Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union

Country Report
Sweden
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This report presents the situation as of February 2013
## 1 Introduction: tradition, definitions and concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition for youth work</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal definition for youth work</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate length of youth work tradition</td>
<td>100+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate length of formal / professional youth work tradition</td>
<td>40 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of relative importance of youth work in supporting young people</td>
<td>Increased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main sectors/fields of formal / professional / statutory youth work</td>
<td>Youth clubs, after school activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main sectors / fields of non-formal / third sector led youth work</td>
<td>Sports, youth clubs, culture and music, activities within EU programme Youth in Action, youth organisations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1.1 Definitions

In Sweden there is no one clear definition of Youth work, though Youth work is undertaken in many different areas.

There are a range of people who can be considered as youth workers in Sweden in the formal and non-formal sector. In Sweden there are formally educated youth recreation leaders and there are plenty of other professions involved in work with young people outside the formal education system such as social workers, young entrepreneurs’, special teachers, psychologists, pedagogues, coaches and others. Within the civil sector there are a great number of volunteers working with youth. Independently of who is working with youth, a common and general main objective of youth work is to provide opportunities for young people to shape their own futures.

Following the definition of youth work by Mr Peter Lauritzen\(^1\) of the Council of Europe, there are many areas of activities where youth work take place in Sweden.

Taking all youth-work undertaken in Sweden together, the work corresponds with the principles outlined by the EU-CoE Youth Partnerships’ set of shared values and methods underpinning youth work:

- Voluntary participation of young people.
- Listening to the voice of young people.
- Bringing young people together.
- Connecting to young people’s life/world.
- Broadening young people’s life/world.

In an interview with the chairman of KEKS\(^2\), a network founded in 2006 that works for the development of quality and competence in the field of cultural and leisure activities for young people, it was underlined that professionals working in this network believe that there is a need to have multi-professional teams involved in youth work. The lack of a clear and recognised definition of ‘youth work’ is considered

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\(^1\) Lauritzen P. (2006), Internal working paper, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

\(^2\) KEKS consists of 38 Swedish municipality departments in 27 cities responsible for “youth issues”, www.keks.nu.
to be a weakness as it is believed this undermines the status of youth work in Sweden. KEKS own definition of youth work is: "To encourage and support young people, whatever their background and life situation, to organise themselves and become resources in the realisation of their own interests and ideas".

1.2 Tradition and development of youth work

1898 is an important year in Swedish child and youth policy. This year can be said to be the starting point for the articulation of a social responsibility from the state regarding children’s and young people’s social situation (Lundström, 1993). During that year a governmental committee was installed to consider the “social issue”. The committee was generally known as the “gang boys committee”, a name that indicates its mission and assignment at that time.

In a forthcoming research paper by one of Sweden’s well known researchers and experts on youth policy and leisure time, Torbjörn Forkby (in press) states that:

"Leisure activities, if there were any, were up to social movements such as the temperance, religious and sports associations to organise. One example is Birkagården in Stockholm which was the first settlement/community centre in Sweden. Birkagården was established 1912 by religious and socially committed people. It took a couple of decades in to the 20th century until youth really was discussed as a social category in its own right. 1939 is a suitable year to start when it comes to Sweden. In this year another governmental committee was installed, namely “The youth care committee”. The committee is a milestone in Swedish formulation of a policy for youth. They tried to look comprehensively on young people’s situation and brought on a more scientific approach, and in this way challenged the prevailing highly morally oriented discussion of youth.”

Professional youth work in Sweden started to seriously develop after 1945 when the first recreational leaders started to organise youth in their leisure time.

The key drivers behind development of the youth work sector in Sweden during the past 10 years is emphasised through the National Government Bill on Youth Policy, The National Agency for Youth Policy in Sweden (National Board for Youth Affairs), the 290 Municipalities in Sweden, and youth organisations (see figure 1 below). The public sector provides most of the basic welfare services for young people. However, nongovernmental organisations provide important supplements in several areas. The Swedish Red Cross and Save the Children Sweden are two major voluntary organisations with several projects on national and local level working with, for example, young criminals, young refugees and vulnerable young people.

The importance of youth work in supporting the lives of young people in Sweden has increased in importance over the past 10 years. Given the unemployment of young people, increasing emphasis is put by the government aimed at lowering drop-out rates from secondary schooling, the high number of NEETS (Neither in Employment, Education or Training) and the forthcoming need of human capital on the labour market due to an ageing population. Other contributing factors that have led to an increased importance of youth work is the segregation and exclusion of youth due to class and ethnic background in combination with school drop-outs. These trends have

made it necessary to develop a wider range of educational and motivational options for the heterogeneous group of youth.

The government, together with the unions and employer organisations, have a common aim in order to decrease the unemployment rates among youth, a “Job Pact”. Briefly, the Job Pact is for young people under 25 and it provides an opportunity to combine education and work, during secondary school and after. Young people have to work 75% of the time and get 75% of salary - the rest of the time is devoted to studies. In this way it is hoped that it will be cheaper and easier for employers and youth are given the chance to improve their skills.

Through the European Social Fund (ESF) in Sweden there are many ESF funded youth projects. In December 2012 there were 180 on-going projects in the country. The Theme Group Youth⁵ have the task to collect knowledge, experiences and methods developed in these projects throughout the period 2007-2013 in order to collect best practice and to have a policy improvement impact. The aim is to increase the quality of work with youth that risk exclusion from the labour market. The Theme Group Youth have, among many things, developed a model that shows how many NEETS we have in Sweden.

