



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Finland

2020

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/en/youthwiki>

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Finland

OVERVIEW

Youth Policy in Finland

Finland is famous for a variety of reasons, one of those being that the country has its own law to respect the rights of young people. The [Youth Act](#) promotes social inclusion, opportunities to participate in the decision-making over matters of concern, development of individuals' abilities, improvement of living conditions, and access to free-time hobbies and youth work — to name a few. The [Government Decree](#) supports the implementation of the act by, for example, specifying the allocation of the duties involved at the national, regional and local levels.

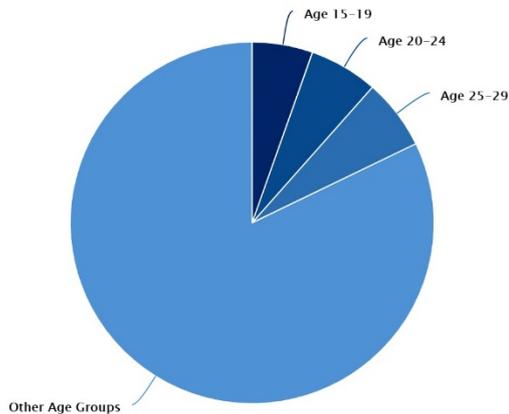
The [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#) has its basis in the Youth Act, but it is also informed by the Government Programme. The [Government Programme](#) for the year 2019- 2023 'Inclusive and competent Finland – a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable society' includes the pledge for fair and equal treatment across generations and highlights participation and inclusion. The social inclusion and participation of children and young people will be promoted with digital means, and efforts will be made to improve their media literacy. According to the Government Programme, 'the main themes for the national programme for youth work and youth policy are to prevent social exclusion and bolster inclusion among young people.' The newest National Youth Work and Policy Programme was published in 2020 and is outlined in Youth Wiki/Finland [1.9 Current Debates and Reforms](#).

In addition, the Government has launched a cross-administrative democracy programme extending until 2025. One of the key priorities of the democracy programme is to develop school teaching and other school practices, as well as to support children's and young people's ability to have a say in their local environment and society. (For more information, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation](#)). Currently, the Youth Wiki chapters include information also about the earlier Government Programme, National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme and Democracy Programme. For that perspective, all chapters will be updated in 2020- 2021.

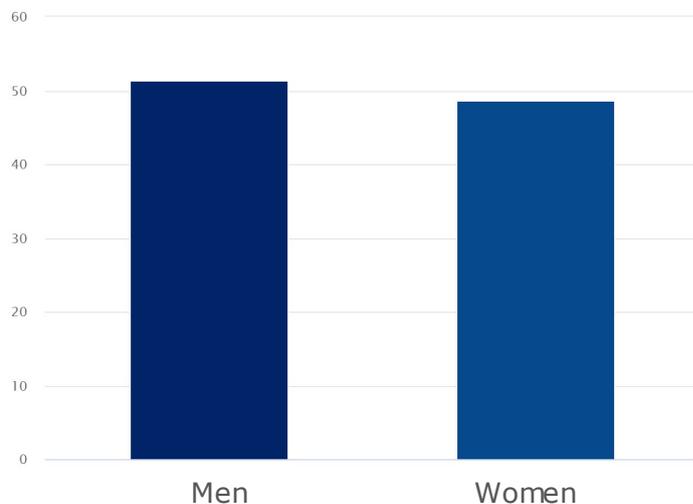
Like other countries, Finland is also currently suffering from the Covid-19 epidemic (see [Government's information and advice on the coronavirus](#)). Youth employment has been strongly hit by the Covid-19 epidemic (see more in [Youth Wiki/Finland 3. Employment and Entrepreneurship Overview](#)). For that reason, the amount of study places in universities, for example, has been raised. At the same time, a reasonable amount of teaching activities at a variety of levels is being offered only online – in some regions, these periods of online activities have several months by February 2021. Moreover, the regular offer of face-to-face health services for young people, normally offered alongside educational services has been reduced (YLE NEWS 27.1.2021). Several organisations have reported that many are seeking online support. For the research project "How young people have experienced the time of Covid -19 epidemic, a thousand Finnish young people were interviewed. Those who report the negative impact of distance learning are those experiencing loneliness, those who have been hurt most by the restrictions regarding social contact, reported researcher Jenni Lahtinen from [Finnish Youth Research Network](#) (About the study in Finnish [Yksinäisyys yhteydessä etäopetuksen kielteisiin kokemuksiin - Nuorisotutkimusseura ry](#)). In addition to employment, health, and education the Covid-19 epidemic will change the landscape of all public activities, and these changes will be progressively taken into account in all the chapters of Youth Wiki.

There are also some structural changes coming related to the organisation of public services in Finland. The Government is starting preparations for restructuring health and social services, taking into account the work done during previous electoral terms and making sure that relevant constitutional requirements are met. (For more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland [7.8 Current Debates and Reforms](#)).

Ratio of young people in the total population on 1st January



Ratio of men and women in the youth population



Statistic references

References:

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_010 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2017): Eurostat, yth_demo_020 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2016): Eurostat, yth_demo_070 [data extracted on 4/09/2018].

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

As described on its webpage: '[The Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is responsible for the overall development of youth work and youth policy. The aim of youth policy is to improve the conditions in which young people grow up and live in and to enhance interaction between the generations through inter-sectoral cooperation. The objective of youth work is to support young people in growing and transitioning to leading an independent life and to promote their participation in society.

The Ministry strives to support young people in growing up and gaining independence, promote their active citizenship and social empowerment, and improve the environment in which they grow up, as well as their living conditions.

The development of youth policy issues is informed by the [Government Programme](#), the [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#) as well as other strategies and implementation plans by the Government.'

In 2021 there are 309 municipalities (see: the [Glossary](#)) in Finland, which exercise significant autonomy, see the [Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities](#). The municipality is responsible for how youth policy and youth work is implemented at the local level. The situation will continue to be run as such, despite the large reforms in health, social services and regional government currently been planned.

1.1 Target population of youth policy

The [Youth Act](#) defines young people as those under 29 years of age. Therefore, the actors that operate in the field of youth work target their actions at this age group. In addition, there are some specific policy measures targeting different sub-groups among youth. For more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [1.3 National Youth Strategy](#).

At the same time, there are several specific legislative documents which use varying definitions of youth, which shows the flexibility of the concept. For example, in the [Child Welfare Act](#) of 2007 anyone under 18 years of age is considered to be a child and those who are aged between 18–20 are considered to be young persons. However, the statutory [child benefit](#) is paid only for those under the age of 17. The Act on Agricultural Structural Support defines "young" farmers as those who are younger than 41 years of age.

In addition, several national programmes and statistics agencies target young people but define their target groups in different ways. For instance, youth unemployment usually refers to those aged 15-24. Low-threshold [One-Stop Guidance Centres](#) (in Finnish: Ohjaamo) support and provide personal and individually tailored support for young people under 30 years of age.

1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

Finland has had separate legislation on youth work since the beginning of the 1970s. The [Youth Act](#) covers youth work (see: the [Glossary](#)) and activities, youth policy and the related responsibilities of the central and local government, cross-sectoral cooperation as well as state funding. The Youth Act is complemented by the [Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy](#).

In addition, several other laws, such as the [Child Welfare Act](#) and the Basic Education Act, refer to youth issues and address the rights and obligations of young people.

Scope and contents

The Youth Act specifies the objectives and values of youth work and youth policy. The purpose of the Act is specified as follows:

- 1) to promote the social inclusion of young people and provide them with opportunities for exerting an influence and improving their skills and capabilities to function in society;
- 2) support the growth, independence and sense of community of young people and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and adoption of skills necessary for this purpose;
- 3) support young people's free-time pursuits and engagement in civic society;
- 4) promote non-discrimination and equality among young people and the realisation of their rights; and
- 5) improve young people's growth and living conditions.

The implementation of the Youth Act is based on solidarity, cultural diversity and internationality, sustainable development, healthy lifestyles, respect for life and the environment, and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The Act also lays down provisions for both the local and national levels of youth policy and youth work. As a part of the national youth work and youth policy, the Act defines the tasks and roles of the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#), the [State Youth Council](#) and the Assessment and State Aid Commission. It also includes provisions on the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme. Additionally, it lays down provisions for Government transfers and state subsidies on youth issues.

As a part of local youth work and youth policy, the Youth Act defines the roles and responsibilities of the local authorities, youth associations and other organisations doing youth work. These include for instance, also provisions on cross-sectoral cooperation, outreach youth work and youth workshop activities. For more information about the youth work in Finland see [Glossary](#).

The rights of young people

The rights of young people specified in the Youth Act include the participation of young people in local and national level youth work and youth policy. According to the Act, youth work and youth policy at the national level shall be implemented *"by engaging in cooperation with municipalities, youth organisations, other entities and the young people themselves."*

In addition, young people must be given opportunities to be involved and exert an influence in the handling of matters concerning youth work and youth policy from local to national level. Furthermore, it is specified that young people shall be consulted in matters that affect them. Several other Acts define specific rights and obligations of young people.

The objective of the Youth Act is to support all persons between the age of 0 and 29 years of age. However, the Act includes special provisions on outreach youth work and youth workshops aimed at assisting those young people who are especially in need of support (see Youth Wiki/Finland [4.7 Youth Work to foster social inclusion](#)).

Revisions/updates

Youth legislation has been regularly renewed (1972, 1986, 1995, 2006 and 2016).

The Youth Act 111/2016 was accepted by the parliament in December 2016, and came into force on 1st of January 2017.

The Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy related to the renewed Act came into force on 13th of April 2017.

1.3 National youth strategy

Existence of a National Youth Strategy

According to the [Youth Act](#) the Government shall adopt a national youth work and policy programme every four years. The latest [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#) based on the Youth Act and the [Government Decree on Youth Work](#) was published in January 2020. Consultation related to the writing process of the programme targeted at different stakeholders, including young people, took place in June-December 2019. The consultation process included interviews of young people, a stakeholder survey, the possibility of writing statements and of commenting on the draft online (see more on the obligations and tradition of consulting young people in Youth Wiki/Finland [5.4 Young people's participation in Policy-Making](#)).

Scope and contents

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme coordinates the objectives and measures determined by the key ministries for promoting young people's growth and living conditions, which are designed to contribute to the attainment of the objectives defined in the Youth Act during the programme period.

One of the programme's main goals is to establish the youth policy perspective as part of public sector decision-making. The programme will help the effective use of resources from various sectors aimed at improving the conditions in which young people grow and live. The core content of the programme is to set out more detailed objectives and measures necessary to achieve the goals defined in the Government programme as well as other government strategies and programmes.

In accordance with the current [Government Programme](#), the main themes of the National Youth Work and Youth Policy programme for the years 2020-2023 are the prevention of social exclusion and the enhancement of inclusion and involvement. Social exclusion will be prevented more effectively by ensuring equal opportunities for a meaningful life for all youths. The programme includes three targets which will be used to achieve these goals: 1) Young people will have prerequisites for smoothly running daily lives – Social exclusion will be reduced; 2) Young people will have the means and the skills for participation, and for exerting influence; 3) Young people will have trust in society – Non-discrimination and security will be strengthened.

In addition to the Government's youth policy objectives and their related measures, the programme includes objectives for the youth sector's European and international activities and defines the priorities of Finland's selected national youth work centres of excellence.

The programme also describes how the monitoring and the evaluation of the programme is to be implemented. In addition, the programme included a description of the situation of young people, based upon statistical data and research on children and young people.

The programme encompasses all young people under 29 years of age, as referred to in the Youth Act. The key measures determined in the programme are, however, targeted at improving the living conditions of young people in the core group of youth, or roughly between 12 and 25 years of age.

Based on the Government Degree on Youth Work and Policy that outline the preparation of the programme, the following aspects should be given a due consideration to:

- 1) the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and Finland's other international obligations related to the scope of application of the Youth Act's application;
- 2) the youth policy objectives established by the European Union and Council of Europe; and
- 3) the diversity of youth and the various minorities among young people.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

According to the Youth Act the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is primarily responsible authority that implements the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme in conjunction with various other ministries, such as [Ministry of Justice](#), [Ministry of the Interior](#), [Ministry of Defence](#), [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#), and [Ministry of the Environment](#).

The implementation of the programme is funded by the annual budgets of the ministries and different branches of the administration. Additional funding also comes from various other national and European programmes (i.e. the European Social Fund), as well as from the regional and local levels.

Based on the Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy, the State Youth Council shall, once during each government term, prepare an assessment of the progress made in the implementation of the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme and make proposals for changes, as and when appropriate.

Youth work centres of expertise form a network that support the implementation of the objectives set out by the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2017-2019. For more information about youth work centres of expertise, see: [Youth Wiki / Finland 1.4 Youth policy decision-making](#).

Revisions/updates

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2020-2023 builds upon three [earlier programmes](#), referred as the "Child and Youth Policy Programme" (2012-2015, 2016 and 2007-2011) referred to as the "Child and Youth Policy Programme" (2012-2015, 2016 and 2007-2011) and the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme (2017-2019). The first two were prepared in accordance with the earlier Youth Act (2006). The major difference between the two earlier programmes and the rest is that now the frame of reference upon which the writing process has been based is the actual government programme.

1.4 Youth policy decision-making

Structure of Decision-making

The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is the responsible authority for the overall development, coordination and drafting of national development plans on youth issues in the central government. The work is carried out by the [Division of Youth Work and Youth Policy](#) of the Department for Youth and Sport Policy in the Ministry.

When planning and developing the national youth policy the work is done in a close cooperation with several actors. These include such actors as other ministries, [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see: the [Glossary](#)), other state agencies, municipalities (see: the [Glossary](#)), and youth organisations that have a significant role in the field of Finnish youth work and youth policy.

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme, prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture, is the central document that provides the national objectives and guidelines for youth policy that the Government adopts every four years. The [Education and Culture Committee](#) is the parliamentary commission that is in charge of most of the youth issues.

Major roles and tasks of the institutional actors involved in youth policy making

- The [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) are responsible for the regional implementation of the Ministry of Education and Culture in the field of education, day care, libraries, sports, and youth work (see: the [Glossary](#)). The Ministry exercises

result-based management and provides the resources for the Regional State Administrative Agencies. Their tasks include e.g. assessing the accessibility of basic services and producing information on impact of local and regional youth work and youth policy. Additionally, the agencies distribute discretionary government transfers to youth workshops, outreach youth work, local hobby activities of children and young people, and local and regional projects in the field of youth. The six regional state administrative agencies are: Southern Finland, Eastern Finland, Southwestern Finland, Western and Inland Finland, Northern Finland, and Lapland.

- **Municipalities in Finland** exercise significant autonomy (see: the [Glossary](#)). The municipality has responsibility on how the youth policy and youth work is implemented in the local level. The municipal youth work services include e.g. information and counselling services, youth facilities and hobby opportunities, sports, cultural and multicultural youth activities, outreach youth work and youth workshops. At the local level, municipalities can allocate resources as they see fit, but they should evaluate the service with young people on a regular basis – also the government assesses municipal youth work as a basic service, in practice those assessments are carried out by the Regional State Administrative Agencies (see more about the assessment process in Youth Wiki/Finland [10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work](#)). The municipalities have a central role in youth work in Finland; there are around 3 400 youth work professionals in the municipalities.
- **The expert bodies** assisting the Ministry of Education and Culture in matters of youth affairs are the [State Youth Council](#) and Assessment and State Aid Commission of which the roles and tasks are defined in the Youth Act. The former has an expertise on youth work and youth policy, whereas the latter is an expert body on state subsidies. The State Aid Commission makes a proposal on the distribution of state aid to national youth work organisations and national youth work centres of expertise. Both bodies are attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- **Ministries.** Youth policy influences young people over administrative borders, as youth policy is cross-sectorial several ministries are responsible for policy areas concerning young people. These ministries include e.g. the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#), [Ministry of Justice](#), and [Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#).
- **An other important national public agency** involved in youth policy implementation is the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#). The agency functions under the Ministry of Education and Culture. The organisation and tasks are set out in the legislation. It is responsible for the development of early childhood education and care, pre-primary, basic, general upper secondary, vocational upper secondary, adult education as well as for international mobility and cross-border co-operation. The latter includes the coordination and managing of scholarships and exchange programmes, including nearly all education, cultural, youth and sport programmes of the EU in Finland. Also, information and statistics on international mobility are provided.
- **Youth work centres of expertise** form a network that support the implementation of the objectives set out by the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) (see more in Youth Wiki/Finland 10.8 Current debates and reforms).
- In 2020, six youth work centres were accepted by the Ministry for the next four years.
 1. The city of Lahti is leading the consortium for municipal youth work called Kanuuna (see descriptions of each centre of expertise below),
 2. the Guides and Scouts of Finland for youth organisations,
 3. the Youth Academy for youth participation,
 4. the National Workshop Association for targeted youth work,
 5. the city of Helsinki/ Verke for digital youth work and
 6. the South-Eastern University of Applied Sciences for the youth work in schools and educational institutions.
- 1. [Centre of Expertise for Municipal Youth Work Kanuuna](#) (Cannon) advocates for municipal youth work and serves youth workers throughout the country. As a centre of

expertise, Kanuuna's objective is to strengthen expertise and cooperation in the field, increase awareness of the work and the production of information, as well as develop and model quality assessment of municipal youth work.

- 2. [The Youth Work Centre of Expertise Kentauri](#) studies the outcomes of young people's free-time hobbies and NGO activities, develops NGOs' data production related to youth work, develops the NGOs' impact assessment, investigates the effects of the changing operating environments of youth NGO activities and improves the identification and recognition of young people's competence.
- 3.-4. Descriptions in English are under construction.
- 5. [Verke](#) is the national Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work in Finland. Verke's vision is to provide everyone who works with young people with the opportunity to use digital media and technology as part of their work.
- 6. [The center of expertise Nuoska](#) develops youth work models at schools and educational institutes regionally and nationwide.

Main Themes

The central document that provides guidelines and national objectives is the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme that the Ministry of Education and Culture prepares and the government adopts every four years (see more Youth Wiki/Finland [1.3 National Youth Strategy](#)).

The National Agency for Youth

There is no single National Agency for Youth in Finland. Several ministries and branches of administration, each having its own focus and themes, are responsible for youth issues, managing youth related programmes, and disseminating information on youth issues. Also, the role of the youth work centres of expertise, the national youth organisations, national youth work service organisations, and national youth work organisations is significant.

The Ministry of Education and Culture's youth work and youth policy division produces youth policy documents and information, as well as supports financially municipalities, national youth centres, youth organisations, and other actors operating in the field of youth work. Since 2017, certain organisations were appointed as national youth work centres of expertise. These organisations are responsible for developing youth work and policy in their areas of expertise. The Ministry of Education and Culture agrees on guidelines for the work in annually held negotiations with the organisations.

The [Ministry of Justice](#), in cooperation with relevant other actors, organises events and produces material for young people that provides relevant information for them e.g. on participation and voting. Lapsiasiavaltuutettu (The [Ombudsman for Children](#)), which is an autonomous and independent authority operating under the Ministry of Justice, promotes the rights and welfare of children and young people, see for example [Do you know about the human rights of children?](#) It also monitors and reports annually to the government on the welfare and living conditions of children and young people, and the implementation of their rights. It also reports to Parliament every four years.

The [Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#) facilitates the development communications and global education carried out by civil society organisations. An independent and autonomous [Non-Discrimination Ombudsman](#) promotes equality and prevents discrimination based e.g. on age, ethnic or national origin, or family connections.

There are also several other websites providing information for children and young people. For instance, [lapsenoikeudet.fi](#) on the rights of children by [Communication Network on the Rights of the Child](#) coordinated by Central Union for Child Welfare.

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

One of the main principles underlying the purpose of the Youth Act is cross-sectoral co-operation as such. The key instrument for cross-sectoral youth policy is the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#). The Ministry of Education and Culture, together with other ministries concerned, is responsible for the preparation of the programme. Moreover, the programme even aims to root the youth policy way of thinking in different branches of administration: "The primary means for attaining the objectives of the programme are to root youth policy thinking in the core activities of different administrative branches and to build links supporting the living conditions of young people within and between different government policies. To support this work, a network of liaison officers consisting of officials in the key ministries for the growth and living conditions of young people has been identified during the preparation of the programme. The network will be used to coordinate youth affairs in the state administration. The tasks of the network of liaison officers will be coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The programme then continues: "Youth policy work is broad-based by nature and carried out across the boundaries of various administrative branches. The programme channels the available human and financial resources available to the various ministries so that they benefit young people's growth and living conditions in the best possible manner."

In addition, the national implementation of the Youth Guarantee since 2013 has proven to be an efficient measure for enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation. The Youth Guarantee is one of the [government's key projects](#) and it focuses on cross-sectoral cooperation among the administrative branches of the government. (See more in Youth Wiki/Finland [3. Employment and Entrepreneurship](#)).

1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

According to the [Youth Act](#), [the State Youth Council](#) which is an advisory body attached to the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), is obliged to produce up-to-date information regarding young people and their living conditions.

In practice, the State Youth Council publishes several surveys and studies of young people in cooperation with the [Finnish Youth Research Society](#) and other research actors. It has also developed a set of youth indicators that it follows and updates. This data is taken into consideration in different levels of youth policy making. For instance, the goals and objectives of the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme are widely based on evidence from this data and from other studies conducted by youth researchers.

According to the Youth Act, the coordinating body for cross-sectoral cooperation at local level set by local government is obliged to gather information on young people's growth and living conditions. Based on this data they should evaluate the situation of young people to support and influence local level policy making and planning. For instance, the city of Helsinki publishes a [youth welfare report](#) that is a regularly updated online database, which is based on statistics, indicators, research, expert opinions and the experiences of young people.

There is no clear definition of evidence-based youth policy in Finland. However, as the above examples show that evidence-based youth policy is predominantly understood as policy making which takes into account the analysis of the wellbeing and living conditions of young people and the challenges that they experience.

Cooperation between policy-making and research

The cooperation between the applied youth research and policy making dates back to early 1970s. Currently there are several institutionalised, as well as informal mechanisms, that the Ministry of Education and Culture maintains with the research community:

- The State Youth Council is attached to and funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Together with the Finnish Youth Research Society it releases Youth Barometer which measures the values and attitudes of young people. In 2018 the theme of the Youth Barometer were [power, influence and Europeanness](#), in 2017 the theme of the Youth Barometer was [education](#). In 2016 it was [future](#), in 2015 it was [everyday life management](#), in 2014 it was equality and discrimination, in 2013 it was participation, and in 2012 intergenerational relationships. The Youth Barometer supports the statutory duty of the State Youth Council to annually review the implementation of the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme.
- The Ministry of Education and Culture appointed the [Finnish Youth Research Society](#) as one of the youth work centres of expertise. The Finnish Youth Research Society provides information and expertise on matters relating to young people and youth policy. As a centre of expertise, the Finnish Youth Research Society explores the effectiveness of targeted youth work measures, young people's equal opportunities to have hobbies, education system and its response to topical needs of information according to the guidelines agreed by the Ministry and the Society.
- Representatives of the Finnish Youth Research Society and the State Youth Council were participating in the working group drafting the new Youth Act which came in force 1.1.2017. Also the statistics and studies were taken into account in the process of renewing the act.

The State Youth Council (named earlier as Advisory Council for Youth Affairs) conducted a mid-term review on the implementation of the Child and Youth Policy Programme (2012-2015) in spring 2015. The review considers that more attention should be given to the attempt to intervene in the polarisation of the well-being of children and young people. Similarly, internationalism should be seen as an important element in the lives of children and young people. In the earlier evaluations (2013), it highlighted that more attention should be paid to the development of opportunities to participate for all children and young people regardless of their age, gender, place of residence, or economic status.

In 2015, the international team convened by the Council of Europe visited Finland and contributed to the revision process of the Youth Act. According to the report of the "advisory mission" youth issues in Finland are relatively high on the political agenda and resources are strikingly good (Williamson 2015). Finland's approach to youth work and youth policy is anchored in a purposeful and positive framework of extending opportunity to young people, rather than seeking to regulate and control their behaviour. However, according to the report, Finland should be more innovative regarding how it responds to the changing perspectives and circumstances of young people. Whilst in the urban locations services generally do reach most young people, in the rural areas the isolation and exclusion of young people may be a challenge.

The 2014 report on youth work ([European Commission, 2014](#)) stresses the high degree of professionalism and the high status of the Finnish youth work sector. This is mainly seen as a result of qualified and highly educated workers in the youth work sector and as a result of a well-defined sector with relevant and supportive legislation.

National Statistics and available data sources

Several national youth statistics, indicators and reports are collected and published in Finland annually or on every second year. The most important actors collecting statistical data are Statistics Finland and the [National Institute for Health and Welfare](#). Most of the data is available online.

Examples of the national youth statistics

- Youth Barometer, since 1994, annually measures the values and attitudes of young people between 15 and 29 years of age. The Youth Barometer is published by the State Youth Council in cooperation with the Finnish Youth Research Society.
- [The School Health Promotion Study](#), since 1996, monitors the health and well-being of young people between 14 and 20. The aim of the study is to strengthen the planning and evaluation of health promotion activities at school, municipal, and national levels. The study is carried out every second year by the National Institute for Health and Welfare.
- [Sotka.net](#) is an information service and indicator bank that offers key population welfare and health data from 1990 onwards. It has a special focus on children, young people, and families. Additionally, it also provides international comparisons of the data.
- [Youth work statistics](#) is a portal with national statistics on municipal youth work, youth workshops and outreach youth work. One of offices of the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) administers the portal. The portal has been developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- [The Research Foundation for Studies and Education](#) (Otus) conducts annually a national Student Barometer which is a survey concerning student's everyday life, education, and values.
- [Amisbarometri.fi](#) (VET Student Survey) is a survey carried out every second year in the vocational institutions by the National Union of Vocational Students in Finland (SAKKI ry) and the Research Foundation for Studies and Education Otus. It is supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the National Board of Education.
- The [Finnish Social Science Data Archive](#) (FSD) provides access to a wide range of digital research data for learning, teaching, and research purposes. The youth data covers such topics as information society, consumption, participation, health and sports, and working life.

Youth indicators and national youth reports

Youth well-being indicators: The State Youth Council has produced a comprehensive set of indicators within the following eight areas: Context, Education, Employment and entrepreneurship, Health, Life management, Culture, creativity and hobbies, Participation, Personal integrity and legal protection. Besides the annual Youth Barometer the `Youth Leisure Time Surveys` are carried out every three years since 2009 and `Living conditions of young people` conducted every second year since 2001 in cooperation between the Ministry of Culture and Education, Finnish Youth Research Network, the National Institute for Health and Wellbeing and State Youth Council (see more in [Publications](#)).

Other data on the situation of young people

- [The annual report of the Ombudsman for Children](#)
- [Studies of the Youth Research Society and Youth Research Network](#)

Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field

The Ministry of Education and Culture allocates annually funding from the state's youth budget to youth research. In 2016, the annual basic funding for the Finnish Youth Research Society, which is the leading expert organisation in the field of youth research, was 1.15 million euros. In addition, the Ministry funds several research projects of the society.

The funding is based on annually held negotiations and the results-based management of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The state funding for youth research is based on

the Youth Act which states that the state budget may include appropriations for research on youth work and youth policy.

In 2017, a separate sum of 350 000 Euro was allocated to the youth research and education of youth work. Part of this funding is allocated to the implementation of [Master and Doctor Programme in Youth Work and Youth Research](#) at the University of Tampere. Youth research is also subject to funding under the more general “research and education” category of the government budget.

