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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Ministère de l'Éducation

YOUTH WORK AND YOUTH POLICY

Fact Sheets
- Youth

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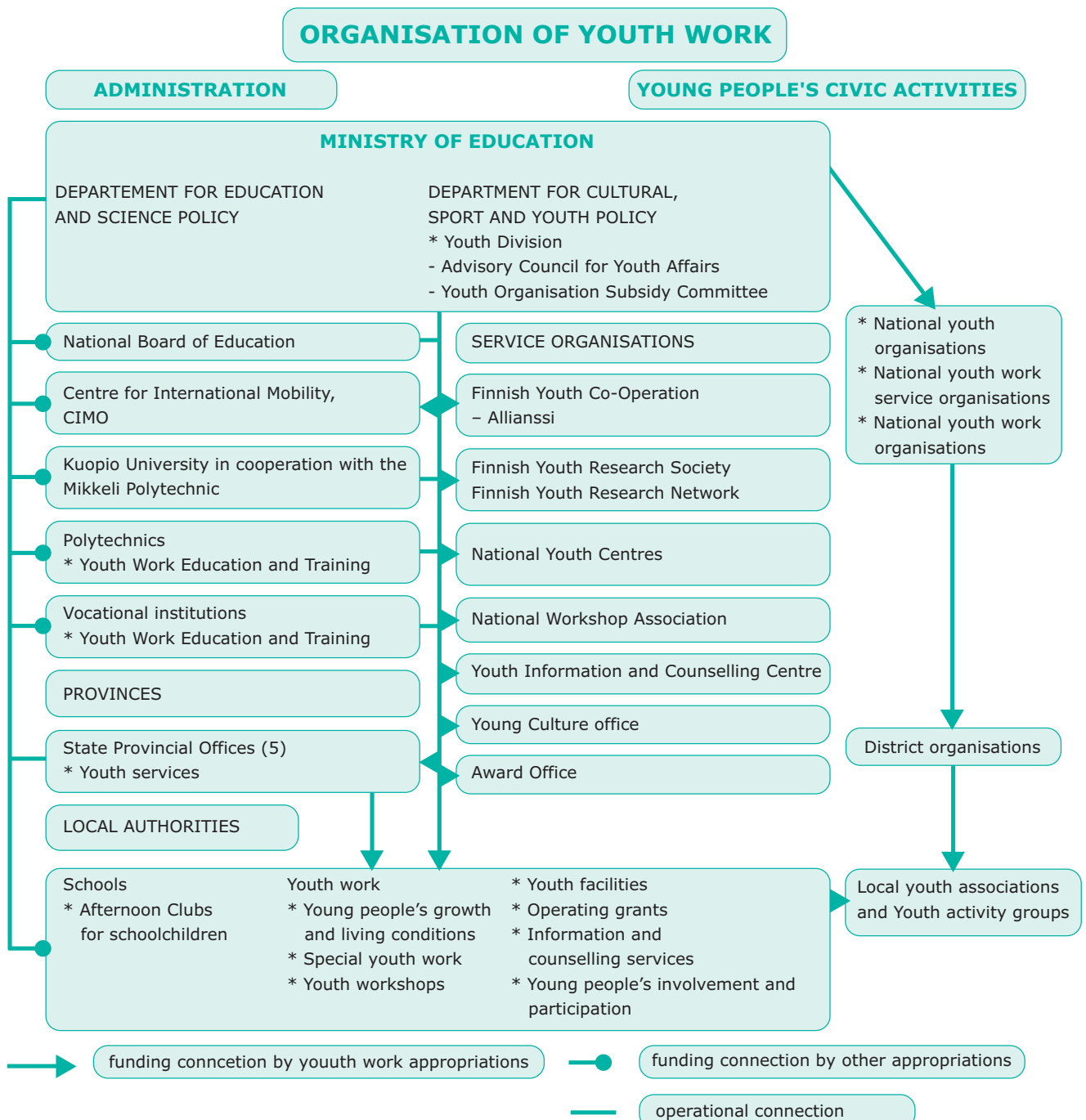


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1. Organisation of Youth Work

In Finland, youth work is divided into young people's own civic activities and various public measures for improving conditions for youth activities, complete with service functions linking these two sectors.



According to the Youth Act (72/2006), the Ministry of Education is responsible for general development of youth work and policy. In practical terms, this is carried out by the Youth Division of the Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy, which has a permanent staff of 12 people (in 2006).

The expert bodies assisting the Ministry of Education in terms of youth affairs are the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (NUORA) and the Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee. The former focuses on youth policy, whereas the latter promotes young people's active citizenship.

Youth work places emphasis on co-operation with school communities. Key partners include the General Education Division of the Ministry's Department for Education and Science Policy and the National Board of Education. Their common areas of action cover schoolchildren's afternoon activities, young people's media and democracy education as well as various youth empowerment projects (2003–2007). Responsibility for education and training in youth work lies with the Ministry's University, Polytechnic and Vocational Education Divisions.

Higher education in this field is currently provided on a Master's Programme jointly organised by the University of Kuopio and Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences. The University of Tampere is planning to launch a Master's Programme in Youth Work and Youth Research.

Polytechnic-level education in youth work is available at six different units of HUMAK University of Applied Sciences and at Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences. Upper secondary vocational education and training in youth work is provided by 17 educational institutions.

The Centre for International Mobility (CIMO) is accountable to the Ministry of Education and its duties include implementation of the European Union's Youth Programme and support for foreign tours of young people's cultural groups.

Provincial departments for youth services are responsible for granting appropriations allocated by the Ministry of Education to youth workshops, schoolchildren's afternoon clubs (for pupils in grades 3–9) and regional development of youth work to local authorities, youth organisations and other organisations involved in youth work.

The basic units involved in public sector youth work are local authorities (municipalities). Their duties are determined in the Youth Act, but each local authority has independent discretion in terms of the extent and implementation of services. There are 432 local authorities in Finland (as at 1st January 2006).

For the purposes of developing young people's civic activities and active citizenship as determined in the Youth Act, there are 69 national youth organisations and national youth work service organisations and 37 nation-

al youth work organisations in Finland (2006), which receive operating grants from the Ministry of Education. In addition, the Ministry of Education awards operating grants to district organisations.

Responsibility for supporting local associations (6,500) lies with the local authorities, which receive statutory government transfers for their youth work (€7,078,000 in 2006). The unit cost used to determine the amount of statutory government transfer for municipal youth work is €12.30 per young person under the age of 29. The statutory government transfer granted to cover operating costs equates to 29,7% of the unit cost.

The service organisations of youth work, activities and policy receiving support from the Ministry of Education are as follows:

- Finnish Youth Co-Operation – Allianssi is an organisation promoting the interests of national youth and youth work organisations. Allianssi has 100 member organisations (2006) and it maintains various youth work services and runs the Allianssi House that started operations in Helsinki in 2005.
- The Finnish Youth Research Society and its Finnish Youth Research Network bring together about 200 youth researchers and allocate youth research appropriations granted by the Ministry of Education.
- The National Workshop Association co-ordinates the operations of about 230 youth workshops, trains workshop instructors and functions as the workshops' interest organisation and liaison vis-à-vis central government.
- Finnish Youth Centres is the co-operation organisation of ten national youth centres. It produces statistical data on the centres' operations, arranges colloquia for them, organises training for their staff and manages their joint marketing efforts.
- The Ministry of Education supports the Youth Information and Counselling Centre established in conjunction with the City of Oulu Youth Affairs Centre. This national co-ordination centre for youth information and counselling services started operations in 2006 with a view to supporting creation of young people's information and counselling service systems at municipal and sub-regional levels in different ways.
- The Young Culture Office is located within Allianssi House and it develops and organises Young Culture events.
- Activities within the International Award for Young People, known as the Avartti Programme in Finland, are split between two locations. The Helsinki office manages international activities, while local Avartti programmes are co-ordinated by the Jyväskylä unit.



