

<p style="text-align: center;">THE NATIONAL REPORT OF FINLAND ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMON OBJECTIVES FOR VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES OF YOUNG PEOPLE</p>
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***Common objectives to promote voluntary activities among young people:**

- (1) Encourage the development of voluntary activities of young people with the aim of enhancing awareness of the existing possibilities, enlarging their scope and improving their quality.
- (2) Make it easier for young people to carry out voluntary activities by removing existing obstacles.
- (3) Promote voluntary activities with a view to reinforcing young people's solidarity and engagement as responsible citizens.
- (4) Recognise voluntary activities of young people with a view to acknowledging the value of their personal skills thus acquired and their engagement for society and the role that voluntary activities play in terms of facilitating the transition from education to work and adult life.

Chapter 1 An overview of voluntary work and voluntary activities in Finland in accordance with the common objectives

Q1: Describe briefly the national situation at the moment of the adoption of the common objectives on voluntary activities of young people (starting point).

This survey describes the situation in Finland after May 2004. The common EU youth policy with its common objectives has had a supporting effect at national level, for example, with regard to the reform process of the Youth Act. The survey utilises a few concrete examples of various organisations while recognising that civic activities are extremely varied and can take many forms.¹ The common objectives for participation of young people and the Finnish national report on their implementation are also, from the perspective of this report, a relevant cut-off point: questions relating to civic participation and civic activities are clearly linked. As concepts, participation, civic activities, voluntary work, and voluntary activities are interlinked. However, voluntary work could be said to be action striving towards the common good more than mere participation.

In Finland, voluntary activities are a kind of civic activity, a way to partake in civil society.² Various NGOs, among them youth organisations, command significant influence in Finnish society. Moreover, young Finns consider social participation through organisations essential: value surveys and recent participation statistics show that there is still interest in voluntary activities.³ Young people feel that they belong to their families and circle of friends as well as Finnish society and school/work communities (Myllyniemi 2004, 54). Young people also have a strong desire to help others, which is evident in the fact that the majority would be interested in voluntary work, if only they could find a meaningful arena in which to work (Niemelä 2006, Yeung 2004)⁴. However, those consulted also mentioned that today's busy way of life and stimuli provided by the environment set their own challenges: how does one find time for voluntary work, and how can voluntary work compete with other possibilities to spend one's free time? The interests of young people are constantly changing, and so voluntary activities must change as well.

Finland offers a multitude of opportunities for participation in civic activities. As a whole, various civic activities hold a very significant role in Finnish society. The concept of *voluntary work* emphasises individual action. That is, individuals make decisions about their own actions based on their own free will. The concept of *voluntary activities* is often thought to refer to the organisation of voluntary work or its larger framework. In Finland, voluntary activities are considered an acceptable and respected wide-ranging form of civic activity which includes: voluntary work, friend-visitor activities organised by the Finnish Red Cross, voluntary rescue services, buddying, first aid groups, youth, culture and sports organisations as well as neighbourly help.⁵ On the whole,

¹ Examples for organisational work are mostly taken from among the member organisations of the Finnish Youth Co-operation – Allianssi, which answered the questionnaire made for this report.

² See also Paajanen 2002

³ Vapaaehtoistyö meillä yllättävän yleistä ('Voluntary work is surprisingly common in Finland'). Socius 8.11.2004. <http://www.stm.fi/Resource.phx/socius/socius-52004/index.htm>

⁴ Marko Raitanen (2006) writes that young people use different values in different situations as guiding criteria for their behaviour. In all 1,100 7th to 9th graders from around Finland took part in Zest-research. All in all the data gathered gives a picture of young people in the lower secondary school age group who are capable of telling the right from wrong. In Turku, a questionnaire implemented by the City of Turku Youth Work Centre and the Department of Social Policy in the University of Turku surveyed young people's values and attitudes. According to the survey, the attitudes of young people in Turku are strongly on the side of Nordic welfare state, social equality and collectivism. In all 3,449 young people from Turku were interviewed for the survey in the spring 2006. Source: City of Turku Youth Work Centre.

⁵ Finland is a small country when measured with population: In the end of 2004, Finland had the population of 5,236,611. (Population structure: http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/vaerak/tau_en.html) In the end 2004, there were 982,322 15

supporting others and “walking alongside” them, listening to experiences and taking individual situations into account is very much part and parcel of the everyday work of volunteers. The feeling of being useful to others is extremely important. Volunteer work can provide one’s life with new and increased meaning. Ideas, zeal, idealism, love for one’s neighbour, and the will to do good all surface as motivating factors for voluntary work (see also Nylund and Yeung 2005).

Voitto Helander (2006, 96) writes that associations working on various levels maintain and promote the unity and communality of the society. Voluntary organisations are also crucial in forging an identity for citizens. Likewise, promotion of various innovations can be perceived as a function of associations (ibid.) Volunteers play a central and significant role from the perspective of associations. According to Särkelä and Vuorinen (2006), for example, the activities of social and health organisations combine a variety of functions, the emphases of which vary from organisation to organisation and according to the various societal situations. For example, the most significant functions of social and health organisations are exerting influence, NGO activities, expert activities, and developing and offering support and services. The central tasks of organisations include their functioning as NGOs, facilitators of voluntary activities, and providers of peer support (ibid.)⁶ For example, the Prometheus Camp Association organises Prometheus camps, which are politically and religiously non-aligned coming-of-age camps. The aim of the camps is to provide young people with tools to form their own world views. Young people who have completed the camp can take part in them as camp leaders as soon as the following year. They are given wide-ranging training beforehand, and once they have completed it, their responsibilities are, in principle, the same as other camp leaders, except for the legal responsibilities pertaining to the adults. Once they have participated for a few years, they may also be recruited to take part in local groups organising the activities and to represent them on the association’s board.