1.7 Funding youth policy

How Youth policy is funded

From the central administration, most of the funding for youth issues is awarded by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). The Ministry of Education and Culture funds youth issues from the proceeds of gaming activities and budget funding. According to the Ministry of Culture of Education, the Ministry “*almost 30 percent of the proceeds of gaming activities used to promote youth work are allocated to the activities of youth sector organisations with the aim of strengthening the preconditions for civic activities and the youth work of NGOs*”.

The majority of the funding is channelled through central government transfers and grants. According to the definition provided by the [Act on Discretionary Government Transfers](#) transfers mean public funding granted in the form of aid for an activity or project. Some of the funding is allocated to youth activities in municipalities, as the central government transfers are used at the municipalities’ discretion. Targeted central government transfers are also granted to municipalities. Central government transfers for youth work are granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture or the Regional State Administrative Agencies.

For 2019, the estimated use of the state budget was approximately 78 393 million. The majority of this budget is allocated from the proceeds of gaming activities and the rest from the state’s ordinary budget. The corresponding figures were 68,6 in 2017 and 73,5 million in 2016.

Other administrative branches, especially in the areas of education, social welfare, and employment, include appropriations for policy initiatives influencing young people.

What is funded?

The Ministry of Education and Culture annually allocates government funding to the national youth organisations, municipal youth work, statutory bodies, and other actors doing youth work. The Ministry has additional appropriations for measures that address topical issues, such as young people’s social empowerment, international projects, and new forms of youth work and youth culture.

For 2019, estimated use of the state budget of approximately 78 393 million.

Youth workshops	13 500 000
Outreach youth work and the Youth Guarantee	13 650 000
Sámi language nests inside and outside the Sámi Homeland Area	850 000
Teaching the skills of entrepreneurship, economic and working life	800 000
Statutory agents: State Youth Council, Assessment and State	1 050 000

Aid Commission, Youth committee of Sámi parliament

Non-governmental youth organisations working in national level 18 300 000	18 300 000
Government transfers for local youth work (municipalities)	7 975 000
Developing the growth and living conditions of youth in local and regional level	4 670 000
Youth work centres of expertise	5 000 000
Development, innovation and research	3 748 000
International cooperation	1 250 000
National youth centres	5 700 000

Source: State's Draft Budget by the Ministry of Finance

For more information, visit:

[State's Draft Budget](#) (in Finnish)

[Financing youth sector](#)

Financial accountability

Under the [Youth Act](#), registered associations and foundations pursuing the objectives and promoting the underlying principles of the Act may be approved as national youth work organisations eligible for state aid. Eligibility for state aid can be revoked if the organisation ceases to meet the statutory criteria for state aid. Additionally, the Act includes provisions on state grants to national youth work centres of expertise. The Act also proposes provisions on youth workshops.

For instance, according to the Youth Act the subsidies to the national youth work organisations shall be allocated on the basis of eligibility and performance. The act states: "When the eligibility of a youth work organisation for state aid is assessed, due consideration shall be given to the nationwide coverage, quality, scope and social impact of its activities as well as the ways in which the organisation promotes non-discrimination, equality and social inclusion among young people."

As described in the [Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy](#): "When addressing state aid issues, the Assessment and State Aid Commission shall give its informed view on the fulfilment of the criteria set out in the Youth Act. The members of the Commission are appointed by the Government following consultations with parties engaged in youth activities. The Commission members shall be familiar with the operations of national youth work organisations and possess expertise in youth work, youth policy and youth activities."

The Act on Discretionary Government Transfers lays out the provisions on discretionary government transfers that may be granted in the form of general or specific transfers. It also regulates the provision on auditing and duties of the recipients of discretionary government transfer. Further legislation, as well as guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Culture, also creates a framework for subsidies. The recipients of discretionary government transfers must obey the legislation on public procurement.

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Regional Administrative Agencies control the spending of funds according to "performance" criteria. The recipient of the funding

must give a detailed account of the use of the funds to the financing authority. For instance, the report of the general transfers must include a description of the activities, income statement and the balance sheet, the audit report, and other requested documents. Some of the application and reporting forms are currently available on the e-service portal Suomi.fi.

The indicators of young people's well-being and living conditions are one way to examine the results. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.2 Administration and Governance](#).

Use of EU Funds

Structural funds programme for 2014-2020

Finland's ongoing [structural funds programme for 2014-2020](#) include objectives that support measures affecting young people. The [European Social Fund \(ESF\)](#) supports various projects that promote employment, improve knowledge and skills, and increase social inclusion. The total amount of ESF funding for these three priorities for the period 2014-2020 is EUR 497.3 million. Along with national co-funding (50%), there is around EUR 995 million of public funding available for these priorities.

However, only a part of this funding is used for projects supporting youth-related activities. The national implementation of the ESF in the field of the Ministry of Education and Culture is around EUR 89.6 million (incl. national co-funding).

Compared to the previous structural funds programme period 2007–2013, ESF funding has decreased significantly. The evaluation of the previous programme period was implemented in different stages. However, these evaluations do not have a specific youth perspective.

The role of the ESF funds for the implementation of the youth policy is currently significant. One concrete example of the use of the ESF funding is the network of the [one-stop guidance centres](#) for youth that began operation in 2014. In 2019, the network includes approximately 70 One-Stop Guidance Centres in different parts of Finland. The majority of these receive financial support from the ESF, and their activities belong to the field of the [Ministry of Employment and the Economy](#).

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

Finland plays an active role in the European field of youth issues. The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) takes part in multilateral co-operation between the governments, which include the Council of Europe, Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as regional councils.

The [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#) 2017-2019 presents objectives for European and international cooperation. The programme especially considers the needs to improve the quality of youth work, which is seeing crucial for developments in youth employment. Regarding this matter, the programme suggests "investing in

1. Youth workers' competence, networking and the learning from the best practices
2. The development of digital youth work
3. Generating of information concerning the youth field."

The programme also mentions, that: "In addition to these objectives, European cooperation will be directed steered by the common national objectives and agendas during Finland's Chairmanship of the Council of Europe (2018–2019) and the Presidency of the European Union (2019)."

In 2016, Finland held the Presidency of the [Nordic Council of Ministers](#). During Finland's presidency, children and young people were a priority and their wellbeing was supported by means of inter-administrative cooperation. As a part of the chairmanship the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, together with [The Nordic Committee for Children and Young People \(NORDBUK\)](#) and other actors, i.e. ministries, youth organisations and youth research society, organised a broad youth conference on children's and young people's rights and well-being in September 2016. The aim of the conference was to prepare a proposal for the future of youth work and youth policy means, objectives, and implementation of the Nordic youth work and youth policy cooperation. The conference supported the Strategy for work with children and young people in Nordic countries, was prepared by the Nordic Council of Ministers and adopted by the Nordic Ministers in 2009.

International cooperation

Finland has agreements and programmes for cultural exchange with over 50 countries. Some of the bilateral agreements or memorandum of understandings include a section on youth cooperation to promote cooperation between the countries. Between some countries there is a specific Memorandum of Understanding on Youth Cooperation (e.g. China).

Multilateral youth sector cooperation beyond the EU member states is mainly based on the cooperation in the frameworks of the sub-regional structures. One of the most important of these is the intergovernmental [Barents Euro-Arctic Council \(BEAC\)](#) and its [Joint Working Group on Youth \(JEGY\)](#). The Chairmanship of the JWGY rotates among the BEAC member states every two years. Finland held the chairmanship for the period of 2013-2015. The priorities of the Finnish chairmanship in the youth sector were youth participation and social inclusion, equal opportunities for education and work, and youth mobility.

In addition, the [Working Group on Health and related Social Issues \(JWGHS\)](#) of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council has implemented the programme "Children and Youth At Risk in the Barents region" (CYAR).

According to the [Youth Act](#), the state budget may include appropriations for international youth co-operation. In 2017, the appropriations in the state budget for the international cooperation in the youth field is 1 million euros. Projects supported should promote the internationalisation of the youth field.

1.9 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme for the years 2020-2023 was enacted by the [Finnish Government](#) on December 19th 2020 ([Finnish version](#), English translation is forthcoming). The summary of the programme describes the content and policy aims of the programme as such: 'The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme is a statutory, cross-sectoral programme adopted by the Finnish Government every four years. The aim of the programme is to improve the conditions in which young people live and grow. One of the programme's main goals is to establish the youth policy perspective as part of public sector decision-making. The programme will help the effective use of resources from various sectors aimed at improving the conditions in which young people grow and live.'

The national programme is applicable to all young people under the age of 29, as established by the [Youth Act](#). At the end of 2018, there were a total of 1.8 million people in this age category. However, the programme's priorities centre specifically on the core area of young people's lives, i.e. on the improvement of the conditions in which young people between the ages of 12 and 25 grow and live.

In accordance with the current [Government Programme](#), the main themes of the programme for the years 2020-2023 are the prevention of social exclusions and the enhancement of inclusion and involvement. Social exclusion will be prevented more effectively by ensuring equal opportunities for a meaningful life for all youths. The programme includes three targets which will be used to achieve these goals: 1) Young people will have equal opportunities for a smooth everyday life – social exclusion will decrease; 2) Young people will have the means and skills to participate and have influence; 3) The safety capital of young people will grow.

In addition to the Government's youth policy objectives and their related measures, the programme includes objectives for the youth sector's European and international activities and defines the priorities of Finland's selected national youth work centres of excellence.

Ongoing debates

Among other newspapers, regional newspaper Hämeen Sanomat described on 23.12.2019 (in [Finnish](#)), that 'there are suppose to be cuts in funding for those organisations using funding coming from [Veikkaus](#), the gambling company owned by the Finnish State. It is said that '43% of the gambling funds delivered by the Ministry of Education and Culture has been for art and culture, 19% for science, 29% sport and 10% for youth work.' Based on the newspaper's article, the reason for reducing an annual amount of 5.5 million euros from 2020 onwards lies in the responsibility programme Veikkaus is obliged to launch in order to diminish detrimental gaming-related issues.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

As stated in [Youth Act](#), one of the core ideas of youth policy and youth work is to support young people's active citizenship. Volunteering can be seen as a form of such activeness. Based on the act, the governmental bodies at the national and local levels support this effort, for example by funding third sector organisations.

Many youth organisations in Finland provide training for their members, and especially for members that volunteer as instructors or leaders. There are also possibilities for voluntary work abroad. Voluntary activities can also be part of thematic studies in upper secondary education in Finland. Beside the enrichment volunteering gives to the lives of individual young people and to the well-being of the society, the bottom line is that regardless of where the skills are gained, these should be recognised by the education system.

2.1 General context

Historical developments

The concept of volunteering traditionally includes both voluntary work and voluntary activities, which are a type of civic activity and a way to engage in civil society. This also applies to youth volunteering. The field of civil society organisations is very heterogeneous in Finland, and young people volunteer in several active roles in these organisations.

It is traditionally thought in Finland that the welfare state rather than the non-formal sector, should guarantee services. Thus, it is often claimed that voluntary activities should not replace public services. However, volunteering is on the policy agenda and its significance for many different sectors, including sport and youth sector, is recognised. Youth volunteering is seen as a way of learning citizenship skills, encouraging participation and gaining a sense of community.

Public authorities do not organise youth volunteering in Finland, but they do support it in many ways. One of the most important public actors in Finland is the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), which supports and funds youth organisations. Many of these organisations have a long history and therefore their position in the field of youth policy and youth work, and in society generally is extremely important.

At the national level, the [Youth Act](#) promotes the social inclusion of young people and provides them with opportunities. Voluntary activities can support these goals and improve the quality of one's own life. Especially, if a young person is not employed, nor in education, voluntary activities can offer meaningful experiences and develop skills.

Some changes have been made in the area of volunteering related to the Government Programmes. Previous executive director of the [Citizen Forum](#), Leo Stranius, wrote on June 3rd 2019 in the [Forum's Webarena](#) that 'the significance of the civic society is clearly acknowledged in the [Government programme for the years 2019-2023](#).' According to Stranius, several proposals by Citizen Forum's 48 non-governmental organisations have been well taken into account in the actual government programme. Among these were several proposals regarding volunteering and young people. According to Stranius, the following suggested goals have been recognised in the government programme:

- Updating the democracy policy with the goal of promoting volunteering.
- Including volunteering in the activity model for the unemployed.
- Improving communication with young people by implementing new tools.
- Recognising and acknowledging the skills gained and learned from volunteering, by improving cooperation between schools and organisations.
- Reaffirming democracy and human rights education in schools, having ministerial activities within student organisations; updating democratic policies to recognise youth participation.

Stranius concludes, that 'With this government programme, we have a good chance of making Finland the best place in the world to volunteer.'

According to the earlier Prime Minister Juha Sipilä' [Government Programme 2015-2019](#), strict regulation might pose an obstacle for voluntary activities. Thus, the Government aims to decrease the regulations of Finnish society in order to improve the operational environment of volunteering. The ten-year goal of the government is to increase a sense of community and to make it easier to become involved in voluntary activities by removing the obstacles standing in the way of volunteering.

Definition(s) and concepts

There is no legal definition of volunteering in Finland and a wide range of different definitions are used. As mentioned above, the concept of volunteering includes both voluntary work and voluntary activities.

Finland's youth sector has adopted the European Council's definition of voluntary activities from 2008. According to this [definition](#), voluntary activities are open to all young people, undertaken by their own free will in the general interest for a sustained period within a clear framework, that is either unpaid or with a token payment and/or reimbursement of expenses. As the Council Recommendation on the Mobility of Young Volunteers emphasises, voluntary activities provide an informal educational and learning experience through which young people may develop their professional and social skills, and competences. Thereby, these activities enhance their employability and active citizenship, while benefiting local communities and fostering social cohesion.

The key words that appear in most definitions of volunteering are: 'unpaid activity', 'for the benefit of others', and 'act of free will'. In other words, voluntary activities are understood to be a non-paid activity carried out for the public good that is based on civic participation.

Sometimes organised volunteering is differentiated from informal activities like neighbourly help, but it has become increasingly more common to describe volunteering as an activity that encompasses both. Around two-thirds of volunteers take part in organised volunteering through voluntary organisations, whereas the remaining third volunteer through informal channels.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

Youth volunteering in Finland often takes place in the non-governmental sector. A number of government bodies support volunteering as a part of their wider responsibilities, mostly by funding third sector organisations. The most important ministry is the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), which allocates appropriations for the youth sector.

The youth field, including voluntary activities, receives most of its funding from the lottery funds. Therefore, the gambling industry is an important part of the funding of voluntary activities (for more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland: [5.6 Supporting Youth Organisations](#)).

To summarise, voluntary activities in the youth sector are largely funded and supported, but not regulated, by the public authorities in Finland. The youth organisations set their own objectives, which means that the organisations enjoy a high level of autonomy. One of the most important laws regulating these organisations' activities are [Youth Act](#) and the [Associations Act](#).

As mentioned above, the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) funds and supports the third sector youth organisations. Its criteria define which organisations are eligible to apply for state subsidies. It also collects data on youth volunteering in the organisations that it supports.

[The Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy KANE](#) functions under the [Ministry of Justice](#). KANE's main purpose is the strengthening of cooperation between civil society and the public authorities. The Government Decree on the Advisory Board on Civil Society Policy (in [Finnish](#)) regulates its activities. In accordance with the [Policy Agenda for Volunteering in Europe](#), KANE follows the development of the position of voluntary activities. In its action plan, the perspective of children and young people is taken into consideration.

[Finnish National Agency for Education](#) develops education and life-long learning as well as promotes international mobility and cooperation. It is the national agency of the Erasmus+ and gives information about the programme, provides assistance with the application process, manages the selection of projects, supports and monitors their implementation and gives out information on the results of the programme.

[The Finnish Gaming Company Veikkaus](#) owned by the state funds third sector organisations. In this sense, its role in the field of volunteering is significant. (for more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland: [5.6 Supporting Youth Organisations](#)).

The [Evangelic-Lutheran Church](#) is both a civic activity forum and an organiser of services. Young volunteers have an important role in its activities and participate in organising confirmation camps.

Municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) offer facilities, sometimes free of charge or at a discounted rate, for their use by voluntary organisations. For example, in the sports' sector, about three-quarters of sport facilities are run by municipalities. Municipalities also support the voluntary movement by developing and delivering training for many people that are involved in volunteer activities.

There are many non-public actors that take part in the implementation of youth volunteering. Organisations that are recognised as national youth organisations are

eligible to receive state subsidies. These include ideological, political, sport, leisure, and student organisations. According to Allianssi's Vetovoima project, youth organisations estimated that the number of young volunteers working in these organisations is over 40,000. However, only 83 out of 177 organisations responded to the questionnaire. If the number of young volunteers is approximately the same in all organisations, it would mean that approximately 88,000 young volunteers take part in these voluntary activities. It must be taken into account that this number is only an estimation. (Taavetti 2015.)

[The Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) is a politically and religiously independent trustee with over 130 national youth and educational member organisations. The purpose of Allianssi is 'to encourage young people to become responsible members of society and help them to participate in decision-making processes and international activities. Allianssi serves youth organisations and the youth work field as a whole'. In addition, Allianssi collects and disseminates information about voluntary activities and organises [Allianssi Youth Exchange](#) programmes abroad.

The [Prometheus Camp Association](#) organises politically and religiously non-affiliated camps for young people. Around 600-700 volunteers participate in its activities annually.

[The Guides and Scouts of Finland](#) and [Youth Academy](#) offer many possibilities for young volunteers. Since 2018, they have both been working as youth work centre of expertise, more about the youth work centres of expertise for the years 2020-2024, see Youth Wiki/Finland [10.8 Current debates and reforms](#). More about the role of Scouts as a centre of expertise, see also [Youth Wiki/Finland: 2.7 Skills recognition](#).

The [Citizen Forum](#) is an observer and promoter of civic activities, with cultural and civic work as two major strategic parts of its activities. It promotes voluntary activities and represents volunteers in working groups, committees, and so forth. In addition, it disseminates information regarding voluntary activities and cooperates with a support group on volunteering, which was set up by Members of the Parliament in 2009.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

As mentioned above, public authorities do not organise youth volunteering in Finland, but they do support it in many ways. Therefore, youth volunteering is based on cross-sectoral cooperation between public authorities and civil society; public authorities are funding and supporting operations of youth organisations, which offer volunteering possibilities for young people.

Overall, cross-sectoral cooperation is highly valued in Finnish youth policy, and youth volunteering is not an exception to this. Several ministries are responsible for policy areas concerning young people. These ministries include also the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), the [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#), and the [Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#). The [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#), which renews guidelines for Finnish youth policy every four years, is a statutory cross-sectoral programme. For more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland [1.9 Current debates and reforms](#).

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

Finland does not have a national strategy regarding youth volunteering.

Scope and contents

Responsible authority

Revisions/ Updates

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is no general, nation-wide programme for youth volunteering, which would be organised, funded, and monitored by the Finnish State. In this sense, Finland does not have a national strategy for youth volunteering.

Funding

Since there is no general, nation-wide Programme for youth volunteering, this is not strictly applicable. Although youth volunteering often takes place in the third sector, it should be emphasised that the public authorities do have an important role regarding the funding of youth volunteering. For example, the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) allocates state aids to national youth work service organisations and organisations carrying out youth work. These include organisations that are involved in youth volunteering. For more information, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 5.6 Supporting youth organisations](#).

Secondly, the most important funding sources of voluntary organisations include also membership fees, fundraising, donations, and service delivery. However, there are clear sectoral differences in the funding sources of voluntary organisations. Voluntary youth organisations are mostly funded by state subsidies, EU funds, foundations, state ministries and private sources.

A significant form of public support for sports is the tax-free nature of volunteer work. Non-profit organisations do not need to pay taxes on the income gained through fundraising, donations, membership fees, etc. as long as no individual receives direct personal benefit from it and that all the funds are used for the 'common good' - to support activities for the entire club or team.

The sources of funding of Finnish voluntary organisations are

- Membership fees
- Fundraising
- Donations
- The use of facilities free of charge, voluntary workforce
- Income from service provision
- Sale of products
- Income from advertisements (e.g. in a magazine of a voluntary organisation)
- Agreements with private companies
- Grants from local and national authorities
- Project funding
- Capital income (e.g. rent income, etc.).

No conflicts of interest have been identified between the state aid rules and the allocation of grants and subsidies to voluntary organisations. One of the primary reasons for this is due to the long tradition of the activities of the voluntary sector.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

In the publication "The Value of Volunteering" (in Finnish [Vapaaehtoistyön arvo](#)) of the [Citizen Forum](#), edited by Sini Hirvonen and Satu Puolitaival (2019), the results from the study "Voluntarism in Finland 2018" realised by market research company Taloustutkimus have been summarised. It is found that about 30% of 15-24 year olds had volunteered in the four weeks prior in comparison with 40% of the entire population. However, when compared to the figures from 2015, the amount of young volunteering

had tripled. Reasons for not volunteering are said to be: no time (45%), never asked (27%) and I don't know how to get in (18%). While 70% of those not involved in volunteering, said they would participate if asked. Moreover, 75% of student claimed they would start volunteering if it were possible to have such activities included in studies. Regarding the new handbook on how to get young people into volunteering see also [Youth Wiki/Finland 2.8 Current Debates and Reforms](#).

Support to young volunteers

The overall ethos of the Finnish voluntary sector is that everyone can volunteer regardless of their level of experience, skills, or background. This means that there are no minimum requirements for individuals to be able to participate in voluntary activities. One of the challenges, which volunteering faces in Finland, is that many administrative roles, even in small voluntary associations, require a high level of skills in order to deal with the increasingly complex bureaucracy and administration. Many youth organisations provide training for their members, and especially for members that volunteer as instructors or leaders. These education and training opportunities are one form of support for young volunteers.

The [Finnish Red Cross](#) provides volunteers with training, support, and work counselling. The [Evangelic-Lutheran Church](#) arranges courses on social skills for young volunteers. The politically and religiously non-affiliated [Prometheus Camp Association](#) organises camps where young people can discuss and form their own world views. Once they have completed the camp, they can participate in organising and planning camps. The [Guides and Scouts of Finland](#) trains volunteers by offering peer instructors, with consideration for each age group.

In addition, the support of the municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) for those involved in volunteering (training, grants) is significant, especially in bigger cities and towns.

Almost all voluntary organisations provide insurance for their volunteers. The volunteer insurance system is well developed, easily available and relatively inexpensive. Some volunteering programmes might provide young volunteers with a little pocket money. The pocket money received by the volunteer cannot be regarded as valid salary. Furthermore, the work performed by a volunteer cannot replace the basic functions the organisation delivers. In practice, the legal status of volunteers is ambiguous. For example, volunteers are sometimes regarded as employees, and the European voluntary service has been treated according to the taxation practices of the [Employment Contracts Act](#). The taxation of voluntary work is subject to a number of different interpretations.

The tax instructions concerning voluntary activities and the treatment of foundations and associations by the tax authorities have been examined in line with the tax policy outlines of the earlier Government Programme. In 2017, the tax administration published tax instructions concerning voluntary activities. The tax administration estimated that several guidelines mitigate practices. Also members of the support group on volunteering, set up by Members of Parliament, have found that new instructions have made practices more solid. However, they have indicated that there continues to be some problems with the current system; for example, if volunteers are offered a free lunch during a six-hour-day, this may be seen as a sign of a sort of work contract and, thus, an indication of taxable earnings. For more information about the discussion even in the parliament level, see the press release of the Citizen Forum (in [Finnish](#)) and information offered by the tax administration (in [Finnish](#)).

Quality Assurance (QA)

There is no comprehensive system of quality assurance for evaluating voluntary activities at the national level. However, the subsidies for youth organisations must be allocated on the basis of performance. In other words, youth organisations must prove the quality of their actions in order to receive state subsidies (for more information, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 5.6 Supporting youth organisations](#)).

In addition, there are a variety of quality assurance systems and controls at both the local and regional levels. Most municipalities, organisations and cities provide their own system of quality assurance.

In 2017, the national mid-term evaluation report of the youth initiatives funded through the Erasmus+ was published. This is in part carried out for quality assurance purposes. According to the evaluation report, the Erasmus+ programme functions well in Finland and the increasing programme budget can be effectively absorbed. At the institutional level, the cooperation projects have had long-term impacts. Should the national financing decrease, it is likely that the importance of the Erasmus+ programme will further increase. There are some challenges concerning the administrative structures and responsibilities related to the application procedure. In addition, the evaluation report emphasises that it is important to reconsider the inclusion of those fields that were originally left out of the scope of student mobility in the Erasmus+ programme. For more information, visit: [Mid-Term Evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme 2014–2020 Finland](#).

Target groups

The [Youth Act](#) and the [Government Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy](#) do not identify specific target groups within the youth population whose participation in voluntary activities will be fostered.

However, in accordance with the Government Decree, grounds for approval to be identified as a national youth organisation, and therefore entitled to subsidies, can be departed from if an organisation can be deemed to be nationally representative of a language or other minority or a specific branch. Although this measure is not directly aimed at fostering participation in voluntary activities, it does take into consideration minorities in the third sector and supports their participation.

According to the Vetovoima project (Taavetti 2015) by the [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#), it seems that most youth organisations are not interested in targeting specific groups. Instead they often emphasise that their activities are open to all. On the other hand, the survey notes that young people who belong to minorities rarely participate in the activities of organisations, unless the organisation specifically targets them.

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

With regards to voluntary activities, the most important EU programme is [the European Solidarity Corps](#) (in Finnish [Euroopan Solidaarisuusjoukot](#)) which replaced the European Voluntary Service (EVS) in 2018. As the national agency of the Corps and the Erasmus+, [the Finnish National Agency for Education](#) provides information on the programme, provides assistance for the application process, manages the selection of projects, supports and monitors their implementation and gives out information on the results of the programme in accordance with the Commission's guidelines.

Nowadays, there are three rounds annually to apply for funding. See the examples of funded Volunteering Projects, Traineeships and Jobs, Solidarity Projects in Finland [here](#) (2019/Round 2). There is approximately 2,6 million euro available in the European Solidarity Corps Programme for financing the actions of Finnish stakeholders in 2020.

Other Programmes

There are no other cross-border mobility programmes for volunteering that are funded by the government.

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

There is no specific legal framework that applies to young volunteers abroad.

2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

Information providers

Municipalities and representatives of the civil society are the main information providers of youth volunteering opportunities. At present, the ministries do not directly disseminate information on volunteering opportunities, but they do support the civil society organisations in order to guarantee volunteering opportunities. Many of these organisations, which provide information, are the same actors that organise national and international volunteering opportunities.

- Several municipalities provide information about volunteering opportunities. For example, the [Department of Social Services and Health Care of City of Helsinki](#) offers volunteering opportunities.
- The Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi (in [Finnish](#)), among its other tasks, raises awareness amongst young people about the value and possibilities of national and international voluntary activities (For more information: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 2.6 Cross-Border Mobility Programmes](#))
- [Maailmanvaihto ry. – ICYE Finland](#) is an international non-profit youth exchange organisation that promotes international voluntary service (For more information: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 2.6 Cross-Border Mobility Programmes](#))
- The [Citizen Forum](#) is a non-aligned association, which aims at promoting participation in voluntary activities. Its main focus has not been primarily on young people, but on developing a common understanding of volunteering, defining good practices, sharing information about the value of the volunteering, and including grassroots level voluntary organisations into the strategic planning process of volunteering at the national level (For more information, see: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering](#)).
- www.vapaaehtoistyö.fi (volunteer work.fi) organised by Kirkkopalvelut (in [Finnish](#)) is an internet brokerage portal that functions as a national platform for organisations looking for volunteers and individuals interested in volunteering.
- Educational institutions. Since volunteering is seen as a opportunity to learn citizenship skills, group participation, and a sense of community, its role within the educational framework is emphasised.

