

**Children are not
political tools!**

**Notice if they are used for
political purposes!**



Topics to be covered

- 1 Motivations behind the use of children
- 2 Examples of infringement when using children for political purposes
- 3 Why it is NOT OK to use children for political purposes
- 4 Checklist for parents for giving consent to a child's participation
- 5 Tips for recognizing, and taking action against political abuses
- 6 Useful links



Children can become tools for political goals in many ways

When a child is featured or involved in a campaign

When a politician involves his/her own child or uses him/her for political purposes

When children are addressed by politicians

When campaigning with an issue that affects children

OK, that politicians want to win the trust and sympathy of their voters

but **not OK,** if they wade through children, and violate their rights.

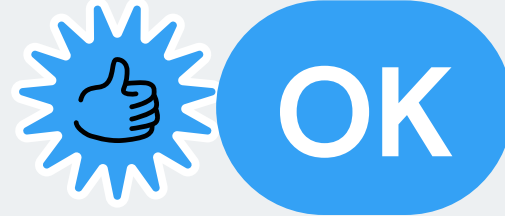
Even if it is
unintentional or
due to lack of awareness.



Let's see some
examples

1

When a child is featured or involved in a campaign



OK

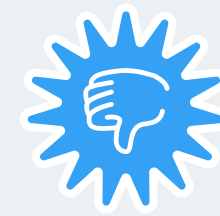
if a politician wants

to show the children what developments he/she supported that affected them

to show that he is humane and child-friendly

to show that he/she cares about children

to entertain people



not OK

if a politician

only looks at whether the parents agree to the child's participation, but does not seek the children's informed consent

invites the press to take photos of children while handing over a playground

invites the press to take photos of him/her at the school canteen

is shooting a campaign film in which he/she puts sentences in the children's mouths

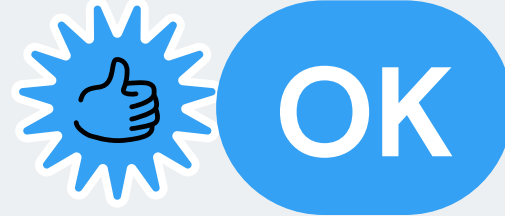
invites young people to an event but limits what they can say

only invites young people to a forum who go to school preferable to him/her

organizes a program featuring children for a political event

2

When a politician involves or uses his/her own child for political purposes



if a politician wants

to capture voters emotionally as well

to show his/her ordinary, human side

to show that family is important and matters to him/her

to help addressing those to whom he/she is attached to

make an action tangible



if a politician

posts a photo with his/her own children on his/her public side

allows you to gain insight into his/her children's private lives through his/her own

publishes a report with private photos in a tabloid from a holiday with his/her children

shoots a video in his/her own apartment, showing their intimate space with the children

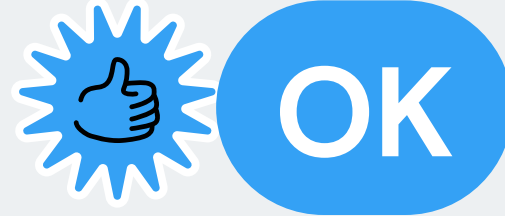
campaigns where he/she is present as a parent

sends a gift to where his/her child is going

illustrate his/her own child in presenting a political program

3

When the children are addressed by politicians



OK

if a politician wants

to spread his/her political messages widely

to communicate with adults in a simple, understandable way

to address children and young people as well

to mobilize children and young people

to show that he/she is paying attention to the children



not OK

if a politician

allows political advertisements to pop up during tales

politicizes with fairy tale figures

communicates in a way that if a child did same, he/she would be punished (eg mocking)

seems to talk to the kids, but he/she chooses a channel where the children can't be reached

hides party politics in an issue that is important for children without being transparent

pretends to answer questions coming from children, even though he/she invented them

talks about issues important to children without asking them

cuteness factor is more important than taking children seriously. (e.g. asking kindergarten children, ignoring questions from teenagers and student councils)

to show how important children
are to him/her

only goes to a school to produce press
material about it

to help, to make gestures

sends gifts, fancy stuff to children through a
sports association or children's home

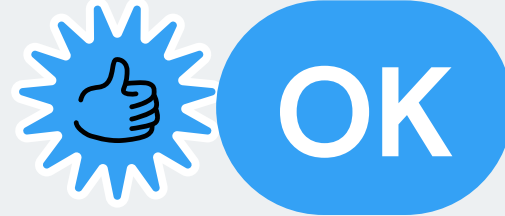
But worst of all...