Generally, in terms of target groups in Swedish youth policy, during the last ten years the focus has been on general welfare issues for all young persons between 13 and 25 years and targeted measures for groups that are at risk of social exclusion for different reasons and in different ways.

1.3 The current situation: the delivery of formal and non-formal youth work

The delivery of formal youth-work is provided by “fritidsledare” (recreational leaders). The two-year long post-secondary educational programme is provided by 21 “Folkhighschools” to train recreational leaders in Sweden, each with its own profile. These schools are all part of a national network (Fritidsledarskolorna) and they are connected with the work on EU level through the Youth and European Social Work Forum (or Y.E.S. Forum), a network of organisations across several EU and non EU countries.

The delivery of non-formal third sector youth work is done by many different organisations. Within the non-formal youth work sector, the Swedish church is provides for youth work activities. There were 4800 employed child-and youth workers and 13,000 volunteer youth workers in 2012⁶. There are 562 youth choirs in Sweden with 6500 active young persons between 13 and 25 years. 8 per cent of the age group 13-25 are taking part of the Swedish church youth work on regular basis and 1% of the total population (total population: 1,6 million individuals 13 to 25 years in 2012) is taking part in the "open activities".

The Swedish National Sports association has 11,000 associations focusing on different sports for youth. There were 92,000 leaders (or youth workers) working with youth during 2012 on voluntary basis. 291000 young persons between 15 and 19 years were active in some of the mentioned sport associations during 2012 and 620 000 active children and youth between 7 and 14 years⁷.

⁵ See: www.temaunga.se
⁶ Interview with the Swedish Church research and statistics department
⁷ Interview with the Swedish Church research and statistics department
2 Legislative context and governance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative framework for youth work</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of regulation for youth work</td>
<td>National / Regional / Local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body(ies) with a responsibility for governing youth work</td>
<td>Ministry for Education and Research, National Board for Youth Affairs, Municipalities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.1 Legal background

In the Budget Bill for 2009 the Government presented two goals for the national youth policy:

- Young people are to have genuine access to influence.
- Young people are to have genuine access to welfare.

Welfare issues are an important part of Swedish youth policy. The youth policy goal concerning young people’s access to welfare focuses on young people’s possibilities of achieving a good living standard in social and cultural terms. It concerns their formal right to a good living standard and their real possibilities to achieve a good living standard.

Young people have access to the general public welfare system, meaning that they should be treated on equal terms with others and that their needs should be considered in every area of the welfare system. This concern, for example, local social services offices and local health centres. There are however certain services that are targeted more specifically at young people. One example is financial aid for studies, which enables pupils/students to fund their education. Another is young people’s clinics where young people seek advice on questions related to physical, mental and sexual health. Many of these are also accessible via the Internet.

The process of developing the new bill on youth policy in Sweden was launched with a collection work during 2012 and is divided into two parts. The first part consists of a dialogue tour that the Ministry of Education carried out in five locations in Sweden in the autumn of 2012. The second part will be carried out by the Youth Division of the Ministry of Education and will collect feedback on the specific needs of young people in policy from other ministries, National Board for Youth Affairs and SKL (SALAR) and LSU (The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations) The goal is that the Bill will be passed during late 2013.

Sweden does not have specific youth legislation apart from the legislation regulating governmental funding for youth organisations; this part of legislation is not a part of the Budget Bill for youth policy. Matters regarding youth are integrated in other areas of legislation. The Convention of the Rights of the Child serves as a basis for legislation concerning children up to 18 years. Leisure activities are an optional obligation for the municipalities, however, there are a number of laws that regulate what a municipality should provide its citizens regarding a meaningful leisure time. The Planning and Building Act says that there should be parks and green areas and that sports centres, marinas and public swimming pools shall be reported. Recreation centres or other open youth work activity are affected indirectly by The Social Services
Act where one can find overarching goals about democracy, equality and active participation in society\(^8\).

One piece of *legislation* that is closely connected with the aim to lower the NEETs is stated in the School law since July, 2005. Every municipality shall continuously update information and know how many young persons under the age of 20 that are NEETS in order to provide some meaningful activities or measures. This work differs in quality between municipalities and recently SALAR has published a handbook for municipalities in order to improve the coverage and impact\(^9\).

### 2.2 Governance

The Ministry of Education and Research is responsible for the coordination of the Government’s youth policy, issues affecting youth organisations and international cooperation in the youth field.

The Swedish youth policy approach is cross-sectoral. Several ministries are responsible for policy areas that concern young people, such as work, education, health, housing, culture, etc. Certain responsibilities are delegated to one or more government agencies within each policy area.

The Swedish National Board of Youth Affairs is the government agency responsible for the evaluation of the objectives set for the national youth policy and the policy for the civil society by the Swedish Parliament. The Board produces and communicates knowledge about young people’s living conditions and the conditions for the civil society. The Board supports municipalities in the development and implementation of local youth policy and shares knowledge on several topics related to the civil society. It also distributes funds to and supports methods development in young people’s leisure and associative activities and in international youth cooperation.

The main duty of the Children's Ombudsman is to promote the rights and interests of children and young people (up to the age of 18) as set forth in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The current Ombudsman is Mr. Fredrik Malmberg. Sweden has implemented the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and is giving regular reports on its development to the UN.

