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Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth

# COUNTRY SHEET

## ON YOUTH POLICY

### IN FINLAND



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By: Sami Myllyniemi

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# 1. Context and principles of national youth policy

## 1.1 Context of national youth policy

Youth policy is designed to improve the conditions in which young Finns live and grow. The government adopts a development programme every four years with the aim of stepping up cross-sectoral youth policy action. The programme contains the youth policy objectives for the coming years (first period was 2007–2011). The programme is prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture in collaboration with other ministries.

## 1.2. Principles of national youth policy

In Youth Act young people means those under 29 years of age. 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. Youth policy means improving young people's growth and living conditions.

The Ministry of Education and Culture bears the responsibility for the overall development of youth work and youth policy. The provincial state offices are the regional authorities in matters relating to youth work and youth policy. The Ministry of Education and Culture adopt the performance targets for provincial youth services together with the provincial state office. The Ministry of Education and Culture are responsible for coordinating youth policy at the national level and the provincial state offices at the regional level.

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

See relevant publications:

- Development Programme for Child And Youth Policy

<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisopolitiikka/kehittaemisohjelma/index.html?lang=en>

- Youth Work and Youth Policy in Finland

[http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/Liitteet/YOUTH\\_WORK\\_AND\\_YOUTH\\_POLICY.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/Liitteet/YOUTH_WORK_AND_YOUTH_POLICY.pdf)

## 2. Statistics on young people

1 005 927 young people aged 15–29 lived in Finland 31.12.2010. This is 18.7 percent of the total population (5 375 276). Of these were 491 176 women (9.1 percent of the total population) and 514 751 men (9.6 percent of the total population ).

68 872 young Finns aged 15–29 have been born outside of Finland (which makes approximately 7 percent of the age group). The number is increasing quite rapidly, in 1990 in this age group it was 19 742 (less than 2 percent). Nevertheless, it must be stressed that this is not the number of young people with different nationality or migration background.

Source: Statistics Finland's Web-databases  
[http://pxweb2.stat.fi/database/StatFin/databasetree\\_en.asp](http://pxweb2.stat.fi/database/StatFin/databasetree_en.asp)

### 3. Actors and Structures

#### 3.1 Public authorities

##### 3.1.1 National public authorities:

Ministry in charge of youth affairs is Ministry of Education and Culture (*opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*). At the Ministry, youth work and youth policy belongs to the portfolio of the Minister of Culture, Mr. Stefan Wallin, who was inaugurated on April 19th 2007. The duration of mandate is 48 months. <http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/?lang=en>

##### *Youth Department in the Ministry*

- In the Ministry of Education The Youth Policy Division prepares matters relating to young people, drafts national development plans, and coordinates youth policy in the central government. 11 people work in the youth department
- Director responsible for Youth in the Ministry is Mr. Georg Henrik Wrede, Head of the Youth Unit.
- Contact person in the youth department competent for European youth policy is Mrs. Seija Astala, Counselor for Cultural Affairs

<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuorisoi/?lang=en>

##### *Other national public bodies who are directly involved in youth policies*

- The expert bodies assisting the ministry of Education in terms of youth affairs are The State 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 by allocating state subsidies to national youth organisations. Secretary General of The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs in 2010 is Mrs. Liisa Sahi.
- Finnish youth policy approach is cross-sectoral, and therefore several ministries are responsible for policy areas concerning young people.
- Finnish National Board of Education (*Opetushallitus*) supplies development, evaluation and information services regarding education to owners and managers of schools, teachers, policy makers and working life.
- The Finnish Centre for International Mobility CIMO is an expert and service organization subordinate to the Ministry of Education. It coordinates and manages scholarship and exchange programmes. CIMO is also responsible for implementing nearly all EU education, cultural and youth programmes in Finland.

- The ombudsman for children in Finland (*Lapsiasiavaltuutettu*) was established 1st of September 2005 by law. Its task is to promote the realization of the rights and interest of children in together with the other actors in the field of child policy. The Office is independent authority in connection to the Ministry of Social and Health Affairs. Ombudsman works through networking with other authorities, organizations, child research. Ombudsman does not deal with individual cases, but concentrates on lobbying for children at the strategic policy making level.

#### *Parliament commission in charge of youth issues*

- Most often youth issues have been dealt in the Education and Culture Committee (*sivistysvaliokunta*) of the Finnish Parliament (*eduskunta*). Chair of The Education and Culture Committee is Mrs. Raija Vahasalo.
- The Education and Culture Committee deals with matters relating to education, training, science, art, cultural activities, sports, youth work, copyright, and financial aid for students. The work done in committees is of central importance since reports drafted by committees provide the basis on which Parliament takes nearly all of its decisions.