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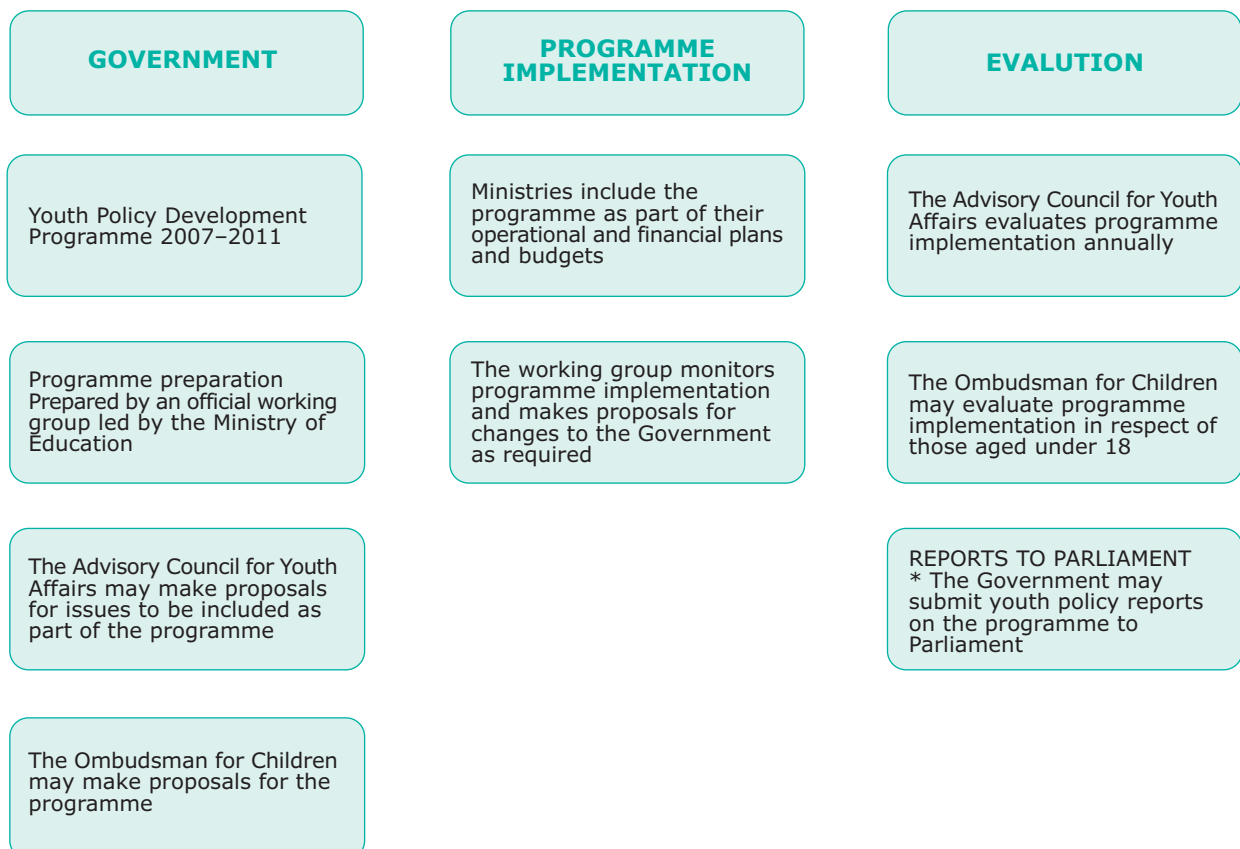
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2. Organisation of Youth Policy

Youth policy activities are being restructured on the basis of the new Youth Act. Finland has lacked comprehensive horizontal youth policy both nationally and at regional and local levels. Several local authorities have drawn up various child and youth policy programmes (130 municipalities in 2003).

Based on the new Youth Act, the operational structures of youth policy comprise the following areas:

OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES OF YOUTH POLICY



The national Youth Policy Development Programme also sets guidelines for corresponding programme work at regional and local levels. The regional level refers to the youth policy development programmes prepared both by provinces and regions. Local programme work places emphasis on multidisciplinary co-operation, which has been highlighted in the new Youth Act.

The Youth Policy Development Programme is a national application of the European Youth Pact.



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3. The Youth Act

Legislation governing youth work has been enacted in Finland since 1972. Youth work legislation has been reformed every ten years (1986, 1995 and 2006). The most recent law, the Youth Act (72/2006), entered into force on 1st March 2006. The new Youth Act specifies the objectives and values of youth work and policy. The purposes of the Act include support for young people's growth and independence, promotion of active citizenship, social empowerment of young people and improvement of their growth and living conditions.

The premises for implementation of the Act include communality and solidarity, equality and non-discrimination, multiculturalism and internationalism, healthy lifestyles and respect for life and the environment.

The Ministry of Education has been given responsibility for general development of youth work and policy. The State Provincial Offices are the authorities dealing with youth work and policy issues at regional level, whereas local responsibility for these areas rests with local authorities.

A new youth policy element provided in the Youth Act is a national Youth Policy Development Programme to be issued by the Government every four years. The programme includes national youth policy objectives and guidelines for preparation of provincial and municipal youth policy programmes. The programme is prepared in co-operation between key ministries involved in youth affairs, working under the leadership of the Ministry of Education.

The Act also lays down provisions on expert bodies assisting the Ministry of Education, namely, the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (NUORA) and the Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee. The Advisory Council mainly focuses on youth policy issues and it also submits to the Government annual evaluations of implementation of the Youth Policy Development Programme.

The new Act includes more specific provisions on the duties of the local authorities in terms of youth work and policy than previous legislation. The duties have been defined in terms of targeted basic services, which means that local authorities have independent discretion to decide on their implementation. In addition, the Act highlights the significance of regional co-operation between local authorities and of multidisciplinary co-operation.

The Act also includes provisions on young people's right to participate in dealing with matters concerning local and regional youth work and policy and on their right to be consulted in matters affecting them. This is a new and challenging task for local authorities, while also being an important part of democracy education for children and young people.

The Youth Act is, first and foremost, an act on the financing of youth work. It lays down provisions on the following support systems for youth work and policy:

- statutory government transfers to local authorities for youth work
- discretionary government grants for youth sector organisations
- operating and investment grants for national youth centres
- grants towards construction of facilities for young people
- support for youth research
- support for international youth co-operation.

In addition, local authorities and youth organisations receive discretionary grants earmarked for the following activities:

- workshop activities for unemployed young people
- afternoon activities for schoolchildren
- youth information and counselling services, as well as web-based media
- preventive substance abuse welfare work

- young people's cultural activities and the International Award Programme in Finland
- national and regional youth work development projects
- provincial youth services.

The Youth Act is complemented by the Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy (103/2006). It includes further provisions on preparation and implementation of the Youth Policy Development Programme, support schemes for youth sector organisations, award of operating and investment grants to national youth centres, as well as on the composition, appointment and duties of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs and the Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee.

Appendix: Youth Act (72/2006)

Youth Act (72/2006)

Part 1

General provisions

Section 1

Purpose

1. The purpose of this Act is to support young people's growth and independence, to promote young people's active citizenship and empowerment and to improve young people's growth and living conditions.

2. The implementation of the purpose is based on communality, solidarity, equity and equality, multiculturalism and internationalism, healthy life styles, and respect of life and the environment.