Civil society as a whole is built on people’s self-motivation, activity, voluntariness and communality. Civic activity strengthens active citizenship, increases social capital, and creates communality, which are all important prerequisites for human, social, and economic well-being, and a democratic social system (see Civil Society 2006 report). Civic activities create spaces for meeting people of different backgrounds and ages. Activities offer opportunities for participation and exerting influence and may engender an important feeling of belonging. Through NGOs, people can also influence local, regional, national and international levels. Civic activities thrive and increase the social, educational, and economic well-being of both people and society as a whole when they are allowed to work spontaneously and autonomously, and when the prerequisites for such activities are favourable (ibid.)⁷.

to 29-year-olds in Finland. Currently, high on the agenda in the discussion about society is the relative growth of older age groups. Ageing population sets challenges for service production with consequent increasing expectations towards NGOs and voluntary work.

⁶ For example, scout activities are non-partisan and open to all. The Guides and Scouts of Finland has approximately 75,000 members. The first scout groups were founded in Finland in 1910. <http://www.partio.fi/english/index.php> One can get some kind of idea of the number of people taking part in voluntary work in the physical activity and sports sector by considering the number of adults involved in the activities. Over half a million (532,000) take part in voluntary work in physical activity and sports without pay and in their own free time. Source: Finnish Sports Federation (SLU), Kansallinen Liikuntatutkimus 2005-2006: Vapaaehtoistyö (“National sports and physical activity survey 2005-2006: Voluntary work”). http://www.slu.fi/liikunta_ja_yhteiskunta/vapaaehtoistyö/

⁷ From the perspective of membership, communality and even service production, working in associations is significant. This is evident, for example, in the large number of NGOs. The Register of Associations maintained by the National Board of Patents and Registration of Finland (NBPR) has approximately 125,000 non-profit associations, of which 70,000 are active. There are approximately 30,000 unregistered associations. There are about 2,700 foundations and little less than 1,000 small new co-operatives. Organisations employ approximately 82,000 employees, of which about 25,000 are part-time. The share of organisation personnel of the whole workforce is approximately 3.5%. The

After the adoption of the common objectives, questions pertaining to civic activities have been increasingly discussed in Finland. In recent years, several methods of civic activity have been developed further or the activities themselves, such as peer student support, have been systematically studied. At a national level, the Citizen Participation Policy Programme⁸ and the Youth Participation Project⁹ are a part of the civic activity discussion framework.

The participation and activities of children and young people are quite varied. Why, then, do they take part in voluntary activities or participate in civic activities? According to a study by Kari Paakkunainen and Sami Myllyniemi (2004, 53), the most important motivating factors among young people were the need to organise events, a desire to influence, and possible benefits in later life. Different individuals may have very different reasons for participating in something.

In addition to a desire to influence, particularly as motivation for children and young people, social motives, friends, and being a part of something can be significant factors encouraging action. Participation in organisations or activity groups teaches various kinds of civic skills. Hence, in addition to promoting things that are important to oneself, there are opportunities to learn new things and to create and maintain social relationships.¹⁰ Aaro Harju (2004, 22) writes that it is important to realise that active citizenship, civic activities, and social participation do not necessarily mean the same thing to everyone. Not everyone finds the same things meaningful, or wants, knows how to, or even can act in similar ways, nor is it necessary. For some, demonstrating or participating in an association may construct the most meaningful forum for participation. Others may find writing letters to the editor the most comfortable way of expressing their opinions. Still others may prefer the challenge of party politics.

For example, the Democratic Union of Finnish Pioneers has always relied heavily on volunteers. Voluntary workers are a central enabling factor for children's clubs as well as many campaigns and camps. In practice, the age distribution is wide with the youngest instructors being 15 and the oldest 60. However, the great thing is that different generations enjoy working together. Co-operation between different generations may enable diversified learning both ways.

Finland's answer to question 1 is that there has been a great deal of positive development during the present Government's term of office (2003-2007). The changes made to youth legislation (the new Youth Act came into force in March 2006), the current Citizen Participation Policy Programme, and the Youth Participation Project have all contributed to opening up participation opportunities for members of civil society. The common objectives of the EU youth policy have provided an excellent basis for work at the national level.

number corresponds to the NGOs share of gross domestic product. (see The Register of Associations; Report of Civil Society 2006 Committee)

⁸ The Citizen Participation Policy Programme promotes active citizenship, functioning of civil society, civic participation and functioning of representative democracy.

⁹ The project aims to prevent marginalisation of young people and to promote their participation opportunities. (<http://www.edu.fi>)

¹⁰ Readiness for voluntary work is on a high level in Finland and approximately half of those not yet involved in the voluntary activities would be ready to participate if asked (Yeung 2002, 52-55).

Chapter 2 Description of measures implemented in Finland at national, regional and local level in accordance with the lines of action of Objective 1

Q2: How have voluntary activities of young people been developed since the adoption of the common objectives?

Line of action (a) In connection with the Citizen Participation Policy Programme, there has been an ongoing effort in teacher training to clarify how individuals grow up to become active citizens and how this can be nurtured and supported. The concepts of “active” and “passive” citizen have been further defined, and by doing so, more understanding about the conceptual framework of voluntary work has been achieved (e.g. Harju 2004). Numerous studies on the participation of young people and civic activities have been conducted in recent years (for more information on this, see question 9).

