

Child and youth participation in Finland

Online participation platform Digiraati.fi

Liisa Männistö, Senior Specialist

Bilateral meeting Japan – Finland
8 December 2022



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
FINLAND

Definition and purpose of child and youth participation

- Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 12
 - States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the **right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child**, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
 - For this purpose, **the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child**, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

The key drivers of the promotion of child participation

- Legislation
 - Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
 - Constitution of Finland, Youth Act
 - Local Government Act & Act on Wellbeing Services Counties
 - Each municipality and each wellbeing services county has to appoint a youth council.
 - Residents of a municipality/county may also exert influence by submitting initiatives.
 - Legislation on early childhood education, pre-school education and training
 - Children must be heard and their views must be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
 - Schools and educational institutions must appoint pupil/student councils.
- Training of professionals
- Information on children's rights to children and young people
- Tools and mechanisms to support child and youth participation

Child Participation Assessment process in 2019

- Council of Europe Child Participation Assessment Tool (CPAT)
- Self-assessment of children's participation rights and the structures for participation
- [Summary report](#) was published in January 2020
- [Full assessment report \(in Finnish\)](#) was published in February 2020



CPAT: Main findings

- **The national legislation** on children's right to participate is perceived as comprehensive but fragmented/scattered.
- **Children don't get enough information** on their right to participate.
- **Authorities don't know enough about their duty** to consult with children.
- **Stronger coordination** of child rights policy is needed at governmental level.
- Many **formal structures for child participation exist** at local, regional and national level, but the number of children participating through them is very limited.
- There are **shortcomings** in the implementation of legislation on consultation/participation of especially **children in vulnerable situations**.
- **Consultation mechanisms** are often too complicated and not child-friendly.

Online participation mechanisms: underlying policy goals

- Government Programme 2019-2023
 - We actively promote **versatile and effective opportunities for participation** and means of direct democracy.
 - We strengthen the **obligation to consult young people** and develop **new tools for consultation**.
 - We promote the **inclusion and agency of children and young people in society**, for example, by digital means.
- Several policy programmes and strategies to implement GP goals
 - National Democracy Programme 2025
 - National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2020-2023
 - National Child Strategy