At the regional level, Sweden has 20 county councils/regions (18 counties and two regions) with competences in fields relevant for youth. They have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation. The main task of the county councils/regions is health care. Some of the county councils/regions have, or have the last years had, specific projects for young people. In every county in Sweden there is a county administrative board. This board is a government agency that represents the Parliament and Government in the county. It is the responsibility of the county administrative board to see that the decisions taken by the Government and the Parliament have the best possible effects in that county.

Sweden has 290 municipalities with local governments. There is no hierarchical relation between the municipalities and the regional public authorities. The local authorities have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation. The municipalities are responsible for: water and sewerage, schools, spatial planning and building, health and environmental protection, refuse collection and

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waste disposal, rescue services, social services and security. Voluntary activities are: recreational activities, culture, housing, energy, industrial facilities and employment. Many decisions that concern young people are taken at municipal level. Youth policy goals established by the Parliament are requirements for the central government but only advisory for the municipalities. Youth policy in municipalities can, if the municipalities wish so, start from the national objectives but the way it is executed in practice is shaped on the basis of local conditions. The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs supports municipalities in the development of local youth policy and provides funds and provides tools and methods for local projects.

3 Policy and programme framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General level of political commitment to the issue of youth work</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedicated policy / strategy on youth work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programmes on the development of youth work</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net impact of economic crisis on funding for youth work</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1 Policy commitment

The situation of young people is affected by a wide range of policy areas in the Government’s Budget Bill such as education, employment, culture, health, etc.

Public bodies that have relevance for youth policy are:

- The National Labour Market Administration (support and service for unemployed youth, provision of national statistics, support for municipalities and the Ministry of Labour).
- The Swedish National Agency for Education (provision of national statistics within the formal education system, support for municipalities and the Ministry of education).
- The Swedish National Institute of Public Health (provision of national statistics on youth and health, gives support to Municipalities, Regions and the Ministry of Health).
- The Swedish Arts Council (distribute financial support to a variety of culture- and literature events organised by and for youth. Provision of national statistics and support to municipalities, regions and the Ministry of Culture).
- The Swedish Consumer Agency (develops advice on consumer rights and information to young persons on private economy issues).
- The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (This organisation works within all policy areas relevant for all citizens including youth).
- Parliament commission in charge of youth issues.

In the Parliament it is the parliamentary committees that prepare all decisions. The composition in each committee reflects the parliament as a whole. After a committee has presented its proposal the members of the parliament adopt a position. Youth issues are prepared in different committees depending on the specific issue.

The committee of Cultural Affairs prepares matters concerning culture, education and popular adult education, youth activities, international cultural cooperation and sport and leisure activities.
The committee of Health and Welfare prepares matters concerning care and welfare services for children and young people except for pre-school activities and care services for schoolchildren.

The Committee on the Labour market prepares matters concerning labour market, and working life including labour law. The Committee also considers matters concerning integration and discrimination and equality between women and men, as these matters do not fall to any other committee to prepare.

### 3.2 Policies and programmes to develop youth work

Government support for youth policy in 2012 was 33.936109 million Euros (this amount includes 563.603 Euros to the National Board for Youth Affairs for management of funds for the civil society). Youth policy is further supported with 1.714792 million Euros/ year) through state funding to gender policy.

However, when one talks about local youth work, the main organisations where actors find funding are:

- The National Board for Youth Affairs carries out the distribution of government grants to youth organisations. In 2013, 103 children and youth organisations received 19 752 179 million Euro in government grants and 16 077 355 million Euro in Orgaation grants for support of children and youth organisations. In 2012 the National Board for Youth Affairs allocated 2 411 603 million Euros to non-profit organisations working with and for young people at the local level.  

- The Swedish Inheritance Fund Commission\(^\text{11}\) supports non-profit organisations and other voluntary associations wishing to test new ideas and methods for developing activities for children, young people and the disabled. The Fund give financial support to projects which children, young people and the disabled take part in and organise themselves. The Swedish Inheritance Fund prioritises projects working for gender equality, integration, diversity and accessibility. Programmes must be innovative, stimulate development and lie outside the organisation's ordinary sphere of activities. Organisations can sometimes also be granted support towards the cost of their premises. Financial support is particularly directed at non-profit organisations, but support can also be granted to local authorities if they cooperate with a non-profit organisation.

- Every year the Swedish municipalities allocate nearly 1, 4 billion Euros to cultural and leisure activities\(^\text{12}\) The National Agency for the EU Programme ‘Youth in Action’ has its office at the National Board for Youth Affairs which is seen as an advantage due to knowledge sharing at an Agency where there is access to local, regional and national coverage and knowledge on youth policy issues. According to the annual report from 2011 the Swedish National Agency received a total of 257 applications, compared to 295 in 2010. Out of those 257, 135 projects were granted funds. Overall, the number of applications was somewhat lower in 2011 than in 2010 and the success rate was 52 % vs. 47 % in 2010. Projects which did not fulfil the formal criteria or were of low quality were rejected and the limited budget within certain actions resulted in a strong prioritisation of projects.