More research has been concentrated on the participation of young immigrants in civic activities. For example, findings of Harinen et al. show that sports events include young people from different cultures, even though participation in actual sports clubs seems to still be very selective. However, participation in other kinds of organisations has increased greatly among the multicultural population. It is worthwhile to note the level of active participation in the fields of religion, human rights organisations, and politics among young people with African and Middle East backgrounds (Harinen 2005, 53.).

As for **Line of action (b)**, the state subsidies for NGOs involved in voluntary activities for young people have been greatly increased, with the intention of improving the rate of participation and overall support for activities. Both provinces and municipalities are directing funds to youth work with an emphasis on projects run by young people themselves. On the whole, an effort has been made to secure the prerequisites for voluntary and civic activities through a variety of means, including the provision of financial resources for youth work. As mentioned earlier, the majority of Finnish voluntary work is organised through NGOs.

Basic rights pertaining to social participation of citizens are defined in the Constitution, Local Government Act, and special legislation. The revised Youth Act is a significant legal framework, particularly from the point of view of young people. The national legislation aims at securing opportunities for participation. The purpose of the Youth Act is to support the growth and independence of young people, promote their active citizenship and social reinforcement, and improve their upbringing and standard of living. Section 2, Subsection 2, of the Youth Act (27.1.2006/72) defines active citizenship as goal-oriented activities of young people within civil society. According to Section 8 of the Act, young people shall be given opportunities to participate in the decision-making process pertaining to regional and local youth work and policies.

According to Section 7 of the Youth Act, youth work and policy are part of the local authority's responsibilities. Local authorities, youth associations, and other organisations doing youth work are responsible for implementing youth work. Youth services may also be produced regionally through co-operation between municipalities. The local youth work and policy shall comprise educational guidance of young people, facilities and leisure activities, information and advisory services, support for youth associations and other youth groups, sportive and cultural, as well as international and multicultural youth activities, young people's environmental education, and, when needed, youth workshop services and other forms of activity suited to local circumstances and needs. Youth work and policies shall be implemented in multi-professional co-operation with local authorities,

and with young people, youth associations, and other organisations doing youth work. (See Youth Act 27.1.2006/72)

Objective 2: Line of action (c) maintained that the exchange of information, experience and good practice of all relevant actors in the field of voluntary activities of young people should be increased with the aim of removing all kinds of obstacles and developing simplified procedures. The development of voluntary activities and clarifying the role of voluntary work has indeed been a central theme. For example, Guides and Scouts of Finland has announced the promotion of voluntary worker training and taking the support of voluntary activities into practice as one of the main objectives of the association.

The training course aimed at members of NGOs by Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi serves well as an example of the promotion of educational opportunities. In 2004-2006, it implemented development training for youth organisations with funding from the Ministry of Education. The training aimed at providing youth organisations with new competences needed in changing society. One of the themes in the training was the management of volunteers. Bringing in new elected officials and organisers is one of the main issues facing such organisations.

From the point of view of the voluntary work by young people and adults alike, the sports sector is a central forum for participation.¹¹ The voice of young people can also be heard through voluntary work in sports. At the end of 2005, a Youth Committee for Sports was founded in collaboration with the Young Finland Association¹², the Finnish Sports Federation (SLU) and the Finnish Olympic Committee. The aim of founding the youth committee was to increase young people's opportunities for expressing their views, influencing and participating on all levels in sports organisations. The young people consulted said that the activities should appeal to children and young people: those involved in voluntary work should be youthful, not just old-age pensioners. The traditions of sports clubs are well worth maintaining, but even they should be made to appeal to young people.

At the beginning of 2004, the Youth Academy¹³ launched a project "More recreational facilities for young people" with funding from the Ministry of Education. The aim of the project is to increase recreational activities in the 13- to 16-year age group. This age group has been chosen for attention because it has been found that this group is most at risk for dropping out of their hobbies. The Young Finland Association has launched a similar project with the aim of increasing the level of physical exercise among young people. The Youth Academy and the Young Finland Association also surveyed young people's views on hobbies. The survey was based on interviews of ninth graders, asking what young people expected from their hobbies. The respondents practiced both sports and other hobbies, such as arts. In towns and cities, young people mentioned learning as something that should be emphasised when marketing hobbies to them. Other factors which only

¹¹ The Finnish Sports Federation (SLU) serves as an umbrella organisation for sports organisations, and its main task is to improve operational conditions of organisations and their members involved in civic activities in the field of physical activities and sports. http://www.slu.fi/slu-esittely/finnish_sports_federation/sport_in_finland/

¹² The Young Finland Association is a non-partisan organisation, the task of which is to increase children's and young people's joy of living and welfare through physical activity. Its membership consists of 52 national sports organisations. <http://www.nuorisuomi.fi/home>

¹³ The Youth Academy is a co-operation organisation consisting of Finland's largest youth and sports organisations (12 members), and it provides young people with opportunities for self-motivated activities with their peers, and increases appreciation of hobbies and learning derived from them. The Youth Academy supports young people and adults working with young people and operates both in leisure and school environments.

appeared in towns and cities were the importance of physical health, an active mind, and the opportunity to take it easy (Laine 2004).

The Turbo project¹⁴ in Turku subregion charted the youth and sports services in municipalities, and in the third sector, and services directed at young people by private service providers. Associations are responsible for a significant part of youth activities organised in municipalities.