Key initiatives

- According to the new national curriculum, voluntary activities will be a part of thematic studies in upper secondary education in Finland. The new national curriculum came into effect on 1st of August 2016. An International Baccalaureate upper secondary education already includes 50 hours of voluntary activities. Young people can also study the management of voluntary work in vocational secondary education. (More about [upper secondary education in Finland](#)).

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy Framework

According to Anni Karttunen, the validation of skills and competences towards eventual recognition and certification is embedded in the formal education system. The validation of Competence-based Qualifications has the longest history of over twenty years in Finland. It is well established and steered by detailed legislation and policies, as well as quality assurance mechanisms. Validation arrangements are in place also in the Initial Vocational Education and Training, and in Higher education (both first and second cycle studies). They are developed through national measures, legislation as well as

development projects, and are steered by legislation (Karttunen 2015). With regards to informal and non-formal learning, these too play important roles in the policy framework. However, many of these practices (for example, the Competence-based Qualifications – CBQs) do not explicitly refer to voluntary activities. Validation in the third sector, where volunteering often takes place, is not defined by legislation, but its role is related more to identification and the documentation of competences ([Karttunen 2016](#)), see also Youth Wiki/Finland [6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning](#).

Additionally, the strategic goals of the working group appointed by the [Ministry of Finance](#) concluded that the recognition of the skills and competences acquired through voluntary work should be improved in the educational system, and cooperation between schools and organisations should be increased. The teaching of active citizenship and an awareness of the various forms of civic activity should be developed on the basis of the new national curriculum, which came into effect in 2016 (for more information: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 2.7 Raising Awareness about volunteering possibilities](#)).

The [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) is the national centre both for [Europass](#) and Youthpass (in [Finnish](#)). It manages and develops documents and disseminates information about the passes. It has for example produced Youtube videos about the use of the Youth and Euro passes for young people.

Existing arrangements

[Youth work centres of expertise](#) form a network, which supports the implementation of the objectives set out by the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#). The new centres of expertise for the period 2020- 2024 have been nominated by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) in March 2020, see more in in Youth Wiki/Finland [10.8 Current debates and reforms](#). One of the centres of expertise continues to be led by the [Guides and Scouts of Finland](#). Its main purpose is to concentrate on how the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during voluntary activities can be made visible and measurable by a model for validating skills so that they can grant study points (ECS) as a part of formal education. The report from the first version of the validation model was published at the end of 2019 (report in [Finnish](#)). One of the concrete tools developed has been called the [Digital Competence Disk](#). The competence disc shows how accumulated competence (as translated into credits) gained through some specific hobbies and volunteering can be recognised in some specific studies leading to a qualification, for example: Basic Training for Guide and Scout Leaders can now be recognised as a part of a Bachelor's of Humanities, Community Education in [HAMK Häme University of Applied Sciences](#) and at [Humak University of Applied Sciences](#). Building these connections takes place during the deliberation process called the 'Interpretation Forum' where representatives of voluntary organisations and educational institutions negotiate over the kind of adaptation needed in order to put into effect this studification procedure. The establishment of the validation model follows the principles of the [EU Council Recommendation 2017/C189/03](#) and the [European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System \(ECTS\)](#).

[The Association of Study Centres](#) for example is a nationwide adult education institution, which has introduced the Open Badge system. The goal is to recognise and certify learning through the courses provided by the centres. Other liberal adult education providers have been developing Open Badges for learning gained in the informal sector. These include voluntary activities. There are several other Open Badge initiatives running in the third sector, the aim of which is to validate competences gained in areas such as voluntary activities, scouting or liberal adult education (Karttunen 2016).

2.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Previous executive director of the [Citizen Forum](#), Leo Stranius, wrote on June 3rd 2019 in the [Forum's Webarena](#) that "the significance of the civic society is clearly acknowledged in the [Government programme for the years 2019-2023](#)". According to Stranius, several proposals by Citizen Forum's 48 non-governmental organisations have been well taken into account in the actual government programme. Among these were several proposals regarding volunteering and young people. According to Stranius, the following suggested goals have been recognised in the government programme:

- Updating the democracy policy with the goal of promoting volunteering
- Including volunteering in the activity model for the unemployed
- Improving communication with young people by implementing new tools
- Recognising and acknowledging the skills gained and learned from volunteering, by improving cooperation between schools and organisations.
- Reaffirming democracy and human rights education in schools, having ministerial activities within student organisations; updating democratic policies to recognise youth participation.

Stranius concludes, that "With this government program, we have a good chance of making Finland the best place in the world to volunteer."

Ongoing debates

[Citizen Forum](#), an information and development centre for volunteering, published a handbook in 2019 called 'Handbook for young people's volunteering' (in [Finnish](#)). It is targeted at organisations that would like to attract more young people to working as volunteers, as well as gives advice on how to motivate and work with young people. The handbook reflects the experiences from the forum's 'I help — young people in volunteering (2017-2019 project (in [Finnish](#))' which was funded by [STEA — the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations](#) operating in connection to the [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#). The main target group the handbook addresses is young people under 18 years old.

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme for the years 2020-2023 ([Finnish version](#), English translation is forthcoming) offers a summarised version of the actual government programme's objectives related to youth employment. It is stated that 'young people under the age of 25, and graduates under the age of 30 will be offered a place for work, a work placement, a study place, a place at a workshop, or rehabilitation placement no later than three months after registering as unemployed.' And that: 'the government will further youth guarantee based on the knowledge of experts. The one stop-guidance centres are also going to be strengthened as well as youth workshops.' All these aspects mentioned belong to the youth guarantee concept of Finland, see more in [Youth Wiki/Finland 3.1 General context](#).

Youth employment has been strongly hit by the Covid-19 epidemic (see [Government's Information and advice on the coronavirus](#)). Based on the [Employment Bulletin March 2020](#) of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, unemployed jobseekers under the age of 25 numbered around 41 000, representing an increase by 11 600 from March a year ago. Moreover, youth unemployment has grown by 11 300 since February. There are also young people among those 400 000 people now laid off temporarily.

Additionally, many municipalities and enterprises have cancelled their summer job vacancies for young people.

At the end of April 2020, the Minister of Employment, Mrs Tuula Haatainen was advised that working life needs to be developed from the youth's point of view, regarding aspects of education, equality and guaranteeing livelihood support, based on the results of the [Youth Barometer 2019](#) (published in April 2020 by the [Finnish Youth Research Network](#) and the [State Youth Council](#), see also [Youth Wiki/Finland 3.1 General context](#).) On that occasion, Minister Haatainen emphasised 'that especially during this corona time, everything needs be done so that young people can manage and are able to pursue their work life. Insecurity in the labour market should not lead to the neglect of young people.' (Press release of the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#) on 28th 4 2020, in [Finnish](#).) On the other hand, concrete measures for securing job opportunities for young people throughout the Corona-period are still to be seen.

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

'Based on the latest [Youth Barometer](#) (telephone interview data gathered in 2019), very few young people think that 'any work is good enough as long as it pays well enough'. Work is not just a source of income for young people, although a clear majority disagrees with the claim that work is not essential in order to be happy. With three out of four claiming that they would prefer to take a job rather than live on subsidies, even if accepting work does not raise their level of earnings, young people are clearly committed to finding work and being employed. On average, young people are satisfied with their current job. The school grade (from 4 to 10) given to job satisfaction in the 2019 barometer is 8.2, which is higher than it has been earlier. On the other hand, over one third of the respondents are concerned about their ability to cope at work. (Press release on 20th of April 2020 by Finnish Youth Research Network and the State Youth Council.)

According to [Statistics Finland's Labour Force Survey](#) the unemployment rate of young people (15 to 24-year-olds), was 17.2 per cent in 2019, which was a little bit higher than in the previous year. As mentioned in the overview ([Youth Wiki/Finland 3. Employment and Entrepreneurship Overview](#)), youth employment is now decreasing rapidly because of the covid-19 epidemic.

Traditionally, the tripartite system in the labour market is strong in Finland. [Labour legislation](#) is drafted in collaboration with organisations that represent the interests of employers and employees. For example, the working conditions of employees are determined on the basis of legislation and collective agreements that exist for various sectors.

Definitions and concepts

Explaining the situation regarding youth employment and entrepreneurship in the Finnish context is impossible without first giving a short overview about the Finnish Youth Guarantee concept (see: the [Glossary](#)). In 2013, the government promised an allocation of 60 million euros per year for the establishment of the Youth Guarantee. The core element of the Guarantee was a reduction in waiting time of young people face when becoming a client of the Labour Services, so that 'young people under the age of 25, and recent graduates under the age of 30 are offered a place for work, a work placement, a study place, a place at a workshop, or rehabilitation placement no later than three months after registering as unemployed'. The Finnish model was used as one example in the EU Council's recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee in all member states (European Union [2012](#), [2013](#)).

The methods for implementing the Guarantee include measures related to the educational guarantee, the skills programme for young adults, public employment and economic development services for the youth, as well as rehabilitation services, including

the municipal social and health care services and other specific services for young people, such as outreach youth work and workshop activities.

Among other measures, the youth employment rate was planned to be used as an indicator to measure the success of the programme, but as it was explained in the 2015 report by the Ministry of Employment and Economy 'implementing the Youth Guarantee out was interrupted by the poor economic situation so much so that all objectives connected to youth employment were not reached.' ([Nuorisotakuu-työryhmän loppuraportti ja suositukset jatkotoimiksi](#)).

After the 2015 parliamentary elections, the new government announced the idea of 'turning the Youth Guarantee into a community guarantee', as described in the national report to the European Commission in 2016 on [the implementation of Youth Guarantee at the national level](#). The services for young people in need of support were assembled to a single place, namely to [One-Stop Guidance Centres](#). This service centre gathered all the relevant employment and social services for young people under one roof. In 2018, over 60 centres nationwide have been established. There are also other measures taken to support the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, however in 2016, government funding was cut by ten million euros, over a three year period.

As mentioned in the overview ([Youth Wiki/Finland 3. Employment and Entrepreneurship Overview](#)), the [Government programme](#) – published after the parliament elections in Spring 2019 – continues to uphold its commitment to the Youth Guarantee. In Spring 2020, an expert working group has started its work to further the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee way of action (see also [Youth Wiki/Finland 3.11 Current Debates and Reforms](#)). The Government Programme has also mentioned that the one stop-guidance centres are going to be strengthened, as well as youth workshops.

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#) is responsible for the planning and implementation of labour policy and legislation. As mentioned earlier, labour legislation is drafted on a tripartite basis.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Since 2013, the national implementation of the Youth Guarantee proved to be an efficient measure for enhancing cross-sectoral cooperation in national level coordinated by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (see more in [Youth Wiki/Finland 3.1 General context](#)). The successful implementation of the youth guarantee requires cooperation at the local and regional levels between the authorities, the business sector, and various organisations, such as registered non-governmental organisations.

Some of the statutory responsibilities of the municipalities (see: the [Glossary](#)) support the implementation of the horizontal youth policy planning and implementation. According to the [Child Welfare Act](#), municipalities must draw up a plan to promote the well-being of children and young people. In the context of employment, entrepreneurship, and the Youth Guarantee these plans are used, for example, to develop the local affordances regarding youth workshops or the availability of summer jobs for pupils and students.

Also, the [Youth Act](#) stipulates that local authorities must have a coordinating body for local cooperation with representation, for example, from the local educational, social and health care, and youth administrations, as well as from the labour and police administrations. The body may also include representatives from the defence administration, as well as other authorities. Issues connected to employment, entrepreneurship, and the Youth Guarantee are some of the main themes handled in these bodies, in some cases special issue sub-groups have been established.

3.3 Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

Skills Panorama (2017), published by the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training [Cedefop](#) of the European Commission, comments on the skills forecasting system in Finland in a section entitled [Skills anticipation in Finland](#). It is stipulated that, 'in Finland skills anticipation activities, at the national level lead by the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) and the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), are well-established and linked to policymaking. In recent years, socioeconomic factors such as the effects of the economic recession, the gradually decreasing number of people in the labour force, and the ageing population has increased the need for better matching between the skills supply and demand. As a result, significant investment in skills anticipation has been undertaken. The aim is to steer the education system – both vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (HE) – to meet the needs of the labour market. This is being achieved by making skills anticipation more comprehensive, with input and feedback from the government (central, regional and local) and from stakeholders increasingly including employers, trade unions, and labour market intermediaries as well as education institutions and their staff and students. Skills anticipation takes into account sectoral, occupational and geographical differences, and includes skills assessments, skills forecasting, skills foresight, and employer surveys.'

Skills development

Based on the aforementioned [Skills anticipation in Finland](#) published in the Skills Panorama (2017) of [Cedefop](#), in Finland 'skills anticipation influences government policies on VET, higher education and adult education. Forecasts of future skills demand have an impact on decisions about education supply. The funding that higher education institutions receive from the Ministry of Education depends on the results from the long-term labour force assessments, the VATTAGE (economical) and MITENNA (educational) models. Skills anticipation results feed the so-called performance agreements that set the priorities and qualitative and quantitative targets that the institutions need to meet. Skills anticipation also has an impact on curriculum planning in VET and higher education institutions. There is, however, room for improvement, related to strengthening the links between skills anticipation results and the development of education strategies at sub-national levels; ensuring greater coherence among the various exercises taking place across the country; and providing user-friendlier labour market information to support informed decisions of school leavers and job seekers.

Dissemination of the data generated by skills anticipation exercises is an important element of the overall approach. There is a drive to make the outputs from anticipation exercises accessible to a wide audience (policymakers, employers, jobseekers and young people, etc.) through a range of channels including reports, workshops and online publications. Despite the focus on dissemination of skills anticipation data, there is a need to improve the user-friendliness of the existing database to better inform students, job seekers and employers.'

3.4 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

The purpose of all guidance and counselling is to support individuals in making educational choices and career plans based on the principle of lifelong learning. Everyone in Finland is entitled to guidance and counselling services regardless of whether they are studying, working, unemployed or outside of the labour market. The public sector education and employment authorities and the education providers, normally municipalities (see: the [Glossary](#)), are the main actors responsible for providing guidance and counselling services. The division of duties and labour between them is clear.

Education and training institutions bear the main responsibility for the guidance and counselling of pupils and students (see more in [Eurydice/Finland Guidance and Counselling in Early Childhood and School Education](#).) Vocational guidance, career planning, and educational and vocational information services — available at public employment and business services — are primarily intended for those outside education and training. Guidance and counselling at public employment and business services, however, are also available for students.

As mentioned in section [Youth Wiki/Finland 3.1 General context](#), one of the main methods of realising Youth Guarantee in Finland is to maintain the network of One-Stop-Shop activities (in Finnish: [Ohjaamot](#)) across Finland. The One-Stop Guidance Centre is an easy access service point for young people under the age of 30. Its operating model is to provide information, advice, guidance and support across a range of sectors of basic services from various administrative branches and across a broad network of collaborators. The open operating model encourages young people to get in - touch in order to sort out their own situation, which they can also do without involving aforementioned organisations. The One-Stop Guidance Centres offers special support for young people going through transitions and encourages them to remain in education and work. The situation of young individuals using the service is taken into account in the guidance that the initiative offers. The support offered can encompass several stages such as social rehabilitation and health care services, or getting on the path towards education or employment, and coping with the preparations involved in these various processes.

Funding

The career guidance services in educational institutions are financed by the municipalities, the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#), and the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). Career guidance services in public employment and the business sector are financed by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

During the earlier years, One-Stop Guidance Centres have been carried out with ESF funding and were jointly initiated by the [Ministry of Economic and Employment](#), the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#). Among other services, public employment offices and [One-Stop Guidance Centres](#) were expected to be placed under new region levels of administration at the beginning of the year 2021, if the planned reforms for the health and social services, and regional government, would have been carried out according to plans made by the previous government (more information about the current state of the reform, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 7.8 Current Debates and Reforms](#)). In this intermediary situation in which the reforms are being postponed and re-planned, the One-Stop Guidance Centres, for example, are currently being funded mainly by the municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) and the public employment services of the state. Some of the centres also still have project-based funding, for example, from European Social Fund. The responsibility of allocating reasonable amounts of funding to the One-Stop Guidance Centres to ensure the quality of their service lies at the local level (municipality).

Quality assurance

The career guidance provided by educational institutions is regulated by the curriculums of basic education, general secondary and vocational secondary schools (for more information about current curriculum guidelines, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland Chapter 6 Education and Training](#)).

As described in the report regarding the implementation of [Article 22 of the Constitution of the ILO in Finland](#), the success of the public employment services depend on two factors. Firstly, it is important to focus on evaluating a young person's need for services. Secondly, value is placed on the speed of the service process by making use of the wide range of existing services. Based on the assessed service needs, the public employment office will draw up an employment plan together with the young person, soon after he or

she has registered as an unemployed jobseeker. The assessment of service needs must be carried out within two weeks of the person registering as a jobseeker. The employment plan will then be developed further by meeting the young person according to his or her service needs. The young person must then be offered active measures to facilitate employment before he or she has been continuously unemployed for a period of three months. The services stated in the employment plan are mutually binding and are jointly agreed upon by the young person and the public employment service office, who take the young person's opinion into account. If a skilled or unskilled young person requires public services other than those offered by the public employment office, such services will be arranged in cooperation with other authorities.

For more information about services arranged in cooperation with other authorities (e.g. youth workshops), visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.7 Inclusive programmes for young people](#).

The national coordinating project ([Meeting site – Kohtaamo 2014–2020](#)) supports the development of the One-Stop Guidance Centres and related web-based guidance and their implementation. The project also evaluates the key processes and the outcomes of the One-Stop Guidance Centres, such as their usefulness for young people, integration of youth services, and youth transitions after the service (see the publication [One-Stop Guidance Center \(Ohjaamo\) – Ready to offer multi-agency services for the young](#)). The project is funded by European Social Fund.

According to the [Youth Act](#), each municipality or coalition of several municipalities together are obliged to have a coordinating body for cross-sectoral cooperation. The number of municipalities having such a body is monitored as part of the Annual Reports of the Government submitted to Parliament. For more information regarding the annual reports, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion](#).

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

The responsibilities of each party involved in traineeships and apprenticeships are outlined by the law. The organiser of a traineeship is responsible for the occupational safety of a trainee as specified in the [Act on Occupational Safety and Health](#) (738/2002) and in the [Young Workers' Act](#) (998/1993). The law also regulates the daily and weekly maximum working hours of the trainee and specifies that the contract has to include a precise job description of the work the trainee is expected to perform. If necessary, the [Employment and Economic Development Office](#) can demand separate terms and conditions in traineeship contracts. In addition, the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986), the [Non-Discrimination Act](#) (2014) and the [Act on the Protection of Privacy in Working Life](#) are also applicable in labour market policy.

As described in [Key figures on apprenticeship training in Finland](#) (2016) by the [Finnish National Agency of Education](#), the provision of apprenticeship training is based on an authorisation to provide education, which is granted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The training provider is responsible for the administration of apprenticeship training and the monitoring of apprenticeships. The training provider is also responsible for, among other things, assessing the suitability of the placement workplace, the identification and recognition of the student's prior education, approving the apprenticeship agreement, drafting the student's personal study plan, paying training compensation to employers, paying student financial aid and making arrangements for competence-based qualifications.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

One of the [key projects](#) in the of implementation of the Government Programme (2016–2018) was the reform of vocational upper secondary education. As part of the aim of creating a more competence-based customer-oriented system and improving efficiency, and as such, on-the-job learning, individual learning paths will be promoted. The idea is

to increase and diversify learning in the workplace and apprenticeship training in particular, reduce employers administrative and financial burden that the provision of training entails and improve the quality of workplace learning. A new model contract for education and training was also be introduced to permit greater flexibility in the provision of workplace training and completion of qualifications in a more hands-on manner.

According to the report [Key figures on apprenticeship training in Finland](#), improvement is needed in the number of students under 20 years old of age involved in apprenticeships. In 2014, the percentage of students in apprenticeship training under the age of 25 was far lower than in institution-based education. As part of the Youth Guarantee, an effort has been made to increase the percentage of young people in apprenticeship training, for example, by paying increased training compensation for students leaving basic education and by implementing a preliminary non-employment period of no more than six months preceding the start of apprenticeship training.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has been currently preparing a preliminary phase of apprenticeship training. The planned changes would mean that apprenticeships need not necessarily be based on a working contract. This aims to lower the threshold for employers as well as for students to enter into an apprenticeship contract.

Recognition of learning outcomes

The text is based on the report [Key figures on apprenticeship training in Finland](#) in Finland published in 2016 by the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#).

Apprenticeship training is integrated into a student's personal study plan, taking into consideration the student's prior learning level and the opportunities and requirements of the workplace. Additionally, the personal study plan is drafted within the framework of the curriculum or competence-based qualification, set out by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The personal study plan is jointly drafted by the student, the employer, and the provider of vocational education and training (VET).

Young people and adults can complete vocational upper secondary qualifications and specialist vocational qualifications through apprenticeship training. Apprenticeship training can also be provided in cases where a qualification is not being sought. Completing a recognised apprenticeship will provide the apprentice with the same eligibility as other forms of qualifications to access higher education. The provision of apprenticeship training is based on the authorisation to provide education, issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The training provider is responsible for the administration of apprenticeship training and the monitoring of apprenticeships. The training provider is responsible for assessing the suitability of the workplace, the identification and recognition of the student's prior learning level, drafting the student's personal study plan, and making arrangements for the competence-based qualification.

Funding

As apprenticeship training in Finland is publicly funded, the student and employer do not have to pay any costs related to the training. Municipalities have a statutory funding obligation for the provision of apprenticeship training in vocational upper secondary education and training. Further vocational education and training is entirely funded by the state, without any municipal funding. From the funding received, the provider of apprenticeship training is obliged to pay training compensation to employers for the training provided at the workplace, in connection with the practical work assignments. In addition to this, if the student suffers any loss of income (i.e. he or she is not paid any wages during the theoretical studies), the education provider is required to pay social benefits to students in the form of a daily allowance, in addition to a travel and accommodation allowance.

Employers taking on students who complete their basic education and begin apprenticeship training in the same year are eligible to receive increased compensation.

If an unemployed person is accepted into apprenticeship training, the employer is also eligible to receive a pay subsidy, which is paid by the local public employment office. Where apprenticeships are concerned, the so-called pay subsidy can also be paid over the entire duration of the apprenticeship on a percentage basis. This is called discretionary aid and is decided upon by the local employment office.

During an apprenticeship, the student is paid wages in accordance with the applicable collective agreement and, with some minor exceptions, the student's employment is subject to the same employment legislation as the collective agreement for that field. If the employer does not pay any wages for training given in the educational institution, the person receives the relevant social benefits given to students.

Quality assurance

The [National Agency for Education](#) follows the [key figures and indicators of apprenticeship training](#). These figures include, for example, the number of students in vocational education and training, time taken to complete a qualification, and the progress of study. Furthermore, information about gender, language, educational background, as well as the special needs of students in apprenticeship training, are also monitored.

3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

Employers are eligible for a [pay subsidy](#), when hiring an unemployed jobseeker of any age group. Wage subsidies are paid for work carried out on an employment contract or for an apprenticeship. Both public sector employers, such as municipalities, and companies and other private-sector employers such as associations, foundations and social corporations can receive the subsidy when the relevant conditions are met.

As described on the webpages of public employment services, the [job alternation leave system](#) offers many benefits to all the parties concerned. While helps the employee to cope, it also increases offers for fixed-term employment relationships. Young people under the age of 30, who have recently graduated with a vocational or higher education degree or are under the age of 25 do not need to be registered unemployed jobseekers in order to be recruited as a substitute for the duration of the job alternation.

The youth workshop activities are targeted at young people who are inactive in education, employment and training, or those in need of other support. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion](#).

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

[Employment and change security](#) improves the employee's position in situations where they are in danger of being dismissed or have been dismissed for financial or production-related reasons. Change security also applies to fixed-term employees, and those who are laid off for a period of 180 days, or to those who have been laid off. This enhances the co-operation between employees, employers, and the [Employment and Economic Development Offices](#) (TE Offices). Change security includes paid leave for dismissed employees to search for a new job, supplementary unemployment allowance, or the increased allowance due to their extensive employment history paid while participating in services that promote employment and support the employment plan. Employment and change security involves young people, but there are no measures to enhance their position in the labour market in change situations.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

According to the [Non-Discrimination Act](#), a person should not be discriminated against for any reason, e.g. for age. The obligation to promote equality expands beyond public authorities to education providers, educational institutes and employers. The obligation

to draw up an equality plan concerns employers who have 30 or more employees. Public authorities, education providers, and employers must ensure that employees with disabilities have equal access to services, work or education and training. Persons with disabilities must also have equal access to goods and services. The Act applies to all public and private activities, excluding private life, family life, and religious institutions.

The [Act on Equality between Men and Women](#) prohibits discrimination based on gender, and requires the promotion of gender equality. There is a long history of promoting gender equality in Finland, particularly regarding pay, working conditions, terms of employment, and career development. There are also various forms of financial support and child care arrangements available for families, such as a maternity grant, maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, child care leave and child benefits.

Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

The processes of integrating young people into the labour market are included in the main budget of the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#).

Quality assurance

The effects of main policy measures are monitored by following the indicators provided by the [State Youth Council](#). These indicators evaluate the well-being and living conditions of young people. Some of these are also reported in the Annual Government Report (for example, see [Hallituksen vuosikertomus](#)). For more information on well-being indicators, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland 4.2 Administration and Governance](#).

3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

In the field of international cooperation and mobility, Finnish society specifically puts emphasis on the roles of education, training, employment and young people. [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) promotes internationalisation and the concrete possibilities that it has brought. The Finnish National Agency for Education's Internationalisation Services' annual budget is approximately 50 million Euros, 75 per cent of which is distributed as grants and subsidies. In addition, it funds several programmes, which are funded by the [European Union](#), the [Nordic Council of Ministers](#) and the [Government of Finland](#). The National Agency for Education works under the guidance of the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).

There are several internship programmes promoting cross-border mobility. Students in particular are the target group. The Finnish National Agency for Education provides international trainee opportunities for higher education students and recent graduates. The goal is to support degree studies and to enhance students' professional skills. Traineeships vary usually from 3–6 months and they include a grant.

Government officials' exchange programmes support the civil servants' international mobility and their professional development. The programmes are funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Nordic Council of Ministers. In addition, the Finnish National Agency for Education's Internationalisation Services may support individual civil servants on short-term secondments in their own administrative field abroad.

The Finnish National Agency for Education is also the Finnish coordinator of the government officials' exchange programme, which is funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The purpose of the programme is to encourage state employees to learn about the administration and legislation of other Nordic countries and to increase collaboration among the Nordic civil servants.

Legal framework

Overall, there is no specific legislation concerning the cross-border mobility of young workers, trainees and apprentices, entrepreneurs and professionals. The [Young Workers' Act](#) applies to persons under the age of 18, but its emphasis is not on cross-border mobility. All provisions and obligations set by the labour legislation include incoming employees and trainees and their rights correspond to Finnish employees' and trainees' rights.

Residence permits practices are similar for everyone regardless of a person's age, except residence permits issued for working holidays and au pair work. Citizens of EU/EEA countries do not need residence permits in order to work in Finland, but they have to register their right of residence should the work last for more than three months. Employees from outside the EU/EEA countries always need to have residence permits, regardless of the duration of the stay. Entrepreneurs must apply for a residence permit based on self-employment. Both residence permits based on self-employment and employment are granted by the Finnish state. A residence permit is always valid for a fixed-term, even if the employment is on a permanent basis. If the employment continues, the employee may apply for an extension to the residence permit from the local police.