Children can become tools for political goals without politicians actually getting into contact with them.



4

When politicians campaign on an issue that affects children



if a politician wants to

to stand up for the protection and interests of children and to debate about it

emphasize the participation of children



if a politician

use children for excuse

argues for the protection of children with a measure that is actually for a different purpose

presents a false picture of children or a group of children

it puts children into a fault line / battlefield of a political game

it stimulates a politically heated debate instead of a professional one about children

presents something as if it was an idea of the children

Why not OK?

A child is not an instrument

A child is not a decoration

A child is not someone's property

A child is a citizen with rights

A child is a person whose dignity must be respected

If politicians misrepresent something as if it were in the best interests of the children

**it causes severe damage at the
individual, family, and social levels**

- 1** It distracts attention and resources from real problems.
- 2** It creates the false illusion that something is happening to protect children.
- 3** It is wading over children and seriously violating their rights.
- 4** It mocks everyone who seeks real answers to protect children.

Those who care about children
can gain the trust and support of
voters.

**But those who care about
children also respect their rights.**



to participate in
matters affecting
him/her

for the protection of
his/her privacy

to respect his/her
dignity

to take his/her opinion
into account



to protect against and
prevent from abuse

to understand what
he/she and his/her face
are used for

to protect against
exploitation and
manipulation

for proper information
and transparency

for equal treatment

to protect against
hateful content that
might be harmful to
his/her
development

to learn about his/her
rights



What can
you do?





Before you agree to
your child's
participation,

consider:

Purpose of participation

What is the
purpose of my
child's
participation?

How **relevant** is
this to him/her?

Does my child
want to be
involved?

**Does he/she
agree?**

What is his/her
motivation?

Does my child
understand
what he/she is
involved in?

Does my child
understand
his/her own role
in it?

Who does my
child **represent?**

Can my child tell
his/her **opinion
honestly?**

Method of participation

How does my
child **appear** in the
campaign?

How does my child
participate?

How **child-friendly**
is the process, the
way my child is
involved?

Do they devote
enough attention,
time and energy to
make my child
**feel safe and
well?**

What **guarantees**
are there to take
into account the
rights and best
interests of my
child during the
participation?



The impact of the participation

How **authentic** is this to my child?

(Including the message of the campaign, his/her own role, the way of participation and appearance)

How does this affect my child **now or in the future**?

Could this put my child in a **vulnerable position**?

What does the content **convey** to the other children?

How does it affect society?

Do my child or we as parents have the opportunity to **change our minds**?

What happens then?



If a politician is campaigning on issues affecting children,

get informed:

Is there a **meaningful explanation and debate**, or is there a one-way political communication?

What **evidence** (data, impact assessments, research) do they refer to?

What do the experts, **professional organizations** say about it?

Are its goals and instruments **in line** with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Are **resources** spent on campaign and political communication, or action?

Are the **views** of children and professional organizations **taken into account**?

Is it supplemented with the necessary conditions for **implementation** (are they serious about it)?

Who's talking about it? Do **competent** professionals represent it/ does it belong to the relevant professional sector?

You can already do a lot for children's rights if you

pay attention to the topic



Talk with your friends and family about using children and involving them in political campaigns.

Familiarize yourself with children's rights and the possible options for enforcing them.

Think critically, read and follow the news, orient yourself.

Become aware of your own attitude, behavior, values.

Do not distribute/share political content that abuses the image of children.

Stand up against the political use of children, making sure that you also respect the human dignity and rights of others.

Write to your representative, the offending politician, the school that admitted them, and send them information material.

When you vote, take into account how they treat children.

Learn more



- 1 Children's rights 1x1 for organizers of political campaigns and politicians (Hintalovon Children's Rights Foundation)
- 2 Directive, principle on the involvement of children in political campaigns (Hintalovon Children's Rights Foundation)
- 3 Advice and sub-page of the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union (TASZ) for parents in case of party politics in school and kindergarten
- 4 The website called School and Politics, a joint project of the Eötvös Károly Institute and the Association of History Teachers
- 5 Objection template to be submitted to the Election Committee (Eötvös Károly Institute)
- 6 Statement from the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights and his deputies on the use of children for political purposes
- 7 Maltese study and draft directive on children's participation in political communication