Section 2

Definitions

1. For the purposes of this Act:

- (1) young people means those under 29 years of age;
- (2) active citizenship means young people's goal-oriented activity in civil society;
- (3) social empowerment means measures targeted at young people and geared to improve life management skills and to prevent exclusion;
- (4) youth work means the promotion of active citizenship in young people's leisure time, their empowerment, support to young people's growth and independence, and interaction between generations;
- (5) youth policy means improving young people's growth and living conditions;
- (6) national youth organisation means a registered association which implements the purpose of this act and whose operations extend to the whole country;
- (7) national youth work service organisation means a registered association whose primary purpose is to produce services geared to general improvement of youth work;
- (8) organisation doing youth work means a registered association or other organisation whose operations at least partly consist of youth work and the extent of whose youth work is comparable to the activities of a national youth organisation.

Part 2

National youth work and youth policy

Section 3

Development and cooperation

1. The Ministry of Education shall bear the responsibility for the overall development of youth work and youth policy.

2. The provincial state offices shall be the regional authorities in matters relating to youth work and youth policy. The Ministry of Education shall adopt the performance targets for provincial youth services together with the provincial state office.

3. The Ministry of Education shall be responsible for coordinating youth policy at the national level and the provincial state offices at the regional level.

Section 4

Youth policy development programme

1. The Government shall adopt a youth policy development programme every four years. The development programme shall contain the national objectives for youth policy and provide guidelines for youth policy programme work at the provincial and local levels. The development programme shall be revised according to need.

2. The development programme shall be prepared by the Ministry of Education together with the other ministries concerned. During the preparation, they must hear major stakeholders in youth work and youth policy.

3. Further provisions concerning the development programme shall be enacted by Government Decree.

Section 5

Advisory Council for Youth Affairs

1. There shall be an Advisory Council for Youth Affairs appointed by the Government to act as an expert body on youth work and youth policy. The Council is at

tached to the Ministry of Education. The Council may have subcommittees for the preparation of matters.

2. The tasks of the Council shall be

- (1) to issue a statement to the Ministry of Education concerning matters to be included in the development programme and review annually the implementation of the youth policy development programme;
- (2) make proposals for programmes and measures concerning youth;
- (3) produce up-to-date information about young people and their living conditions.

3. Further provisions concerning the Council shall be enacted by Government Decree.

Section 6

Evaluation and subsidy committee

1. In matters relating to national youth organisations and national youth work organisations the Ministry of Education shall be assisted by an evaluation and subsidy committee appointed by the Government. The committee may appoint subcommittees from amongst its members for the preparation of matters.

2. The tasks of the committee shall be

- (1) To make a proposal annually to the Ministry of Education for the allocation of state subsidies to national youth organisations and national youth work service organisations;
- (2) To issue a statement annually to the Ministry of Education concerning the eligibility of national youth organisations and national youth work service organisations for subsidies based on applications;
- (3) To issue a statement annually on the allocation of subsidies to organisations doing youth work;
- (4) To evaluate the activities of the subsidised organisations at the request of the Ministry of Education.

3. Further provisions on the committee shall be enacted by Government Decree.

Part 3

Local youth work and youth policy

Section 7

Development and implementation of youth work and youth policy

1. Youth work and youth policy are part of the local authority's responsibilities. The implementation of youth work shall be the responsibility of local authorities, youth associations and other organisations doing youth work. Youth services may also be produced by local authorities in cooperation.

2. The local youth work and youth policy shall comprise educational guidance of young people; facilities and hobby opportunities; information and advisory services; support to youth associations and other youth groups; sportive, cultural, international and multicultural youth activities; young people's environmental education; and, when needed, youth workshop services or other forms of activity suited to the local circumstances and needs.

3. Youth work and youth policy shall be implemented in multi-professional cooperation with local authorities and with young people, youth associations and other organisations doing youth work.

Section 8

Young people's participation

1. Young people must be given opportunities to take part in the handling of matters concerning local and regional youth work and youth policy. Further, young people shall be heard in matters concerning them.

Part 4

Government funding

Section 9

Government transfer to local authorities

1. Government transfers shall be made to the local authority for operational costs incurring under this Act as provided in the Act on the Financing of Education and Culture (635/1998). The statutory state aid must be used for activities referred to in 7 Section.

Section 10

State subsidies for youth organisations and youth work organisations

1. An appropriation may be annually included in the state budget to be allocated as general subsidies to national youth organisations and national youth work service organisations. The national youth organisations may allocate subsidy they receive to their registered district organisations for their operations. Further, national youth organisations may allocate special subsidies to their local associations for a specified purpose. General subsidy shall not be allocated to a youth organisation whose main mission is to promote studies in a single field of education, study or corresponding. Nor shall general subsidy be allocated to a youth organisation primarily promoting trade unionism.

2. Organisations whose activities or subsidies are governed by separate statutes or whose state subsidy comes from an earmarked appropriation in the state budget shall not be entitled to general subsidy under this Act.

3. The subsidies to national youth organisations and their district organisations shall be allocated on the basis of performance. The performance criteria shall be the quality, extent, and cost-effectiveness of operations. The allocation of the subsidy shall also take account of the social relevance of the activities and the need for subsidy.

4. Costs incurring from business activities shall not be counted as acceptable expenditure.

5. The Ministry of Education shall approve the organisations entitled to subsidy under this Section.

6. Further provisions concerning the performance criteria, acceptable expenditure, the procedure for approving the eligible organisations and other grounds for subsidy may be enacted by Government Decree.

Section 11

State subsidies to organisations doing youth work

1. An appropriation for general subsidies to organisations doing youth work may be annually included in the state budget. The allocation of the subsidies shall come under Section 10 (2) and (3).

2. Further provisions concerning the subsidy criteria may be enacted by Government Decree.

Section 12

State subsidies to national youth centres

1. An appropriation for subsidies to be allocated for the operation and construction of national youth centres may be annually included in the state budget. The subsidies for operation shall primarily be based on performance, determined as the degree to which the centre is used by young people and the operational idea of the centre. For centres initiating their activities, the subsidy may, however, be granted on the basis of an estimate.

2. The centres must implement the purpose of and the principles underpinning this Act and work on a non-profit basis. Possible proceeds of the centres shall be used to develop the centres and their services. The Ministry of Education shall approve the centres entitled to subsidies under this Act based on applications.

3. Further provisions concerning the criteria for approving the centres and the organisation of the operations and finances of the centres may be enacted by Government Decree.

Section 13

Other state subsidies

1. An appropriation may be included in the state budget for the development of youth policy research, international youth cooperation, the construction, renovation and equipment of youth facilities, and youth work.

Part 5

Miscellaneous provisions

Section 14

Competent state subsidy authority

1. The competent state subsidy authority in matters referred to in this Act shall be the Ministry of Education.

2. The Ministry of Education may transfer budgetary subsidy appropriations to be allocated by the provincial state offices.

Section 15

Financing of statutory state aid and discretionary subsidies

1. The government transfers and state subsidies referred to in this Act shall primarily be allocated from the proceeds of national lottery and pools.

Section 16

Application of the Act on Discretionary

Government Transfers

1. The state subsidy referred to in Sections 10-13 shall otherwise come under the provisions of Sections 10-13 of the Act on Discretionary Government Transfers (688/2001).

Part 6

Coming into force and transitional provisions

Section 17

Coming into force

1. This Act shall come into force on March 1st 2006. However, Sections 10 and 11 shall come into force on January 1st 2007.

2. This Act repeals the Youth Work Act of 24 February 1995 (235/1995) with subsequent amendments. However, Section 8 of the repealed Act shall be applied until the end of 2006.

3. Measures needed to implement this Act may be taken before the coming into force of this Act.

Section 18

Transitional provisions

1. The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs and the Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee appointed before this Act comes into force shall continue to operate until the end of their terms.

2. The youth organisations and youth work service organisations approved for subsidies before this Act

comes into force shall maintain their entitlements until the end of 2006, unless the Ministry of Education amends or repeals its decision before that.