Secondly, there is a separate residence permit for person who works as an au pair. The residence permit for an au pair can be granted if the applicant is between the age of 17 and 30 and they are interested in Finnish culture, live in the host family like a family member and is not related to the family. Also, he or she must not have worked as an au pair earlier in Finland or another country. Finland has not confirmed the European Council's treaty on the location of au pairs. Therefore, Finland follows this treaty only for applicable parts. An extension of the residence permit is not possible.

Thirdly, students have only a limited right to work. If person has a student residence permit, he or she may work if such work is part of a traineeship required for a degree or is on a research paper required by the curriculum. Other paid employment is limited to 25 hours a week on average. However, these limitations regarding hours of work permitted do not apply the times when the educational institution is not offering instruction (e.g. summer and Christmas holidays).

An international trainee has the same rights as a Finnish trainee, and the work contract must correspond to that issued to Finnish trainees and employees. As with the employees, trainees from outside the EU/EEA need a residence permit. The trainee's wages are paid in accordance to the relevant collective agreement. [Enterprise Finland Services](#) of Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment provides information about international recruitments and trainees for employers.

There are no specific taxation arrangements for young people who are from other EU countries, but the general practices which concern everyone else, also apply to them. When an employee works in Finland, taxes are generally paid to the Finnish state, but there are several factors that affect the taxation arrangements. If an employee works in Finland for no more than six months in the service of a foreign employer, he or she does not usually have to pay taxes to the Finnish state. When a person is working as a temporary employee for a foreign employer, income is taxed in Finland, provided that the applicable tax convention with the state of residence allows it.

For more information, visit:

[Working in Finland](#). The Finnish Immigration Service.

[Work in Finland](#). Guide for employees and entrepreneurs interested in Finland. Employment and Economic Development Offices.

[Tax administration](#), Finland.

3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy Framework

In 2017, The Entrepreneurship Education Guidelines were published by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). Like described online [Entrepreneurship education](#) by the ministry, 'The purpose of the Entrepreneurship policies of the Ministry of Education and Culture is to direct, develop and steer the measures for promoting entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education at different levels of education. The policies are part of the Ministry's steering through information.' And follows: 'The Entrepreneurship policies support, in a concrete manner, the management and staff of educational institutions and other stakeholders of entrepreneurship education in evaluating and developing their activities. In addition, they provide tips and support for planning the practical work.' The Guidelines updating process (earlier version was published in 2009) was part of the Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government Programme which aimed to strengthen competitiveness by improving conditions for business and entrepreneurship.

Finland's definitions of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education follow the [guidelines](#) set by the European Parliament and the Commission. According to these, entrepreneurship is defined as an individual's ability to translate ideas into action. Creativity, innovation, and risk-taking are significant themes of entrepreneurship. In addition, this definition refers to anyone's ability to plan and direct action towards the achievement of objectives.

Formal learning

In Finland, entrepreneurship education is a part of higher education policy and it is also included in the curriculum of basic education (ISCED 1 – primary education, ISCED 2 – lower secondary education). According to Eurofond's report [Youth entrepreneurship in Europe: Values, attitudes, policies](#), the support to entrepreneurship education is the most extensive policy measure implemented at the national level in Finland for promoting entrepreneurship among young people. A Finnish student receives, on average, 12 years of entrepreneurship education programmes as part of the compulsory education system and from three to seven additional years linked to non-compulsory education.

The guidelines for entrepreneurship education provided by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) follow the definitions of the European Parliament and Commission Commission in that sense that entrepreneurship education also refers to wide-ranging work done within the educational administration and its goal is to enhance entrepreneurship and the necessary skills. The role of experimental learning, and the creation of a flexible and innovative operational culture are emphasised.

The new curriculum (ISCED1-2) came into effect in 2016 and the role of entrepreneurship plays has been strengthened throughout the curriculum. According to the curriculum, the school supports students' entrepreneurship and working - life skills and develops needed competences. Entrepreneurial education is integrated within cross-curricular themes, such as "Personal Growth" and "Participatory Citizenship and Entrepreneurship". Some of the new thematic components of the new upper secondary education curriculum (ISCED3) are those of active citizenship, entrepreneurship and working life. Also, several subjects emphasise entrepreneurship skills (e.g. citizenship education, mathematics and, economics).

For more information, visit:

[The National Agency for Education](#)

[The National Agency for Education - Curricula and qualifications](#)

Non-formal and informal learning

The Ministry of Education and Culture promotes the recognition and acknowledgement of non-formal and informal learning through legislation, guidance, and funding. Youth

organisations and local youth work emphasise the principle of supporting young people's active citizenship, in accordance with the principles of the [Youth Act](#). One of the most active organisations promoting informal and non-formal learning of entrepreneurship competences is [Finnish 4H Organisation](#), which arranges leisure activities for children and young people between the ages of 6 and 28. The aim of 4H is "to raise active, responsible and entrepreneurial young people". Entrepreneurship is taught through the experimental learning model. Young people aged 13 and older are encouraged to start their own projects. Also, 4H teaches skills, which are considered as useful in working life, and offers many young people their first working experiences.

There are no national guidelines on how to measure the quality of non-formal and informal learning. From this viewpoint, it is not surprising that there are no national standards for the validation and recognition of competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning either. However, the competence-based learning has a long history in Finland and the starting point is that skills and competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning must be recognised as well as those gained in formal learning. For more information about the recognition of skills acquired through voluntary activities visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland 2.8 Skills recognition](#); about apprenticeship training, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland 3.5 Traineeships and Apprenticeships](#).

Educators support in entrepreneurship education

The [National Agency for Education](#) provides supporting materials for teachers. These materials cover also entrepreneurial education. Some teacher training institutions offer optional courses on entrepreneurship.

[National YES Finland](#) is a registered organisation which offers entrepreneurship education service for teachers. It provides training in entrepreneurial education and services for developing entrepreneurship in schools and establishing school - business networks. YES organises events, seminars, and training programmes, regionally and nationally, and participates in the development of teaching plans and strategies.

[Nuori yrittäjyys – Junior Achievement Finland](#) is a non-profit organisation, which offers several programmes for young people between the ages 7 and 25 to support entrepreneurship and working life skills. Also, several training programmes for teachers are available. (For more information about JA for students, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture](#)).

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

All advisory and other business services are available to young entrepreneurs as well as to any person that wishes to start an enterprise. For example, the [Employment and Economic Development Offices](#) provides information regarding training for those planning to start a business. A flexible combination of [start-up grants](#) and entrepreneurial training are also available. The Employment and Economic Development Offices also offers training free-of-charge for new entrepreneurs, as labour market training. In 2020, the offices have received more resources for maintaining their ability to offer services because of the higher level of demands caused by the Covid-19 epidemic. Besides public services, the [Federation of Finnish Enterprises](#) has a nationwide community of young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurially-minded students called the Young Entrepreneurs (in Finnish [Nuoret yrittäjät](#)). The community provides a growing network of inspiring young entrepreneurs so that they can interact and exchange information with one another. Its purpose is also to promote the pursuit of an entrepreneurship-friendlier society, especially for the younger generation.

Access to capital

There are several [start-up grants](#) available that are not specifically for young people, but for which they can also apply. The grant applicant can be eligible for a start-up grant if he or she is an unemployed jobseeker, or is setting up as a full-time entrepreneur after a period in paid employment, education, or domestic work. The goal is to encourage new businesses and promote employment. The start-up grant provides an entrepreneur with a secure income during the time that getting the business up and running is estimated to take – however, the time limit is a maximum of 18 months. The start-up grant is awarded by the [public employment and the businesses services](#) if enterprising is a suitable option for the applicant (adequate capabilities, potential for continued profitable operation, and the grant is necessary for survival). The decision on whether or not to award a start-up grant to an applicant is made by the employment and businesses services. They take into consideration the competitive situation of companies in the relevant sector and the need for a new enterprise in the area. The provisions of the start-up grant are contained in the [Act on Public Employment and Business Service](#) and the related Government Decree.

[Business Finland](#) is the Finnish innovation funding, trade, investment, and travel promotion organization, headquartered in Helsinki. Business Finland is fully owned by the Finnish Government. The [Young Innovative Company Funding](#) is intended for talented start-up companies, which have operated for a period of less than five years and whose goal is fast growth in the international market. It is not specifically for young people, but it is an important source of funding for start-up companies.

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

The most visible event to promote entrepreneurial culture in Finland is [Slush](#). The event has grown really fast: in 2018, there were over 20,000 attendees: over 3,000 start-ups, 1800 investors and 650 journalists from over 130 countries. The organisation behind Slush is non-profit and driven by students. Also, there are thousands of volunteers who participate in organising the event. According to Slush's website, "Slush is run by the youth who want to make a difference in their societies". Slush is organised under the Startup Foundation ([Startup -säätio](#)). In 2020 Slush-event will not be organised, see more [here](#).

[Startuplifers](#) is a non-profit internship programme for students who would like to work at start-ups in San Francisco or Silicon Valley. The programme provides training and guidance, and also connects students with start-up companies in the Bay Area.

Networks and partnerships

In [Youth Wiki/Finland 8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture](#), there are examples of how the entrepreneurship culture is being promoted through culture, all which all are worth mentioning here. Firstly, the Entrepreneurship College of Kainuu's Vocational College (in Finnish [Yritysamis](#)) is offering real entrepreneurship learning spaces for its students. Moreover, there is an annual contest for entrepreneurship by the [Development Centre Opinkirjo](#). There is also 'StepDemo', a grant offered by the [Promotion Center for Audiovisual Culture](#) to support the development of a concept or demo for persons under the age of 29 in the games & music scene.

[Nuori yrittäjyys – Junior Achievement Finland](#) is a non-profit organisation, which offers several programmes for young people between the ages 7 and 25 to support entrepreneurship and working life skills. During the [JA Company Program](#), the students establish an actual company using real money. The program provides an opportunity to strengthen skills related to the working life and financial management, as well as develop the ability to interact with other people and gain an entrepreneurial attitude. The JA Company Program is available to all students in comprehensive and upper secondary

schools and functions as a part of the operation of the educational establishment. Junior Achievement Finland (Nuori Yrittäjyys ry) is a part of the international Junior Achievement (JA) network, which operates in more than 110 countries around the world. The funding of Junior Achievement Finland is organised in accordance with the principles of Public-Private Partnership (PPP). Most of the funding comes from foundations, companies, and from the European Social Fund coordinated by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

Promoting entrepreneurship is one of the objectives of higher education policy in Finland, too. [Aalto Entrepreneurship Society](#) (Aaltoes) is the largest student-run entrepreneurship community in Europe. The society is a registered organisation founded in 2009 and its main goal is to promote entrepreneurial culture and global thinking among students of Aalto University. In 2011, the Aalto Entrepreneurship Society launched Slush, which is one of the biggest startup and tech events in Europe. In addition, the Aalto Entrepreneurship Society has started several projects which promote entrepreneurship. For example, the Start-up Sauna programme – an accelerator for tech teams, and the Start-up Life programme for students have been initiated by Aalto Entrepreneurship Society. The Aalto Entrepreneurship Society is student-run and active members and leaders change annually.

The [Startup Foundation](#) was founded in order to make the various projects initiated by Aaltoes more permanent. The Start-up Foundation receives most of its funding from Aalto University, Technology Industries of Finland and Sitra, which is a fund operating under the Finnish Parliament. The Start-up Foundation does not offer directly funding for start-up companies, but it supports activities promoting entrepreneurial culture (e.g. Start-up Life).

The [Startup Sauna co-working space](#) is a meeting point for entrepreneurs and investors. It's a space for events such as motivational talks, pitching competitions, hackathons and BBQs. It hosts annually nearly 100 events related to start-ups and entrepreneurship. In addition, the space is open to everyone and no previous ties or connections to Startup Sauna are needed.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

In the Facebook group "Representation of interests of Finnish Youth Sector" administered by the [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#), the plans of the government in relation to Youth Guarantee were commented on by Allianssi on March 9th, 2020. According to that post, the new government is dedicated to continuing the realisation of Youth Guarantee (for more information about the content of Youth Guarantee see Youth Wiki/ Finland [3.4 Career Guidance and Counselling](#)). The planning operative body is a working group under the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), in which Allianssi has a seat. Based on Allianssi's perspective, the ministries have highlighted the need to concentrate on youth employment issues when it comes to Youth Guarantee. As a representative of the Youth field and a member of the working group, what Allianssi wants to bring into discussion is the need for measures that would formulate a more comprehensive picture of youth well-being.

Ongoing debates

In Finland, the [National Audit Office of Finland](#) (NAOF) audits central government finances, monitors fiscal policy, and oversees political party and election campaign funding. The role and duties of the NAOF are stipulated in the country's Constitution. The NAOF has recently evaluated youth workshops and outreach youth work. The detailed results of this evaluation can be seen in [News](#) published by NAOF. (More information about what is meant by 'youth workshops' and 'outreach youth work' in Finland see

Youth Wiki/Finland [4.7 Youth Work fo Foster Social Inclusion](#)). When summarised, the results of the NAOF evaluation are as follows:

- ‘Workshop coaching encourages young people to study but does not promote their employment’
- ‘The efficiency of outreach youth work could be improved by allocating discretionary government transfers, as well as according to regional need.’

NAOF’s recommendations, based on Principal Performance Auditor, Mrs Tanja Kirjavainen, are:

- ‘Youth workshops should be developed so that they would more clearly support under 20-year-olds and young people without an upper secondary degree in their studies and support them in completing their upper secondary education.’
- ‘The efficiency of outreach youth work could be improved by allocating discretionary government transfers also according to local service need.’

In its ‘News’ (in [Finnish](#)) on February 20th 2020, the [National Workshop Association](#) comments on the results of the evaluation. It concurs with (in Finnish) the [Ministry of Education and Culture’s](#) statement concerning the need to take into account the number of young people in the target group that are finishing their basic education, and that direct employment be clearly stipulated as an unrealistic objective to be achieved during the coaching periods in youth workshops. The association also agrees with the ministry in saying that when choosing the variables for measuring the effectiveness of outreach youth work, estimating the numbers of young people and the study level of the personnel is not enough, as there is an additional necessity to take into account, for example, also the availability of other services in the area as well as the actual needs of the individuals. Both the National Workshop Association and the Ministry were satisfied with the majority of the recommendations that were suggested by NAOF.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion is one of the most central themes to the [Youth Act](#) and youth policy in Finland. According to the 2016 Youth Act, the purpose of the Act is to “*promote the social inclusion of young people and provide them with opportunities to exert an influence and improve their skills and capabilities to function in society*”. Social inclusion is a wide concept. Therefore, promoting social inclusion is an approach, which can be applied in several sectors of youth policy. For example, raising the employment rate, lowering the number of early school leavers, and reducing the number of people living at risk, as well as promoting multiculturalism, sustainable development and gender equality are all part of social inclusion policies. In practice, it can mean supporting early teen, youth, student and other organisations to create equal opportunities for participation in multicultural activities and community life and to gender mainstreaming as part of legislation drafting (for more information, visit: Youth Wiki/Finland [4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#)).

One of the most important structural changes in the area of the social inclusion policy in Finland is the ongoing reform of the social and healthcare services. The objective is to reduce the health disparities in Finland and manage costs more effectively. In 2021, the reform is still ongoing. For more information, visit: Youth Wiki/Finland [7.8 Current Debates and Reforms](#).

4.1 General context

Main challenges to social inclusion

The [State Youth Council](#) (Valtion nuorisoneuvosto) is a consultative body attached to the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), and it provides expertise young people's living conditions. The State Youth Council has identified four main challenges when it comes to the social inclusion of young people in Finland. Their estimations are based on data provided by Statistics Finland and the results of several studies (E-mail correspondence on 21.11.2016 from the State Youth Council, which was formerly known as the Advisory Board on Youth Affairs):

1. *"Disadvantaged social environment due to lack of money*
2. *Low employment rate of young people*
3. *Young people with an immigrant background experience different kinds of risks are in different kind of risks*
4. *Leaving school early*

The State Youth Council identifies that a low household income has a negative impact on the social life and leisure time of young people. According to the Youth Barometer, 35 per cent of young people have not pursued taken up a hobby due to a lack of money. Young people living in poor households also meet their friends less frequently than those living in wealthy households.

Young people are also suffering the consequences of the economic recession and poor employment prospects. Their low employment rate is a problem. According to the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), 42 300 young people under 25 were unemployed as of September 2016. The State Youth Council estimates that the Youth Guarantee has not been able to help a third of young people without a job or an education placement within three months from registering as unemployed.

Young people with an immigrant background are at a higher risk of becoming a NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). They also experience more bullying and physical threats, and are more likely to have no close friends. When they face difficulties with their school work, they feel that they receive less support than other pupils. Also, adolescents with migrant background also perceive their health to be poorer than other adolescents and experience anxiety and school burn-out more frequently than the other groups.

According to [Statistics Finland](#), during the 2013/2014 academic year 5.4 per cent of students attending education leading to a qualification or degree discontinued their studies and did not resume them. The discontinuation of education is highest in vocational education for young people, where seven per cent discontinue their studies completely."

(Based on E-mail correspondence on 21.11.2016 from the [State Youth Council](#), which was formerly known as the Advisory Board on Youth Affairs).

Definitions and concepts

Several definitions and concepts relating to social inclusion, which are used in Finland, are rooted in the European discussion. Therefore, there are no significant country-specific definitions and concepts. For example, the use of concepts as social inclusion, social exclusion and the NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training), are defined similarly in most of the European countries.

For more information, visit: Eurofond, 2016. [Exploring the Diversity of NEETs](#).

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The legal framework of the social inclusion of young people is set by the [Constitution of Finland](#) (Chapter 2 - *Basic rights and liberties*). The Constitution is complemented by the Youth Act (Section 1 - *The purpose of this Act is to promote the social inclusion of young people and provide them with opportunities for exerting an influence and improve their skills and capabilities to function in society; support the growth, independence and sense of community of young people and facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and adoption of skills necessary for this purpose; support young people's free-time pursuits and engagement in civic society; promote non-discrimination and equality among young people and the realisation of their rights; and improve young people's growth and living conditions*), the [Non-Discrimination Act](#) (Chapter 1 - *The purpose of this Act is to promote equality and prevent discrimination as well as to enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against*) and the [Language Act](#) (Section 2 – [1] *The purpose of this Act is to ensure the constitutional right of every person to use his or her own language, either Finnish or Swedish, before the courts and other authorities. [2] The goal is to ensure the right of everyone to a fair trial and good administration irrespective of language, and to secure the linguistic rights of an individual person without him or her needing specifically to refer to these rights*).

The areas of expertise of the [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#) are the promotion of welfare, social and health services, income security, insurance, working life, and gender equality. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health supports the welfare of people in Finland through social and health services, and by ensuring income security. The target group is not specifically young people but the policies also concern them.

The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) develops educational, science, cultural, sport, and youth policies in Finland. Therefore, its role in relation to the social inclusion of young people is important. On 11 December 2017, [Youth Work Centres of Expertise](#) were approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture as eligible for state aid in 2018–2019, in accordance with the priorities set in the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2017–2019](#). The priority related to “Social empowerment”, which as a concept is very close to “social inclusion”, was chosen to be backed by several Centres of Expertise. Firstly by a consortium administered by the City of Espoo in co-operation with the National Workshop Association, Juvenia – Youth Research and Development Centre of South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences and HUMAK University of Applied Sciences; secondly, by a group administered by the National Workshop Association realised in co-operation with Juvenia - Youth Research and Development Centre of South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences; and thirdly by a group administered by the Finnish Association for Mental Health realised in co-operation with Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention (EHYT) and Youth Mental Health Association – Yeesi.

Employment is very much part of social inclusion and thus unemployment can lead to at worst poverty and social exclusion. Therefore, the role of the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#) must be taken into account in the when discussing social inclusion. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 3 Employment and Entrepreneurship. Employment and Economic Development Offices](#) are provided by 15 regional TE Offices with some 120 branches in Finland. Institutionally, they work under the guidance of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment.

From the point of view of social inclusion, the Unit for Democracy, Language Affairs and Fundamental Rights is the most important unit of the [Ministry of Justice](#). It promotes and monitors the realisation of the right to vote and participate, as well as the general prerequisites for citizen participation. The tasks of the unit include promoting and monitoring the realisation of linguistic rights. Although these duties are strongly related to participation, they include provisions for social inclusion as well. For example, the

Ministry of Justice organises campaigns, which especially target young people in vulnerable positions and who face discrimination based on their age and/or ethnic background. The goal is to promote possibilities to participate in society. In addition, promoting social inclusion is one of the most important goals of the Democracy Policy Programme (2017-2019). For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 5.5 National Strategy to Increase Youth Participation](#).

Municipalities (see [Youth Wiki/ Finland Glossary](#)) actively promote and support the social inclusion of young people. Social and health services are arranged by municipalities. In the future, services will be organized at the regional level (for more information see [Youth Wiki/ Finland 1.9 Youth Policy/ Current Debates and Reforms](#)). As mentioned previously, as per the Child Welfare Act, each municipality, or two or more municipalities together, must draw up a plan concerning the actions of the municipality or municipalities to promote the wellbeing of children and young people, and to arrange and develop child welfare services. There are six Regional State Administrative Agencies in Finland. The agencies work in collaboration with local authorities. Tasks of the Regional State Administrative Agencies (see [Youth Wiki/ Finland Glossary](#)) include for example the supervision and steering of outreach youth work in the regions. The ongoing regional government reform will affect their current role and tasks.

The [Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities VANE](#) is a co-operative organ for authorities, disability organisations, and organisations for relatives of disabled people. It closely follows the decision-making in society, organises hearings, gives statements, and promotes the real implementation of the human rights of disabled people. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol entered into force for Finland on the 10th June 2016. A national coordination mechanism, Advisory Board for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, was established in connection with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to replaced the former National Council on Disability. The responsibility of the new mechanism will be to coordinate the implementation of the Convention in different administrative branches. At least five members of the Advisory Board shall represent persons with disabilities or their families. The Council works in close connection with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The [Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations](#) works under the guidance of the Ministry of Justice. It engages in dialogue with immigrants, ethnic, cultural and religious minorities, public authorities, political parties, and NGOs. Through cooperation and discussion, they aim to build trust and an open Finland. The board brings together migration experts from national, regional and local levels ranging from public officials to civil society representatives. It also forms a network of experts on migration, integration and equality which promotes dialogue between different population groups.

The [Ombudsman for Children](#) reports to the government on the welfare of children and young people, and on the implementation of their rights. The Ombudsman conveys the opinions of young people to decision-makers. The opinions are recorded by surveys, reports and by personal meetings with young people and children (for example, young people with disabilities, young people who have arrived Finland without their families, young people with a Sámi or Roma background, and young people whose parents are in prison).

The [Non-Discrimination Ombudsman](#) advances equality in Finland. It is possible to turn to the Ombudsman if one has experienced or witnessed discrimination on the basis of age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activism, family connections, health, disability, sexual orientation, or other personal characteristics.

Cross-Sectoral Cooperation

Social inclusion demands cross-sectoral approaches. Various ministries and municipalities work and co-operate in the area of social inclusion policies. In this sense, the responsible actor depends on which area of social inclusion is being discussed.

Overall, the [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#) coordinates social inclusion policies (*people living in poverty and social exclusion, health*). Its areas of expertise are welfare, social and health services, integration, income security, insurance, working life, and gender equality.

In terms of education (*the number of early school leavers*), the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is the most important ministry. According to the Youth Act, the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for youth policy.

Since employment (*employment rate*) must be taken into account in the area of social inclusion, the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#) plays an important role and coordinates employment policies.

These three ministries represent the top-level authority in the context of Finnish social inclusion policy. Under the guidance of the ministries several advisory boards, institutes and services work in the area of social inclusion (e.g. the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations, the National Institute for Health and Welfare, etc.).

At the local level, municipalities are responsible for arranging and developing child welfare services. According to the [Child Welfare Act](#), each municipality, or two or more municipalities together, must draw up a plan, concerning the actions of the municipality or municipalities to promote the wellbeing of children and young people, and to arrange and develop child welfare services. This plan will be subject to approval by the council of each municipality involved and must be reviewed at least once every four years. The plan must cover the circumstances in which children and young people are being raised, and the state of their wellbeing.

According to the [Youth Act](#), youth work and youth policy is implemented as cross-sectoral cooperation and as cooperation with young people, youth associations and other organisations doing youth work. The local authority has a coordinating body with representation from the local educational, social and health care, and youth administrations and from the labour and police administrations for the planning and implementation of cross-sectoral cooperation.

4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

The Government Programme In accordance with legislation (for more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.2 Administration and Governance](#)), Finland's national strategy for the social inclusion of young people is based on the vision of the Government Programme ([Finland, a land of solutions – Strategic Programme of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government](#)). At the national level, the Government Programme sets the major policy directions to be followed. More specific strategic goals relating to social inclusion of young people are specified in the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme.

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme The [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) is the most central public document of youth policy in Finland. Overall, young people should be taken into consideration at two different levels: in youth policy specifically, and at the general policy level as well.

Europe 2020 Strategy Finland's [national targets](#) which are based on Europe 2020 Strategy are also considered in social inclusion policies. The Europe 2020 Strategy promotes smart, sustainable and inclusive economic growth. In 2016, the Finnish Government presented the eight Europe 2020 [national reform objects](#).

Scope and contents

The Government Programme

According to the Government Programme public health, and active and healthy lifestyles are promoted, along with taking responsibility for one's own life. With regards to the

social inclusion of young people, the Government's objective is to raise the employment rate of young people. The strategic objectives of the Government Programme are realised in the form of [26 key projects](#).

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme

All the five objectives outlined in the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2017 are closely related to social inclusion of young people: it supports the way for recreation, employability, participation in decision-making and exerting influence, mental well-being and life management related to independent housing. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.3 National Youth Strategy](#).

Europe 2020 Strategy

With regards to the social inclusion of young people, the most central national targets of Finland are raising the employment rate, lowering the number of 18–24 year-old early school leavers to below 8%, and reducing the number of people living at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Responsible authority

The Government Programme

According to the [Constitution](#), the Government submits annual reports to Parliament on governmental activities and on the measures undertaken in response to parliamentary decisions. Also, according to the Government Programme, the Government uses indicators in the follow-up of its strategic objectives and, if necessary, takes corrective measures on the basis of the information. According to the Government Programme, the Government develops criteria in order to monitor its objectives together with the OECD.

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2017-2019

According to the Youth Act the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is primarily responsible authority that implements the National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme in conjunction with various other ministries, such as [Ministry of Justice](#), [Ministry of the Interior](#), [Ministry of Defence](#), [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#), and [Ministry of the Environment](#). For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.3 National Youth Strategy](#).

Europe 2020 Strategy

The programme presents measures to attain the national targets and how the country-specific recommendations given by the European Union have been taken into consideration. It includes several measures and various ministries are responsible for the implementation and monitoring. The programme is published by the Ministry of Finance.

Revisions/Updates

The Government Programme

The Government Programme of Juha Sipilä has not undergone revisions or updates.

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme

The Government adopts a new youth policy programme every four year. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.3 National Youth Strategy](#).

Europe 2020 Strategy

As mentioned above, there are eight Europe 2020 national reform programmes, which presented measures to attain the national targets of Finland and how the country-specific recommendations given by the EU have been taken into consideration.

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

Finland's Structural Fund Programme 'Sustainable growth and jobs 2014 – 2020' is realising the [Europe 2020 Strategy targets](#), many of which are related to the social inclusion of young people, being one of the population sections considered to be in a vulnerable position in society. The programme is led by the [Ministry of Economics Affairs and Employment](#).