### **3.1.2 Regional public authorities with competencies in the youth field**

Finnish regional administration comprises five provinces and 19 regions. Youth work and the coordination of youth policies at the regional level are the responsibility of provincial state offices under the guidance of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Their duties relate to young people's employment (e.g. youth workshops), income, housing, education and training, health and leisure activities. They do the regional monitoring, evaluation and development of young people's growth and living conditions. Provincial youth services are also responsible for evaluation of basic municipal youth services. Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (*ELY*) operate in close collaboration with local authorities and local state authorities.

Reform Project for Regional Administration (*ALKU-hanke*) was completed by 2010. The aim of the project was to create a system of State regional administration, which builds on citizens' and customers' needs and works in an effective and productive way.

### **3.1.3 Local public authorities with competencies in the youth field**

Finland is the most decentralised country in the European Union. Municipalities have local governments with far-reaching powers, a fairly independent economy – with the right to tax the income of their residents – a total budget over 30 billion euro, and a personnel of more than 430,000. The project to restructure local government and services (*PARAS-hanke*), launched in

2005, has far reaching impact on the municipal service system. Municipal mergers which became effective in the beginning of 2009 diminished the number of municipalities being 336 at the end of 2010 (in 2008 it was over 400).

The objectives of youth work are stated in the youth act, but the implementation of youth work is the responsibility of local authorities, youth associations and other organizations doing youth work. Municipalities decide independently on the methods and implementation of youth work. Youth services may also be produced by local authorities in cooperation. They receive a state subsidy from the Ministry of Education.

The Programme for Child and Youth Policy, which for the first time was adopted by the Government in 2007, provides the municipalities with guidelines and models how to implement the programme. Almost half of the municipalities have also an own policy programme for children and youth.

### **3.2 Youth welfare services (comprising public and/or non public actors)**

Youth welfare issues are an integral part of overall welfare services. The Programme for Child and Youth Policy (2007–2011) defines the aims, focus areas and practical measures to improve the well-being of children and young people during the current government term. The collaboration partners in the Programme include regional and local authorities, organisations, industry, children and youth researchers and ecclesiastical bodies. [http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2007/Lapsi-ja\\_nuorisopoliitikan\\_kehittamisohjelma\\_2007-2011?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2007/Lapsi-ja_nuorisopoliitikan_kehittamisohjelma_2007-2011?lang=en)

It is task of Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (Nuora) to review annually the implementation of the youth policy development programme, make proposals for programmes and measures concerning youth and produce up-to-date information about young people and their living conditions. [http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisoasiain\\_neuvottelukunta/?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisoasiain_neuvottelukunta/?lang=en)

### **3.3 Non-public actors/structures & youth services with competencies in the youth field**

#### **3.3.1 Youth Councils**

Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi, is a national youth council – an interest organisation with over 100 member organisations, including nearly all national youth, interest, hobby and political organisations, as well as other youth work partners and professionals. Its purpose is to support the growth and civic activities of young people and to develop young people's living conditions. [http://www.alli.fi/english/Contact person Mr. Jarkko Lehikoinen jarkko.lehikoinen\(at\)alli.fi](http://www.alli.fi/english/Contact_person_Mr._Jarkko_Lehikoinen_jarkko.lehikoinen(at)alli.fi)

List of member organizations of Allianssi: <http://www.alli.fi/allianssi/jasenjarjestot/>

### 3.3.2 Youth NGOs

Youth NGOs play significant role in Finnish youth work and policy. The Ministry of Education and Culture supports annually about a hundred youth organisations with about 12 million euros. The Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee (*Nuorisojärjestöjen arviointi- ja avustustoimikunta*), whose members are nominated by youth organisations, submits annually a proposal to the Ministry for state subsidies to be allocated to national youth organisations. It also evaluates and develops the subsidy system.

Some of the biggest NGOs are:

- In terms of membership, the largest youth organisations are various student organisations, and schoolchildren's organisations.
- *KEPA*, or the Service Centre for Development Cooperation, is a service base for Finnish NGOs interested in development work and global issues. Over 200 such organisations belong to KEPA. These organisations vary greatly in character - large and small, local and national, professional and ideological. KEPA itself is a politically and ideologically non-aligned organisation that operates with funding from the Finnish foreign ministry.
- The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (*Mannerheimin Lastensuojeluliitto*) is an NGO promoting the wellbeing of children and of families with children, and seeing that children's views are taken into account in public decision-making. It is the largest child welfare organization in Finland with more than 90 000 members and 565 local associations throughout the country.

<http://www.mll.fi/en/>

### 3.4 National network(s) for knowledge on youth linking all actors in the field (policy makers, researchers, young people and their organisations, NGOs)?