3. The national youth centres approved for subsidies before this Act comes into force shall maintain their entitlements at the entry into force of this Act.



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4. Financing of Youth Work and Policy

Annual government expenditure on youth work amounts to about €39 million, accounting for about 0.1% of the State Budget. Municipal youth work appropriations total about €150 million, equating to 0.6% of municipal budgets.

The amounts targeted at children and young people account for about 15% and 35–45% of the State Budget and municipal budgets respectively. This means that youth policy, including the national Youth Policy Development Programme and municipal child and youth policy programmes, has far-reaching economic impact.

Within the Ministry of Education budget, youth work is mainly funded from proceeds from the national lottery and pools. In line with the Lotteries Act (1047/2001) and the related Act on the Use of Proceeds from Money Lotteries, Pools and Betting (1054/2001), the share of youth work accounts for 9% of these funds. Other beneficiaries are the arts, sports and science. The share of lottery and pools proceeds

spent on youth work amounts to €34,228,000 in the 2006 State Budget. In addition, youth work receives €4,723,000 from general budget funds for youth workshop activities and preventive substance abuse welfare work.

Finnish local authorities are self-governing and have the right to levy taxes. Municipal youth work is mainly funded from municipal tax revenues. Statutory and discretionary government transfers towards municipal youth work total about €16 million, accounting for about 11% of municipal expenditure on youth work.

The Ministry of Education supports national youth organisations, their district organisations, youth work service organisations and other organisations involved in youth work – about a hundred organisations in all – to the tune of €11.6 million every year, covering about a quarter of their operating costs.

The Ministry of Education's budget for 2006 is allocated to different activities as follows:

Municipal youth work	7,073,000 ¹
National youth work organisations	11,600,000
National youth centres	4,300,000
Construction of youth facilities	1,700,000
International co-operation	1,000,000
Youth research	875,000
Youth work development, information management, cultures	1,850,000
Youth information and counselling services, web-based media	725,000
Afternoon activities for schoolchildren	1,100,000
Preventive substance abuse welfare work	1,000,000
Regional development of youth work	1,000,000
Social empowerment of young people	577,000
Youth workshop activities	4,600,000 ²
Ministry of Education expert bodies	300,000
Provincial youth services	450,000
For use by the Ministry of Education	855,000
Total	38,951,000

1 In addition, local authorities also receive various earmarked grants totalling about €9 million.

2 Including grants for the National Workshop Association.



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5. Municipal Youth Work

As at the beginning of 2006, there are 432 municipalities in Finland, including 114 urban municipalities (towns and cities). Of these, 44 are bilingual (Finnish and Swedish), while Swedish is the first language in 19 municipalities. In addition, the three Saami languages are also official languages in three northern municipalities. In 2005, Finland had 5,255,580 inhabitants, with about 2% of these being immigrants and 62% living in urban municipalities. The capital city, Helsinki, had a population of 560,905, whereas the smallest island municipality, Sottunga, had 127 inhabitants. The average population of municipalities was about 12,000 inhabitants.

The total expenditure of municipalities in 2004 amounted to about €29.64 billion, with €150 million or about 0.6% allocated to youth work. However, funds channelled to children and young people account for about 35–45% of municipal budgets, including expenditure on education, training, health care, sports, culture, child welfare and housing, etc.

Statutory government transfers for municipal youth work amount to about €7 million, corresponding to about 4.7%. These transfers are based on a unit cost calculated at €13 per municipal inhabitant under the age of 29. In addition, local authorities receive about €9 million through discretionary government transfers. Statutory and discretionary government transfers to municipal youth work thus account for about 11% of municipal expenditure on youth work.

Local elections are held every four years to elect municipal councils that decide on local affairs within their respective municipalities. The municipal council appoints the municipal board and municipal committees. Only 12 municipalities have a specific youth committee. Other local authorities have included youth services in joint committees together with sports, cultural, educational, recreational or welfare affairs. In

small municipalities, these affairs are managed by the municipal board.

There are about 3,400 municipal youth workers. Local authorities maintain 1,100 youth facilities of different sizes and about a hundred camp sites and centres. Youth information and counselling services are available in more than a hundred municipalities, which means that about 60% of young people have access to these services through schools, libraries and youth centres as well as specific youth information and counselling points. Local authorities award annual operating grants to a total of about 6,500 youth associations and activity groups.

Local authorities also maintain the majority of workshops intended for unemployed young people, where 7,050 young people work for six-month periods every year. In 2005, 66% of young workshop participants found placements in education, training, work or other supervised activities at the end of their workshop period. Workshop activities were funded by the Ministries of Education and Labour and from European Social Fund programmes.

In addition to supporting young people's active citizenship, another key aspect in municipal youth work is social empowerment of young people, which covers preventive substance abuse welfare work, organisation of afternoon clubs for schoolchildren and working with young immigrants as well as workshop services. According to a survey conducted in 2003, 130 local authorities had prepared child and youth policy programmes with a view to improving children's and young people's growth and living conditions.

For the purposes of supporting young people's active citizenship and involvement and participation in society, about 200 municipalities have various youth councils, youth parliaments, online participation systems and other interest groups.

The new Youth Act determines municipal youth work and policy in terms of the following targeted basic services, which the local authorities may implement as they see fit:

- Young people's educational guidance
- Facilities for young people and recreational opportunities
- Information and counselling services
- Support for youth associations and groups
- Sports-related, cultural, international and multi-cultural youth activities
- Young people's environmental education
- Youth workshop services where necessary.



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6. Regional Administration – Provincial Youth Services

Finnish regional administration comprises five provinces and 19 regions. The regional authorities functioning on behalf of the Ministries of Education, the Interior and Social Affairs and Health are the State Provincial Offices. The regional administration for the Ministries of Labour and Trade and Industry comprises 15 Employment and Economic Development Centres (T&E Centres). The Ministry of the Environment's central agency is the Finnish Environment Institute with 13 Regional Environment Centres. Regional Councils, in turn, are bodies formed by local authorities, which have also been assigned certain regional development functions by the government. The regional administration is not entitled to levy taxes; nor are there any elected decision-making bodies at this level.

Finland is divided into five provinces: the Province of Southern Finland, the Province of Western Finland, the Province of Eastern Finland, the Province of Oulu and the Province of Lapland. The State Provincial Offices Act (22/1997) provides that each State Provincial Office must have a department dealing with youth services, which is steered by the Ministry of Education. In practical terms, this means that the Ministry and the State Provincial Offices draw up three-year performance agreements, which are reviewed annually.

The State Provincial Offices have included youth services within their Education and Culture Departments together with school, sports and library affairs. In the Province of Lapland, youth services are directly subordinated to the Governor.