A good example of youth voluntary work is peer student activities in schools. Peer students receive training as well as information and support. Peer student activities account for the largest group of volunteers in the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare – 10,000 peer students, 700 peer student instructors and 60 trainers are involved in this important work¹⁵. The aim of the peer student activities is to promote a feeling of companionship among the students, make schooling more enjoyable, increase social responsibility, and secure a safe and supportive atmosphere at school (Haiminen & Salovaara 2003, 1). A research project, "Peer student activities as support for the feeling of communality and student participation at schools" is ongoing. Peer student activities have not been previously studied in a systematic manner in Finland, even though the system has been in place for over 30 years. Peer student activities cover almost 90% of grades 7 to 9 in basic education, which speaks volumes about the necessity and social need for the activities (http://www.mll.fi/in_english/peer_support_in_schools). The final report on the project will be published in the beginning of 2007.

The answer to the Question 2 is that there have been efforts using various means to develop prerequisites for young people to participate in voluntary work nationally, regionally and locally, and in this respect, the revised Youth Act is an important enabler of concrete activities.

Chapter 3 Supporting voluntary work and activities

Q3: How are the different types of voluntary activities and organisations that provide opportunities for volunteering of young people supported?

For young people, volunteering is, first and foremost, a form of spending time together; by engaging in joint activities, social bonds, which are created in these activities, also elicit commitment and encourage further participation. Sustainable development and respect of life are important to children and young people. The state and local authorities can grant special subsidies to activities and subject areas which are particularly interesting to young people.

In Finland, the implementation of youth work is the responsibility of the state and regional authorities, which also have to create prerequisites for spontaneous civic action by young people. For example, the civic activities of young people and youth work development projects are subsidised from the Ministry of Education appropriations. On the local level, the responsibility for youth work rests with municipalities, and in accordance with Section 9 of the Youth Act, they

¹⁴ Taking part in the project are the 18 municipalities of the Turku subregion: Mynämäki, Askainen, Kaarina, Lemu, Lieto, Masku, Merimasku, Naantali, Nousiainen, Paimio, Piikkiö, Raisio, Rusko, Rymättylä, Sauvo, Vahto, Velkua and Turku. Due to a merger Mietoinen will be added from 1 January 2007.

¹⁵ According to the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare peer student activities are a modern form of voluntary activity, in which a young person commits for one or two school years. Activities are a form of learning about citizen participation and it emphasises peer learning and participation.

receive a Government transfer for operating costs, as defined in the Act. According to Section 10 of the Youth Act, an appropriation for distribution as general subsidies for national youth organisations and youth work service organisations can be included in the annual Government budget. National youth organisations may allocate these subsidies to the operation of their registered district organisations. In addition, national youth organisations may allocate special subsidies for their local organisations for a defined purpose. Subsidies for national youth organisations and their district organisations are allocated on the basis of their performance. The performance criteria include the quality, extent and economic efficiency of the activities. In addition, the current social significance of the activities and the need for subsidy are taken into account when deciding on payments. According to Section 11 of the Youth Act, an appropriation for distribution as general subsidies for youth work organisations can be included in the annual Government budget.

In view of supporting voluntary activities, economic and information resources are perceived as central areas, which means that the main questions are, on the one hand, how to fund the activities and, on the other hand, how to find information about the activities in the first place. In recent years, more resources and appropriations have been allocated to youth work, and state support for youth work has increased significantly.

In 2004, there were 60 national youth organisations. They had in all 792,032 under-29-year-old members, of which 277,212 were under 16 years of age. In all, there were 105 national youth organisations, youth work service organisations and organisations doing youth work that received funding from the Ministry of Education in 2006. These organisations received state appropriations to the amount of €1,735,300 in addition to which various project appropriations have been granted. During the term of office of the current Government, that is to say from 2003 to 2006, the general appropriations to the aforementioned organisations have risen by approximately 49%. The increase in appropriations is set to continue also in the 2007 Government budget¹⁶.

The Mahis activities of the Youth Academy enhance social empowerment by encouraging vulnerable 13- to 17-year-olds to plan recreational activities for themselves. The groups can apply for €500 grants to support their 'Mahis' ideas. Groups always have a trained adult instructor present to cheer them on and encourage them.

International forms of voluntary work are a way of finding one's way into voluntary activities. In Finland, the administration of the EU Youth Programme is the responsibility of the Centre for International Mobility, CIMO. Opportunities for voluntary work in the NGO sector in developing countries are offered by the Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi¹⁷, the Finnish Branch of Service Civil International (KVT), ICYE Finland and the Finnish Volunteer Programme Etvo. There is plenty of support and information available for those interested in voluntary work. The main

¹⁶ Ministry of Education /Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy/Youth Policy Division

¹⁷ The Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi is the National Youth Council of Finland, the task of which is to represent Finnish youth organisations and parties in the sector in Nordic, European and international co-operation. Allianssi is politically and religiously non-aligned interest organisation and its membership includes 107 national youth and expert organisations dealing with youth issues. Through its connections, Allianssi aims to exert influence in the Council of Europe and European Union as well as the United Nations. Allianssi provides information and connections to youth organisations all over the world, helps to find funding opportunities for organising international events and gives out information about language courses, educational opportunities as well as organises seminars and excursions to those involved in youth work.

activities of KVT include the organisation of international work camps in Finland and providing Finnish volunteers to work on camps abroad.

There are several different support activities available for parties organising the activities. For example, the Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA) offers its member organisations a variety of member services, organises lobbying, and organises or co-ordinates different events. In addition to its member services, KEPA produces various services, such as different publications and library services.

The Finnish Sports Federation (SLU) supports the operational prerequisites of its member organisations and sports clubs through training and development services¹⁸.

