

APPENDIX

Author(s): Hege Stein Helland, Katrin Križ and Marit Skivenes

Editors(s): Professor Nigel Lowe QC (Hon) and Dr Claire Fenton-Glynn

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Table A. Variables measuring ‘child’s voice’ in the decisions and descriptions of the values.

Variables	Value	Description of value (coding description)
The child’s opinion was (was not) heard.	1. Yes	The child is heard about being adopted (including if the child’s spokesperson conveys the child’s opinion on adoption).
	2. No	The child is not heard about being adopted
	3. Too young	The child is assessed as too young/immature to be asked for its opinion.
	4. Not mentioned	Nothing about the child’s voice on the matter of adoption
The involvement of a spokesperson or guardian ad litem	1. Yes	The child is heard about being adopted, including whether the child’s spokesperson conveys the child’s opinion on adoption
	2. Yes – direct	The child’s opinion is given by the child directly. This includes an opinion expressed via phone or written communication.
	3. Yes – indirect	The child’s opinion is given via a spokesperson or the opinion of the child on the matter of adoption is collected and conveyed through a guardian, social worker, or spokesperson.
	4. No	The child has not been heard about being adopted.
	5. Too young	The child has been assessed as too young or too immature to be asked for their opinion.
	6. Not mentioned	There is no information about the child’s voice on the matter of adoption.
Description of the child’s opinion about the adoption	1. Positive	Statements such as: I want to belong here; I wish for my prospective adopted parents to decide everything for me; I belong here, etc.
	2. Negative	Negative statement about the adoption or being adopted
	3. Unclear	It is difficult to say whether the child wants to be adopted or not.
	4. Not mentioned	The child’s opinion about the adoption has not been mentioned (but the child’s opinion on other matters might have been).
Extent of the court’s weighing of the child’s opinion*	1. Decisive weight	The child’s opinion on the adoption is given decisive weight in the proceeding.
	2. Great weight	The child’s opinion on the adoption matters a lot in the proceedings, but it is not the decisive factor.
	3. Some weight	The child’s opinion has been given some weight, but not enough to decide the matter.
	4. None	The child’s opinion is given very little or no weight.
	5. Not mentioned	The judgment does not mention how much weight the child’s voice is given.

	6. Not applicable (NA)	The child's voice has not been mentioned by the court or county board.
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** We only used the court's reasoning here; other parts of the judgments were excluded because they did not fall within the scope of this study.*

Table B. Description of values for variable 'child's presence' in the decisions.

No information	The child has not been described or assessed.
Very little	The child has only been briefly mentioned with one or two sentences and little information or general information has been provided, for example, "the child is – similar to all small children – dependent on close attention and care,"
Some information	The child has been described a little more (in a paragraph or so), and the description concerns this specific child, not children in general, for example, "the child protection worker explained to the court that there had been focus on the food intake of the child."
A lot	The judgment contains several paragraphs and information that is specific to this child. It describes the child's physical condition, special features of the child (e. g. the child was born prematurely, with a specific health concern, was born with withdrawal symptoms, or the child was completely healthy, etc.), the physical and/or emotional needs of the child, the child's behavior, and development, etc.

*** This code encompasses information about how much the child is described. Descriptions do not have to be first-hand. They may rely on reports or statements from institutions or foster parents.*

Table C. Description of values for variables 'child's needs in the past and the present' in the decisions. Coded for both past and present separately.

Attachment issues (AI)	Yes (mentioned)	Diagnosed attachment issues or clear issues relating to attachment. Often described as poor attachment or disorganized attachment.
	NM (not mentioned)	
Child development (CD)	Yes (mentioned)	The child is slow in its development or has 'disturbed'/'distorted' development
	NM (not mentioned)	
Vulnerability (V)	Yes (mentioned)	The child is described as being generally vulnerable / having a vulnerability or needs without specification of what this vulnerability or need consists of. If this vulnerability is the consequence of another factor (e.g. attachment issues) only code it as that factor. Included here if it is mentioned that the child has a potential vulnerability that may show later (hereditary factors or due to previous experiences / stress).
	NM (not mentioned)	
Physical health issues (PH)	Yes (mentioned)	The child has a form of physical disability or chronic disease.
	NM (not mentioned)	
Psychosocial issues (PS)	Yes (mentioned)	If the child has challenges related to its behavior in social situations. Can show as acting out, aggression, depression, social

	NM (not mentioned)	isolation or difficulties establishing contact. Sometimes described as difficulties playing with other children.
Learning (LD) difficulties	Yes (mentioned)	The child has clear cognitive limitations. This can range from severe learning difficulties to reduced cognitive function. It is often referred to WAIS tests, other IQ and ability tests when these limitations are to be investigated and the score is below normal range.
	NM (not mentioned)	
Mental health (MH)	Yes (mentioned)	Such as PTSD or other diagnoses
	NM (not mentioned)	

Table D. Description of values for variables ‘Adapting and Attaching’ in the decisions.