The provincial youth services have been assigned the following duties in the performance agreements:

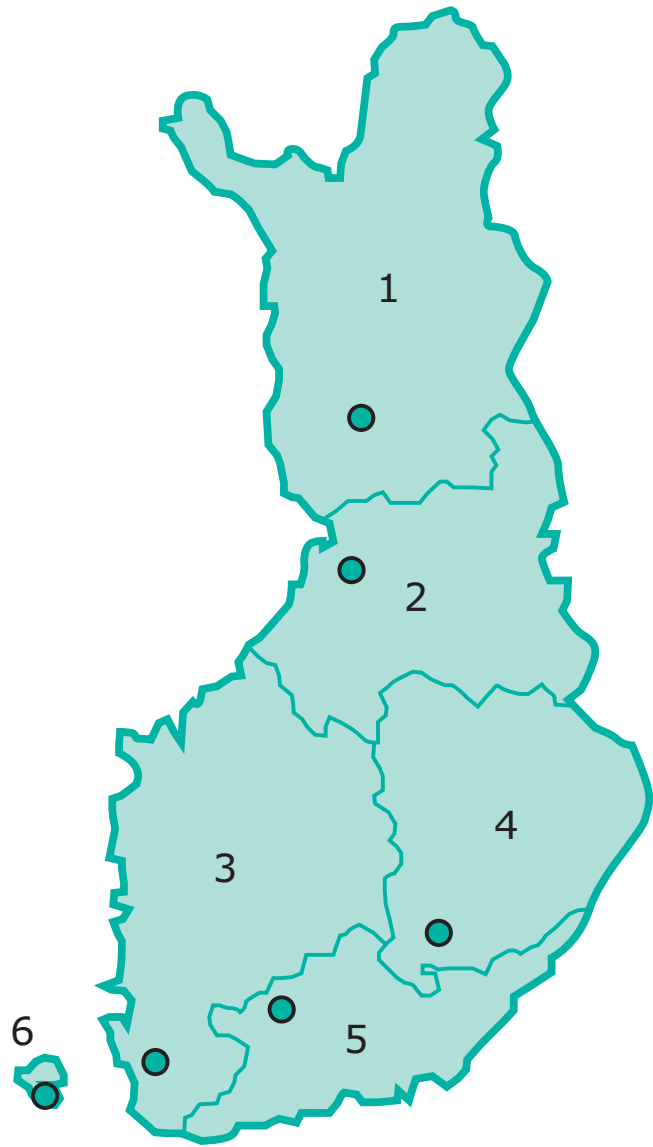
- Support for youth workshop activities (for 2006, the Ministry of Education has allocated €4.1 million to provinces for this purpose)

- Support for schoolchildren's afternoon clubs (2006: €11 million)
- Regional youth work development grants (2006: €1 million)
- Evaluation of basic municipal youth work services
- Topical youth work training (in 2006, training specifically related to implementation of the new Youth Act)
- Organisation of regional youth work colloquia
- Regional monitoring, evaluation and development of young people's growth and living conditions
- International youth work co-operation at regional level
- Other duties assigned by the Ministry of Education.

For 2006, the Ministry of Education has allocated an appropriation of €450,000 for provincial expenditure on youth services. Around 20 people are employed in provincial youth services and their salaries are covered by the Ministry of the Interior.

Map of provinces

- 1) Province of Lapland
- 2) Province of Oulu
- 3) Province of Western Finland
- 4) Province of Eastern Finland
- 5) Province of Southern Finland
- 6) Province of Åland





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7. National Youth Organisations, Youth Work Service Organisations and Youth Work Organisations

Youth organisations have played a significant role in Finnish youth work and policy for well over a hundred years. Their activities are based on young people's own active involvement. Freedom of assembly and, subsequently, organisational activities are basic rights enshrined in the Constitution of Finland.

Central government has subsidised youth organisations ever since the 1940's. The Act on Government Transfers for National Youth Work (1035/1973), effective as from 1974, established the support system that had already been the practice based on appropriations allocated from the State Budget every year. Since then, legislation governing youth work and activities has been updated every ten years or so.

Provisions on financial support for youth sector organisations have been laid down in the Youth Act. In addition to this Act, the Act on Discretionary Government Transfers (688/2001) creates a framework for subsidising such organisations. The forms of subsidy are general and special grants.

Financing

The amount reserved for general grants awarded to national youth organisations and youth work service organisations in the 2006 State Budget is about 10,000,000 euros. These have been allocated to 68 organisations, whose activities involve about 850,000 Finns under the age of 29. Special grants are awarded on the basis of a continuous application procedure, which enables flexible implementation of new types of pilot and other projects. The following sections deal with general grants provided for organisations.

Eligibility for Grants

National youth organisations and youth work service organisations may receive discretionary government transfers once the Ministry of Education has confirmed their eligibility. Each organisation must submit a free-form application to the Ministry of Education including details of their organisational structure, membership, activities and finances.

An organisation can be approved as a national youth organisation if it has at least 1,000 members and if at least two thirds of its total number of members are under 29 years of age. The members may be the organisation's direct members or members of its district or local organisations. Each individual member may only be counted once. The membership registers and the organisational structure must enable an unequivocal count of members. The Associations Act (503/1989) requires each registered association to keep a membership register.

It is possible to make exceptions to the requirement of one thousand members if an organisation works with a minority group or provides activities that can be considered to have national relevance.

In addition to the number of members, the criteria taken into account when deciding on whether to approve an organisation include the type of youth work carried out by the organisation, its area of operation and young people's participation in its decision-making processes. This investigation and consideration is intended to ensure that the applicant can be characterised as being a youth organisation. The organisation is also required to operate more extensively than locally or regionally; however, the real operating area

of groups such as linguistic and cultural minorities is taken into account in this context.

General grants are not awarded to activities primarily aiming to promote studies in one field of education, study or similar, nor to organisations primarily promoting trade union activity.

Award Criteria

Discretionary government grants to organisations are based on performance criteria, including the quality, extent and cost-effectiveness of activities. Other aspects taken into account when deciding on grants include the current social relevance of activities and the organisation's need for financial support. Performance is assessed on the basis of planned and actual activities.

The quality of activities is assessed in relation to the objectives set by each organisation itself and to achievement of them. The extent of activities is judged on the basis of the number of young people involved in the organisation's regular activities. These participants do not need to be official members of the organisation. Other aspects taken into account include the effectiveness and regional coverage of activities. Assessments are mainly based on information provided by the organisations.

In terms of assessing cost-effectiveness, attention focuses on the organisation's income from its own activities, the share of administrative expenses within total costs and the profitability of activities. Aspects taken into account when considering the need for financial support include the organisation's financial standing, other forms of public aid received and funds available for core activities.

Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee

The expert body assisting the Ministry of Education in subsidies for youth sector organisations is the Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee, which is appointed by the Government. The Committee's duties include making annual proposals to the Ministry of Education on allocation of discretionary government transfers to national youth organisations and youth work service organisations. Committee members are experts in organisational activities and the Committee also has a full-time employee.

When reaching decisions, the Committee uses the following classification of organisations (the number

of each type as in March 2006 is shown in brackets): political youth and student organisations (10), young people's interest organisations (11), young people's cultural and recreational organisations (19), religious youth organisations (10), pre-teen organisations (9) and youth work service organisations (8).

Youth Work Organisations

The Ministry of Education awards general grants to organisations working with young people, which include any registered association or other organisation at least partially involved in youth work that is comparable in terms of scope to the activities of national youth organisations. Grants are mainly awarded on the basis of the same criteria used for national youth organisations and youth work service organisations. The amount reserved for general grants to youth work organisations in the 2006 State Budget is about €1,700,000. The funds have been allocated to 37 organisations.



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8. National Youth Centres

There are ten national youth centres in Finland, which are supported by the Ministry of Education by virtue of the Youth Act. The centres were established to cater for national and international youth activities and they provide children and young people, youth organisations and youth groups with a safe operating environment at a reasonable cost. The centres are mainly owned by local authorities.

The Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy lays down provisions on approval of centres to fall within the scope of the Youth Act. Approval conditions are as follows:

- 1) The standard of facilities and equipment at the centre must be suitable for regional, national and international activities.
- 2) The centre's administration and finances must be independent.
- 3) The centre must primarily cater for regional, national and international youth activities, camp and eco-school activities, as well as activities to promote young people's active citizenship and social empowerment.
- 4) The centre must function as a youth work development centre and as a regional service centre for municipal youth work, where necessary, and provide further and continuing training in youth work as required.

In 2005, youth centres provided about 160,000 youth course days. The Ministry of Education supported the activities and construction of centres to the tune of €2.1 million and €1.9 million respectively. The average support amounted to €13–14 per course day. Youth activities accounted for 70% of the centres' occupancy rate. The grants allocated by the Ministry of Education may only be used to support use of the centres for youth and youth work activities.