\(^{11}\) See: www.arvsfonden.se  
\(^{12}\) See: www.skl.se/ for statistics on expenditures for municipalities.
Table 3.1  Number of applications received and projects granted 2007-2011 in Sweden (Youth in Action)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Applications</th>
<th>Granted projects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As was the case in 2010, the number of applications for Youth Exchanges in 2011 decreased. Promoters say that the difficulties in finding funding for organisations / municipalities in economically strained times is an important reason behind this decrease. This not only affects Swedish organisations, but also partner groups around Europe and European colleagues in other NAs confirm that they are seeing a similar trend. Notably, the 15 % decrease in European Voluntary Service (EVS) applications is of a different nature: it is largely a positive trend, despite the decrease in applications; the granted projects held almost the same number of volunteers as last year's did. Furthermore, their periods of service were longer. More and more organisations are strategic and apply to send / receive more volunteers within a single application instead of several. The NA has encouraged this and will continue to work on further activities in 2012 to stimulate the strategic work of organisations who do EVS and keep encouraging them to send fewer and larger applications instead of applying several times to do many small individual projects.

The commitment of funds equals 2 875 309 EUR, which is 101 % of the total budget initially allocated. This could be compared to 2 596 997 EUR, equalling 100 % for 2010.

Table 3.2  Number of young people, youth leaders and the total number of participant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Young people</th>
<th>Youth leaders</th>
<th>Total participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>1814</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>2337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2774</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>3309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>2276</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>2821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2821</td>
<td>1006</td>
<td>3908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>3538</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>4321</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over 4300 young people and persons working with youth issues participated in the Youth in Action programme in 2011. This is an increase from 2010 and an all-time high for Sweden. 52 % of the participants were women, making the gender balance among those taking part in the programme consistent with that of previous years. Within all actions, except EVS, 50-53 % of those participating are women. The Swedish NA has encouraged organisations to strive for gender balance in their projects. The proportion of women in EVS, an action having difficulty reaching male participants, was somewhat higher, reaching 65 % in 2011.

Training and Cooperation Plan (TCP) activities enabled 566 youth workers/leaders to attend training courses or seminars in 2011, a slightly lower figure than in 2010 (695 people). Activities included both international and national trainings and the gender balance among participants was even, like in 2010. The number of leaders involved in
TCP or sub-action 4.3 will hopefully also render more high quality projects within other actions in the following years\textsuperscript{13}

4 Youth workers: training, status, population and profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FACTS</th>
<th>RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum qualifications standards for youth workers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth worker as a recognised profession / occupation</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of formal, dedicated qualifications for youth workers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education background of the majority of youth workers</td>
<td>Two year post-secondary education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of youth workers</td>
<td>8000 formally educated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend in the overall number of youth workers</td>
<td>Increase due to the heterogeneous group of professions working</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1 Training and qualifications

The delivery of formal youth-work training is provided by Folkhighschools. The two-year long post-secondary educational programme train recreational leaders or youth workers in Sweden. After finishing this educational programme, youth workers receive a diploma / certificate. These schools are all part of a national network (Fritidsledarskolorna) and they are connected with the work on EU level through the Youth and European Social Work Forum (or Y.E.S. Forum), a network of organisations across several EU and non EU countries.

Fritidsforum is an association formed 1937 connecting members engaged in open recreation activities; playgroups, neighbourhood centres, meeting places, youth centres and more. Fritidsforum provides in-service training for youth-workers mainly within leisure time activities for youth in different kind of youth centres in Sweden. Operators of activities can be municipalities, cooperatives and associations of various kinds. Fritidsforum stands for venues that affirm the equal worth regardless of age, gender, beliefs, and cultural background or ethnicity. Open venues such as community centres, recreation centres, youth centres is an important part of the social, cultural and democratic infrastructure\textsuperscript{14}.

The National Board for Youth Affairs provides in-service training for youth workers. Keks is the network for youth workers mentioned on page 2 they also provide in-service training for many different professions working with youth.

4.2 Status of youth worker profession

Most members of the staff working in youth canters are recreational leaders with the two year-long training at “folk high-schools”, but there are great variations in training and even quite a few lacking formal training\textsuperscript{15}. The education of youth workers has

\textsuperscript{13} National Board for Youth Affairs (2012), \textit{Annual Report 2012}. Stockholm: Ungdomsstyrelsen.

\textsuperscript{14} See: www.fritidsforum.se

been debated because of its low and/or uneven quality. The occupational group is characterised by relatively low average age, many are in short time employment and have short, work experience and are comparatively low paid. There are in other words there is room for enhancement of competence and the status of youth workers.

Other professions that are commonly related to youth work are social workers, study- and career coaches, special education teachers, psychologists, teachers, nurses just to mention some with a formal education background. In Sweden there is increasing amount of youth workers within the non-formal sector and civic sector that are working as coaches where the general aim of their work is to give individual support to young people in order to help them to navigate into a certain direction and find their own motivation.

4.3 Youth worker population

According to the union Kommunal there are approximately 8000 educated and employed formal youth-workers / recreational leaders in Sweden 2012. They mainly work in the youth centres, primarily aimed at young people between 13-16 years.

According to the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), Sweden has approximately 1109 youth centres that are governed by the municipalities. In 2006 there were 1349 youth centres; the decline of youth centres is a fact since the 1990s. The target group for the youth centres are all young persons in the municipality and the main aim is to provide quality after-school activities including arts, music, work-shops, and sports with youth influence as a read thread in all activities provided. In addition to youth centres in Sweden there are about 150 “Youth houses” (mainly for youth 17-25 years old). Since the 90s there are efforts to organise youth clubs for the older age group 17-25. Research form Fokus-05 and the National Board of Youth Affairs shows that young people establish themselves on the labour market much later in life compared with some 10 years ago. This highlights the need for access to meaningful leisure time, preferably free of charge.