Child adapting to the new family	Yes	The judgment mentions that the child has adapted well to their new circumstances, has no challenges and is a “normal child.”
	Not mentioned	The way in which the child has adapted to the new family has not been mentioned.
Description of the child’s attachment to the adoptive family	Good	The attachment has been described as good, very good, stable, robust, etc.
	Not good	The attachment has been described as not good, not very good, not present, dysfunctional, disorganized, etc.
	Mixed	The attachment to some family but not to other family members has been described as good, or it has been described as varying over time.
	Not mentioned	The attachment to the adoptive family has not been mentioned.
	N.A.	The adoptive family has not yet been determined.
Description of the child’s attachment to the biological family	Good	The attachment has been described as good, very good, stable, robust, etc.
	Not good	The attachment has been described as not good, not very good, not present, dysfunctional, disorganized, etc.
	Mixed	The attachment to some family but not to other family members has been described as good, or it has been described as varying over time.
	Not mentioned	The attachment to the biological family has not been mentioned.

Table E. Children by age group, country and total. Only including children with accurately identified age. N=196 children

	Age group				
	0-4 years	5-6 years	7-11 years	12-17 years	Total
Austria	1	0	5	1	7
England	65	9	7	0	81
Estonia	3	0	2	0	5
Finland	3	3	2	3	11
Germany	13	5	7	0	25
Norway	34	13	6	7	60
Spain	2	1	2	2	7
Total	121	31	31	13	196

Table F. Age of children whose voice were heard or deliberately not heard by the court (years in increasing order). N= 66 children.

	Total children heard				Too young to be heard	Total		
		Age heard – direct	Age heard – indirect	Age heard – unknown how			Mean ^a	Median ^a
Country	N=37	N=16	N=18	N=3	N=29	N=66	Mean^a	Median^a
Austria	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-
England	6	11	5 - 6 - 7 - 7 - 7	-	0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 0 - 1 - 1 - 1 - 3 - 4	20	2.65	1
Estonia	5	10 - >10 - >12	>7 - <7	-	3 - <10 - <10 - <10 - <10	10	6.5	6.5
Finland	3	12 - 14	10	-	10	4	11.5	11
Germany	8	3 - 5 - 7 - 8 - 9 - X ^b - X ^b - X ^b	-	-	2	9	5.6	6
Norway	14	15 - 16	6 - 8 - 8 - 9 - 9 - 10 - 12 - 13 - 14	4 - 12 - 12	1 - 2 - 4 - 4 - 4 - 5 - 7	21	8.3	8
Spain	1	-	X ^b	-	X ^b	2	-	-
Total mean^a		10	8,7	9,3	2,2			
Total median^a		10	8	12	1			

^a Calculations of mean and median exclude children whose age is not known (n=5) and where the child's age is presumed (n=8, Estonia); ^b X = Child's age is unknown.

Table G. Age of children whose voice were given weight by the court (years). N= 13 children.

Country	Age of children					Mean	Median
	Weight: (n=7)	Some	Weight: (n=5)	Great	Weight: (n=1)		
Austria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
England	11 - 7	-	-	-	-	9	9
Estonia	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	10	-	-	-	-	10	10
Germany	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Norway	4 - 5 - 10 - 14	9 - 12 - 12 - 15 - 16	13	-	-	11	12
Spain	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Total mean</i>	<i>8.7</i>	<i>12.8</i>	<i>13</i>				
<i>Total median</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>				

Table H. Children by age group, n= children heard within age group, country and total. Only including children with accurately identified age (N=29). Total N=196 children.

	Age group and number of children heard in age group								Total	
	0-4 years	Children heard	5-6 years	Children heard	7-11 years	Children heard	12-17 years	Children heard	All age groups	Children with known age heard
Austria	1	-	0	-	5	-	1	-	7	0
England	65	-	9	2	7	4	0	-	81	6
Estonia	3	-	0	-	2	1	0	-	5	1
Finland	3	-	3	-	2	1	3	2	11	3
Germany	13	1	5	1	7	3	0	-	25	5
Norway	34	1	13	1	6	5	7	7	60	14
Spain	2	-	1	-	2	-	2	-	7	0
Total	121	2	31	4	31	14	13	9	196	29