A good example of voluntary activities in schools is peer student activities. The inclusion of student association activities in schools in the Basic Education Act is under way. Schools do not necessarily have functioning practices, which would support pupils entering voluntary activities outside the school (cf. experiences garnered in the Mukava-project). However, there are a number of other voluntary activities in schools, such as the 'Päivä nuorelle' (Day for a Young Person) fund-raising drive organised by Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi, in which pupils from lower and upper secondary school voluntarily raise money for student association activities in schools and for youth work done by Allianssi.

In Helsinki, the task of the Office for Young People's Civic Activities working under the auspices of the Youth Department is to promote operational prerequisites of youth organisations and youth groups in the city, and means for the social participation of young people. The office provides additional information on such things as founding an association or applying for appropriations (see <http://www.nk.hel.fi/eng/youthDepartment/>).

Answer to Question 3 is that particularly at the national level, economic support for youth organisations has increased considerably. Young people acting in these organisations are also provided with training and opportunities to develop their activities.

Chapter 4 Obstacles to participating in voluntary activities and voluntary work and removing them

Q4: Which obstacles to volunteering do young people encounter?

At the moment, different NGOs are facing very similar challenges: how to get children and young people interested in the first place and how then to make them commit to the activities. Other topical challenges include getting new members interested in elected positions, the organisation of activities, and satisfying the increased demand for expertise. The lack of information on available forms of voluntary activities can present an obstacle to participation for young people. Therefore, the information and advisory services for young people play an important role in disseminating the right kind of information. With information and advisory services, it is possible to increase young people's understanding of society and influence their abilities to become active citizens (see Fedotoff & Kovalainen 2006, 100).

¹⁸ One of the tasks of SLU is to support its member organisations in various ways. See http://www.slu.fi/slu-esittely/slu_ry_n_tehtavat/ (only in Finnish)

Salaried personnel and volunteers deal with very similar issues, but from a different position. For example, the demand for expertise shows itself as an occupationally different theme when it comes to salaried personnel. Not all organisations have salaried personnel, but the work still needs to be done to keep the wheels of the services provided by the organisation rolling: volunteers are invaluable when it comes to actually conducting the activities. Therefore, the role of volunteers should not be underestimated, even from that perspective. The occupational expectations demanded from salaried personnel should not be expected of volunteers.

People's expectations towards NGOs have grown (that is, the same kinds of services provided by commercial service providers are also expected from volunteer organisations). At the same time, people's willingness to commit has decreased, and they often join organisations only to take part in a particular project. The greatest change in the last twenty years has been the increasing bureaucracy and professionalism in organisational activities.

NGO activities should be of the kind that anyone can engage in any kind of voluntary work; however, currently the demands can be so tough that a great many people may be left out. The demand for professionalism is spreading ever lower in NGOs. (Kansalaisyhteiskunnan toimintavalmiudet ("Operational prerequisites of civil society") –report, 11.) With this in mind, Guides and Scouts of Finland has maintained that when children and young people or their parents direct similar expectations at traditional scouting activities, such as camps organised by young volunteers, as at private, chargeable activities organised by professionals, conflicts are bound to arise. However, volunteers may, in their activities, face any number of questions and problems and have to deal with all manner of quandaries. Paying more attention to the well-being of volunteers is an issue that should probably be addressed in more detail in the future¹⁹.

The Finnish Rheumatism Association has noticed that young people have difficulties taking part in its voluntary work. The fear of being singled out is one reason that may prevent many young people suffering from rheumatism from participating in voluntary activities. As for multicultural young people, those most in danger of being left out are those who have not lived in Finland for long, who suffer from the feeling of "otherness" and a lack of friends, and who most fluently speak something else than Finnish (Harinen 2005, 80).

NGO activities in Finland are regulated by the Associations Act. The Act does not apply to informal coalitions or communities for profit, or other financial benefits to those involved, or the purpose and activities of which are otherwise financial in nature.

The state has not regulated civil society activities much. Organisations have received state support in form of general grants, which has left room for the organisations' own deliberation and decision-making. (See the Civil Society 2006 report).

At the local level, there is a great deal of variety in civic activities. There are huge differences between resources in different municipalities, which is why subsidies to organisations vary greatly. From the organisational point of view, the effect of demand for competitive bidding has been great, particularly because traditional voluntary work and business activities have at times been compared.

In taxation, the "pocket money" from voluntary work done in the Youth Programme –related young European's voluntary work may have been considered as wages. Taxation practices vary greatly depending on the region and the tax office handling the matter. Some of the volunteers pay 35% tax

¹⁹ For example, peer students and peer student co-ordinators interviewed by Sini Perho brought out the issue of well-being.

at source for their pocket money, whereas for some, there is no tax payment required. Some of the tax offices have also considered the EU Youth Programme to be comparable to on-the-job training, which is part of international studies. This means that the volunteers can claim a monthly trainee deduction of €10. The problem is the unequal taxation of volunteers, and equality would be closer if the receiving organisations had a chance to participate in the programme, regardless of region. In addition to taxation, it has not always been easy for international volunteers to obtain visas for Finland.

Finland's answer to Question 4 is that obstacles to participation in volunteer work include lack of information about various possibilities for action, people's different expectations towards organisational activities, and variations on the interpretation of the nature of voluntary work within the tax administration.

Q5: How are these difficulties tackled?

There have been considerable efforts to resolve recognised difficulties. The work continues to make it easier to acquire visas. Following the Line of action (b), Finland has intentionally encouraged dialogue between political decision-makers, the field of youth work, including young people, youth organisations, and researchers. Strengthening the dialogue in civil society through advisory councils has been one way of bringing various parties in the field closer to each other. At the moment, there is talk about founding an advisory council for civil society policy in Finland. As for Line of action (d), it can be said that by revising the Youth Act (in particular), Finland has tried to enhance young people's opportunities to participate in decision-making.