The Finnish Youth Research Network (*Nuorisotutkimusverkosto*), operating as part of the Finnish Youth Research Society, is a research unit founded in 1999. This network is based on the Youth Research 2000 program which began in 1994. The Youth Research Network is a community of researchers working in co-operation with various universities and research institutes both nationally and internationally. Its operation is multi-disciplinary and both thematically and geographically diverse. The orientation is a combination of academic research and applied research relevant to youth policy. Finnish EKCYP correspondent Mr. Sami Myllyniemi works as a statistical researcher of The Finnish Youth Research Network.

[http://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi/sivu.php?artikkeli\\_id=148](http://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi/sivu.php?artikkeli_id=148)

## 4. Legislation

### *Articles of the constitution concerning youth explicitly*

Section 14 - Electoral and participatory rights: A young person aged 18 is legally an adult and has the right to vote and stand in national and local elections. A young person aged 18 who is an immigrant residing permanently in Finland has the right to vote in local elections and local referendums.

Section 6 – equality: Children shall be treated equally and as individuals and they shall be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development.

### *National legislation on youth*

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, entered into force on 1st March 2006. The Youth Act specifies the objectives and values of youth work and policy. The purpose 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

### *Regional and local legislation on youth*

Youth Act, Part 3 concerning local youth work and youth policy states that "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."

## 5. National Policy Programmes on youth

The policy programme for the well-being of children, youth and families launched by Prime Minister Vanhanen's second Cabinet (2007–2010) was divided into three areas: a child-oriented society, well-being families and prevention of social exclusion. The Government of Prime Minister Mari Kiviniemi (2010–2011) proceeded with the implementation of decisions of Matti Vanhanen's second Government.

[http://www.minedu.fi/lapset\\_nuoret\\_perheet/?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/lapset_nuoret_perheet/?lang=en)

The Youth Policy Development Programme 2007-2011 was a national application of the European Youth Pact.

The development programme contains the provincial national objectives for youth policy and it provides guidelines for youth policy programme work at and local levels. According to the Youth Act a young person is anyone under the age of 29 years. In practice this implies that the youth policy programme is also concerned with small children.

The aim of the programme is to turn Finland into a friendlier place for children and young people. The Programme is based on the life-cycle approach according to which a human life-cycle is seen as continuum from early childhood to increasingly independent youth and adulthood. The aim is to cross administrative borders and to promote multi-disciplinary co-operation at a local level. One strategic focus is providing an increasingly forceful presence in various transitions, changes and crises in life. This aim is supported by the evaluation of the effects decision-making has in the lives of children and families.

[http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2007/Lapsi- ja\\_nuorisopolitiikan\\_kehittamisohjelma\\_2007-2011?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2007/Lapsi- ja_nuorisopolitiikan_kehittamisohjelma_2007-2011?lang=en)

## **6. Budget / Public expenditure allocated to youth**

National level : Budgeted proposal of 2010 allocated 65.3 million euros for youth work in 2011.

Regional level : Municipal youth work total about 170 million euros (out of which roughly 32 million state subsidies)

## **7. European Dimension of youth policy**

### **7.1 Council of Europe.**

The recommendations of the Council of Europe are integrated in Finland's national youth policy strategies and documents which provide guidelines for regional and local youth policy programmes and activities. According to the Youth Act of 2006, a youth policy development programme will be adopted by the Government every four years (for the government term). The next youth policy programme (2012 -2015) will be informed by the resolution on the youth policy of the Council of Europe adopted by the Committee of Ministers in November 2008.

Finland contributes to the European Youth Foundation.

### **7.2 European Union.**

#### **7.2.1 Implementation of the Youth in Action programme**

The National Agency for the European Union Youth Programme in Finland is Centre for International Mobility CIMO. It belongs to the administrative sector of the Ministry of Education and Culture, although it operates as an independent governmental organisation. CIMO is also the national Coordinator of Eurodesk and Youth in Action Programme.

<http://www.cimo.fi/english>

#### **7.2.2 Follow up of the EU Youth Strategy (2010 – 2018) on the national level**

The next Government's youth policy programme (2012-2015) will be based on the renewed framework of EU cooperation in the field of youth.

## 8. Further sources of information on youth policy in Finland

Ministry of Education and Culture

<http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/?lang=en>

The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011

[http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2007/Lapsi- ja\\_nuorisopolitiikan\\_kehittamisohjelma\\_2007-2011?lang=en](http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Julkaisut/2007/Lapsi- ja_nuorisopolitiikan_kehittamisohjelma_2007-2011?lang=en)

Development Programme for Child And Youth Policy 2007–2011

<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=en>

Youth work and youth policy. Fact Sheets

[http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/Liitteet/YOUTH\\_WORK\\_AND\\_YOUTH\\_POLICY.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/Liitteet/YOUTH_WORK_AND_YOUTH_POLICY.pdf)

Youth Young People in Finland 2010 <http://alli.fi/binary/file/-/id/665/fid/1033>

Finnish Youth Research Society <http://www.nuorisotutkimusseura.fi/en>