes women and/or children affected by domestic abuse in any setting (e.g. support agencies, the police, courts, government).

We are asking stakeholders to reflect on any changes in issues related to children and contact in the context of domestic abuse since November 2018.

Your views will be anonymous. They will help us to understand what has worked well in this project and will form part of a final evaluation report alongside other data gathered from events and other documents.

2. About You

1. What country are you from? *

2 What is your work role? *

3. What organisation do you represent? *

- ☐ NGO/Charity
- ☐ Local Public Administration/Government
- ☐ Regional Public Administration/Government
- ☐ National Public Administration/Government
- ☐ Police
- ☐ Judicial System
- ☐ Social Services
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Academic
- ☐ Other (please specify):

4. Which sector is that organisation in? *

5. Have you attended any meetings about child contact and domestic abuse since November 2018? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ I was invited but was unable to attend any meetings
- ☐ I was not invited to any meetings

If yes, how many?

6. Were any of these meetings organised as part of the IJCC project?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't know

If yes, how many?

7. Which of the following aspects of IJCC meetings were most useful in your opinion?

	Not useful	Somewhat useful	Very useful	Don't know/not applicable
Meeting other agencies with shared interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning about child contact and domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning from other countries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
System mapping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hearing about how to involve children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involving children and young people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. About domestic abuse and child contact issues in your country

The IJCC project has been established because we recognised some of the same issues across different countries. We are looking at the issues when children are living separately from an abusive parent, and the court system intervenes because one of the parties wants to gain or refuse contact with the non-resident parent.

8. Since November 2018 have you seen any increase in awareness of the following issues? *

	No more awareness	A little more awareness	Some more awareness	Don't know
Awareness that child contact orders can be dangerous for woman and children in families where there has been domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
That children have a right to express their views about contact with their parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Awareness that children's views about contact with a n abusive parent should influence the decision about ordering contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Awareness that children are harmed by living in families where there is domestic abuse between their parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Awareness that children are safer when their mothers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	No more awareness	A little more awareness	Some more awareness	Don't know
are helped to be safe				

9. Since November 2018 have you seen any improvement on the following issues? *

	No improvement	A little improvement	Some improvement	Don't know
Children's safety during contact sessions with abusive parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's views being taken into account when ordering contact with abusive parent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women's views being taken into account when ordering contact with abusive ex-partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Women's safety when arranging contact sessions with abusive ex-partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Criminal and family courts working together to protect women and children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children's rights being protected in the child contact system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	No improvement	A little improvement	Some improvement	Don't know
Women's rights being protected in the child contact system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. Are you aware of any of the following agencies taking action since November 2018 to tackle issues of child contact and domestic abuse? *

	Yes	No	Don't know
NGO/Charities working with domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
NGO/Charities working with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local Public Administration/Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional Public Administration/Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National Public Administration/Government	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Public Prosecutors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social Services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other (please specify)

11. If yes, what have these agencies done?

12. Are you aware of any developments on the following issues since November 2018? *

	No change	Improved	Don't know
Systems for routinely and meaningfully consulting children about their views on contact with abusive parents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laws and policies to protect women and children in the context of domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access to affordable legal advice for parents in the context of domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordination and information sharing between family and criminal courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training for professionals working with cases of domestic abuse and child contact	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please describe any developments:

13. Is there anything else that has been done in your country since November 2018 to tackle this issue?

14. Is there anything your organisation is currently doing to tackle this issue?

15. Any other comments?

16. If you would like to see the final results of this project please provide an email address (this will be separated from your responses to preserve confidentiality):

Appendix 4: partner meeting feedback questions

IJCC first partner meeting feedback

1. I enjoyed the meeting

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

2. I understand what is required of my organisation for the IJCC project

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

If you disagree, please comment:

3. I have more ideas about how to involve children in my part of the project

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

4. What was the best thing about this meeting?

5. What could be improved?

IJCC second partner meeting feedback

1. I enjoyed the meeting

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

2. It has been useful to hear about how the projects in other countries are progressing

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

3. I feel inspired

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

4. I have gained new ideas and knowledge at this meeting

- ☐ Strongly agree

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

5. I feel supported by the IJCC partnership

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

6. What was the best thing about this meeting?

7. What could have been improved?

Appendix 5: Stakeholder event feedback questions

Improving Justice in Child Contact – EU Project

This event is being held as part of an international project that aims to improve the circumstances of women and children who have difficulties with child contact following domestic violence. We would be very grateful if you could help the project report our impact by answering the following questions.

- 1) What is your work role?
- 2) What organisation do you represent?
- 3) Which sector is that organisation in (please tick) ?
 - Public
 - NGO/Charity
 - Local Government
 - National Government
 - Other (please specify)

- 4) Does your organisation provide direct services to women and/or children who are affected by domestic violence?
Yes/No
 - If YES: can you please tell us how many women and/or children your organisation works with each year:
WOMEN _____ CHILDREN _____
- 5) What is the main learning you will take from attending the event today?
- 6) Are there any actions you will take or will plan to take as a result of attending the event today?
Yes/No
If yes: please describe
- 7) Have you made connections with organisations or colleagues you didn't know before?
Yes/No
If yes: please describe:
- 8) We are looking for volunteers to follow up with after a few months in our evaluation (specify if this will be the Portuguese partners or us?) If you are happy to be contacted please leave your email address here:

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