Finland has played an active role in development of the European Intergovernmental Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ) of the Council of Europe. In 2006, Finland established a secretariat for this development work to operate in conjunction with Youth Centre Villa Elba.

The national youth centres have become experts in environmental education, camp and eco-school activities and providers of social youth work in natural environments. All centres have conducted the necessary safety inspections for adventure education and other activities.

Finnish Youth Centres is a registered association functioning as a joint service organisation for youth centres.

Further information about the youth centres is available on the following websites:

1. Ahtela (Turku/Sauvo)
2. Anjala (Anjalankoski)
3. Hyvärilä (Nurmes)
4. Marttinen (Virrat)
5. Metsäkartano (Rautavaara)
6. Oivanki (Kuusamo)
7. Piispala (Kannonkoski)
8. Syöte (Pudasjärvi)
9. Vasatokka (Inari)
10. Villa Elba (Kokkola)

Website

- www.05.turku.fi/nuoriso/nuorisoleirialueet/ahtela.html
- www.nuorisokeskusanjala.fi
- www.hyvarila.com
- www.marttinen.fi
- www.metsakartano.com
- www.kuusamo.fi/Resource.phx/sivut/sivut-Kuusamo/oivanki/index.htx
- www.piispala.fi
- www.syotekeskus.fi
- www.vasatokka.fi
- www.kokkola.fi/elba/fi/index.shtml





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9. International and European Co-operation in the Youth Sector

Objective

The youth policy objective of international co-operation is to promote the aims of the Nordic welfare state model in international structures. The objective of youth activities is to make young people more internationally aware.

In its international activities, Finland emphasises consolidation of horizontal youth policy and promotion of young people's involvement at local, regional, national and international levels.

Appropriations

In 2006, funds available for central government's international co-operation, international action programmes and foreign tours of young people's cultural groups amount to one million euros.

Bilateral Co-operation

Bilateral co-operation is based on intergovernmental cultural agreements or programmes, which Finland has in place with about 40 countries. The objective of bilateral youth sector co-operation is to develop national youth policy and to support national youth work through networking and exchange of good practices.

Most exchange programmes implemented within the framework of a cultural agreement include an article on youth work, which enables diverse co-operation with the country in question. In addition, the Ministry of Education Youth Division has agreed on youth sector co-operation through specific Memoranda of Understanding with the following countries: China, Estonia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Mexico, the Palestinian Authority, the Republic of Korea, Russia and Spain.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for preparation and monitoring of co-operation programmes, while various parties operating in the youth sector manage practical implementation of these programmes by means of special government grants.

Multilateral Co-operation

Finland plays an active role in multilateral youth sector co-operation within the frameworks of the United Nations (UN) and the Council of Europe (CoE) and Northern European regional structures. The most important of these are the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Nordic Committee for Children and Young People (NORDBUK), the Baltic Sea Working Group for Youth Affairs (WGYA) and the Working Group on Youth Policy of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (WGYP), which is being chaired by Finland between 2005 and 2007.

Co-operation within the structures of the northern region aims to promote young people's active citizenship, mobility and knowledge-based youth policy decision-making and to improve young people's living conditions through cross-administrative co-operation.

Further information:

The Finnish Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) 2005–2007
Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC)
Baltic Sea Secretariat for Youth Affairs
Nordic Council

<http://formin.finland.fi/doc/fin/pu/BEAC/list.html>
<http://www.beac.st/default.asp?id=167>;
<http://www.balticsea-youth.org/>
<http://www.norden.org/start/start.asp>

The European Union

Finland's integration into the European Union in 1995 and participation in European youth policy co-operation has also had a strong impact on national youth policy, in particular on the preparation and content of the new Youth Act, which entered into force on 1st March 2006.

The youth policy priorities of Finland's EU Presidency between 1st July and 31st December 2006 include full launching of the "Youth in Action" Programme for 2007–2013 to allow its full launch at the beginning of 2007, implementing European youth policy priorities in particular in terms of young people's active citizenship, as well as strengthening the status of youth research and tripartite co-operation (administration–research–young people/youth organisations) within European youth policy co-operation.

Further information:

www.minedu.fi/eupresidency



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10. Youth Research

Youth research provides information for the needs of youth policy and youth work. Youth research plays a key role in development of youth policy and youth work. The State Budget includes a separate appropriation for youth research, which is used to produce applied research to meet the needs of youth work, youth activities and youth policy.

A significant part of youth research is carried out within the Finnish Youth Research Network supported by the Ministry of Education. The Finnish Youth Research Network is a research community established at the beginning of 1999 as part of the Finnish Youth Research Society to carry out research in co-operation with different universities and research institutes in both national and international contexts. Its operations are multidisciplinary and distributed in thematic and geographical terms. The network involves about 20 full-time researchers. The Ministry of Education and the Finnish Youth Research Society/Network agree on co-operation on an annual basis. The essential aspect is that the Finnish Youth Research Society/Network forms an independent and critical community of researchers. The Finnish Youth Research Network is considered to be an exemplary organisation of Finnish applied research due to its administrative efficiency, productivity and results.

Youth research is also carried out at polytechnics and other research institutes. The Ministry of Education supports research into municipal youth work in particular.

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, operating in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, also has its own role to play in collection and production of youth-related research information. The Advisory Council is responsible for publishing the Youth Barometer surveys and collecting indicator data on young people's living conditions in co-operation with parties such as the Finnish Youth Research Network, Statistics

Finland and the Finnish National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES).

International co-operation plays a significant role in youth research. The Finnish Youth Research Network and youth researchers participate in international research communities. In particular, Finland is involved in significant co-operation with other Nordic countries, other EU countries and Russia. The Finnish Youth Research Society and youth researchers represent Finland in projects related to young people and youth research carried out by the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Nordic Council of Ministers and other international communities. Youth research is one of the themes of Finnish youth policy during Finland's EU Presidency.

Financing

In 2006, youth research receives support from appropriations reserved for youth work in the State Budget to the tune of €875,000. The majority of these funds are allocated to the Finnish Youth Research Network. Other youth work funds are also used to support research and separate projects carried out at educational institutions, such as follow-up studies, and multilateral co-operation, including youth barometers and indicators of living conditions.



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11. Youth Workshop Activities

Youth workshops have operated in Finland since the 1980's. Youth workshop activities now cover about half of Finnish municipalities, meaning about 200 locations. In 2005, 7,050 young people under the age of 29 participated in youth workshop activities. Of these, 66% found placements in work, education, training or some other active measure at the end of their workshop period. 65% of young people enter workshops through labour administration, whereas 30% have been referred by municipal social, educational or youth services. The last 5% of young people arrive to these workshops on their own without any official guidance, which shows that workshops have managed to retain a low threshold for participation.

Participation in youth workshop activities is linked to the situation on the labour market. When the labour market is slow, workshop participants also include future- and work-oriented young people, whose main obstacle to finding employment is their lack of work experience. When the labour market is booming, as it is today, the pathway for young workshop clients to education, training and the world of work is longer. This is because their education and training opportunities and employability are often hindered by deficient life and social skills.

Youth workshops have seen considerable developments over the last ten years. Workshop activities are being established as a permanent part of public sector services for young people in line with the Government Programme; more than 80% of workshop projects have become permanent organisations. Youth workshop activities are multidisciplinary in nature. They combine activities within four sectors of administration into concurrent and complementary schemes in young people's social empowerment.