One example: the Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi has conducted development training for youth organisations with funding from the Ministry of Education from 2004 to 2006. Member recruitment has been one of the themes on which the development training has focused. The aim of the revised Youth Act is to lend support and give a legal basis for increasing the opportunities for young people to actively participate, particularly with regard to hearing their views on relevant matters.

Chapter 5 Promoting voluntary and civic activities and solidarity

Q6: How was the volunteering of young people in your country promoted during the past two years?

Objective 3 – Promote voluntary activities with a view to reinforcing young people's solidarity and engagement as responsible citizens

Line of action (a) of Objective 3 sets as its goal the dissemination of information on volunteering. In Finland, a central question for voluntary work is how people join the activities. When it comes to young people, awareness about different choices and opportunities is of particular importance. The role of youth information desks and information particularly tailored for young people is crucial.²⁰ Nuortenrinki ("Young People's Round Table"), a community leading opinions in the field, and assembled from the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLCW), works in conjunction with the League's Youth Net, which is a Net service for all young people. Through it, young people get their voices heard and have a chance to influence both the development of the youth activities of the MLCW and the content of Youth Net.

²⁰ See Finland's answers pertaining to the implementation of the common objectives on youth information.

Verkostopalvelu (“Network service”) is a recently-founded web-based information forum offering volunteer labour exchange services for organisations and other corresponding parties, as well as voluntary work for those seeking it. Verkostopalvelu is free-of-charge and open for all²¹. This web site is an example of how information about available opportunities can be disseminated.

In accordance with **Line of action (b)**, various parties (NGOs, local youth departments, teachers) have recently developed ways to encourage young people of different ages to take part in civic and voluntary activities. For example, the Mukava project co-ordinated by the University of Jyväskylä, experimented with various new club and activity models with which to encourage school students to take part in voluntary activities outside the school. The national experiment and research project Mukava (2002-2005) sought to develop methods to support socio-emotional growth of participants and to increase the social capital of the school system. In the Mukava project, subproject Voluntary Work aimed at experimenting and modelling activities to encourage voluntary work in experimental schools. Throughout the project, numerous different ways of encouraging pupils to take part in voluntary activities were tested.²²

The aim of **Line of action (c)** was to find out why some groups are excluded from voluntary work. Voluntary activities of young people always need some form of adult support, so that learning responsibility can take place safely. The Mukava project showed that young people are eager to participate in activities as long as facilities for doing things are available. They may not be able to make initiatives themselves, but a parish or an organisation could take responsibility for co-ordinating the activities providing young people with opportunities to act. The most significant insight of the project was that young people want to feel that the work they are doing is meaningful and useful. Many organisations are happy to take young people on as volunteers, when there is an adult involved in negotiating the matter and the insurance matters are satisfactory²³. Getting volunteers to join activities is a worry, especially when it comes to younger age groups.

In Helsinki, the City Advisory Council for voluntary work aims to make various forms of voluntary activities familiar to the inhabitants and disseminate information on available services and training for NGOs and individuals. People are inspired to join voluntary activities through information and communication. The City of Helsinki has also invested in launching peer support activities. People feel that they get strength, friends, and survival skills from peer support groups. A crucial question also is what kinds of opportunities to act are available to young people²⁴.

The Homma Grants of the Youth Academy are one example of financial assistance available for activities run by young people. When organising its activities, the Finnish Rheumatism Association has taken into account that what they do must be suitable for young people with rheumatism. A person suffering from rheumatism may have great difficulties with such activities as carrying heavy boxes or working with their hands.

The Youth Committee of the Finnish Sports Federation maintain that it would be a good idea to develop some kind of an incentive system for voluntary activities, such as joint parties.

Thus, answer to Question 6 is that Finnish youth policy has striven for strengthening a tripartite model of dialogue between political decision-makers, the field of youth work, (including young

²¹ <http://www.verkostopalvelu.fi>

²² Source: Tuija Bäck, project coordinator of the voluntary work sub-project of the Mukava-project

²³ Source: Tuija Bäck

²⁴ Source: Annamari Aalto, coordinator for voluntary work

people and youth organisations) and researchers²⁵. For example, the reading process of the Youth Act was very extensive and included the principle of transparency, the hearing of various parties, and taking into account the perspectives of youth organisations. In the early autumn of 2006, the Finnish Youth Research Network opened a web-based channel 'Kommentti' for scientific, political and media discussion. The aim of the channel is to increase dialogue between parties working in issues related to young people in a clear, understandable way.

Chapter 6 Recognition of the significance of voluntary activities

Q7: What was done to enhance the recognition of voluntary activities of young people?

Values and attitudes are a central incentive for action in civic activities. Consequently, discussion on growing up to be an active citizen has been part of the basic education curriculum. From the point of view of young people, the role played by home, school, and friends is central in becoming a socially active citizen.

As for the recognition of voluntary activities and voluntary work, application of best practices has continued and new opportunities for recognition have been examined. Awareness of voluntary activities has been also raised in youth forums, and the National Week for Voluntary Activities has been held in Finland for several years.