4.4 Profile of youth workers

The profile of youth workers depends if the work is undertaken in a youth-club or for example in a project working with NEETS with the aim to motivate young persons to undertake studies or find a job. As mentioned earlier apart from the formally educated youth workers at Folkhighschools, in Sweden we can see youth workers with different professional backgrounds, such as social workers, psychologists, special teachers or young adults who feel very engaged but without professional training. It is difficult to divide youth work carried out within the formal and informal sector in Sweden, due to mixed ownership and management of youth centres, clubs, meeting places etc. Swedish youth work related to youth work that focuses on leisure time activities is very decentralised with different service delivery models and there is a heterogeneous provision of youth work that differs between the 290 Municipalities where youth policy is implemented.

As the chairman for Keks views the dilemma: “When we try to analyse and compare the culture and leisure sector it is unfortunately often difficult to

16 Theme Group Youth, 2012:5
see the differences in the public and non-profit arranged and conducted youth work, this goes back to unclear objectives, assignments and definitions of youth work”.

The key challenges facing youth workers and work in Sweden is that professions working with youth are comparatively low paid and that youth work as such needs higher recognition and status.

5 The role and value of youth work

2010, there were 120,100 young people aged 16 to 25 who belonged to the group of NEETS which is 9.5 % of the population of that age. Even in good economic periods such as 2007 Sweden had 7.3 % NEETS (aged 16 to 25). There is a constant need to facilitate labour market entry for young people who neither work nor study, and to improve the activities that will support their establishment. This is done through Government agencies, Municipalities and funding from the European Social Fund and the EU programme Youth in Action. The Theme Group Youth highlights some success factors in the work with NEETS, such as; individually tailored interventions with clear involvement of the young person, and with clear purpose. Staff commitment and broad expertise, such as multi-competent professions working together with access to many methods and sustainability are important factors. The success factor young people highlights are the respectful and friendly treatment from the personnel and many feel that they are finally a part of a context, they have a place to go to every day and they are surrounded by adults who “care for real”.

One delivery model or concept that is growing since practice in some Municipalities show good results is the development of One-stop-shops, in Sweden these kinds of activities are called differently, “One door in”, but Navigator centrum is the most common terminology.

The concept in a “One-stop-shop” or Navigator centrum is that employees from three or more National agencies work in the same project where they can contribute with their specific expertise under one roof in order to give young job-seekers the relevant individually tailored support. One advantage with this organisation is that the support given to youth is not tied to regulations of one national agency and that there is a built-in flexibility.

5.1 Education and training

In Sweden secondary school education (students are 16 to 19 years old) is three years and is optional. Young people without secondary education have very small opportunities to enter any kind of job-market. The National Agency for Education and SKL show that 31 per cent of all students do not finish secondary education in three years and 24 per cent do not finish in four years (2012).

There are many measures and projects whose aim is to lower drop out from schools. Some schools have late open hours with accessible teachers who can work with students. Almost all the mentioned ESF projects provide individually adopted educational lessons.

20 See: www.temaunga.se/publications.
21 See: www.navigatorcentrum.se
"The formal educational system if it is visualised as a road, needs to be broadened and more space and efforts should be invested to provide more and different educational solutions for students."  

- In Sweden as in other EU member states, there are Second Chance Schools just as one example of educational provision for youth between 20-24 who for different reasons need to complete their education. In these schools work is done by special teachers and youth-workers with focus on learning and leisure activities.

- One additional concrete example is an ESF-funded project called “Andra chansen” in the city of Uppsala. This project has reached students who have dropped out from secondary school or are at risk to drop out. After three years the project showed very good results and is from 2013 implemented in the municipality’s regular youth-work. Some of the success factors mentioned in one report from Theme group Youth is that students can combine on the job training with studies, that students get individual support in small groups and that each student get a tailor-made individual learning plan based on capacity and need.

- Last, but not least SALAR (Association of Local Authorities and Regions) is coordinating a large project involving 55 municipalities in six regions and have financing until June 2014. The aim with the project is to develop tools and deepen the knowledge on youth who do not finalise their secondary education. The project will also cooperate with partners in the Baltic-see region.

The National Board for Youth Affairs published a report in 2006 with focus on young people’s opportunities for a meaningful leisure time, the national representative study was based on quantitative and qualitative data and one of the main results were that for youth the most important dimension of a leisure time activity was the learning dimension in activities organised by themselves or others for them.

5.2 Employment and entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is a subject in secondary schools. The Swedish National Agency for Education supports schools in this work and a lot of materials are provided on their homepage. In many projects that are financed with the European Social Fund and where the aim is to support young people’s transitions from school to work, Entrepreneurship is used as a method/approach. Many coaches and youth-workers use this approach in the motivational work with youth, where the aim is to teach young persons to have a general entrepreneurship attitude to their own personality and see opportunities in their everyday life.

- Communicare is a non-profit organisation with many youth projects in Sweden where they mainly focus on entrepreneurship in the above mentioned manner. Young people are also supported and informed on how to start up their own companies.

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26 See: www.skl.se
28 See: www.skolverket.se
29 See: www.communicare.nu
30 See: www.temaunga.se and www.tillvaxtverket.se
Another important actor considering entrepreneurship is the Swedish Job and Society Foundation, the national umbrella organisation of Enterprise Agencies (NyföretagarCentrum) covering 200 of Sweden’s 290 municipalities. Since 1985 the foundation has stimulated the start of more new companies and provides support and information to youth.