In 2016, the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) also outlined three important strategic priorities:

1. Promoting multiculturalism, sense of community and inclusion ([Meaningful in Finland](#))
2. Promoting gender equality (*The Action Plan for Equality* by the Ministry of Education and Culture - In Finnish: [Toiminnallinen tasa-arvosuunnitelma](#))
3. Promoting sustainable development ([The Finland we want by 2050 – Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development](#))

The Ministry of Education and Culture allocates funds to national and international projects in the youth field. It takes into consideration whether these projects promote one or more goals of these strategic priorities. **Meaningful in Finland – Action Plan**

Meaningful in Finland – Action Plan aims to prevent hate speech and racism, and foster social inclusion. The Action Plan was launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture. One of the long-term objectives of the Government Programme is that by 2025 Finland will be a country where everyone can feel at home. This means that Finland would be welcoming and international, and that hate speech or racism will not be tolerated. *Meaningful in Finland – Action Plan* defines the current economic crisis, refugee crisis and rapid changes in society as a fertile breeding ground for hate speech, extremism and polarisation.

Meaningful in Finland focuses on tackling hate speech and racism, and strengthening multiculturalism, inclusion and equality through the Ministry of Education and Culture, its agencies, bodies and other organisations. For example, *Meaningful in Finland* works to improve citizens' multiliteracy. The programme strengthens the structures and procedures in early childhood education, libraries and cultural fields so they can better support multiliteracy. According to the Action Plan, children and the children of immigrants are the specific target groups, because they need to be encouraged to develop their linguistic awareness.

Meaningful in Finland promotes multiculturalism, a sense of community and inclusion in the Ministry's government-subsidised projects. Public libraries serve as meeting points for people and help support active citizenship, multiculturalism and democracy. The skills of teaching staff and other professionals who work with children and young people will be developed and improved. Early teen, youth, student and other organisations are invited to create equal opportunities for participation in multicultural activities and community life. Actors in the youth sector are encouraged to promote human rights and equality, and fight hate speech. A special government grant application process for youth services in local government will be launched. The goal is to help curb hate speech and foster equality.

There are several projects in various fields, which are supported by *Meaningful in Finland*. For example, the 'Show Racism the Red Card' project in football and other team sports is expanded and incorporated in the Finnish schools on the Move programme, as one of the Government Programme's key projects. The project is implemented by Football Players' Association - FPA, the Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation (Fimu), the Association for Promoting Multiculturality Walter, the Foundation for Sport and Health Sciences Likes, and various sports federations. Promoting equality and diversity in all

areas of physical activity is supported. Additionally, a government grant for advocating dialogue between different religions is introduced.

The Action Plan for Equality by the Ministry of Education and Culture

The goal of the Action Plan for Equality is to establish administration methods, which strengthen gender equality in legislation drafting and decision-making. The Action Plan presents various measures, which support gender mainstreaming (= *sukupuolinäkökulman valtavirtaistaminen*). The Ministry of Education emphasized that gender mainstreaming is key part of legislation drafting as well as for allocations in the youth field, and is a funding criteria. The gender impact assessment aims to promote gender and equality in planning, implementing, and evaluating youth work projects.

The Finland we want by 2050 – Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development

The Finland we want by 2050 is a strategy to promote sustainable development in Finland. Social inclusion and wellbeing are also emphasized in the strategy as part of sustainable development. The objective is to guarantee equal prospects for wellbeing, a participatory society for citizens, sustainable work, and sustainable local communities. The strategy is based on the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Funding

Finland's Structural Fund Programme

Finland's Structural Fund Programme '[Sustainable growth and jobs 2014 – 2020](#)' is realising the [Europe 2020 Strategy targets](#). It has five priority axes and thirteen specific objectives. Three of these five priorities are closely related to the social inclusion of young people: 'Employment and labour mobility', 'Education, skills and lifelong learning', and 'Social inclusion and combating poverty'. The amount of public funding that has been allocated for the entire seven-year programme period is 2.6 billion, half of which is EU funding (European Social Fund) and the other half is national public funding. One fifth (meaning, already more than 163 million € for 325 projects, such was the situation on 16.9.2019) will be directed towards projects mainly targeted at young people. Many of these are, for example, connected with the development of the One-Stop-Guidance Centres. In 2019, there has already emerged over 60 such centres nationwide (see more Youth Wiki Finland [3.4 Career Guidance and counselling](#)).

Meaningful in Finland – the Action Plan

The Ministry of Education and Culture launched the *Meaningful in Finland – Action Plan* programme, and allocated 6 Million Euros of funding (e.g. education for people who work with children and young people).

The Action Plan for Equality by the Ministry of Education and Culture

The goal of this action plan is that gender mainstreaming is part of all administration processes, including legislation drafting, etc. There is no specific budget defined, since the Action Plan aims at integrating a gendered perspective in all measures taken. For example, it is one criterion that is used to assess projects in the youth field, which are applying for funding.

The Finland we want by 2050 – Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development

The organisations which commit to this strategy choose objectives relevant to them and their stakeholders. Over 100 organisations have already made commitments. There is not one actor, which would fund the whole programme but rather there are several participating actors – therefore, there is no specific budget defined. At the national level, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Environment, and the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development coordinate the programme.

Quality assurance

Finland's Structural Fund Programme

The evaluation of the '[Sustainable Growth and Jobs' structural funds programme 2014-2020](#) was published in June 2019 by MDI Public Ltd and its partners. (The final report is in Finnish, available [here](#)). For the evaluation, a multitude of methods were used, for example: documents, questionnaires, interviews, and monitored indicators. On average, the funded projects were able to raise young people's opportunities to be involved in education, or work, or to develop their work ability and functionality (see the [Abilitator self-evaluation questionnaire](#) developed by the [Finnish Institute of Occupational Health](#)). On the one hand, it was stated in the evaluation report that even more sophisticated effectivity indicators need to be developed in the future, since, for instance, the young people coming to One-Stop-Guidance-Centres often have several obstacles on their paths to employment and wellbeing such as health issues, and this seems to be one of the reasons why the employment targets have not been achieved in this age group. On the other hand, the projects targeted directly at the development of social inclusion and reduction of poverty got on average good results when it comes to young people.

Meaningful in Finland – Action Plan

Meaningful in Finland consists of ten measures, with various kinds of approaches. Therefore, there is not one mechanism of quality assurance, which would apply to the whole programme. For example, Measure 2 ("*It will promote multiculturalism, a sense of community and inclusion in the Ministry's government-subsidised projects and in the selection criteria of the whole range of European Social Fund measures*") directly affects the selection criteria, which is one way to guarantee the quality of funded projects under the programme.

The Action Plan for Equality by the Ministry of Education and Culture

The programme presents several goals, needed measures, and outlines the actors which are responsible for monitoring the action plan's implementation.

The Finland we want by 2050 – Society's Commitment to Sustainable Development

The organisations publish their commitments in an open database, which is provided by the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development. Additionally, the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development assists in the monitoring process. According to the strategy, the indicators used are chosen by a national network of indicator experts.

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

Intercultural awareness

There are several on-going programmes aimed at raising intercultural awareness (For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.2 Administration and Governance](#)). Under these programmes, various initiatives will be carried out. According to the Youth Act, the promotion of multiculturalism and equality is one of main funding criteria when the subsidies for youth organisations are decided (For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 5.6 Supporting Youth Organisations](#)). In this sense, intercultural awareness is very much part of Finnish youth policy and education, and accordingly, initiatives, programmes and projects funded by the Finnish state take this into account.

Good relations within the population are an important part of intercultural awareness. The [TRUST project](#) (2016–2018) is one example of how good relations are developed. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for the TRUST project. It co-operates with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Finnish Immigration Service, the

Advisory Board for the Ethnic Relations, and various other organizations. TRUST organises education for authorities, volunteers, and asylum-seekers in localities with reception centres. One important focus is reception centres for under-aged asylum-seekers. The website was constructed as part of the Framework Strategy against Discrimination financed by the European Commission.

The Director of Customer Relations of the National Agency for Education Jorma Kauppinen describes in the publication *Constructive Interaction* that the 'policies outlined in the core curriculum documents entail transversal competence themes preparing for a sustainable future, and the teaching and learning of skills based on these competences follows teachers and learners through the entire continuum of education and training. ...the entire general education is to adopt the skills required in thinking and learning, taking care of oneself and managing daily life, multiliteracy, participation and influencing. The same framework conditions – respect for human dignity and the ability to live with other people and the entire ecosystem – are also reflected in the value base of each core curriculum and in the characteristics defined for the school culture.' Just as its defined in the [National core curriculum for basic education](#), so lays the foundation for global citizenship which respects human and cultural diversity while also encouraging pupils to act for positive change. For example, in the basic education (grades 1-9) intercultural awareness, tolerance, freedom and anti-discrimination are included in the value base of civics and religion, and in the [general upper secondary schools](#), these are included in compulsory courses of ethics. When it comes to the development of school cultures, the [Non-discrimination act](#) states that every school and educational institution must have a plan regarding how equality is supported and monitored in all their actions. For that task, the [Peace Education Institute](#) offers a guide to equality planning in schools (In Finnish *Koulu vailla vertaa. Opas yhdenvertaisuussuunnitteluun*). The [Ministry of Justice](#) has an online resource [Equality.fi](#) dedicated for equality in general. With [Finnish Committee of UNICEF](#)'s material on human rights (in [Finnish](#)) and global education, it is possible to discuss children's rights as part of learning and teaching. The materials deal with children's rights through perspectives related to the environment, water, health, education and equality.

Young people's rights

A comprehensive [list of children's and young people's rights](#) are updated on the website of the [Ombudsman for Children](#) in Finland. Lists are available in Finnish, Swedish, English, and Sámi.

Additionally, [Infopankki](#) offers information in 12 different languages about moving or living in Finland, Finnish society, legislation and rights, including children's and youths' rights and obligations. [Infopankki.fi](#) is provided by the City of Helsinki, and supported by the Finnish state.

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

In 2012, the Government decided on the preparation of the first National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Extremism. In 2016, [the plan was revised](#). The updated plan continues the actions which are still seen as relevant and which proved to be effective in the first programme. Also, an overview of the situation of violent extremism in Finland has been released biannually since 2013, see the [Annual Report 2017](#). These biannual overviews are the responsibility of the cross-administrative National Cooperation Network for the Prevention of Violent Extremism, which is appointed by the Ministry of the Interior, and they are published in accordance with the National Action Plan to Prevent Violent Extremism.

The updated Action Plan lists several objectives. For example, the goal is to launch the RADINET Exit Service (in [Finnish](#)), which supports radicalized persons who want to withdraw from violence and from the sphere of influence of violent groups. Simultaneously, this will reduce the threat of violence to society and people. With regards

to young people, the Action Plan emphasizes the ability of children and adolescents to identify, and guard against, violence-inducing messages and propaganda. The objective is for children and adolescents to counter radical and extremist messages and propaganda, both on their own and together with others. Thirdly, the Action Plan highlights the increased number of asylum-seekers. According to the Action Plan, the situation has increased polarization in society, which different extremist movements are trying to exploit. Therefore, the objective is to prevent the dissemination of radical violent propaganda and stop the violent extremist movements recruiting among asylum-seekers, and to efficiently carry out integration. The action will take into account the recommendations of the report [The educational tracks and integration of immigrants – problematic areas and proposals for actions](#) by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

According to the Action Plan, threats of violent extremism have grown in Finland. One of the threats has been associated with the conflict of Iraq and Syria. Secondly, the far-right has become more active. Violent hate speech has become more prevalent, targeted at wide range of individuals and groups. Right-wing groups may cause local problems in terms of racist crime, because they target ethnic minorities and anti-fascists especially. In 2015, the violent attacks towards reception centres showed the new phenomena of extremism in Finnish society. Still, the 2016 Action Plan estimates that the individuals who justify violence on the basis of various motives pose the greatest danger in Finland (e.g. school shootings).

4.6 Access to quality services

Housing

Housing is seen as a very important part of social inclusion, and homelessness can have very negative impacts on young people's employment, study prospects, and their overall physical and mental wellbeing (EKCYF Information Sheet, 2014). One of the strategic goals of the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) is that young people should have the chance to get the support they need in terms of life management as they transition into independent living.

The programme refers to the [Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019](#), which was adopted by the government in 2016 and whose objective is summarised as follows: "The objective is that young people's ability to live independently is improved. The threshold for young people belonging to different groups to get expert, multidisciplinary and solution-oriented counselling and other support for their independent living is lowered. As a result, young people's housing problems are resolved at an earlier stage, which reduces serious housing problems, including the number of evictions."

The Ministry of the Environment is primarily responsible for the government housing policy and reducing homelessness. Based on the [statistics](#) produced by the [Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland](#) (ARA), in 2017 there was more than 1500 homeless young people under the age of 25 in Finland. The number increased almost by 190 individuals compared to the previous year – most of whom were found in big cities: 100 in Helsinki and 37 in Turku. At the same time, the numbers have decreased in other risk groups. The definition "homeless" includes those temporarily living with friends or family, people living outdoors, in stairwells, in emergency shelters or similar facilities, dormitories, accommodation facilities and different institutions.

According to an [international review](#) of the Finnish Homelessness Strategy, the permanent reduction of long-term homelessness on a national level has been achieved. The significant financial investment allocated to the programme by municipalities, organisations and the state, and the extensive, long-term national and local cooperation have made it possible to integrate the development of housing and services both on a general level and by taking the needs of different target groups into account. However, it should not be forgotten that any increase or decrease in homelessness is tied not only to

homelessness policy, but also to other changes and developments in social policy. According to researchers, the most central challenge for eradicating homelessness is significantly improving the availability of affordable rental housing in the Helsinki metropolitan area in particular.

For more information, visit: Pleave, Nicholas; Culhane, Dennis; Granfelt, Riitta; Knutagård, Marcus: [The Finnish Homelessness Strategy – An International Review](#)

[The Finnish Youth Housing Association](#) NAL is a national youth housing expert, which focuses on the development of youth housing and living conditions. NAL provides services that support the success of independent living, and produces and distributes information concerning youth housing. Local youth housing associations arrange group and tenant activities. One example of these group activity forms in youth housing is the young mothers' peer support groups. Also, NAL monitors housing policy and focus on issues, which are significant from the viewpoint of young people (e.g. the production of low-rent apartments, housing costs, subsidies targeted for young people). The services are mainly organised by NAL local area associations in cooperation with the public sector, local organisations and other operators. The services of supported housing are mainly purchased by cities and municipal consortiums.

NAL offers versatile housing services for different needs from housing guidance to supported housing. Since 2016, NAL has cooperated with One-Stop Guidance Centres to offer housing guidance. Also, NAL provides the ABCs of housing for young people. The goal is to offer useful information and to make transition to independent living easier.

Social services

Local authorities are responsible for performing the social welfare and health care services laid down for them by law. They may provide the services either alone or secure them from other organisations or private sector providers. Therefore, the role of local authorities in organising social services for young people is significant. As mentioned above, the municipality (or two or more municipalities together) must draw up a plan concerning the actions of the municipality or municipalities to promote the wellbeing of children and young people, and to arrange and develop child welfare services.

The [key projects of the Government Programme](#) affect the social inclusion of young people, although they may not be explicitly the target group. At the national level, one of the key projects (Key Project 1) of the Government Programme is that services will be developed and become more responsive to the customer's needs. According to the Action Plan, in the implementation of the key projects and reforms the objective is to provide customer-responsive operating processes conducive to independent living in the context of social and healthcare services, and to ensure an appropriate level of social security.

Another key project of the Government Programme (Key Project 5) is to develop career opportunities for people with only a partial work ability. In this case, the measures are not targeting young people specifically, but they do concern young people as well.

Potential financial provisions for young people include student benefits, housing allowance, social assistance, sickness allowance (young people from the age of 16 are entitled to sickness allowance if they are unable to work due to illness), unemployment benefit, conscripts allowance and other armed service benefits, financial assistance for families (for example maternity grant and child benefits), disability allowance, rehabilitation allowance and medical expenses (EKCY Information Sheet, 2014). What a disadvantaged young person actually receives depends on their specific situation, as well as any overlapping statuses they may have. Most benefits in Finland are distributed by [Social Insurance Institution Kela](#), but local social services can also provide temporary social assistance and help with housing.

One form of financial assistance available for young people is income support. If it is not possible for a person to have any other means of income, he or she can apply for income support. According to the Act on Social Assistance, the goal is to strengthen the social

security of individuals and families, to prevent social exclusion and to promote independence. Income support should be the last resort and should only a temporary solution, although the reality does not always match in this case. The principles of income support are established by the legislation, and the ministry in charge is the [Ministry of Health and Social Affairs](#). The basic amount of income support is about 450€ (2016) euros per month for a person living alone. If a young person receiving income support is living with his or her parents, the basic amount is 73 per cent of the regular one. Children under the age of 10 receive 63 per cent, and children from 10 to 17 years of age receive 70 per cent of the regular support.

According to the Act on Social Assistance, there are a few sanctions that can be applied. For example, the basic amount of income support can be reduced if person does not register as a job-seeker at the employment office or does not participate in rehabilitating employment activities or follow his or her personal integration plan. The same practice applies, if a person is under 25 years old and discontinues his or her studies or does not accept a study place. The sanctions are aimed at preventing school dropouts and discouraging social exclusion.

In 2017, the administration of the basic social assistance scheme was transferred from municipalities to Kela ([Social Insurance Institution of Finland](#)). Kela has stated that the purpose of income support should not only be to keep people alive but also to enable participation in Finnish society, and according to Kela this should be taken into account when the basic amount of income support is reduced. From this point of view, income support is also part of social inclusion policies.

Young people are more often in receipt of income support than other people, and the number of young people claiming income support has increased over the last few years. In Helsinki, 19 per cent of 18-24-year-olds had received income support in 2014. On the whole, the number of 15-29 year olds receiving income support has increased 22 per cent since 2009.

For more information, visit:

The [Youth Welfare Report in Helsinki](#)

The Government has proposed the implementation of a [basic income experiment](#). An experiment testing a basic income was launched in 2017. The aim is to show whether basic income can be used to reform social security so that incentive traps relating to work are eliminated. The experiment would be the first phase of a larger basic income pilot study. The primary goal is to promote employment.

Health care

The [Governmental Decree](#) on Maternity and child health clinic services, school and student health care, preventive oral health care for children and young people guarantees school health care, dental care, contraception and other sexual health counselling for young people. Also, an examination by a child or youth psychiatrist to determine their mental health status must be available if necessary. Local authorities provide the services.

Young people just as all members of society are entitled to public health care, but may also be covered under a healthcare scheme through their employment or study place. Additionally, most schools have their own nurses and, in some cases, psychologists. The [Finnish Student Health Service](#), is an example of a service specifically for young people, which provides basic healthcare and dental services for students in higher education. The Finnish Student Health Service does not provide emergency health assistance.

If a young person is not covered under school health care for some reason, municipalities may provide other services targeted at young people. For example, the city of Tampere has a [Youth Clinic](#), which provides the services of public health nurses, a doctor, and a psychologist working for Tampere residents under the age of 22 who are not entitled to

the occupational health care or student health care services. The medical examinations are free of charge. Also, the Youth Clinic provides birth control advice for all Tampere residents under the age of 22.

NGOs are allowed to also offer health services to young people, but according to the legislation, the local authorities are primarily responsible for arranging such services. The Family Federation of Finland (in [Finnish](#)) is an example of a significant third sector actor working in the social and health sector. The organisation provides services, acts as an advocate and carries out research. The Family Federation of Finland's website has a section specifically for young people. The goal is to offer guidance and information about sexual health for people under the age of 20. A young person can also book an appointment online. Altogether there are about ten different support- and crisis services offered by phone targeted at young people, approximately thirty online services (in the form of chats or databases for example), and at least four organisations offer face to face support, such as peer support groups and one-on-one appointments at regional [Finnish Association of Mental Health](#) crisis centres, at shelters provided by the [Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters](#) as well as youth shelters provided by the [Finnish Red Cross](#). The contact information and opening hours of the aforementioned services is gathered into one place on the online service "Life of young people" (in Finnish [Nuortenelama.fi](#)), organised by [Koordinaatti](#), a national youth work centre of expertise for youth information and counselling.

Financial services

The financial services and benefits that a young person has access to often depends on their status: whether she or he is employed, unemployed, whether he or she studies or does not study, whether he or she has children, whether she or he is disabled or not, etc. ([EKCYF Information Sheet, 2014](#)). On the other hand, the mere fact of being a young person may warrant the need for more support when it comes to coping and well-being from the financial services as well. Based on a publication by Marko Niiranen "The changes made in the Act on the Adjustment of the Debts of a Private Individual 2015" (in [Finnish](#)), youth has become an assessment criteria when applying for and being granted debt adjustment. Based on Niiranen the amendment was made to strengthen the possibilities of young people receiving a positive decision, even if the assessment as such still depends on a combination of many different kinds of criteria - not only age (Niiranen 2015, 226-229).

Young people living in poverty are a very diverse group of people, which includes students, frictionally and structurally unemployed, single parents, etc. Therefore, all young people that live in poverty are not necessarily at risk of social exclusion and cannot be described as vulnerable young people ([EKCYF Information Sheet, 2014](#)). However, it should not be forgotten that economic uncertainty increases the risk of developing mental health issues (stress, depression, etc.). For students in higher education, mental health issues are the most common reason to use the services of the Finnish Student Health Service (YTHS).

One example of financial services is [My Finances](#), which is a joint project with the Finnish Federation of Settlement Houses, the Finnish Youth Housing Association NAL, Nuorisosäätiö, and the Guarantee Foundation. The main objective of the project is to prevent economic problems and help young people in managing their daily finances. My Finances has a network consisting of over 80 organisations (e.g. foundations, corporations and banks). The network collaborates at various working groups, themed events, and seminars. The project's target group is people who work with young people and need more support with their economic skills. The service is funded by Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA).

Quality assurance

It can be said that in Finland all public services are subject to systematic quality assurance. At the local level, municipalities can allocate resources as they see fit, but

they should evaluate the services produced with young people on a regular basis. According to the [Youth Act](#), youth services are in practice implemented according to cross-sectoral cooperation. The local authority has a coordinating body with representation from the local educational, social and health care, and youth administrations and when possible, also from the labour and police administrations for the planning, implementation and assessment of all youth services. Moreover, the central government assesses the local services, and in practice such assessments are referred to as 'Evaluations of basic services', which are carried out by the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#). The principles offered for equality in the [Non-Discrimination Act](#) are, for example, implemented when establishing the evaluation standards.

One way to examine and monitor the social inclusion of young people at the national level are the indicators provided by the [State Youth Council](#). These indicators evaluate the well-being and living conditions of young people. Some of the indicators are based upon the [Youth Barometer](#) and some of them are based on the eight areas of the EU Youth Strategy: context, education, employment and entrepreneurship, health, life management, culture, creativity and hobbies, participation, personal integrity and legal protection (see those EU Youth Strategy related well-being indicators in Finnish [here](#)).

The Youth Barometer is published in cooperation between the [Finnish Youth Research Network](#) and the State Youth Council. The Youth Barometer studies young people's values, attitudes and experiences. The theme each year is different: it was learning and education 2017, future 2016, life management in 2015, equality in 2014, and participation in 2013. However, some of the questions are repeated every year, which makes it possible to track changes in attitudes. The Youth Barometers' Time Series has been gathered in the form of [indicators](#). The categories are work and employment, society and democracy, relationships, satisfaction, social exclusion, uncertainty and security. For example, young people are asked annually if they worried about their income, health or future, finding a job, or living in an unsafe environment, and if they are subjected to physical, psychological and/or sexual violence, or if they are lonely. With regards to satisfaction, they were asked how satisfied they were with their financial situation, health, relationships, spare time, and life as a whole.

The [National Institute for Health and Welfare](#) (THL) works under the guidance of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. It promotes the welfare and health of the population, prevents diseases and social problems, and develops social and health services. Areas include, for example, health and welfare inequalities, health promotion, and gender equality. Additionally, THL promotes the health, wellbeing and inclusion in multicultural Finland.

With regards to young people, the [School Health Promotion Study](#) is conducted annually by THL. The School Health Promotion Study monitors the health and wellbeing of young people between the ages of 14-20-year-olds in Finland. The operations of THL are governed by the corresponding Act and Decree. The results are utilised in the planning and evaluating of health education. The School Health Promotion Study has affected the development of the wellbeing indicators.

There are several research projects which examine the operational environments of youth policy and services for young people, including services, which promote social inclusion. Many of these projects are funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The information provided by research supports developing and evaluating these services. The experiences of young people, who use services, are at the core of this research.

One example of these research projects is [Young people at the counter – service system project](#) (2014-2015), a joint research project by THL and the Finnish Youth Research Network. It examined the costs of social exclusion and how young people, and social and employment services meet the needs of 18-29-year-olds. The first part of the project concerned the use of health services by young people classified as socially excluded and the associated costs, and the second part deals with the encounters of young people and service providers. The second part is based on qualitative interview material. Of those

interviewed, 19 are 18-29-year-olds using various services, and ten are customer service professionals from TE employment offices, job service centres, social work, outreach youth work, Vamos, and youth information and advice points. The young people, who were interviewed, were mostly satisfied with the services. However, from the point of view of young people, the long waiting times were a problem, and from the employees' point of view, the problem was no-show appointments. Especially, in the mental health services, accessing acute treatment was difficult. The employees emphasized the creation of trust between the young person and the employee as the condition of effective service. Instead of one-door services, the interviews of both the young people and the employees highlighted a need for a single person who would coordinate the young person's situation.

4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

Policy/legal framework

The [Youth Act](#) and the [Government Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy](#) form the base of legal framework of youth work in Finland. According to the Youth Act, youth work means the efforts to support the growth, independence and social inclusion of young people in society. Also, according to the [Non-Discrimination Act](#), the authorities evaluate the realisation of equality in their activities and take the necessary measures to promote the realisation of equality. This means that municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) must promote equality in services, including youth work. According to legislation, municipalities are responsible for the equality mapping of their services, but since the legislation came into effect in 2015, not all municipalities have implemented the task yet.

The legislation on [outreach youth work](#) entered into force in January 2011. According to the definition of outreach youth work provided by the amended Youth Act, the purpose of outreach youth services is "to reach young people in need of assistance and provide access to services and other support designed to promote their growth, independence, social inclusion and life management skills as well as to improve access to education and facilitate entry into the labour market." In this sense, the definition of outreach youth work in the Finnish context corresponds to the definition of targeted youth work. The consortium called "Centre for Expertise for Outreach Youth Work" (in [Finnish](#)) led by the City of Espoo is also one of the youth work centre of expertise approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture for the years 2018-2019.

Also, the amendments made in the Youth Act already in 2010 have significantly developed the role of [youth workshops](#). The youth workshop activities are specifically targeted at the NEETs (Not in Employment, Education or Training). The target group includes unemployed young people and adults without vocational or professional qualifications or work experience, career-changers, job-seekers with disabilities or a diminished ability to work, people recovering from substance abuse or mental health problems, long-term unemployed, people unable to work full time, and immigrants who need assistance in entering the Finnish labour market. The consortium led by the [National Workshop Association](#) is also one of the youth work centre of expertise approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture for the years 2018-2019. More about the centre of expertise related to youth workshops is available in [Finnish](#), more of the all youth work centres of expertise in [Youth Wiki/Finland 1.4 Youth Policy Decision-Making](#).

What is then meant by 'youth workshop' (in Finnish: nuorten työpaja)? "Workshops in Finland are communities that aim to support the participants' everyday life management, social empowerment, and employability skills, and thus, promote their access to education and work." This definition was borrowed from the report of the Erasmus+ funded development project "Paving the way to formal Education", where Finnish youth workshops co-operated with their colleagues from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and Slovenia. (See the homepage of the project and the report "Assessment and Documentation of Non-formal Learning – Tools and Practices " (2017) in different

language version [here](#).) Although professionals doing roughly the same work in other European countries refer to such youth organisations as “production schools”, Finns have chosen to use the English word ‘workshop’.

Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

According to the Youth Act and the Government Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy, the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) allocates state subsidies for youth work programmes. This also covers inclusive youth work programmes, which have specific target groups. A few examples are listed below.

According to the Youth Act, the purpose of outreach youth services is to reach a young person in need of support, and help him or her find services that will promote his or her growth and independence, and his or her access to education and to the labour market. Secondly, outreach youth work is primarily based on information provided by the young person and on his or her personal estimate of the need for support.

The objective of youth workshops is to improve the skills and abilities of young people and to enable them to access education or training, to complete their education or to become employed. Also, workshops support life management skills, social empowerment, social growth at one’s own pace and learning by doing.

[Educational travel -training](#) (in Finnish Nuotta) is a social youth work project of national youth centre network (see the [Finnish Youth Centres Association](#)) supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Nuotta training is targeted at young people between the ages of 13 and 28. Nuotta coaches seek to empower young people and challenge them to take control of their own daily routine: they assist them with such things as time management, the ins and outs of social life, and life management skills. Nuotta encourages social engagement and supports young people in their efforts to take responsibility for their study and work paths. Activities are based on the theory of experiential learning (e.g. climbing, trekking, canoeing, archery, arts and different problem-solving games). The typical length of these activities is 2-4 days. In 2019 there is nine youth centres that have the status of a national youth centre based on Youth Act. The specialty of the national youth centres is that they also offer accommodation, which also differentiates them from the local youth centres which offer free-time activities for local young people on daily basis by the municipalities.

The Ministry of Education and Culture allocates state subsidies for municipal youth work services in order to prevent hate speech and promote equality in services. These allocations are part of the *Meaningful in Finland* Programme (For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland 4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#)). State subsidies can be allocated for projects, which 1) increase young peoples’ awareness about equality and human rights, and strengthen their competences to act against hate speech and discrimination, and/or 2) organize mutual leisure time activities for young people with different backgrounds.

The Ministry of Education and Culture also allocates subsidies in order to support participation and the active citizenship of young asylum-seekers in Finnish society.

Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people

In Finland, at the local level municipalities are responsible for youth work (see [Glossary](#)). For example, there are more than a thousand youth house in daily use. Also, registered youth organisations, national youth centres and parishes provide youth work services. These activities are funded partly by state subsidies. For example, in the municipalities these are distributed in accordance with the number of inhabitants under the age of 29. The youth work provided by parishes is funded by church taxes. See more about [Youth Work in Finland](#) offered by the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi.

Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes

[Humak University of Applied Sciences](#) and [XAMK University of Applied Sciences](#) provide education and training for youth work professionals (Community Educators, Degree Programme in NGO and Youth Work, etc.). The social inclusion of young people form a part of studies; for example, Humak offers a course (30 ECTS) Young People and Social Inclusion.

The University of Tampere offers a degree programme in [Youth Work and Youth Research](#). It is also possible to specialize in youth research as part of doctoral studies.

Financial support

The Government finances youth work that fights against social exclusion. One of the most important ways to guarantee the activities and the position of youth work in Finland is through governmental appropriations for the youth field. For more information, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 1.7 Funding Youth Policy](#).

Quality assurance

National Workshops Association: Quality Criteria Model (in Finnish Sovari)

[National Workshops Association](#) provides a quality criteria model ([Sovari](#)), which focuses on social empowerment in workshop activities, outreach youth work, and Nuotta coaching. The goal is to produce consistent information about the efficiency of services for both professionals and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The quality criteria model covers self-knowledge and self-confidence, social skills, everyday life management, competences in studying and working, and goal orientation. **Goals of Youth Work and Youth Policy at the National Level**

The most visible forms of targeted services in Finland are workshops for young people and outreach youth work. Approximately 90 per cent of municipalities have workshops for young people. Outreach youth work is financed by targeted government subsidies and carried out in 95 per cent of municipalities. The main objective of outreach youth work is to reach those young people under 29 who are in need of support and direct them to the sphere of such services, or other forms of support that promote their growth and independence as well as their access to education and work.

The objectives and evaluation are also part of quality assurance. According to the [Constitution](#), the Government submits annual reports to Parliament on governmental activities and on the measures undertaken in response to parliamentary decisions. With regards to young people, the Annual Report 2015 and its Appendix 1 (Liite 1: [Ministeriöiden tuloksellisuuden kuvaus](#)) set a few criteria to be followed. According to the Appendix 1, there are 3 major goals of youth work and youth policy:

- Active citizenship of young people will be increased
- Social empowerment of young people will be increased
- Growth and living conditions of young people will be improved

According to the Appendix, the first goal is achieved quite well (grade: good). Youth organizations and youth centres have received annual allocations. According to the Youth Barometer, the active citizenship of young people takes various forms in society. The number of young people, who feel that they belong to the Finnish society, is higher than before.

Secondly, the social empowerment of young people receives a good grade. According to the Appendix, the Youth Guarantee and support for youth workshops and outreach youth work are key. The availability of services has improved and outreach youth work reaches more young people than before.

Thirdly, the goal of improving the growth and living conditions of young people receives a satisfactory grade. The number of young people who are satisfied with their life has been same for twenty years. The guidelines for youth sector have been developed in collaboration with the Regional State Administrative Agencies.

With regards to the social empowerment of young people, more detailed criteria were outlined:

- Coverage of workshops for young people in municipalities
- Young people (under 29-year-olds) in workshops
- Young people who are unemployed (under 25-year-olds)
- Young people reached by outreach youth work
- Outreach youth work, coverage in municipalities.

4.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

One of the most important structural changes in the area of the social inclusion policy is the reform of the social and health care services. For more information, visit: Youth Wiki/Finland [7.8 Current Debates and Reforms](#).

Ongoing debates

During the study [Youth Barometer Special Sample](#) of the [Finnish Youth Research Society & Network](#), 35 young people from different parts in Finland under the age of 30, who are neither working nor in education were interviewed by researcher Anu Gretschel. One of the research aims was to find out what kind of life is considered “good”, according to young people outside of work and training, and if such a good life is possible to achieve, even without ever finding a job. According to their interviews, when categorised, there are ten different areas which are perceived as key to having a good life. A good life can be understood as being ‘good life enough’ of being good, since it would be rare for anyone to have all of the following and in any great amounts:

1. Self-esteem, the ability to feel satisfied
2. Other people, relationships, a support network, respectful communities
3. Feeling well, daring, able to feel enthusiasm
4. Respect for life and living
5. Solidarity, being there for other people, voluntary work
6. Balance, doing something meaningful. Everyone is equal – also outside of work.
7. Good (enough) living habits
8. Freedom to choose and live according to one’s own lifestyle, being heard in regard to one’s own matters (autonomy)
9. Something to hold onto, even when everything else is lost
10. A place to live, some kind of income.

The study is funded by the [Foundation for Municipal Development](#), the [Regional State Administrative Agency for Southwestern Finland](#) and the [Prime Minister’s Office](#). The project is realised together with researcher Sami Myllyniemi. The results of this study will be ready by the end of 2020.

5. PARTICIPATION

The rights of all young people to participate in planning, decision-making and implementing the matters related to their lives are well recognised in the law base starting from the [Constitution](#). Since 2006, the [Youth Act](#) specified the youth participation and the right of young people to be heard in the municipalities as a legal obligation. Based on the Youth Act (2016) Section 24 – ‘Participation, consultation and influence’:

- *'Provisions on the opportunities to be provided for young people to participate and exert an influence in youth councils or similar youth advocacy groups are set out in section 26 of the [Local Government Act](#) (410/2015).*
- *Aside from the provisions of this Act, the local and central government authorities shall offer and organise opportunities for young people to be involved and exert an influence in the processing of issues related to local, regional and nationwide youth work and policies, or otherwise ensure that they are consulted in said contexts. Additionally, young people shall be consulted in matters that affect them.'*

5.1 General context

Definitions and concepts

The definitions and concepts relating to participation used in Finland are the same as the ones used in broader European discussion. Therefore, there are no significant country-specific definitions and concepts.

Institutions of representative democracy

Finland is a centralised parliamentary democracy. Power in Finland is vested in the people, who are represented by deputies assembled in [Parliament](#). Legislative power is exercised by Parliament, with the President of the Republic having only a minor role. The Cabinet of Finland is the highest level of government of the state, which consists of the Prime Minister and a requisite number of ministers. Members of the Government shall have the confidence of the Parliament.

[Local authorities](#) (municipalities, see the [Glossary](#)) have broad responsibility for the provision of basic services to citizens. They have strong self-government based on local democracy and decision-making, and the right to levy taxes. In municipalities, the highest decision-making authority is vested in local councils that are elected by residents. The role of municipalities will be changed in the near future, due to ongoing regional government reform (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [7.8 Current debates and reforms](#)).

Finland has a multi-party electoral system. Electors (those eligible to vote) vote directly for the person they want to be elected. Voting is voluntary and a person entitled to vote may vote either 1) in advance or 2) by ballot on election day. Voters may cast their votes at the polling station stated in the voting register and on the polling card sent to them before the elections.

5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Young people as voters

The voting age in Finland is 18 years old and there are no special provisions for certain groups of young people. The proposal to lower the voting age has not been actively discussed in parliament and parliament has no official position on the matter. Therefore, there are no imminent plans to lower the voting age. In 2010, the Evangelical Lutheran church has lowered the voting age to 16 in parish council elections.

Voter turnout of young people in local, parliament, presidential or in EU -elections is not systematically documented, but there are some research-based estimations. For example, it has been estimated that in the 2015 parliament elections turnout was 47% among 18 to 24 -year-olds and 58% for 25 to 35 -year-olds (Wass & Borg 2015, 184).

There are no recent statistics regarding voter turnout in referendums (or in the case of Finland, plebiscites, as they are advisory only), as the last referendum was in 1994.

Young people as political representatives

In Finland, membership of a political party is only possible for those who are eligible to vote, as per the [Act on Political Parties](#). A party is a registered association that is entered on the [party register](#) kept by the Ministry of Justice. As of April 2020, there are eighteen parties registered, nine of whom are represented at parliament.

Young people over 18 years old can stand as political candidates in local, national and European elections. There is no quota of seats reserved for young people nor are there any provisions aimed at facilitating young people to stand as political candidates.

Seven (3,5%) of the 200 members of the [national parliament](#) are under the age of 30 years old during the term 2019-2023. The average age of the representatives is approximately 48 years old. There are no functions within parliament reserved for young people, exclusively.

As of 2017, there are 513 (5.7 %) members under the age of 29 elected to local councils in the municipal elections (Email information from Piipponen 2018). The average age of the representatives (2017-2021) is approximately 50 years old (Pekola-Sjöblom & Piipponen 2018, 11). There are no functions within the local councils that are specifically reserved for young people.

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

The [Youth Parliament](#) was established at a national level at the beginning of 1998. The parliament is not directly part of the constitutional structure, nor either is it mentioned in the [Youth Act](#) as such, but it realises the objectives mentioned in both by strengthening the participation of young people. The Youth Parliament is organised and funded as a cooperative effort by the [Parliament of Finland](#) and [Development Centre Opinkirjo](#). At the national level, the Youth Parliament has 199 members coming together in the plenary session every second year. Members of Youth Parliament consist of 8th and 9th grade pupils (15-16 years old), representing their Parliamentary Groups at the local level. There are also about 140 pupils working as journalists. The diversity of the representatives is valued and there are many members representing different kinds of backgrounds and specialised schools.

The plenary is organised in the form of a parliamentary Oral Question Time -session and it is chaired by the Speaker of Parliament. During the day, members are introduced to the committees' duties and role in parliamentary work. That is also the place where the questions are finalised. However, the most important moment is when the questions are presented and discussed directly with the Members of Parliament. Those young people who are working as journalists participate in the politicians' nonstop press event, during which they have a chance to ask questions from the MPs. One parliament member from each parliamentary group is present to answer the young people's questions.

Such parliamentary activity at the local level usually takes the form of a Parliamentary Club, as part of schoolwork or as an extra curricular activity. In some schools, it takes place as a part of the pupils' council activities. Each club can decide how they choose their representatives, whether it is an election, nomination, discussion or something else. Parliamentary clubs from the local level are given a chance to have their say during the planning of the plenary session agenda. About half of the questions are picked for the agenda based on a vote; the other half are selected at the plenary session. The following criteria are considered when putting the agenda together: regions (questions from each electoral district in proportion to the attending clubs), the sectors of the ministers represented, gender and language of the students presenting the questions.

The aim of the Youth Parliament is to inspire young people to get involved in making a positive difference to matters that are important to their generation. The amount of

questions the members of parliamentary clubs tend to submit for discussion at the plenary session is high: often more than 150. Even if all the questions cannot be successfully handled in the session itself, the questions' content are analysed and summarised, and conveyed to civil servants at different level of decision-making.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

According to the [Local Government Act](#), all municipalities must have a youth council or equivalent action group for young people. The youth council should be given the possibility of influencing planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up activities in different sectors that are relevant for residents' well-being, health, studying, environment, living and public transport, as well as other matters that the youth council considers relevant. Currently, there is ongoing government reform at regional level. According to the draft bill, there will be regional youth councils based in law in the future, with their members chosen from representatives of the municipal youth councils (for more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 5.10 Current Debates and Reforms](#)).

There is a cooperative body and umbrella organization for youth councils at national level. It is called the Union of Local Youth Councils in Finland ([Suomen Nuorisovaltuustojen Liitto NUVA ry.](#)). The mission of the Union is to work in advocacy, education, and co-operation for all youth councils in Finland. It works with local youth councils, youth workers, civil servants and politicians and is the expert body regarding young people's participation in Finland.

The members of the Union of Local Youth Councils in Finland are individual members of the local youth councils. Membership is voluntary and requires a small annual fee. The members of Union are between 13 and 20 years old. The Union of Local Youth Councils has eight district organisations, which are individually registered non-governmental organisations. These are trained by and cooperate closely with the Union of Local Youth Councils in Finland, which also co-funds them.

The Union of Local Youth Councils is a registered non-governmental organisation. The highest decision-making body is the general assembly which is held once a year. Every member of the Union has a vote in the general assembly. The general assembly chooses a chair, two vice-chairs and between 4 and 10 board members for the period of one year. It also decides on the work plan and budget of the Union, and the membership fee for the coming year. The members of the board are the same age as the other members, so the Union is a genuine young people's organization.

The goal of the Union of Local Youth Councils in Finland is to encourage co-operation between local youth councils, enhance the participation of young people, support democracy education and take care of publicity for the youth councils at national level. The Union is also responsible for assisting in the founding of new youth councils and educating the youth councils about their rights, roles and possibilities. In order to achieve these goals, the Union organises seminars, national level education events and school events at local level for both youth councils and city representatives. The Union actively communicates with the authorities and political actors, for example the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) and [Ministry of Finance](#).

The Union improves young people's opportunities to participate and influence decision-making, and also offers its members the possibility to network, interact and exchange ideas. The Union has an open-access material and knowledge bank Vaikute for young people ([Vaikute-sivusto](#)), which offers information and its materials for free.

The Union of Local Youth Councils cooperates with other NGOs and with the state in order to promote the youth councils and their possibilities to participate, but also to give the youth councils the opportunity to take part in the ongoing decision-making progress at national level. For example, in 2016 the Union organised the Annual Meeting of Local Youth Councils together with the Ministry of Finance, wherein representatives from each youth council were invited. The agenda was to discuss ongoing regional government reform and collect young people's ideas for the work of the parliamentary workgroup.

The Union has also cooperated with the [Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities](#). The function of the Union of Local Youth Councils is partly financed by the Ministry of Education according to its status as a youth organisation, as defined in the [Youth Act](#). Since the beginning of 2018, it belongs also to a consortium administered by the [Youth Academy](#) which has been chosen by the Ministry of Culture and Education to function as a Youth work centre of expertise for youth participation realised in co-operation also with [Development Centre Opinkirjo](#). (More about the Youth work centres of expertise, see [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) and Youth Wiki/Finland [10.8 Current debates and reforms](#).)

Higher education student union(s)

As per the [Universities Act](#) and [Polytechnics Act](#), there is a student union in every higher education institute, both in universities and universities of applied sciences. Membership is voluntary in the latter, but because of the benefits receive with the student card, it is very popular among students. Student unions serve as statutory supervisors of interests of students when it comes to decision-making, both at institutional and local levels, for example, in electing representatives for decision-making bodies of the universities.

In addition to their statutory duties, higher education student unions also organise leisure time activities and provide information regarding topical matters. All members of a student union are eligible to elect members to the parliament or representatives that hold the highest decision-making power at institutional level. For example, they select the executive board for managing day-to-day affairs. Additionally, there are staff that are hired to support the elected officials. The financing of the unions is based on membership fees and allocations from the institution.

The individual student unions are members of national student unions: [National Union of University Students - SYL](#) or University of Applied Sciences Students – SAMOK (in [Finnish](#)). They both are registered organisations. SYL represents the interests of approximately 132 000 students from its member student unions in 14 universities. SAMOK on the other hand, has unions in 26 universities of applied sciences and has approximately 65 500 students as members.

The highest decision-making body of the national student unions is the general assembly. They are usually held once a year. Their main duty is to elect the president and the board members for a one year period. They also have responsibility for deciding about the content of the work plan, the budget and the membership fee for the coming year. Decision-making power is held by representatives mandated by the student unions. Each member organisation may send one representative with voting rights per 1 000 (SYL) or 500 (SAMOK) members.

The main duty of the national student unions SYL and SAMOK is to oversee the rights of students and advocate and support equal access for all. Often that means improving the educational, financial and social benefits of students. Both organisations have widely recognised expertise on matters of higher education. They are heard in various official organs dealing with education, general housing, social welfare and student health. Additionally, they are both represented in diverse national bodies, involving those dealing with higher education policies, for example the Council for Higher Education and its sub-committees, and various committees and working groups of the Ministry of Education. Both organisations are members of [The European Students' Union \(ESU\)](#).

Both national unions arrange various meetings and seminars, organise campaigns, and publish leaflets and publications. They also benefit the member student organisations by offering services. The students themselves also directly benefit from the discounts the national unions offer in the form of student cards delivered by the [Student benefit and identification service provider Frank](#) which is owned by several student organisations.

School student union(s)

According to the Act on Upper Secondary Schools ([Lukiolaki](#)) and Act on Vocational Education ([Laki ammatillisesta peruskoulutuksesta](#)), each educational institution must have a student body organised by students who select a board by voting. The student unions serve as the statutory supervisor of students' interests when it comes to decision-making, both at institutional and local levels. There are, for example, often student members in the organs of the institution. The student unions are registered organisations.

Anyone studying in a Finnish upper secondary school can become a member of the [Union of Upper Secondary School Students](#) by paying a membership fee. For students pursuing a vocational degree in upper secondary education there are several student unions to choose from: the [National Union of Vocational Students in Finland - SAKKI](#) and the [Finnish Student Alliance - OSKU](#) (Suomen Opiskelija-Allianssi - OSKU).

For Swedish speaking students in lower and upper secondary level there is the [Swedish-speaking School Student Union of Finland](#).

In all national school unions, membership is voluntary for students and is based on paying a membership fee. The Union of Upper Secondary School Students has 50 000 members, the National Union of Vocational Students in Finland 100 000, the Finnish Student Alliance - OSKU 25 000 and the Swedish-speaking School Student Union of Finland some 5 000 members. In some, a community membership is possible. For example, the National Union of Vocational Students in Finland has approximately 200 community members, most of them student councils. In some of the unions there is also a network structure, meaning that members are divided into sub-organisations based on, for example, geographical region.

The highest decision-making body of the national student unions in secondary education is the general assembly. It is held once a year. The assembly elects the chair and other board members, as well as deciding upon the work plan and budget of the union and the membership fee for the coming year.

Like the higher education national student organisations, school student unions also defend the rights of the students at local and national levels, including those who are not members. They supervise the interests of students in educational, social policy and other matters that concern secondary level education. They support student council activity and help student councils build dialog with educational institutions. At national level, the unions are represented in various committees and working groups of the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), for example in the working group intended to improve the study grant system.

Besides the promotion of interests, the unions also organise recreational and training events, publish magazines and offer their members different kinds of benefits. They also offer guidance for their members.

The unions also offer their members an official student card, which entitles the holder to various discounts. The student card for the members of the Union of Upper Secondary School Students and the National Union of Vocational Students in Finland – SAKKI is delivered by the [student benefit and identification service provider Frank](#), which they have established together with several other student organisations.

The unions finance their operations primarily through membership fees and state financial aid from the Ministry of Education and Culture based on their status as youth organization, as per the [Youth Act](#).

The national student unions at secondary level cooperative with each other at national level and they are, with the exception the Finnish Student Alliance –OSKU, also members of [OBESSU – the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions](#).

Other bodies

A nationwide registered [child welfare association Pesäpuu](#) promotes the rights of young people in substitute care. Their *Survivors - Young Child Welfare Developers* - team has been active since 2008. The aim of the group is the use of the knowledge of experience young people in care have in developing child welfare in Finland at a national level. Survivors-team improves participation among the children and young people at three levels by:

1. promoting children's and young people's knowledge of their rights, so that they are able to be active participants in their own lives
2. using the knowledge and experience of youth to benefit other children and youth
3. building a national network of children and adults, who work together to promote the rights of children and young people in Finland.

The members of Survivors-team are young people around the ages of 18 to 29 with varied backgrounds from child welfare. Some of the team members are still in child care but most have already started independent life. The group has been active since 2008 and has had a huge impact on Finnish policies regarding child welfare – both according to the young people themselves but also documented evidences about the development they have promoted.

The team coordinates young people's participation in the development of specialized and demanding services by holding national youth forums for young people in care, which is also one of the key methods used by the team to empower young people in care. Youth forums are like a peer support model by young people for young people. They are places for young people to share their thoughts and feel empowered and connected to the system they are living in. The forums are also a way to promote youth participation because the materials produced within them are always published and presented to local or national authorities. The team has hosted over 30 local and nationwide forums. The group has also set up a national network of local groups of young people in care, which are mentored by the team members. In spring 2016 there was a youth forum organised as a special forum for those young people who are already part of teams in local or regional level.

Survivors-team co-operates with several national and international partners, such as the [Ombudsman for Children](#) in Finland and [Central Union for Child Welfare](#) (in Finland). In spring 2016 Survivors-team organised a Keyforum as part of the government key project targeting the development of services for children and young people. One team member of Survivors is also in the project's steering group. Survivors has also developed several materials, like 'Me and My mates' -feelings cards, ['We believe in you – you should too' - guidelines](#), 'Checkpoint*' -cards and 'Protect your Dreams – Safeguard the Hope' - a report to support discussion and participation of young people in care.

5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

The consultation of children and young people in Finland has a solid legal basis as it is included as a guiding principle in the top-level national legislation. According to the [Constitution](#), public authorities shall promote opportunities for the individual to participate in societal activity and influence the decisions that concern him or her. It also states that democracy entails the right of the individual to participate in and influence the development of society and his or her living conditions. The [Youth Act](#) highlights the fact that young people must also be given opportunities to take part in the handling of matters related to local and national youth work and youth policy. Furthermore, young people shall be heard in matters concerning them.

The [Local Government Act](#) states that all residents of a municipality should be given the right to take part in discussion forums and resident panels, for example in planning and developing services regardless of their age. All residents who are at least 15 years old may also submit a referendum initiative. The role of the local council is to ensure that there are diverse and effective opportunities for participation.

All residents despite their age have also the right to submit initiatives on matters concerning the municipality's activities. The Local Government Act also states that "the action undertaken as a result of an initiative must be notified to those who submitted the initiative." For young people, the process of submitting an initiative for the municipality is supported by the online youth initiative channel – 'Ideas of young people.fi' ([Nuortenideat.fi](#)). The service is developed in co-operation with young people and actors working with them (e.g. youth councils and youth organisations and schools). The development process is organised by the [Ministry of Justice](#), the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), and National centre of expertise for youth information and counselling – [Koordinaatti](#). The service, among others, corresponds to the strategic goals of the Youth Act and the national youth work and policy programme.

The youth initiative service was launched in 2015 as a part of the online democracy platform for all citizens. In addition, organisations working with young people can use the service. Actors such as municipalities, non-governmental organisations, associations, schools, young people's participation and influence groups can utilize the service as a part of their work. It is a low-threshold service in which young people can share ideas about how to develop their living environment, discuss and comment on ideas, follow certain topics, respond to queries published by organisations or young people and track how the ideas are being processed. Furthermore, the online democracy service is a national tool for democracy education and it aims to promote the development of young active citizens. The service also includes a platform where young people can practice writing initiatives with the support of an adult. This service and the young people's ideas, initiatives and decisions are transparent for everyone.

At national level, consultation ([kuuleminen](#)) is an established part of the ministries' [legislative drafting processes](#). In accordance with the instructions and guidelines of the Ministry of Justice for legislative projects concerning youth policy and policies affecting young people, the representatives from youth organisations, youth research community and other relevant stakeholders are appointed to a preparatory body by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). Stakeholder consultations are carried out to hear to hear opinions from all the relevant target groups. In consultation with the stakeholders, both traditional listening methods - such as written comments - and modern information and communication technology are used. Some of the stakeholders are also heard in Parliament at the Committee debate.

Actors

Youth Actors

At national level, the Union of Local Youth Councils (in [Finnish](#)) and national student unions (for more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 5.3 Youth representation bodies](#)) are the main actors that represent young people during the consultation processes.

According to the [Youth Act](#), the [State Youth Council](#) is a consultative body attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture, which has expertise in young people's living conditions. Most of its members are nominated by national youth and youth work organisations.

There are also civic organisations that promote children's and young people's rights and their possibilities to participate and be heard. Additionally, the Ministry of Education and Culture listens to these organisations during its youth consultation process. The representation of youth in these processes is often coordinated by the [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#), which is a registered organisation for promoting the interest of

Finnish young people, youth organisations and youth work in national and international arenas.

One of the key values of the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi is to promote youth participation and make young people's voice heard. It participates in several different expert bodies and working groups of the central authorities. It also offers expert services and information for youth organisations, youth workers and young people to develop the possibilities of youth participation and its impact.

Specific target groups

The [Ombudsman for Children](#) has its own consultation system where the primary aim is to taking into account of the opinions of young people from different cultural backgrounds or those with special needs when planning welfare services.

The [National Council on Disability VANE](#) is a cooperative organ for authorities, disability organisations, and organisations for relatives of disabled people. It closely follows decision-making in society, issues statements and promotes the real implementation of human rights for disabled people. The Council works in close connection with the [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#). (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [4.2 Administration and governance](#)).

Public authorities

All public authorities are obligated to consult young people in decision-making. The [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see [Glossary](#)) organises training for the local authorities for example for municipal youth workers how to develop the youth participation and the impact of young people in the daily procedure and decision making processes in local level. During one such training session in April 2018 in eastern Finland in the city of Joensuu, the youth workers raised the following themes, being those issues with which they need more support: How to motivate young people to participate? How to develop the interaction between the Youth Council and young people but also the municipality? What kind of ways are there to support youth workers to find time for developing youth participation when their well-being is threatened by an already too heavy workload?

Information on the extent of youth participation

[Finland's Human Rights Report 2014](#) emphasizes long-term measures to promote equality, both nationally and internationally. In the report, among the national priorities is the need to consult and listen to children and young people with disabilities when preparing legislation. This notion is in line with the [Council of Europe policy review on child and youth participation](#) and the [Children's participation rights in Finland](#) (2020). These two reviews were realised by the Ministry of Justice with an evaluation tool developed by the Council of Europe. It is highlighted that marginalised groups (children under 13 years old and all disadvantaged children and young people) are still not able to participate fully in matters affecting their living circumstances in Finland.