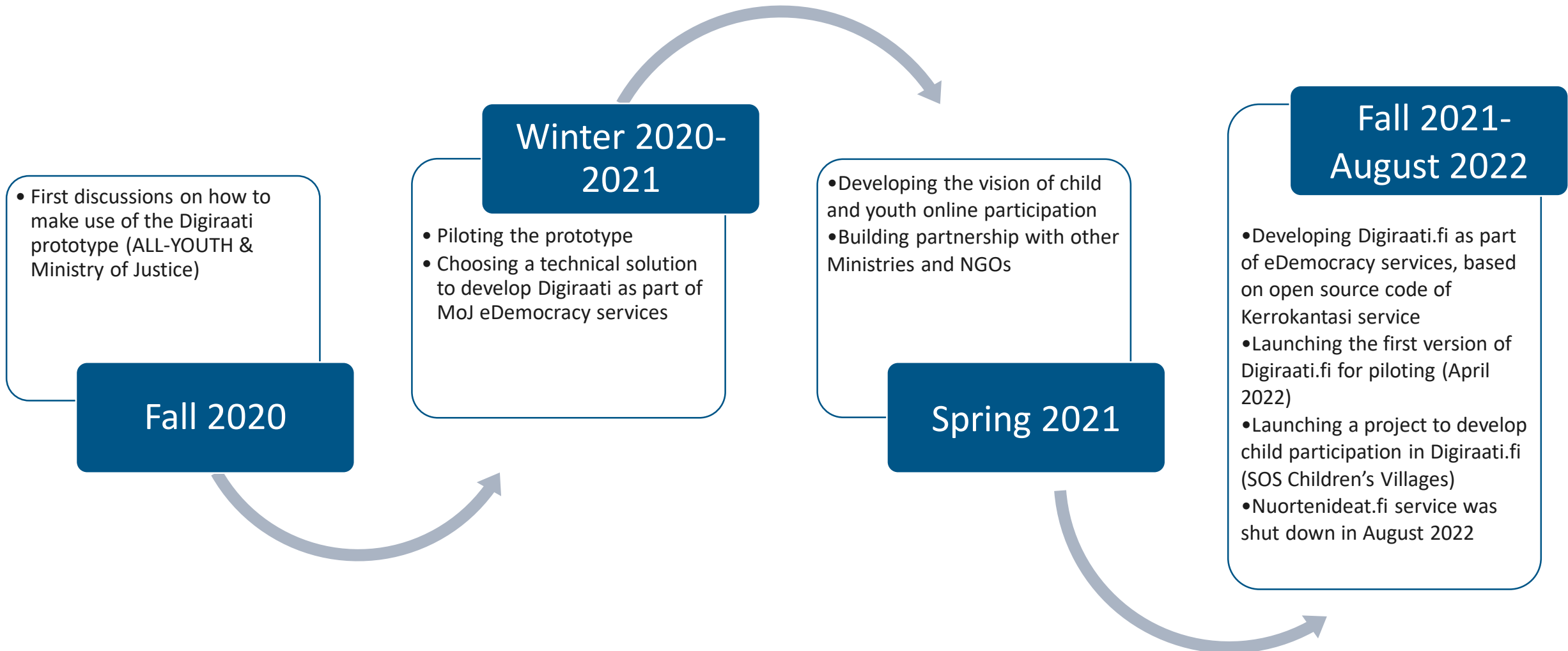
eDemocracy services in Finland

- <https://www.demokratia.fi/en/home/> is a landing site for six eDemocracy services maintained by the Ministry of Justice (Digiraati.fi to be added later)
- Challenges from the point of view of child/youth participation
 - The service package is mainly aimed at adults, only one of the services (Nuortenideat.fi) was tailored for young people
 - Nuortenideat.fi's user rate was low in relation to marketing and support resources
 - Interaction between young people and the administration and the effectiveness of participation was low
- Vision of child and youth online participation
 - The service package is developed to be more suitable for children and young people, and their participation is supported in all e-democracy services
 - The Digiraati concept of the ALL-YOUTH research project will be developed in a partnership project to increase interaction and equal opportunities for influence

Digiraati Partnership Project

- Objectives:
 - To build an **online participation platform** to offer young people under the age of 29 **an equal opportunity to participate and have their voices heard** in society;
 - To create an **operating model** that **strengthens the opportunities** for equal participation of children and young people and **increases interaction** between people of different ages and backgrounds and thereby **improves the quality of decision-making**;
 - To develop a **concept that increases the partnership** between administration, civil society actors and research.
- Partners:
 - Ministry of Justice
 - Ministry of Education and Culture
 - National Child Strategy (Min. of Social Affairs and Health)
 - Competence Center for Youth Participation (Nuorten Akatemia ry and Koordinaatti/City of Oulu)
 - Finnish Red Cross Youth shelters
 - Tampere University's ALL-YOUTH research project

Partnership project – What has happened so far?



Partnership project – Where are we now?

- Development of Digiraati.fi will continue based on piloting and feedback from users in 2023.
- Further development work and continuous maintenance was tendered in fall 2022 and a new technical service provider will be chosen in the coming weeks.
- Focus on child participation – how to make Digiraati.fi more child-friendly
- Partnership project will continue to develop the concept of how to support children and young people (especially those in vulnerable situations) to participate in decision-making
 - Steering Committee was set up in Sept 2022 (mandate period until March 2024) to follow up and develop the concept
 - Project Group will make concrete suggestions of how to develop the concept and the platform

Contact

Liisa Männistö

Senior Specialist, Unit for Democracy
and Elections

Liisa.mannisto@gov.fi

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE – FINLAND

www.ministryofjustice.fi

Facebook: facebook.com/oikeusministerio

Twitter: twitter.com/oikeusmin @oikeusmin

Visiting address: Eteläesplanadi 10, Helsinki

Postal address: PL 25, 00023 Valtioneuvosto

Telephone: +358 29 516 001



MINISTRY OF JUSTICE
FINLAND