One project example is “Incubator”, an ESF project for young job-seekers aged 20-29. The incubator offers inspiration, motivation, empowerment, knowledge, lectures, networking, business development, the opportunity to rent an employer and a workplace. Start your own business with access to advice, guidance and coaching, individual planning and adaptation31.

The validation of informal and non-formal learning in Sweden is undertaken with several tools including Youth Pass (within the programme Youth in Action). In relation to youth projects where the aim is to help young people to find jobs, there are two successful validation tools provided by Open College Network (OCN)32 and Experience Learning Definition (ELD)33.

5.3 Health and well-being

The National Board for Youth Affairs published a government report in 2007 with national coverage on the health situation among youth in Sweden34. Generally the conclusion in the report is that a majority of young people in Sweden feel and are healthy, but there are groups that are in the risk-zone. Girls feel more mentally ill and stressed compared with boys, Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people feel more mentally stressed and ill compared with heterosexual youth. Another heterogeneous group that feel more illness and stress is youth with different kind of disabilities compared with those without disabilities. Long-term unemployed young people feel more mental illness and stress compared with youth in education, employment and training. There is one online site for youth in Sweden that provides health information to youth on many topics. Young people are also offered private support on line if needed. The website is: www.umo.se

The Theme Group Youth has published a report based on 20 European Social Fund (ESF) project visits and many interviews. The aim was to highlight the preventive work with youth in order to improve their health. Some of the conclusions are that many activities are based on the mental and social dimension of health preventive work and that the activities show good results, but the lack of psychical training with especially youth who belong to the category of NEETS need to be developed35.

In the government report from the National Board for Youth affairs: Fokus -1036 which is based on national representative sample it stated that;

Young people who are in poor health show lower levels of support for the concept of democracy, have less faith in their opportunities to express their views to decision makers and are less willing to join in and exert influence in their own municipality. The importance of young people’s health is most marked in relation to the sense of being able to influence their own life situation and their sense of participating in society. Our analyses show that young people who are long-term unemployed not only stand

31 inkubator@companion.se
32 See: www.ocn.se
33 See: www.resurs.folkbildning.net
outside the labour market but also occupy a marginalised position in relation to society at large. Individuals who stand outside the labour market have less faith in their opportunities to influence political decisions and they participate in elections significantly less often than others.

5.4 Participation

Participation of youth is a cross-sectorial priority in all policy areas and is underlined in the Youth-policy Bill\textsuperscript{37}, as mentioned in previous sections. The National Board for Youth Affairs published a government report with national coverage on youth participation in 2010\textsuperscript{38}

The analyses of \textit{Fokus 10} show a clear polarisation in society, which can be seen in the worryingly large differences in young people’s opportunities to exert influence over their lives in the various spheres studied (family, school, work, society, neighborhood). The degree of segregation in society has increased and many young people do not come into contact with peers from different social or ethnic backgrounds. Young people tend less and less to join the various available forms of collective organising. Meeting places for young people, such as open youth activities, open recreational activities and other open activities are not used by a majority of young people today. But these meeting places have an increasingly important role to play as contact interfaces for young people and for the various actors involved in social movements and in associations and societies. The relationships between teachers, youth workers, associational leaders, managers, municipal officials and others who come into contact with young people have also become increasingly important for young people’s sense of participation. The influence of young people appears to be realised to an increasing extent in the relationships between young people and the leaders or teachers who work with those activities where young people spend their time. The analyses show, for example, that the single most important factor for young people to perceive themselves as having influence at work is having a manager to talk to and receive support from when the need arises.

Some major youth organisations working with the issue of participation include:

- Sweden's Youth Council\textsuperscript{39} is a cooperation and association of the country's local and regional youth and was formed in 2003. They have approximately 50 active member organisations around the country all of which run their own activities. Youth Council is an organisation by and for young people in a particular community or a neighbourhood. Youth Council activities take place in their own municipality or their own district and aim to make life better for them and other young people where they live.

- Sweden's student council –usually called SVEA- (Sveriges ungdomsråd)\textsuperscript{40} believe and work for a better and more democratic school. SVEA is an organisation of and for students councils in upper primary and secondary schools and is one of the largest youth associations. The organisation as a whole is based on voluntary commitment from the students around Sweden.

\textsuperscript{37} Sveriges rikstag (2009), Regeringens skrivelse 2009/10:53 En strategi för ungdomspolitiken, Stockholm: Sveriges rikstag.
\textsuperscript{38} Ungdomsstyrelsen (2010), \textit{Fokus-10- En analys av ungas inflytande}. Stockholm: Ungdomsstyrelsen.
\textsuperscript{39} See: www.lsu.se
\textsuperscript{40} See: www.svea.org
5.5 Voluntary activities / volunteering

As mentioned previously youth in Sweden are engaged in youth organisations and leisure activities provided by the municipality. Voluntary activities exist of course but have not the same tradition as for example in Great Britain, Private companies in Sweden sell journeys and organise voluntary activities for young people who wish to work in less rich areas in the world, but to volunteer in the well-fare sector in Sweden is not so common. One concrete example were youth are volunteering is extra homework support for students.

- Schools and individual students can get homework support with their extra-curricular activities through organisations such as Red Cross and Swedish Save the Children. Even in this area private companies are selling homework support.
- The EU programme Youth in Action promotes voluntary activities and through the EVS programme (European Voluntary Service), many young people volunteer within the European Union. One of the priorities of the EU program is the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities. The program is available to all and young people with special needs. This can involve young people with social or economic problems, youth with a disability or geographical barriers. The European Voluntary Service enables young people between 18 and 30 years to go abroad for two to twelve months. One secondary school in Sweden (Riksgymnasiet) in the city of Örebro has for many years sent their students with hearing disabilities on voluntary service to Europe with fantastic results. The young individuals mature and get remarkably improved self-esteem after such an experience41 http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/
- Volontärbyrån42 is a non-profit organisation that works with volunteers assignments throughout Sweden and educates organisations in volunteer coordination. The work is for all ages including youth and elderly people.