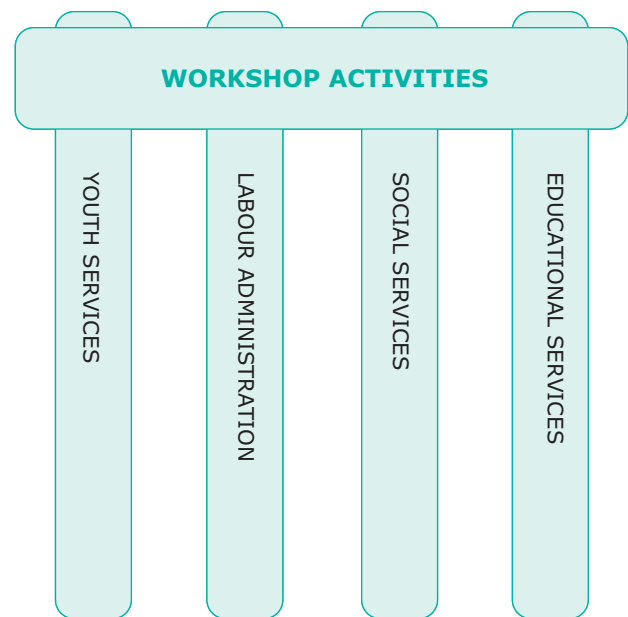


Figure 1. Workshop activities bring together four sectors and build bridges between them.

A future objective is to improve the accessibility of youth workshop activities in areas with young people in need of such activities.

Financing

In 2006, youth workshops are being supported from the youth sector budget to the tune of €4.1 million. In addition, about €3 million of European Social Fund project funds are used for this purpose.



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12. Advisory Council for Youth Affairs

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (NUORA) is an expert body in youth work and policy appointed by the Government and operating in conjunction with the Ministry of Education. National youth organisations and youth work organisations may propose members to the Advisory Council.

The Advisory Council's term of office is the parliamentary term, i.e. four years. The Advisory Council is appointed within six months of each parliamentary election and it remains in situ until the next Advisory Council is appointed.

Mission

The key task of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs is to monitor and evaluate implementation of the Youth Policy Development Programme prepared for and submitted to the Government on an annual basis. In addition to evaluation, the Advisory Council also participates in preparation of the Youth Policy Development Programme by giving its opinion on issues to be included in the programme.

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs is also responsible for bringing young people's perspective into the decision-making process. The Advisory Council pursues this objective through its role as an expert body when youth work and policy and young people's living conditions are being discussed. The Advisory Council's expertise is mainly used by different parliamentary committees and ministries. The Advisory Council aims to introduce issues affecting young people into public debates by giving statements and drawing up action programmes.

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs produces information on young people's living conditions and attitudes. Key publications include the annual Youth Barometers describing young people's values and attitudes and yearbooks describing young people's liv-

ing conditions. In addition, the Advisory Council publishes studies on areas such as young people's political attitudes and activity at the polls. The Advisory Council also maintains an Internet database on young people's living conditions, which contains statistics on their employment rate, education, housing and other factors affecting their living conditions.

Organisation

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs is made up of a Chair, two Vice Chairs and up to 15 other members.

The Advisory Council also includes a Secretary General hired by the Ministry of Education for a term of no more than four years. The Secretary General's term of office is in line with the term of office of the Advisory Council. In addition to the Secretary General, the Advisory Council may have other staff.

The Advisory Council may set up divisions with specific remits. The current Advisory Council has appointed a working committee and a research and publication division.



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13. Youth Work Education and Training

The subfield of education entitled Leisure Activities and Youth Work has been restructured in recent years, which means that people working in the same positions may have many different qualification titles. Programmes leading to youth work positions are available both at upper secondary vocational level and within higher education. Church parishes train their own youth workers at their own vocational institutions.

The qualification available at upper secondary vocational level is the Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction. The qualification confers the title Youth and Leisure Instructor and can be completed at several educational institutions offering programmes in Leisure Activities and Youth Work. Those who have completed the three-year upper secondary vocational qualification have general eligibility for further studies, which means that they can apply to polytechnics and universities. In addition, the qualification can also be completed as a competence-based qualification.

The Vocational Qualification in Child Care and Education and Family Welfare is an upper secondary level qualification within the Leisure and Physical Education subfield. It provides students with qualifications to work both for local authorities and parishes in early childhood education and care assignments. The qualification can either be completed in upper secondary vocational education and training or as a competence-based qualification, in which case participants demonstrate their vocational skills in competence tests.

The qualifications aim to provide participants with capabilities to function as young people's leisure instructors who are able to develop and plan working methods in the field and create and implement conditions for children's and young people's voluntary and self-motivated leisure activities.

Polytechnics (universities of applied sciences) offer opportunities to complete the Bachelor of Humanities

degree on the Degree Programme in Youth Work and Civic Activity. This education provides students with capabilities for various expert, training, development and managerial positions. Admission requirements include the general upper secondary school matriculation examination or an upper secondary vocational qualification in the field. Polytechnic studies take four years.

University education leading to a higher university (Master's) degree has been provided in co-operation between the University of Kuopio and Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences on a two-year Master's Programme in Youth Education. The University of Tampere has started to prepare a Master's Programme in Youth Work and Youth Research with a view to starting education in 2007.

Youth work qualifications may also be completed in apprenticeship training. Apprenticeship training may either be upper secondary or additional vocational training. Each apprentice receives an individual study plan based on the Requirements of the Competence-based Qualification, which takes into account any relevant skills that the apprentice has already acquired. The plan is drawn up in co-operation between the apprentice, the employer and the local education authority. Youth sector vocational qualifications include the Vocational Qualifications in Youth and Leisure Instruction and in Child Care and Education and Family Welfare.



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14. Afternoon Clubs for Schoolchildren

Afternoon activities for schoolchildren are part of youth work that fulfils the principles of communality, youth education and active citizenship. The activities are in line with the value basis set out in the Youth Act.

The Ministry of Education has supported schoolchildren's afternoon activities for several years. At present, afternoon activities are divided into different Ministry of Education sectors according to grades: activities for first- and second-graders are governed by law and co-ordinated by the National Board of Education, whereas afternoon clubs for pupils in grades 3 to 9 are the responsibility of the Ministry's own units and State Provincial Offices.

Statutory morning and afternoon activities are intended for comprehensive school pupils in grades 1–2 and for those transferred or directly admitted to special needs education. These activities are either organised by local authorities themselves or they may purchase the services from another public or private service provider. Local authorities are responsible for supervising any services that they have purchased. The activities are supported through statutory government transfers. A vocational further qualification was created for instructors in 2005.

Providers of afternoon clubs for grades 3–9 may apply for discretionary government transfers to their State Provincial Office's sports and youth department. Sports sector grants emphasise promotion of physical activity, whereas youth sector grants support youth work aiming to promote cultural and manual skills. Both sectors support schoolchildren's leisure interests, meaningful and active ways of spending leisure time and their self-esteem. These activities are organised both by local authorities and local associations or other third-sector organisations. Afternoon clubs for grades 3–9 are organised after school.

Financing

In 2006, provincial youth and sports services allocated €1.1 million and €600,000 to these activities respectively. Statutory government transfers for statutory morning and afternoon activities for schoolchildren are calculated every year in line with certain criteria. The duration of statutory activities is three hours after school. In 2005, there were 1,500 schoolchildren's afternoon clubs supported by provincial youth services throughout Finland. Afternoon clubs must convene at least once per week. Clubs that have received grants may also be granted discretionary government transfers for day camp activities during school holidays.



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15. Preventive Substance Abuse Welfare Work

One of the tasks of youth work is to guide young people towards healthy lifestyles. Prevention of substance abuse, i.e. use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, is a significant part of this task. Even though people aged 18 or over can use alcohol and tobacco products legally, youth work also aims to reduce the adverse effects of drinking and smoking among young adults. In terms of illegal drugs, the aim is to prevent experimentation.