Even if there are formal consultation channels and mechanisms for children and young people, several studies and reports have noted that the existing forms do not reach all groups of young people and they are not fully youth-oriented. For example, according to the report made by the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see [Glossary](#)), role of young people participating in the evaluation and development of youth services at local level was poorly developed, contrary to the provisions of the [Youth Act](#). Additionally, the 2013 study conducted by the Union of Local Youth Councils (in [Finnish](#)) showed that only half of the local youth councils considered the possibility of influencing decision-making as 'good' and only 10% said that they had had a real possibility to influence the decision-making in their municipality.

Thus, new ways to promote participation have been developed recently, however there is still a need to do more.

As a part of the [Action Plan for Open Government](#), specific seminars regarding consultation and listening to children and young people have been organised. In these seminars, it has been recommended that a general quality procedure should be followed when consulting young people. For example, there should be several different methods used for consultation to ensure extensiveness in the process. It has also been highlighted that not only is the quantitative amount of participants important, but also that the quality of the process and its impact are significant. A summary of the statements should be composed, describing the major reactions to the proposed measure in detail. The Open Government Handbook offers fact-sheets ([tietokortit](#)) on how to improve the quality of the consultation processes with children and young people in public administration. The fact sheets were developed by the [Finnish Youth Research Network](#), in cooperation with the [Ministry of Finance](#) and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Finland also participates in the [Open Government Partnership](#). (For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland 5.8 Raising political awareness among young people](#)).

During the revision process of the Youth Act (in force since the beginning of 2017) young people and youth organisations were consulted in different ways. The [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) was nominated as one of the members of the legislative working group. The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) also commissioned the [Youth Academy](#) to organize a consultation among young people in 2015. The hearing was implemented by organizing eight consultation workshops in different municipalities. The number of youth participants was more than a hundred. The aim was to listen to young people's opinions and views on a draft version of the Youth Act.

All in all, during the revision process of the Act, everyone had the possibility to share their views through several online surveys, and on social media services such as Facebook and Twitter. Also, regional events were organized to involve both specialists and young people. According to some estimations, 2 500 people were involved in the process. The leading principle has been to maintain and increase the transparency of the legislative process. The report on the consultation with young people on the revision of the Youth Act was taken into consideration as a part of the wider consultation process of the Act. The report describes the views of young people and it is available on the website of the Ministry. Alongside the report, video material has also been produced on the results of the consultation.

Outcomes

The youth consultations are used to integrate young people's opinions into policy-making, but the content varies. In some examples, young people have participated in defining the content and goals of something like the [Youth Act](#) consultation process. On the other hand, young people participate in the evaluation of how the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) are realised during the different programme periods as part of an evaluation organised by the [State Youth Council](#). In this context, the aim of the consultation is to invite young people to assess the implementation of the actual programme and to affect the preparation of the next.

The outcomes of the consultations are made available publicly on the websites of the Ministries in the form of published reports and often in more youth-friendly formats. According to the Democracy Policy Programme (in [Finnish](#)), in the future the results of consultations will be described in more detail, such as in the Government's Proposals on the enactment of various laws.

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

There are frequently organised so-called Deliberative Discussion Days. They have been organised in more than in 70 municipalities and in several youth or youth work organisations and at least in one national youth centre since 2008. During the forum, young people first evaluate local services and then negotiate the possibility to have some

developments and improvements directly with the decision-makers. The method was broadly delivered to youth workers across the country during the project called *Developing the Evaluation of Basic Services* organised by the [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) and [Finnish Youth Research Network](#).

5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

The Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme sets goals to develop and improve listening to and dialogue with children and young people, and their opportunities to participate (for more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.3 National Youth Strategy](#)).

The National Democracy Programme 2025 has been published in spring 2020 (see more information [Youth Wiki/Finland 5.10 Current debates and reforms](#)). It contains objectives of democratic policy including measures concerning young people. It highlights the role of civic/democratic education as well as the need to co-operate with children and young people during decision-making processes.

Scope and contents

According to the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) the objective is that: "Young people receive more opportunities for participation in decision-making and exerting influence." And further: "Young people feel that they are being heard and have better opportunities to be involved in making decisions on issues that interest and affect them also at national level, and that every municipality has a youth council or a similar youth advocacy group available for young people. Participation and being heard have increased young people's experiences of belonging to and being included in society, which has also reduced the attractiveness of belonging to extremist movements."

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

As previously mentioned in [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.3 National Youth Strategy](#), according to the Youth Act the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is primarily responsible authority that implements the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) in conjunction with various other ministries, such as [Ministry of Justice](#), [Ministry of the Interior](#), [Ministry of Defence](#), [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment](#), [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#), and [Ministry of the Environment](#).

Monitoring and evaluation

As mentioned in [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.3 National Youth Strategy](#), the [State Youth Council](#) attached to the Ministry of Education and Culture has a statutory duty to annually review the implementation of the Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme.

Revisions/Updates

Revisions and updates are described in [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.3 National Youth Strategy](#).

5.6 Supporting youth organisations

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

As mentioned in [Youth Wiki/Finland Chapter 2 Voluntary Activities](#), youth organisations in Finland have a strong position in the field of youth policy, youth work and in society generally. Their activities are largely publically funded and supported, but not regulated, by the authorities. Youth organisations set their own objectives, which means that organisations enjoy a high level of autonomy. However, one of the most important laws

regulating the activities of organisations is the [Associations Act](#). On the other hand, the [Youth Act](#) specifies the objectives and values of youth work and youth policy. The aim of the Act is to support young people's growth and independence and promote active citizenship.

National youth and youth work organisations are eligible to apply for state subsidies. In accordance with the [Lotteries Act](#), proceeds from slot machines are used for awarding grants to charitable or other non-profit organisations and foundations that are legally recognised. According to the Act, the proceeds from pools and betting are used to promote sports and physical education, science, the arts, and youth work.

In accordance with the Youth Act, subsidies for youth and youth work organisations are allocated based on the organisation's management of its finances, the nationwide coverage, quality, scope and social impact of its activities. The organisation should also promote non-discrimination, equality and social inclusion through its activities and otherwise pursue the objectives and promote the underlying principles set out in the Youth Act which include solidarity, cultural diversity and internationality; sustainable development, healthy lifestyles, respect for life and the environment; and cross-sectoral cooperation.

Further provisions concerning the performance criteria, acceptable expenditure, the procedure for approving the eligible organisations and other grounds for receiving the subsidy are set out in the [Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy](#).

[The Ministry of Education and Culture](#) takes into account the type of youth work the organisation carries out, its sphere of activity, membership base and degree of volunteering and youth participation in its decision-making. The organisation's own perspective is highly valued in this process. Additionally, the performance (quality, extent and cost-effectiveness of operations), as well as societal relevance of the activities, and the need for a subsidy are taken account when allocating funds.

The [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) has had an important role in developing the role of youth organisations in Finnish society. It is an umbrella organisation for 130 national youth organisations lobbying for their viewpoint and youth work in general in public decision-making. Its advocacy role is supported by the state. As described in the European Commission Mutual Learning Programme ([Country report of Finland](#)) Allianssi has succeeded in giving youth organisations a stronger (albeit single) voice within the national debate. The role of Allianssi in the Youth Guarantee process is highlighted in the programme as an example. The consultation and consensus-building process across the members of the Alliance takes place within a dedicated working committee amongst grassroots youth organisations. The committee provides an arena for exchange of ideas and proposals, and conclusions are then put forward by the representatives of Allianssi through the national Youth Guarantee working group.

Public financial support

In 2020, the Ministry of Education and Culture financially supports approximately 100 national youth organisations, youth work service organisations, and other organisations conducting youth work with a budget of approximately nineteen million euros. These organisations include political youth associations, youth representation organisations, youth leisure time and culture associations, religious youth associations, and child associations. These organisations receive funding from other sources as well (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [2.4 Youth volunteering at national level](#)).

The Assessment and State Aid Commission annually submits a proposal to the Ministry of Education and Culture regarding the allocation of state subsidies to youth and youth work organisations. The members of the Commission are appointed by the Government following consultations with parties engaged in youth activities. The Commission members should be familiar with the operations of national youth work organisations and possess expertise in youth work, youth policy and youth activities (More information see [Youth Act](#) and [Government Decree on Youth Work and Policy](#).)

Based on the Government Decree, an organisation can obtain the status of a national youth or youth work organisation if:

- 1) young people account for a minimum of two-thirds of the total number of members or the combined number of the individual members of district or local associations (youth organisation);
- 2) at least part of the activities consists of activities in which young people engage in voluntarily on their own terms and with respect to which young people exercise independent decision-making and have budgetary powers (organisation promoting youth work);
- 3) at least part of the activities consist of youth work and such activities can be clearly distinguished from other activities (organisation engaged in youth work);
- 4) its primary function is to offer services to youth work organisations, municipalities or other youth work entities (youth work services organisation).

Also, based on the [Government Decree](#), when the quality of the organisation's activities is assessed, due consideration is given to the regularity and permanency of its activities as well as to the management of its finances and administration. The amount of funding received from the ministry reflects also the organisation's pledge and effort to support equality, equality between women and men, youth participation, and the other aims and premises enacted by Youth Act. The youth field, including voluntary activities, receives most of its public funding from lottery funds. (For more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering](#).)

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

The Youth Act and the Government Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy do not identify specific target groups within the youth population whose participation in the activities of youth organisations should be fostered. However, in accordance with the Government Decree, the grounds for approval to be identified as a national youth organisation, and therefore will be entitled to subsidies, are if the organisation is deemed to be nationally representative of a language, minority or other branch. This encourages the third sector to take minorities into consideration and supports their participation.

[The Meaningful in Finland](#) - action plan includes several measures to support and guide youth and educational organisations in preparing non-discrimination and equality plans, and in developing different forms of participation and increasing their knowledge of the rights and services of children and young people (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#)).

The [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) promotes equality and greater diversity in youth participation. Allianssi works with youth organisations, youth workers and young people to promote justice, equality, equal treatment, participation and tolerance. It supports and promotes youth organisations in preparing their own non-discrimination and equality plan by offering training, guidance and materials. These activities are in-line with the [Non-Discrimination Act](#), as well as with equality materials and recommendations from the [Ministry of Justice](#), which have been collected on a special '[Equality](#)' website.

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy Framework

The development of social and civic competences and the idea of enabling active citizenship among all young people are broadly applied in Finnish policy. For example, the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) promotes ways that children and young people can participate in their everyday operational environments. The programme offers several examples of how the principle of 'Learning to participate by

doing´ can be supported. Additionally, youth organisations as well as local youth work services of municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) are offered suggestions and recommendations on how young people can take an active role in society. One of the key elements of the [National Democracy Programme](#) is to support educational institutions in democracy and human rights education. When it comes to the implementation of both programmes, they offer funding for different kinds of organisations to realise goals they set out in their programmes.

Formal learning

Several measures designed to support different forms of ‘learning to participate’ in formal education in both lower and upper secondary level have been implemented in Finland. The need to increase forms of participation were one of main aspects which motivated the renewal process of the curriculums for general and vocational upper secondary education, or to be more specific: in vocational education the terms ‘national qualification requirement’ and ‘education provider’s locally approved curricula’ are used. These came into effect on 1 August 2016. The civic elements including participation, voluntary activities, an awareness of the various forms of civic activity and societal impact are integrated in all education activities and subjects. Most closely linked to these are history, social studies, geography, religion and ethics, economics, working life skills and health education. On the other hand, the curriculum still contains the separate subject of citizenship education. For example, for general upper secondary education the new curriculum included one additional course of citizenship. On the other hand, according to the new curriculum for basic education, the subject starts already in the sixth grade (pupils are 12 years old). (More about [Curricula and Qualifications](#) by [National Agency for Education](#))

Non-formal and informal learning

Participative structures within formal education settings

Competence gaining through active participation is more emphasised in all levels of education since new curricula were introduced on 1 August 2016. According to the curricula, the aim is to create a culture of action which supports students’ engagement and participation. The idea is to include all students in the planning, realising, developing and evaluating of education and matters concerning the learning community. According to the [Basic Education Act](#), the Act on General Upper Secondary Schools (in [Finnish](#)) and Act on Vocational Education (in [Finnish](#)), education providers must promote the participation of all pupils and students and to ensure that all students have an opportunity to express their opinions on matters related to students’ status. In addition, schools and educational institutions must have a student body. The task of the student body is to promote collaboration between students and the school, and it must be heard in decisions regarding the drafting of school curricula and other plans, such as those involving the formulation of codes of conduct in schools.

Teaching citizenship skills by rehearsing democracy in the educational institution and beyond has created new challenges for teacher education.

Measures to encourage student participation in the local community and wider society

The idea of deepening co-operation with the surrounding local environment, civic organisations, enterprises and other actors is highlighted in the curriculums for lower and upper secondary schools regardless of whether education is general or vocational. Additionally, the principles of Preparatory education for Vocational basic education, either for work or functional independency, the strengthening of equal participation possibilities, action as plenipotentiary citizen and taking part in the actions of the local community are emphasised.

The strategic goals of the working group appointed by the Ministry of Finance (the report in [Finnish](#)) state that the recognition of the skills and competences acquired through, for

example, voluntary work should be improved in the educational system, and that cooperation between schools and organisations should be increased (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [2.7 Skills recognition](#)).

Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers

A partnership between formal education providers and youth work providers, including youth organisations, has been added into the new curricula that came into use on 1 August 2016 for lower and upper secondary education. Also, both the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) and the [National Democracy Programme](#) set goals for such cooperation.

In many cases, cooperation has already been established for many years, which means that processes started during older versions of the curriculum. Cooperation has been common especially when it comes to the lower level of secondary education. The youth work services of the municipalities have been active in organising school youth work. The [Mannerheim League for Child Welfare](#) offers training for pupils who are peer-supporters in their school. The [Operation a Day's Work \(ODW\) Finland](#) offers pupils the possibility for doing a Day's Work for charity. The [Development Centre Opinkirjo](#) organises activities for pupil councils and Youth Parliament clubs in schools, the culmination of which is the Youth Parliament meeting at the national level. The [Youth Academy](#) offers knowhow and funding for pupils to realise their projects. Since the beginning of 2018, the Youth Academy coordinates a consortium which was chosen by the Ministry of Culture and Education to function as a Youth work centre of expertise under the theme "*Participation of young people*". The Union of Local Youth Councils (in [Finnish](#), see also Youth Wiki/Finland [5.3 Youth representation bodies](#)) and the Development Centre Opinkirjo is also member of that consortium. (See more about the Youth work centres of expertise in Youth Wiki/Finland [10.8 Current debates and reforms](#)).

The [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) organised parliamentary elections candidate panels in the lower and upper secondary schools in cooperation with political parties, as well as the 'shadow-parliamentary elections' both for the 2011 and 2015 parliamentary elections and the municipal elections of 2012 and 2017. Additionally, the event 'market place of politics' have been organised by the same bodies, with the idea of opening doors for political parties to come to school as part of civic education. Allianssi is an umbrella organisation for 130 national youth organisations lobbying for their viewpoint and youth work in general in public decision-making.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

As described in Youth Wiki/Finland [5.6 Supporting Youth Organisations](#), state funding for youth organisations includes measures of monitoring the quality and impact of funded projects.

Educators' support

The [Finnish National Agency of Education](#) offers all kinds of in-service training for educational staff.

The Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi organises training events, including sessions with information regarding youth participation for the youth sector and educators working with young people. The main event is the Youth Work Conference with hundreds or even thousands of participants, see more about the forthcoming conference in 2021 in Youth Wiki/Finland [10.8 Current debates and reforms](#).

Additionally, many other youth organisations, other than the ones mentioned previously, produce material for learning participation by doing, carrying out school visits, and organised together the Citizen Participation - markets in the [Educa-fairs](#). The cooperation in the Educa-fairs is coordinated by [Finnish Development NGOs – Fingo](#), which functions as an umbrella organisation of 300 member organisations working in the areas of development cooperation and global education. Educa-fairs are the largest event for the

education and training sector in Finland, in 2019 there was more than 18 000 participants.

National centre of expertise for youth information and counselling – [Koordinaatti](#) offers training for professionals regarding youth information and counselling. Particular emphasis is on distributing knowledge on young people as planners, providers and evaluators of services. Additionally, through its network structure it facilitates multi-professional cooperation and the sharing of knowhow and good practices in the development of quality services among those who are, for example, organising local, regional or national youth information and counselling services. Learning possibilities are realised through various training sessions and seminars.

Koordinaatti is also responsible for the coordination and support of two services online. The youth initiative channel 'Ideas of Young People' ([Nuortenideat.fi](#)) is a dedicated citizen involvement tool for young people (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [5.4 Young People's Participation in Policy-Making](#)). It also allows different stakeholders to consult with young citizens and to involve them in the development of services, such as in educational institutions as part of democratic education. Koordinaatti has also produced guides for democratic education.

One of the main objectives of Koordinaatti is to support young people's independence and sense of responsibility by offering information and counselling services on different issues of life. At the national level, Koordinaatti operates the online information and counselling channel for young people called 'Life of Young People' ([Nuortenelama.fi](#)). Koordinaatti is a member of the [European Youth Information and Counselling Agency, ERYICA](#).

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

The National centre of expertise for youth information and counselling – [Koordinaatti](#) offers a supportive network for those who organise local, regional or national youth information and counselling services (for more, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [5.7 "Learning to participate" through formal, non-formal and informal learning](#)).

Several online information tools provide information for young people in a youth-friendly manner on their democratic rights, for example, 'Life of Young People' ([Nuortenelama.fi](#)) coordinated by Koordinaatti. The Union of Local Youth Councils (in [Finnish](#)) offer an online information tool 'Vaikute' ([Vaikute-sivusto](#)) to provide information about how to make impact as a member of local youth council, but the tool also contains examples on how to participate at the national and European level. Both of these initiatives are financed by the [Ministry of Culture and Education](#).

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

The [Ministry of Justice](#), in co-operation with the [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) and Ministry of Education and Culture send a letter to young people voting for the first time. In the future, there will be some video-material available, with the aim of improving the turnout of young people which will be distributed to schools and educational institutions.

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

The [Meaningful in Finland](#) -action plan includes several measures to support and guide young people and educational organizations in preparing non-discrimination and equality plans, and to develop different forms of participation and increasing knowledge of the rights and services of children and young people (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#)).

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

The [Ministry of Justice](#), as part of the [Action Plan for Open Government](#) and the [National Democracy Programme](#), is organising events and producing information material aiming to increase citizen participation and voting. Social media (Facebook and Twitter) is also used in contacting young people. A special target group of information sharing includes immigrant youth. (For more information about Open Government, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [5.4 Young People's Participation in Policy-Making](#)).

The [Division of Youth Work and Youth Policy](#) of the Ministry of Education and Culture is also on Facebook and Twitter, where it is sharing information and fostering dialogue with young people on youth policy issues.

5.9 E-participation

For more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [5.4 Young People's Participation in Policy-Making](#).

5.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Based on the 'News' (in [Finnish](#)) by the [Ministry of Justice](#), the draft of the new [National Democracy Programme](#) for the years 2020-2025 was presented for comments on February 14th 2020. The programme is cross-sectoral with an idea of strengthening the involvement of citizens and new kinds of communication between the decision-makers and citizens. Democracy is also seen as a core element in all public structures and processes. In the programme, a part entitled 'Democracy and human rights education and participation of young people' will be dedicated entirely to young people.

The Health, Social Services and Regional Government Reform will entail — even currently, when in the state of being postponed and replanned — a remarkable change the share of work between the municipalities and the state in organising public services (more information see [Youth Wiki/Finland 7.8 Current debates and reforms](#)). For example, from the point of view of youth participation, the reform will mean that youth councils will also be established at the regional level.

Ongoing debates

Former ombudsman for children, Tuomas Kurttila, has insisted that the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health immediately start court hearings for the young people who are being taken care of in state-owned reform schools (Bulletin 2/2018, available in [Finnish](#)). The request stems from the reports published in autumn 2018 claiming that some of those institutions have serious weaknesses in terms of the quality of the care, and therefore suggest that proper and systemic hearings for young people could have had already a long-term impact on the prevention of such discrepancies in quality.

There is currently a lack of research that focuses specifically on youth participation in legislative consultation processes. An ongoing sub-study in the [ALL-YOUTH research project \(2018-2023\)](#) aims to fill this gap and focuses specifically on how, if at all, young people have participated in the formal consultation process of amending the General Upper Secondary School Act (Act in [Finnish](#)) in 2016 and 2018, and the Climate Act (in [Finnish](#)) in 2019 and 2020. The preliminary findings of the study on Secondary School Act suggest that the views that young people put forth in the hearing process did not have an identifiable influence on its regulation, nor were their opinions reflected in the summary of the consultation. Additionally, the study on the Climate Act found that young people are concerned about climate change but lack the knowledge on how to participate in legislative processes. These are in line with Vesa and Kantola's (2016, in [Finnish](#)) findings, which suggest that children and young people are generally under-represented

in the formal consultation processes even in cases where the legislation particularly concerns youths and affects their lives.

The sub-project has also developed new co-research practices with young people. For example, a project course with a focus on legislative writing was run in upper secondary school. During the course of this project, new practices were developed with the young people, such as, how to conduct an impact assessment on the execution of the law (see more [in Finnish](#) Heiskanen, Viljanen & Meriläinen 2018). A group of young people studied the impact assessment process in order to analyse how the City of Tampere has executed paragraphs 8 and 24 of the [Youth Act](#), concerning youth centres and official participation models. Research with the students on vocational schools aims to teach how to participate in democratic processes, such as in legislative processes. More broadly the aim is to create models for upper secondary school and vocational education that can be easily adopted nation-wide.

Additionally, ongoing sub-studies in the ALL-YOUTH research project focus on the relationship between youth participation and digital services. Results include an analysis on young people's experiences of using the existing digital platforms designed for the societal participation of citizens ([lausuntopalvelu.fi](#), [nuortenideat.fi](#)) from the perspective of accessibility. Findings indicate that the language used in the consultation processes is very complex and creates a barrier (see [Meriläinen, Pietilä & Varsaluoma 2018](#)). Moreover, the digital platforms remain unfamiliar to teachers and young people alike.

These sub-studies aim to provide guidelines that can be used to improve the accessibility and usability of the existing digital services available to and targeted at the youth. Furthermore, the aim is to develop and test, together with young people and other stakeholders, new innovative digital models and services such as the Virtual Council.

The ALL-YOUTH-research project is funded by the [Strategic Research Council under Academy of Finland](#). An important element of such "strategic" research is the active collaboration between those who produce new knowledge and those who use it, there is a lot of co-operation for example with the government when choosing the themes for research projects.

Forthcoming policy developments

The Health, Social Services and Regional Government Reform will entail a remarkable change the share of work between the municipalities and the state in organising public services (more information see [Youth Wiki/Finland 1.9 Current debates and reforms](#)). For example, from the point of view of youth participation, the reform will mean that youth councils will also be established at the regional level.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Finland is famous for its well working and equal school and education system. One key factor is that in both in formal and non-formal education the responsibility of how to organise the services is given to local-level municipalities, educational institutions and teachers. In the next sub-chapter [Youth Wiki/Finland 6.1 General context](#), the results of two international studies (OECD's PISA and Education and Training Monitor EU Analysis) — which have made Finland so famous — are outlined. When summarising these results, it can be said that in Finland the learning results are excellent, teachers are proud of their profession and the overall life satisfaction reported by students is better than in many other countries. On the other hand, the new government argues in its [Government programme for 2019-2023](#), that, in order to be 'an equal society, it needs to continually seek to provide opportunities for every citizen to study to their full potential.' Generally speaking, the government programme has instigated a lot of national discussion among citizens, experts and media, especially regarding its suggestion to raise the minimum

school leaving age to 18 years (see more Youth Wiki/Finland [6.10 Current debates and reforms](#)).

6.1 General context

Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

The OECD's [PISA 2018](#) (Programme for International Student Assessment) survey ranked Finnish 15-year-olds among the top performers in reading, maths and science, as it has been in earlier years of the same study. At the same time there are also some worrying facts. The students' negative attitude towards reading causes concern, while the percentage of the low-performing readers has risen, meaning that there are now more young people in Finland whose reading proficiency is too weak for studying and participating in society. The link between students' socio-economic background and poor performance is also now stronger than it was earlier. But still, and this is probably the most important insight, among the 79 countries who participated, 'Finland was the only country where both reading proficiency and satisfaction with life were at a high level', as reported in the [Press Release](#) 3rd of December 2019 of [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).

[Education and Training Monitor EU analysis, volume 1 2019](#) offers insight into the level of achievements of the Finnish education system and the needs for its development. It compares the aimed targets in Education and Training in EU members states that are to be achieved before the end of the year 2020. Regarding Finland, the report offered many positive points. First of all, it acknowledges the positive PISA results aforementioned. Compared to many other countries, teaching in Finland remains a 'prestigious and attractive profession.' Finland was also the only country where over 50% of teachers think that their teaching profession is valued in society. In terms of negative trends, indicators show a growing amount of 'early leavers from education and training (ELET)', which refer to people aged 18-24 who obtain no more than a lower secondary diploma and are not enrolled in further education or training. Between 2016 and 2018, there was virtually no progress made in reducing the overall rate of early leavers in the EU. Finland was even among those considered to have negative development, see more in Youth Wiki/Finland [6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training \(ELET\)](#).

Organisation of the education and training system

As described in [Eurydice database/Finland Overview](#): "Compulsory schooling begins at the age of 7 and lasts for 9 years. It is provided in a single structure system called 'basic education'. Nearly all children subject to compulsory education complete their basic education. Only about 200 young people drop out or leave basic education without completing the studies annually. At all levels of education every pupil and student has the right to educational support.

Upper secondary education is provided by general and vocational upper secondary schools. The general age to take upper secondary studies is from 16 to 19 years. However, many students are older, especially in vocational upper secondary education.

Tertiary education is provided by universities and universities of applied sciences. The latter are professionally-oriented education institutions.

Adult education is arranged at all levels of the education system. It may lead to qualifications or be related to general self-development. Liberal adult education, in which many young people also participate to have free-time hobbies or during their gap year before applying to tertiary degree education, provided for example by adult education centres and 'folk high schools', is quite popular in Finland.

In Finland education is free from pre-primary to higher education and most of it is publicly funded. The core curriculum offered at the national level leaves room for local

variations. Local administration and educational institutions play a key role as education providers."

On the borderline of formal and non-formal education are several organisations, which operate as a conjunction of both formal and non-formal education. As described in the [National Core Curriculum for Basic Education](#), schools operate as learning communities, which need dialogue for developing. The [Development Centre Opinkirjo](#) is for example active in advancing the quality of the school club activities (more about Opinkirjo see Youth Wiki/Finland [6.7 "Skills for innovation"](#)). Club activities are recognized in the [Basic Education Act](#). Based on the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education "club activities provided outside the lessons support the school's goals related to education, instruction and guidance" (Finnish National Board of Education 2016, 44).

See also Basic Education in the Arts, in Youth Wiki/Finland [8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences](#). Also the projects of [Youth Academy](#) often support school life.

The Democracy Policy Programme recognises the need for developing democratic education in schools and educational institutions more openly with non-governmental organisations, for example with political parties, see Youth Wiki/Finland [5.7 "Learning to participate"](#) through formal, non-formal and informal learning).

Main concepts

There are no significant country-specific definitions and concepts, concepts related to education and training are rooted in the European discussion.

6.2 Administration and governance

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) is managed by the Board, the members of which represent political decision-making, local authorities, teachers and social partners. Cross-sectorial co-operation mechanisms on themes related to education and training are recently being developed also in the frame of the Youth Guarantee. It involves the following ministries: [Economic Affairs and Employment](#); [Education and Culture](#); [Social Affairs and Health](#). More about the Youth Guarantee in Finland, see Youth Wiki/Finland [3.1 General context](#).