5.6 Social inclusion

The National Board for Youth Affairs have published a governmental report on living conditions among youth with different kinds of disabilities43 The results show that there are great health problems within this heterogeneous group. The report also contains a number of good examples from all over Sweden that succeeds to improve the living conditions of young persons with disabilities, one of them is “Job at sight” (Jobb I sikte).

This ESF-funded project collaborates with several secondary schools for students with special needs. The aim is to increase their ability to work after they leave secondary school.

Because a large part of the training in the last year of schooling is focused on job-practice, the students know more about the work demands and conditions.

Having mapped the participants' areas of interest, the personnel and students are seeking internships. In practice, there are personal assistants who support and act as a link between employers and participants. This support continues even when the participant has been employed.

41 See: www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se; www.orebro.se/riksgymnasier.rgd-rgh.
42 See: www.volontarbyran.com
The National Agency in Sweden that is responsible for the European Social Fund (Svenska ESF rådet)\textsuperscript{44} has a project bank on their homepage. In December 2012 there were approximately 180 ongoing youth projects in Sweden and they are all working with inclusion of young persons that for different reasons risk exclusion from society. All ESF-projects are evaluated and can be found on the Agencies homepage. The Theme Group Youth collects and analyses method development and success factors in these projects and the target group in these projects is heterogeneous, but reports show that every project have participants with different kind of disabilities and are in need for individual solutions. The main success factors in the work with vulnerable young people who risk exclusion highlighted by the Theme Group Youth are: it must take time, young people need to have access to a place to go to on regular bases where they get daily support, individual motivational support, individual matching with e\’n educational options or training / job. If the personnel consist of a multi-professional team it is a big advantage because then the participant have access to several methodological tools\textsuperscript{45}.

5.7 Youth and the world

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations (Landsrådet för Sveriges Ungdomsorganisationer LSU) is the umbrella organisation for Swedish youth organisations and encourages all their member organisations to collaborate with youth organisations in the world. LSU brings together 81 independent organisations, which together have more than half a million young members from across the country.

LSU is highlighting the youth perspective in development cooperation and international politics in Sweden, in the EU and at the global level. LSU annually appoints a youth representative to the Swedish UN delegation and is engaged in poverty reduction strategies through the project Tackling Poverty Together - some of the many ways in which they try to influence policies affecting young people in the world\textsuperscript{46}.

LSU currently has partnerships with youth organisations in many parts of the world. Their partner organisations are working in a similar way as LSU does in Sweden. Their circumstances are different, but the goal is the same: they want to strengthen young people\’s rights and influence. Democracy and human rights with a focus on young people is the starting point in the collaborations. LSU\’s operations in Sweden and the world, is characterised by a mutual partner relationship - LSU is emphasising the mutual learning dimension. Some of the countries that LSU cooperates with: Cambodia (Youth Council, Cambodia), Kenya (Youth Alive Kenya), Lebanon (Youth Advocacy Process), Turkey (Bilgi Youth Studies Unit), Zimbabwe (Youth Empowerment and Transformation).

5.8 Creativity and culture

The Swedish Arts Council (Kulturrådet) is a government authority whose principal task is to implement national cultural policy determined by the Parliament. Cultural policy objectives state that everyone should be given the opportunity to participate in cultural life and cultural activities, and also have the opportunity to take part in creative activity of their own. Making culture accessible – in every respect is the overriding aim of the Swedish Arts Council.

- UKM (Ung Kultur Möts: "Youth Culture Meets")\textsuperscript{47} - is a nationwide initiative that was started in 1997. The ambition is to arrange festivals all over

\textsuperscript{44} See: www.esf.se
\textsuperscript{45} See: www.temaunga.se
\textsuperscript{46} See: www.lsu.se
\textsuperscript{47} See: www.ukm.se
Sweden where young artists between the ages of 13 and 20 can participate and express their artistic vision in front of an audience and in front of each other. During the festivals, participants are able to attend workshops, where they can explore their interests and be inspired by the works of other artists. UKM is open to all artistic genres and methods of cultural expression, especially to those art forms and genres that have no other arena or forum. UKM festivals are based on the cooperation between young people and adult organisers who work to identify young people's areas of knowledge and talent. In order to make new contacts and create large networks, UKM organisers hope to work with different partners in the arena of youth culture, such as: municipal organisations, youth recreation centres, youth clubs, educational associations, art schools and cultural institutions. The annual festivals are arranged on a local, regional and national level. More than 90 festivals take place in Sweden each year. UKM is partly funded by the Swedish National Council for Cultural Affairs.

6 Outcomes and impact of youth work

6.1 Target and reach

6.1.1 Target groups

Swedish youth policy is general and targeted; the ages covered by the policy are 13 to 25 years. The target groups are NEETs, early school leavers, young people with disabilities, and unemployed youth.48

The National Council of Swedish Youth Organisations, LSU49 have been working for over 60 years to improve the conditions, rights and participation for youth. LSU is a meeting place for young people and youth organisations where they can acquire knowledge, contacts and experience. LSU provide training and conferences for young leaders and enable collaboration with other organisations. LSU is working with the youth perspective in developing cooperation and international politics in Sweden, in the EU and at a global level.