The foundation of substance abuse welfare work as part of youth work and youth activities lies in well-managed youth work. Instructors dealing and working with young people are trained and prepared for coping with substance abuse issues (by means of training programmes offered by national organisations, for example). In addition, specific measures have been targeted at areas such as youth workshops. The parties involved in this work mainly include local authorities and third-sector organisations.

Preventive substance abuse welfare work intended for young people is usually about primary prevention. The division of work is determined according to the methods applied: youth work uses community-based methods, whereas individual treatments and therapies are left to the health care and social services sector. In practical terms, this division is not quite as unambiguous: there are overlaps within special youth work and youth workshops.

Prevention of substance abuse is carried out in co-operation between several administrative sectors, where the main responsibility lies with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. At ministerial level, the Ministry of Education co-operates with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice in particular. Local level co-operation involves municipal youth, school and health care

and social services, the police and third-sector organisations. Co-operation between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and other organisations has resulted in training community instructors to support youth workshops in substance abuse issues, for example.

The Ministry of Education Youth Division has an appropriation reserved for preventive substance abuse welfare work. The State Budget also mentions development and introduction of various methods of preventive substance abuse welfare work in municipalities and third-sector organisations as means of socially empowering young people. One such means is the International Award Programme in Finland.

Financing

State Budget appropriations are used to:

- fund the International Award Programme in Finland
- establish and support drug- and alcohol-free Internet cafés for young people
- develop methods of preventive substance abuse welfare work in municipalities and organisations, including regional projects
- train and prepare those working with young people to deal with substance abuse issues.

In 2006, the Ministry of Education has granted €778,000 in discretionary government transfers towards preventive substance abuse welfare work targeting young people. The funds have been allocated to 82 projects.



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16. Multiculturalism and Immigrants

The traditional ethnic, cultural and linguistic minorities in Finland are the 'Old Russians' (descendants of Russians who immigrated to Finland at the turn of the 19th and 20th century), the Roma and Finland's indigenous people, the Saami. Other groups that can be considered to be ethnic minorities are Jews and the Tatars, who are of Turkic origin. These groups mainly differ from the mainstream population in terms of their religions. Finland's Swedish-speaking minority is not considered an ethnic minority, although the group does meet the characteristics of an ethnic minority in many respects. With the exception of the Swedish-speaking minority, all these groups are very small. The number of ethnic groups is growing through increasing immigration.

Finnish immigration policy started to emphasise humanitarian immigration during the 1990's, when the number of foreign people residing in Finland quadrupled. Most people moving to Finland come from neighbouring areas. The largest immigrant groups are Russians, Estonians, Swedes, Somalis and Iraqis. However, at just over 2%, the proportion of immigrants within the population is still the smallest within the European Union.

Immigrants residing in Finland differ from Finns in terms of their age structure. Most immigrants are of working age. There is also a clear difference in the relative proportion of children and young people: 40% of immigrants are aged 29 or younger, whereas 34% of Finns fall within this age range. The number of immigrant children started to increase in the 1990's, when Finland began to receive families of refugees. The proportion of children and young people has also grown through family unification. The demand for youth work services is high among immigrant families. For instance, the majority of users of some youth facilities in Helsinki are young immigrants.

The status of children and young people of immigrant origin in Finland is governed in particular by

the Aliens Act (301/2004), the Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers (493/1999), the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the Child Welfare Act (683/1983), the Child Custody and Right of Access Act (361/1983) and various international agreements. Immigrant children of compulsory school age residing in Finland have the right to receive and the duty to complete basic education, irrespective of nationality. The number of immigrant pupils has clearly increased in all forms of education during the current decade.

Major cities in particular have recently been developing specific methods for working with young immigrants. In addition, some traditional youth organisations have devised programmes to promote immigrant participation. Young immigrants have also started to establish their own organisations and clubs, often intended to bring together a specific ethnic group. In northern Finland, young Saami people have their own organisation.

Financing

The government supports activities of young people belonging to cultural minorities in many different ways. Some organisations receive support from the Ministry of Education from the appropriations intended to support national youth organisations granted on the basis of the Youth Act and Decree. The Ministry of Education also assists young people's activities and projects from other youth work appropriations, such as those reserved for preventive drug work and morning and afternoon activities. In addition, the Ministry of Education has a separate annual appropriation at its disposal to support multiculturalism and another appropriation to support Saami culture and Saami organisations. Local authorities also provide assistance for associations of young people belonging to cultural minorities that operate within their respective areas.



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17. Young Culture Events/Activities

The history of Young Culture dates back to 1970; it was previously known as Youth Art Festivals. The name changed at the beginning of 2001, but the basic idea of young people making and displaying art on their own terms has remained the same. Young Culture is about young people's self-motivated artistic pursuits, new and experimental culture. It is a series of educa-

tional events held every spring and autumn, providing participants with feedback on their performances and works and representing a comprehensive spectrum of young people's cultural activities.

The Young Culture Committee has confirmed the programme of events for 2001–2010. The remaining period includes the following events:

Year	Spring	Autumn
2006	Theatre	Literature, visual arts, photography and oral expression
2007	Music	Digital art, video and design
2008	Dance	Circus and entertainment
2009	Theatre	Literature, visual arts, photography and oral expression
2010	National Festival for Schools	

Participants in the spring events are selected from regional events held between January and March. For autumn events, participants are selected on the basis of young people's applications and works. The events are intended for young people aged between 10 and 20.

The events offer young amateur artists an opportunity to show off their skills and match them against those of other amateurs at regional and national levels. Events include joint performances, workshops and seminars. Young people also have the opportunity to participate in planning and implementing events.

Regional events are organised in co-operation between municipal and provincial youth services. The city implementing the national event is responsible for organising it independently with support from the Ministry of Education and in accordance with a plan approved by the Young Culture Committee.

The Ministry of Education appoints cultural ambassadors from among those groups that have been successful at Young Culture events. These Young Cul-

ture Ambassadors provide a showcase for the cultural pursuits of young people living in Finland and set an example within their own field, promoting their area of interest both in Finland and abroad. The idea behind the Ambassador concept is to support the group's activities over the longer term and encourage the group to interact at an international level.

Further information: www.nuorikulttuuri.fi



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18. International Award Programme for Young People – Avartti

The International Award Programme for Young People was launched in Finland in 1999 as a development project run by the Ministry of Education. Young Finns named the programme 'Avartti – Youth in Action'.

The International Secretariat of the International Award Association granted authorisation to the Ministry of Education Youth Division and the Finnish Award Programme was granted full membership of the International Award Programme for Young People on 19th October 2003.

The Award Programme is carried out under different names and in different forms in more than a hundred countries, taking local conditions into account. In Finland, the programme functions in 50 locations.

Within the operational policy of the Ministry of Education Youth Division, the Award Programme is primarily linked to the sector of young people's social empowerment as a method of preventive youth work.

The programme is unaffiliated to any religious or political ideas and participation is open to all young people aged between 14 and 25. Participants learn useful skills and learn to take responsibility for other people and the environment. The programme requirements are the same for everyone, but the amount of support and encouragement needed by individual young people from professional instructors depends on their initial capabilities and circumstances.

The Award Programme emphasises long-term commitment and active citizenship and young people participate in Skills, Service, Physical Recreation and Expeditions sections at three levels:

- Bronze for those aged 14 or over, with a minimum period of participation of 6 months
- Silver for those aged 15 or over, with a minimum period of participation of 6 months

- Gold for those aged 16 or over, with a minimum period of participation of 12 months.

The Award Committee, appointed by the Ministry of Education, is accountable to the International Secretariat for ensuring that the Finnish programme is implemented in compliance with international principles. The Award Office is located in conjunction with Finnish Youth Co-Operation – Allianssi.

The Award Committee aims to develop the programme into a demanding and challenging youth work method that organisations, local authorities, parishes and schools can use as an educational tool.

Further information: www.avartti.fi