

# **Reconciling Protection and Participation - A Balancing Act?**

*Integrating Participation in Child Protection Services targeting Children  
affected by Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation in Berlin*

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***“...true protection of children does protect their rights.”***

Freeman, 1997: 98

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## **Abstract**

*An increase of child trafficking and sexual exploitation in Europe and Germany has been reported by NGOs in the last decade (Thoma & Stefula, 2001: Introduction & IOM, 2001:33). In the field of child protection services, provided by both governmental institutions and social organisations, examples of good practice in working with this target group become more important. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has brought awareness about children's rights and capabilities to participate in decision-making on all matters affecting them (CRC, art 12). The participation principle needs, in respecting children's rights, to be integrated in projects and interventions targeting children affected by child trafficking and/or sexual exploitation. In doing this, challenges are faced in balancing participation and protection. In this thesis it is explored how children's participation can be integrated in the individual decision-making process in child protection services provided by NGOs. Based on literature study and interviews with NGOs in Berlin, it is described how participation could and should be implemented, what discrepancies, barriers and limitations are faced and what gains result from children's participation in child protection.*