Aaro Harju (2004, 129) writes that new themes should be included in the contents of current education to respond to the needs of organisations in the coming years. There has been an effort to link civic activities as a theme in various fields of education. In connection with the Citizen Participation Policy Programme, a project entitled Citizen Participation in Teacher Training was launched in 2004. The project is a national research programme, which charts and analyses the attitudes, conceptions, and abilities of teachers in training in civic participation in general and as a part of teacher training, and their opportunities to affect the operational culture and its development during their studies (Syrjäläinen, Värri & Eronen 2005, 7-8.) The research showed that the attitude of teachers in training towards civic activities can be described as a concern over the disappearance of soft values (ibid. 70).

In some university faculties, credits are given for participating in voluntary activities. On national, regional, and local levels, methods of recognition have been developed further. For example, various institutions have continued and increased links between research and voluntary work. As for co-operation between non-formal learning and the formal education system, participation in voluntary work has been noted, for example, in applications to institutions, and an applicant may have received extra points for having taken part in civic activities.

An example of best practice here is the Recreational Activity Study Book of the Youth Academy. It is a résumé of recreational and voluntary activities, which gives the reader a broad view of the young person's skills and learning experiences. Participation in all forms of recreational activities can be recorded in the book. The Study Book is aimed at all young people above 13 years of age, who are involved in recreational and voluntary activities. The Youth Academy has a web site for young people at www.homma.fi which provides information about creating projects, making grant applications, and examples of successful Homma projects.

²⁵ A forum has been, for example, the TUHTI –seminars, in which researchers, youth workers, authorities and youth sector students have a chance to meet. The most recent TUHTI-seminar was organised in the Mikkeli University of Applied Sciences 23-24 Nov. 2006.

The Civil Society 2006 committee, appointed by the Ministry of Education on 15 April 2004 (for the term between 15 April 2004 and 31 December 2005), which was a part of the Government's Citizen Participation Policy Programme, has presented further development suggestions:

1. The importance of civic activities as an important contributor to well-being should be recognised, and civic activities and their long-term funding should be included more thoroughly in future government programmes and other central policy and strategy documents at national, provincial, subregional, and municipal levels (parties, ministries, provinces, municipalities).
2. The public utility of civic and organisational activities should be recognised and defined in relation to business activities, and they are to be taken into account in established interpretations in legislation, competition, and taxation. Finland, together with other Nordic countries, will wield its influence to get public utility defined at the European Union level (government, ministries).
3. Make sure that gambling activities can continue to be organised with the government monopoly in Finland.

In money games, particular attention should be paid to the grounds for the state monopoly (prevention of criminal activities, cheating and malpractices as well as minimising the social drawbacks of gambling) (government)

4. Fund-raising by the organisations should be facilitated by, for example, tax deduction rights for donations and member fees. The funding for new organisations and forms of civic activities should be made possible, and programme-based funding for large-scale development projects crossing organisational boundaries should be developed. (government, ministries)
5. Government ministries will draw up an NGO strategy for their field, or update the existing one. The strategy specifies the goals of various parties, determines the forms of co-operation and secures good operational prerequisites for NGOs. The cross-sector co-operation in matters pertaining to NGOs will be increased between ministries and a ministry responsible for civil society policy will be appointed. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to make sure that, in accordance with its strategy, competence in civic and organisational activities is retained and enhanced. (government, ministries)
6. Opportunities for NGOs to co-operate with the neighbouring areas and developing countries, and their opportunities to participate in multicultural activities will be enhanced. The public support system must enable international multidisciplinary innovations at the grass roots level. (ministries, Prime Minister's Office)

At the moment, there is talk about founding an advisory council for civil society policy in Finland. The Citizen Participation Policy Programme of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's government (2003-2007) has paid attention to the need to intensify the interaction between civil society and the authorities.

Chapter 7 Knowledge of voluntary work and future challenges

Q8: Were the common objectives useful? Did they help to enhance the voluntary activities of young people?

Awareness of the situation in other countries has increased because of the process of defining common objectives. There is a great deal of discussion on volunteerism and civic activities at the national level and the society provides opportunities for voluntary activities carried out by NGOs.

Mending existing, identified defects happens gradually. Common objectives with their lines of action have assisted in developing youth policies at the national level and, among other things, have offered support in the revision of the Youth Act.

Q9: Which actions were taken in order to identify existing knowledge of the voluntary activities of young people at national, regional and local level?

Finland is not among the top nations when it comes to wide-ranging empirical data on politics and society (Karvonen 2006, 314)²⁶. At the moment, researchers in political science are developing democracy indicators, which according to Sami Borg (2006, 51), aim at reliable and comprehensive long-term follow-up of Finnish participation and social participation opportunities.

Information about voluntary activities, voluntary work, and NGOs is more readily available than ever before in the Internet. New web sites have brought information closer to young people. In addition, the opportunities for young people to participate and give their views have been analysed in various ways, including through surveys.

Factors attracting young people to voluntary activities include communality, educational opportunities, international opportunities, opportunity to influence, and friends. An inspiring and supportive atmosphere is important to ensure longevity of participation. In recent years, there has been a great deal of youth research, based both on qualitative and quantitative data, on young people's values, participation in civic activities, and in the system representative democracy (e.g. Paakkunainen 2003 and 2004, Hoikkala & Laine & Laine 2005, Raitanen 2006, Martikainen 2006).

Volunteers interviewed by Tiina Pönni (2006) said that their motivations for participating in voluntary activities were a will to help, pleasure derived from the work, interest in other people's lives, the possibility to meet those people in different situations, and the social contact with other volunteers from the same age group. Youth researchers have recently also begun to focus more on participation of young people with ethnic background in civic activities and its obstacles. Several studies pertaining to young people's voluntary activities have been conducted and some are ongoing, such as the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare research project on peer student activities.