49 See: www.lsu.se
Figure 6.1 A comparison between different kinds of youth organisations in respect to the amount of members

Source: Different youth organisations (other than sports clubs) in respect to amount of members. (SoU 2009:29)

6.1.2 Reach

In official policy, leisure in associations is supposed to be the main form of youth work, and governmental economical supports are given to national youth leisure-oriented organisations. This support aims at promoting a stimulating leisure, democracy, non-discriminatory praxis and gender equality. At least 60% of the members must be from 16 to 29 years old to get governmental economical support. About half of young people between 16 and 25 years in Sweden are member of an association. The main organised activity among young people takes place in sports clubs. About 30 per cent of youth are members of sport associations. Among other national youth organisations the role- and conflict playing association is the largest with 80 000 members (receiving about 1,8 million euro in governmental support). The diagram shows a comparison between different kinds of youth organisations in respect to the amount of members.

SKL (SALAR) coordinates an ESF funded project which will run until June 2014 which involves five regions and 55 Municipalities. The project is called “Plug In” and the main aim is to lower drop-out rates from secondary school.

Research shows (that approximately 8-10 per cent of each cohort of young people risk exclusion. This group of young people are not affected by good or bad economic times, they need targeted early interventions.

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50 National board for Youth Affairs, Annual Report 2011 (can be downloaded on www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se
51 SoU 2009:29 and Forkby, Torbjörn (to be published in: The history of youth work in Europe, Volume 4 - Relevance for today’s youth work policy (2013). Ed. Taru, M. Council of Europe
52 For more information see: Plug In www.skl.se
53 Young people not in employment or education– how many are they and what are they doing? (2012) Theme Group Youth www.temaunga.se
6.2 Outcomes and impact

The Theme Group Youth (www.temaunga.se) are collecting good practice and evidence based methods from ESF-projects working with youth. Some success factors that are underlined with the work with young people that risk exclusion is that youth workers can work with individuals in a holistic manner, that there is no time-pressure, that long-term work and follow-up of individuals can be provided and alternative learning possibilities provided.

6.3 SWOT

Table 6.1 Summary of key strengths and weaknesses of the youth work sector in Sweden

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRENGTHS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Youth policy and work done with and for youth see youth as a resource in Sweden and not a problem.</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ A strong and long tradition of youth work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ A cross-sectorial approach where several National Agencies have youth policy issues as a Government assignment, but there is one National Agency responsible: National Board for Youth Affairs.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>■ National Board for Youth Affairs publish a yearly report on some key – indicators showing the living conditions among young people between 13 and 25 year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ To use the resources among youth better and constantly improve young person’s possibilities to influence their own life and in the society they live in.</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ To build on evidence-based methods in youth-work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ To develop and invest more in youth-research, since policy needs knowledge-based youth policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ An opportunity is if the annual indicator report from the National Board for Youth Affairs is directly followed with policy measures.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEAKNESSES</th>
<th>THREATS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>■ Lack of cross-sectorial work between relevant policy areas affecting the heterogeneous group of youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>■ Youth work as a whole has not benefited from the consistent application of quality standards – so difficult to identify and demonstrate quality delivery.</td>
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7 Conclusions and recommendations

The development needs for youth work in Sweden is highlighted by the National Board for Youth Affairs on a regular basis.

Every year the Agency is following up youth policy and priorities in the area with an indicator report called Ung Idag (Youth Today)54, where young people’s living

54 See: http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/publikationer
conditions are followed up in a longitudinal way. The aim of this annual indicator report is influence policy measures so that they take account of the results of the report.

The latest in-depth Government report on young people with disabilities shows that living conditions are worse among young persons with disabilities than for young people without. The largest differences can be seen in health, education and opportunities for employment. This is clearly an area where policy and practice can be improved.

Another priority highlighted by two experts interviewed is young people’s access to meaningful leisure time. There is a constant need to prioritise youth clubs and other meeting places for young persons (with meaningful and learning activities). The message was that it is common that unemployment among youth can take all the focus and as a result less priority is given to leisure and culture.

Despite the work being done on daily basis in schools, youth clubs and youth houses much improvement is left to be done. Equal education for all is still an unrealised goal in Sweden. Students have different individual, social and contextual qualifications for reaching their learning targets and it is a complex map of factors that affect their motivation, mental health and their school results.

Young people who grow up in socially deprived areas have a worse starting point than those who live in more prosperous areas. Individual factors among students, for example ability to study and motivation, can to an extent, explain differences in learning performance, choice of courses and school. Many young people often experience a combination of effects of class, ethnicity, gender and housing segregation. Good teachers and youth workers can compensate for possible negative background factors, but Youth policy has to be a priority and youth workers (including a broad professional composition) need improved recognition an in-service training on regular basis in Sweden.

The importance of a deeply rooted commitment to give young people development opportunities through community based civil society organisations and associations, not least through sports and cultural associations are central pillars in youth-work. Youth work is also a matter of picking up different socio-economic group conditions and part of a work to safeguard democracy and promote trust and tolerance between different groups.

Young people's participation in society must also include a desire to create meetings between various youth groups to create mutual understanding and responsibility. Moreover, even if youth can make a difference and to compensate for the downsides, which is a consequence of the socio-economic and structural conditions, are the decisive power to alter these conditions out of the direct encounter between youth worker and young people.

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