Municipal youth departments offer a great deal of support to young people on civic activity issues, such as founding of associations and training on running the associations. For example, the town of Rovaniemi has stated, with regard to changes in the operating environment and central changes in the service sector from 2004 to 2006, while the number of young people with special needs is on the rise, the role of municipal youth workers in co-ordinating municipal youth policy is emphasised. Thus, the focus is shifting to improving living conditions and the chances for the participation of young people.

Q10: Were difficulties met in the implementation of common objectives and in establishing the report?

From Finland's point of view, the common objectives have proved useful and conducive to discussion. Revision of the Youth Act, which came into force in March 2006, included discussions

²⁶ According to Karvonen (2006, 314), for example, election research, which is crucial to the follow up of democracy, is still in its infancy compared to the other Nordic countries.

between interested parties at various levels and NGO representatives had a chance to influence the development of the Youth Act.

Various parties have also been consulted and challenges facing voluntary work have been discussed during the writing of this report.

Q11: In view of a strategic, forward-looking perspective: should the direction defined by the common objectives continue or should it be changed (if so, how)?

The parties consulted introduced the question of how young people could participate even more in decision making at various levels of voluntary work. From the Finnish perspective, participation and voluntary work are interlinked to a great degree with regard to the priorities set in the common objectives. Finland has a large variety of civic activities that are publicly supported but independent from state control, and with which people are generally satisfied.

The common objectives are relevant, but increasing young people's awareness about their opportunities for participation is needed in the future as well. From the perspective of young people's participation in voluntary work, encouragement and support are essential, in addition to providing adequate facilities for the activities. For example, the Finnish Rheumatism Association remarked that voluntary work should be varied in nature and the threshold to participating in it low.

According to consulted parties, various shorter-term projects are needed in the volunteer sector in future. Likewise, more voluntary activity projects created jointly by schools and organisations are needed. Young volunteers emphasised that the main thing is to get young people to feel they are important and useful to the voluntary activity in question. Handing over responsibility in the right degree also increases young people's motivation to act.

It has been noted that there is an increasing need for experts in the activities of organisations. The aim of the *Kansalaistoiminnan yliopistollisen opetuksen ja tutkimuksen kehittämishanke* ("Development programme for university teaching and research in civic activities")²⁷ is to create a Master's Programme in civic activities (120 credits), the goal of which is to produce a multidisciplinary higher education study module. The Department of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of Jyväskylä is in charge of co-ordinating the Master's Programme.

The Rectors' Conference of Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences (ARENE) has created a civic activity network for polytechnics. The aim of the *Kansalaistoiminnan opetus, tutkimus ja kehittäminen ammattikorkeakouluissa* ("Teaching, research and development of civic activities in universities of applied sciences")²⁸ is to recognise what kinds of research and development projects are under way in polytechnics and universities of applied sciences, and what kinds of co-operation they are involved in with different organisations. The project also aims to find out what kind of teaching-related co-operation polytechnics have with various NGOs, such as youth organisations and trade unions. Humak University of Applied Sciences is responsible for promoting the project in collaboration with other polytechnics.

Both the university and the polytechnic project are meant to better serve the needs of organisations in the fields of voluntary activities and voluntary work.

²⁷ <http://www.jyu.fi/ytk/laitokset/yfi/oppiaineet/sos/tutkimus/kansalaistoimintahanke/> (only in Finnish)

²⁸ The polytechnic project was launched in April 2006. Additional information www.humak.edu (only in Finnish)

Chapter 8 Consulting young people

Q12: Were young people consulted?

For this report, young people's views have been gleaned through youth organisations, primarily by consulting the member organisations of Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi and the members of the Youth Committee of the Finnish Sports Federation. All the member organisations of Allianssi were sent a short questionnaire tailored particularly for this task and through it the participants have been able to express their views and ideas. This report takes advantage of the views expressed by the organisations.

The report draft was examined by the Ministry of Education White Paper working group, which co-ordinates national measures pertaining to EU youth policies. The national co-ordination group includes representatives from relevant fields and levels of public administration as well as youth researchers and representatives from youth organisations. The members representing youth organisations have been responsible for bringing out the views of the young people.

Young people's opinions, activities, and ways of participating in civic activities were also charted on the basis of previously-completed research projects.

Chapter 9 Summary

All in all, it can be said that from Finland's point of view, the common objectives have proved useful. Finnish civil society provides diverse opportunities for participation and being an active citizen. Active citizenship is also shaped by different operating environments.

Promoting young people's participation and encouraging active citizenship are central goals of civic activities. Opportunities for young people to participate in voluntary activities are being further developed nationally. It is important to spread information about opportunities in a variety of ways, particularly in young people's own fora, such as the Internet.

It is also extremely important to listen to young people for their wishes and views. The revision process of the Youth Act is an important milestone in improving the prerequisites for listening to young people. In order to remove obstacles at the national level, youth organisations have received considerable increases in funding.

Supporting, researching, and developing civic activities is important to Finland. The core question and main future challenge is how well young people find their way to the activities.

From the perspective of Finnish society, four main trends are evident in voluntary activities and voluntary work.

- 1.) Voluntary activities take place in civil society; they are a respected and approved activity.
- 2.) Importance of institution: the importance of citizens in growth environments has been understood. Various measures of the Citizen Participation Policy Programme have played an important role.

- 3.) It is worthwhile to consider whether voluntary activities will continue as such and whether people want to serve each other in a welfare society where problems also seem to be on the rise in the future.
- 4.) In voluntary work, reward is a concomitant. From a personal perspective, experiences and feelings derived from taking part in voluntary work are more important.

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