According to the [Youth Act](#), all municipalities must have a coordinating body for the general planning and implementation of co-operation amongst local authorities. These networks must include representatives from education, social, health and youth services, as well as from labour and police administrations (more information about cross-sectorial co-operation in local level, see Youth Wiki/Finland [1.4 Youth Policy decision making](#) and [6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training \(ELET\)](#)).

Governance

As described in the country-description in Eurydice database/Finland [2.6 Administration and Governance at Central and/or Regional level](#): 'The Ministry of Education and Culture is the highest authority and is responsible for all publicly funded education in Finland. The Ministry is responsible for preparing educational legislation, all necessary decisions and its share of the state budget for the Government. It is also responsible for administration in the cultural, ecclesiastical, youth and sports sectors.

[The Finnish National Agency for Education](#) works in close co-operation with the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). It is a national development agency responsible for early childhood education and care, pre-primary and basic education, upper secondary education and training as well as for adult education and training. The activities of the Finnish National Agency for Education include implementing national education policies, preparing the national core curricula and requirements for qualifications, developing education and teaching staff as well as providing services for the education sector and

administrative services. In addition, it assists the Ministry of Education and Culture in the preparation of education policy decisions. For instance in the recognition of degrees and international information exchange its responsibilities cover higher education as well. The Governance has been based on the principle of decentralisation since the early 1990s. Education providers are responsible for practical teaching arrangements as well as the effectiveness and quality of the education provided. Local authorities also determine how much autonomy is passed onto schools. For example budget management, acquisitions and recruitment are often the responsibility of the schools.'

The Finnish National Agency for Education is also the main agency for implementing policies in the field of international cooperation in education, training, youth, sports and culture.

[Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see: the [Glossary](#)) are responsible for the regional tasks of the Ministry of Education and Culture in the field of education, day-care, libraries, sports and youth work. These tasks include for example assessing the accessibility of the public services, handling complaints and organising in-service training.

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

Finland has set a national target to decrease the rate of early leavers to below eight per cent by 2020. Based on Statistics Finland's '[Education Statistics](#)' in March 2017 the target was already reached during the 2014/2015 academic year, when the rate was found to be 5.1 per cent (9.3 per cent in 2013, 9.9 in 2009). Early leavers include students attending education leading to a qualification or degree, which they discontinue and have not resumed their studies in any education leading to a qualification or degree.

Compared to the year before, discontinuation decreased in upper secondary general, university of applied sciences and university education and remained unchanged in vocational education. (See also Youth Wiki/Finland [4.1 General context of Social Inclusion](#)).

Finland does not have a comprehensive strategy to tackle early leaving, see National Information Sheets/Finland (2017, the pages 200-202) in "[Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures](#)".

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

As mentioned in see the National Information Sheets/Finland (2017, the pages 200-202) in '[Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures](#)': in national level measures that have been recently developed to tackle early leaving include for example:

1. Increasing flexibility and permeability of educational pathways
2. Enhancing support for low achievers, including student welfare services offered for all (see also Youth Wiki/Finland [7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks](#).)
3. Networking with parents and other actors outside school, including bodies organising youth workshops and outreach youth work
4. Identifying students who drop out and encouraging them to re-enter education and training.

Specific targeted measures for groups at risk are focused on students with migrant and minority/Roma backgrounds.

One well-known example of increasing flexibility in schooling is called 'Flexible basic education'; see more in "Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe" (2016, p. 47) and [National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014](#), p. 42.

Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Based on the [Youth Act](#); *outreach youth work*, *youth workshop activities* and *youth work* in general mean the efforts to support the growth, independence and social inclusion of young people in society. The purpose of the Act is to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge and adoption of skills necessary for it, especially during the free-time. The mission of outreach youth work is to reach young people in need of assistance and provide access to services and other support designed to promote their growth, independence, social inclusion and life management skills as well as to improve access to education and facilitate entry into the labour market. In youth workshop activities young people acquire skills and capabilities by working or engaging in rehabilitative activities according to their ability. The purpose is to improve young people's capabilities to access and complete education and training, enter the open labour market or access some other service needed.

'[Everyone goes to school](#)' is as an example of educational partnership between the youth work, school and social work where pupils having challenges with school or with life general participate in a peer-support groups during school time for helping others and receiving help for themselves under the supervision of a multi-professional leader team. See more about Finnish youth work Youth Wiki/ Finland 10. Youth Work (not yet published).

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

In Finland the co-operation mechanisms on early leaving is recently being developed within the framework of the Youth Guarantee (see also Youth Wiki/Finland [3.1 General context](#)). It involves the following ministries: [Economic Affairs and Employment](#); [Education and Culture](#) and [Social Affairs and Health](#). Other national authorities and ones from the local level (meaning municipalities, see [Glossary](#)) monitor are also taking part in its implementation and evaluating the development needs of the services. Based on the [Youth Act](#) cross-sectoral co-operation at the local level is coordinated by a body established for the general planning and implementation of co-operation amongst local authorities. It includes representatives from education, social, health and youth services, and can also include labour and police administrations. Labour market partners and employers may also contribute, especially regarding cooperation organised in relation to the Youth Guarantee scheme.

At the level of schools and educational institutions there is also an own co-operation structure. Based on the Act on Pupil and Student Welfare ([Oppilas- ja opiskelijahuoltolaki](#)), the multi-agency partnerships at the local/institutional level involve school principals, teachers, guidance specialists, psychologists, social workers and youth workers. As described in the [National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014](#), the education provider ensures that a school welfare plan is prepared to guide the implementation, evaluation and development of pupil welfare.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

As described in Eurydice database/Finland [8.2 Developments and Current Policy Priorities](#), the Vocational Qualifications Act enacted in 1994 created a new system of competence-based qualifications, where people may acquire vocational qualifications by

demonstrating their vocational skills in competence tests irrespective of how they have acquired their skills. At the same time, a uniform quality assurance system was created for vocational adult education and training.

Eurydice database/Finland [6.4 Organisation of Vocational and Technical Upper Secondary Education](#) also mentions, that one of the purposes for changing the law base of the vocational upper secondary education and training in 2014 was to strengthen the learning-outcome approach of vocational qualification requirements and the modular structure of qualifications which supports the building of flexible and individual learning paths and promotes the validation of prior learning. Upper secondary VET students are for example required to have completed the basic education syllabus or an equivalent previous syllabus. In addition, VET providers may ignore the order of scores in student admission for individual student-related reasons ('flexible selection'): applicants deemed by the provider to have sufficient capabilities to complete education and training may also be admitted as students. VET applicants include young people and adults from different educational and working backgrounds, whose prior competencies must be recognised as part of their vocational qualifications. It is also possible for general upper secondary school graduates to apply for vocational education and training and complete vocational qualifications.

As pointed out in Eurydice database/Finland [8.5 Validation of Non-formal and informal learning](#), validation of non-formal and informal learning has relatively long and established roots in Finland and the legislation and policies are well developed and detailed. However, there is no one single law regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning, but rather laws and regulations for each field of education define validation separately. These fields include general upper secondary education, vocational education and training (including adult VET), and higher education. The core message of the legislation is that validation of non-formal and informal learning is a subjective right of the individual and the competences of an individual should be validated regardless of when and where they have been acquired.

According to ["2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning: Country report Finland"](#), the strengths of the Finnish validation arrangements are in the strong co-operation between all stakeholders. For example, social partners including employers are strongly involved in all aspects from designing the content of qualification requirements to individual validation procedures. Transparency and co-operation promote trust and high market value of the system, i.e. employers see qualifications gained through validation as equally valuable or trustworthy as the qualifications gained through school-based learning. (Karttunen 2016). See also Youth Wiki/Finland [2.8 Skills Recognition](#) for more information about the role of the third sector in validation.

Information and guidance

Like Nevala described in the [European Inventory on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning 2010](#): "The validation of informal and non-formal learning is not advertised in Finland as such. Instead, the public authorities and the social partners are actively involved in raising awareness about the competence-based qualification system in which validation is embedded as a central feature. For example, a dedicated website provides information from the qualification system itself, to good practice examples and assessment methods and offers information on the benefits of acquiring such qualifications" (Nevala, 2011; for more information see also the 2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning made by Karttunen). In practice the validation providers are at the core of guidance and counselling, like Karttunen (2016) points out. In CBQ it is the legal obligation of the provider to arrange adequate guidance and counselling services to the candidates at each stage of the individualisation process, which is documented for learners' individual study plans (Karttunen 2016). More about information and guidance services in Finland, see Youth Wiki/Finland [3.4 Career guidance and counselling](#).

Quality assurance

As Karttunen points out in "[2016 update to the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning: Country report Finland](#)": "In Finland there is no specific quality assurance framework concerning validation procedures. As validation is embedded in the formal qualification system, the quality assurance mechanisms that apply to education and training with special emphasis on assessment are also applied to validation procedures" (Karttunen 2016). The same publication also includes more information for example about qualification requirements determining the learning outcomes, performing external audits, contracting and planning procedures and certifications of the assessors.

6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

Policy framework

As described in Eurydice database/Finland [13. Mobility and internalisation](#), the international mobility of students and teachers is an essential part of education in Finland. The national core curricula sets internationalisation and cultural understanding as one of the key objectives in education. Therefore educational programmes throughout all levels of the education sector contain elements supporting internationalisation. Moreover, the education system provides students with a variety of possibilities to study outside Finland and to gain knowledge of other languages, cultures and societies. The main agency for implementing policies in the field of international co-operation in education, training, youth, sports and culture is the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#). It was formed by the merge between the Finnish National Board of Education and CIMO Centre for International Mobility at the beginning of 2017.

When it comes to informal and non-formal learning, the [Youth Act](#) promotes youth work and activities is established on cultural diversity and internationality as one of the main principles underlying the purpose of the Act.

Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

As described in Eurydice database/Finland [13.1 Mobility in Early Childhood and School Education](#) government financial resources for the internationalisation of education and training are channelled through the Finnish National Agency for Education. There are also other national organisations offering funding to help finance, for example school exchanges. The main programmes for international student and staff mobility are Erasmus+ for mobility in European countries and Nordplus for mobility in Nordic countries.

Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

The [Youth Act](#) leaves open the form of youth work services, which the municipalities need to organise based on various needs at the local level. On the other hand, all the different kind of bodies (including also NGOs and parishes) offering youth work or sharing expertise on youth work at the local and national levels have long traditions in international youth work. Based on the Youth Act, international youth work can also be granted by the annual state budget. There are also [national youth centres](#) around the country which are especially named in the Act for promoting an international orientation for young people.

Quality assurance

The Finnish National Agency for Education publishes [annual statistics](#) on international mobility of students and education professionals in Finland. The statistics are collected from schools, vocational institutions, higher education institutions and adult education

organisations. They include all kind of mobility regardless if funded by educational institutions, state or for example Erasmus+. Regarding the Erasmus+ Youth in Action programme, for example equality of the distribution of the funds to different regions of the country is followed. For more information [in Finnish](#).

The Finnish National Agency for Education together with several other Erasmus+ Youth in Action National Agencies and research partners also participate in transnational, on-going [Research-based analysis and monitoring of the Youth in Action Programme](#). The regular surveys that are carried out measure what impact participation in Youth in Action has had on participants' learning, attitudes and active participation in society. In addition, special surveys are carried out.

See also [Mid-Term Evaluation of Erasmus+ Programme 2014-2020 Finland](#).

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

Based on [Eurydice database/Finland \(Overview\)](#) it can be said the purpose of educational support and guidance in Finland is to maximise the potential of every child and young person. Educational support and guidance covers areas such as support for learning according to the individual capacity of the learners, school attendance, pupil welfare and guidance and counselling. Attention is also paid to supporting the learning of gifted pupils and students.

The Finnish education system has been based on the philosophy of inclusion for a long time. Basic education is the same for all. There is no streaming, but children are supported individually so that they can successfully complete their basic education. Support for learners is given at three levels: general, intensified and special support.

Based on the Youth Act, the [Government Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy](#) and for example the [Non-Discrimination Act](#), one of the main principles in organising youth work services is to foster social inclusion (see more in Youth Wiki/Finland [4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion](#)).

Social cohesion and equal opportunities

Based on Eurydice/Finland 1 [Social, Political and Economical Background and Trends](#) and [2.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies](#): 'The main objective of Finnish education policy is to offer all citizens equal opportunities to receive education, regardless of age, domicile, financial situation, sex, mother tongue or religion. Education is considered to be one of the fundamental rights of all citizens. Firstly, provisions concerning fundamental educational rights guarantee everyone (not just Finnish citizens) the right to free basic education; the provisions also specify compulsory education. Basic and compulsory education is stipulated in more detail in the Basic Education Act. Secondly, the public authorities are also obligated to guarantee everyone an equal opportunity to obtain other education besides basic education according to their abilities and special needs, and to develop themselves without being prevented by economic hardship. Education is also free at all levels from pre-primary to higher education.'

Based on Eurydice/Finland [12. Educational Support and Guidance](#): 'The starting point for the provision of education, guidance and support is attendance to a good and safe school day. Schoolwork should be organised so that the conditions are as favourable as possible for the pupils' well-being, development and learning. The school community should be safe, friendly and respectful in terms of atmosphere. Teachers are required to treat the children as individuals and help them to proceed according to their own capabilities. Pupils should also experience success and joy of learning. Basic education promotes encouraging interaction, co-operation, joint responsibility and involvement. Special attention is paid to pupils' opportunities to influence their own work and the learning environment.'

A collaborative, supportive school forms an appreciative school community for its members: pupils, teachers and other personnel. The school co-operates with pre-primary education and other forms of early childhood education and care, morning and afternoon activities, other schools providing basic education, educational institutions offering further studies, health care and social services, as well as other parties involved in supporting children's growth and development.'

See also Youth Wiki/Finland [4.4 Inclusive Programmes for Young People](#) for strategic priorities for promoting multiculturalism, a sense of community and inclusion, gender equality and sustainable development as outlined by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

6.7 Skills for innovation

Innovation in formal education

As described by Kristina Kaihari from the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#), innovation is one of the main skills the education system is seeking to give to pupils and students. As such, the recently updated core curriculums reflect this goal in the following

- Pupils and students are encouraged to be innovative
- learning environments are multiple, as such learning outside of school is encouraged
- Transversal skills are being developed
- Trials are being made to find the 'right' kind of pedagogical method for motivating young people
- Learning by doing is appreciated
- Interaction skills in a changing world are given more respect. (Personal exchange from Kaihari 7th of June 2017; For more specific information, see also "[Curricula and Qualifications](#)".

Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work

'Fostering innovation' as a term is not explicitly mentioned so often in the general discussion about youth work in Finland. At the same time youth work has its basis in giving young people an active role in planning, realising and evaluating youth work services, so the aspect is inherently involved in the actions of youth work. Nonetheless, there are two processes originating from the non-formal field that are actively being called "fostering innovation". These are school club activities offered by the [Development Centre Opinkirjo](#) (see below) and the work related to the digitalisation in youth work and youth information and counselling services, see more in Youth Wiki/Finland 10 Youth Work (not yet published).

As mentioned in the [Basic Education Act](#), school club activities, for example, which are closely related to education may be arranged in conjunction with basic education. The Development Centre Opinkirjo is a service organisation for child and youth work that promotes the well-being of children and youth. Opinkirjo develops and produces services and content for school clubs (like science clubs), hobby activities, culture and science education and citizenship education. These (services and content) aim to ensure possibilities for children and youth to grow mentally coherent, self-confident, resilient, intellectual and critical, with the abilities to use problem-solving thinking methods. The organization was founded under the auspices of the Suomen Opettajain Liitto (Finnish Teachers' Union) and could thus immediately address issues relevant to youth and education policy.

Opinkirjo supports the establishment of school clubs as part of any given school's development in being a rich learning environment. The schools are guided in how to

establish the club by drawing upon to the strengths of all the participants, with the idea that all the activities are based on the collaboration and active citizenship of young people. Clubs can be established at both lower and upper levels of basic education, thanks to the relevant contents and active working methods made available by Opinkirjo to involve all age groups. Club activities include simulations and real-life situations, such as excursions, role-playing and experts' visits.

Opinkirjo offers for example:

The Finnish Contest for Young Scientists (in Finnish [Tutki-Kokeile-Kehitä](#)) is a Finnish science and technology competition for young people, between the ages of 6 and 20, to foster an interest in science and technology. The winners of The Finnish Contest for Young Scientists participate in the EU Young Scientist Contest and other international contents such as Intel International Science and Engineering Fair and Genius Olympiad. The Finnish Contest for Young Scientists is organised in co-operation with [Academic Engineers and Architects in Finland TEK](#).

The aim of '[Let´s invent more - Learning materials for Invention Clubs](#)' is to provide tools to teachers and club advisors in order to encourage a creative atmosphere and to direct an inventive club.

Opinkirjo supports creative problem-solving also by offering service design -methods (in Finnish [Muotoilukasvatus](#)) suitable for use with children and young people in teaching.

The entrepreneurship education provided by Development Opinkirjo aims to improve children's and adolescents' involvement and activity as future citizens both in their personal lives and as part of their communities and society at large. Entrepreneurship education is a part of citizenship education and the term 'entrepreneurship' is understood broadly. It constitutes skills pertaining to life management, interaction and self-management as well as the ability to innovate and cope with change. The association also organises an annual contest of entrepreneurship (in Finnish [Yritys Hyvä](#)). (More information about the contest see Youth Wiki/Finland [8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture](#)).

6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

National strategy

[Media Literacy in Finland](#) is the media literacy policy and the national media education policy document published by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) in 2019. This document updates and extends the original [cultural policy guidelines for media literacy](#) published in 2013. According to the three main objectives of the media education policy, media education in Finland ought to be comprehensive, of high-quality and systematic in promoting media literacy covering all types of media. The policy document includes various proposals for action that support the objectives. The updated policy stems from the [Government programme](#) which highlights the need for media skills for all age groups, which is reiterated in the Media literacy document: '... promoting children and adolescents' media education remains at least as important and relevant as before.' Beyond this document, as said in the Media Literacy, there are also several sector-specific strategies that are necessary for taking media education into account and to provide more detailed guidance for practical actions, such as curricula in education and library policies. In the youth sector, the role of the [National youth work and youth policy programme 2020–2023](#) is important. One ongoing objective is coordinating ways to prevent child and youth grooming on social media. Both [Verke](#) and [Koordinaatti](#), as subcontractors in the [Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work](#), have an important role in realising the objectives of this programme, see more in [Youth Wiki/Finland 10.8 Current debates and reforms](#).

Generally speaking, the position of media education is recognised in national strategies. The Ministry of Education and Culture supports the promotion of media literacy by

allocating resources and information guidance. The [National Audiovisual Institute \(KAVI\)](#), established in early 2012, is the only party with a statutory duty to promote media education in Finland. [KAVI's Department for Media Education and Audiovisual Media \(MEKU\)](#) is responsible for the promotion and coordination of media education at a national level, and the supervision of the provision of audiovisual programmes from the perspective of protecting children. The [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) has an important role in promoting media education in formal education. It prepares and makes decisions about the core curricula for basic education and upper secondary education, the core curriculum for early childhood education and care, and bases for vocational and competence-based qualifications. Both of these agencies are operating under the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). Other ministries also have an important role, for example the [Ministry of Justice](#) promotes media literacy as a part of democracy education (see more in [Youth Wiki/Finland 5.10 Current debates and reforms](#)). The [Ministry of Transport and Communications](#) and the [Finnish Transport and Communication Agency](#) are co-operating in organising for example campaigns such as the [Media Literacy Week](#) and offering expertise on the safe use of the internet.

The implementation of the media literacy policy will be regularly studied and evaluated by KAVI in collaboration with stakeholders and the Ministry of Education and Culture. A schedule for the follow-up will be drafted in 2020.

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

Based on [Media Literacy](#) in Finland by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), the recent curricula revisions at all levels from early childhood education to secondary level and basic education for adults has been important for the promotion of media literacy. Firstly, media literacy is developed from the perspective of supporting the objectives and key content of instruction in each subject such as Finnish & literature, visual arts, social studies, history, and health education. Additionally, media literacy is also developed within the framework of multidisciplinary learning modules where it is understood as being part of multiliteracy. Both the [National core curriculum for Basic education](#) and the [National core curriculum for General upper secondary schools](#) describe the main topics for learning related to multiliteracy as a multidisciplinary module. For basic education those are for example practising analytical, critical, ethical, environmental, and cultural literacy; producing, interpreting and communicating information and encouraging the use of multiliteracy when participating and being involved in their community, the media and society at large. For general upper secondary schools, emphasis is placed on being familiar with the key norms related to copyrights and freedom of speech, as well as responsibility in producing, using, and sharing contents. When it comes to separate subjects, the specific themes of online safety and the dangers of addiction are included in the content of health education as described in the national core curriculums. The [National Agency for Education](#) offers a platform (in Finnish Mediakasvatus) where pedagogical tools and support for media literacy education are available for teachers. Teacher training related to media literacy is also offered by the universities and other educational institutions, as well as by some NGOs. The Ministry of Education and Culture also offers funding (in Finnish [Erytisavustus mediakasvatuksen ja medialukutaidon edistämiseen](#)) for such awareness raising actions which are organised according to the aforementioned policy document entitled Media Literacy in Finland.

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning

The policy document [Media Literacy in Finland](#) also promotes actions in non-formal and informal learning. [KAVI's Department for Media Education and Audiovisual Media \(MEKU\)](#) is responsible for the promotion and coordination of media education at a national level. In the field, there are almost 100 different organisations promoting media literacy. The [Finnish Society on Media Education](#) is a key organisation among NGOs in the media education field. Several other operators in media education are also members of this society. It aims to support and develop the field of research and practices concerning

media literacy education, contribute to the public debate and provide opportunities to share media education experiences online and offline nationally and globally. It organises events, updates an informative website in three languages, also in [English](#) and co-operates in national and international networks. It also spreads information on social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Slideshare) to thousands of followers. The Finnish Society on Media Education is a global actor and a member of the UN-Alliance of Civilizations Media Literacy Education Clearinghouse and works in cooperation with International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media. Its work is supported by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) and by its members.

The policy document Media literacy in Finland lists actors that are exclusively active in the field of media education: 'There are a multitude of active associations in the child and youth sector that focus on media education in promoting the well-being of children and adolescents. Examples of these organisations include the [Mannerheim League for Child Welfare](#), [Save the Children Finland](#), the [Finnish Parents' League](#) and the [Finnish 4H Organisation](#).' The document also highlights the work done by the [youth work centres of expertise in their work](#): 'From the perspective of media education, some of the key centres of expertise at a national level in the 2010s were (and still are) the [Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work in Finland](#), [Verke](#), and [Koordinaatti](#). These centres of expertise for youth services, are financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, to develop and promote competence, expertise and the flow of information regarding youth services as set out by the [Youth Act](#).'

State funding for a digital approach to youth work and youth information and counselling services are shared by the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#). The annual cost sum has been about one million euros in recent years. As mentioned online by the Agencies: "Regional State Administrative Agencies (AVIs) are responsible for the regional tasks of the Ministry of Education and Culture in the field of education, day care, libraries, sports and youth work. At the local level, these tasks are the responsibility of municipalities."

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

The [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2020-2023](#) has selected 'Coordinating ways to prevent child and youth grooming on social media' as one of its main objectives. Towards this objective, the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is coordinating the actions of an inter-ministerial collaborative project which will be set up in co-operation with [Ministry of the Interior](#), [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#), [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) and NGOs. Results of this collaboration will be reported in forthcoming years. However, at the same time, it can be said that the way in which the Finnish policy approached is not by raising awareness of the risks as such, but rather by strengthening all the positive media skills of young people.

The [Finnish Safer Internet Centre](#) (FISIC) "works with a well-established multi-stakeholder network, involving the public sector, private sector and civil society to help make the internet a trusted environment through actions that empower and protect users online.

One of the main awareness-raising efforts of the FISIC is the annual [Media Literacy Week](#) (MLW) that includes the Safer Internet Day (SID) campaign. The MLW is planned and carried out together with over 40 partners and the actions are implemented in various educational institutions. FISIC also coordinates the Nordic Game Day in an effort to promote game literacy through hundreds of local events in November. In addition, the awareness centre organises an annual Media Education Forum supporting national cross-sectoral co-operation and partnerships.

The Finnish Hotline (Nettivistäjä) has produced awareness-training material for social workers and professionals working with children. The guidebook, *Broach the subject - the internet and sexual abuse of children*, provides advice on how to improve children's safety and prevent sexual abuse on the internet and how to support children in difficult situations. There is also video material for youth covering topics such as expressing one's

emotions and sexuality on the internet, and protecting oneself from harmful online behaviour.

Save the Children Finland has also produced a preventative online self-help material, *I take responsibility*, targeting potential child sexual abuse offenders. The material has been awarded the National Crime Prevention Prize by the Finnish Ministry of Justice.

The [Finnish Safer Internet Centre \(FISIC\)](#) is a joint project of three individual organisations: the National Audiovisual Institute (KAVI), Save the Children Finland (STC) and the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare (MLL). Each organisation has an established role in Finnish society and strong national and international relations. The main national supporter of the project is the Ministry of Culture and Education.”

See also some [e-materials in English](#) about the methods used in the ‘Media Literacy Weeks’. The Media Literacy School helps teachers and other professional educators discuss about the media with children, youth and guardians. The project is co-financed by the European Union.

6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Information providers / counselling structures

Public authorities share information about non-formal and informal learning and quality of youth work as part of their statutory duties based on for example the [Youth Act](#).

Awareness raising initiatives

As mentioned in Youth Wiki Finland [6.1 General context](#) there are broad options for non-formal learning possibilities, and thanks to their long history and statutory nature they are well-known among citizens. Often, at least in part, modes of non-formal learning are also financed with public funding.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

Based on the ‘[Current issues](#)’ published by The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) on January 17th 2020, the Government is to prepare a report on education policy in the run up to 2030. The Ministry of Education and Culture has opened an online survey for everyone to collect feedback to supplement the preparations. The report, which will include the aforementioned comments, is based on, like the Ministry describes: ‘...the policies ensure that:

- ‘The level of education and competence among the population can rise at all levels of education, differences in educational achievement can diminish, and educational equality can increase;
- children and young people can feel well;
- education and training can enhance gender equality and non-discrimination in society;
- Finland can be an internationally attractive place in which to study, to conduct research and to invest.’

Ongoing debates

As previously mentioned in the overview (Youth Wiki/Finland [6. Education and training overview](#)), the [Government Programme for 2019-2023](#), has instigated much domestic discussion among citizens, experts and the media, especially over the suggestion to raise the minimum school leaving age to 18 years since the programme was published in June

2019. In the programme, it is stated: “We will raise the minimum school leaving age to 18 years. With this in mind, we plan to introduce a range of study and support options for compulsory education, such as voluntary additional primary and lower secondary education, folk high schools, workshops, rehabilitation and preparatory education, which may be included in the range of upper secondary qualifications. However, compulsory education cannot be extended unless the fees for upper secondary education are abolished. As part of preparing for the extension, we will conduct research into the reasons why students discontinue their upper secondary education, and take the appropriate measures to address these underlying causes. We will also carry out a study on non-fee-paying upper secondary education and a reduction in learning material costs and, based on these results, take the appropriate measures to implement upper secondary education that is genuinely free of charge.’ Further development is underway.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

In regards to young people’s health and well-being, schools play an important role in Finland. A young person is entitled to have school health care, dental care, contraception and other sexual health counselling for young people. If a young person needs further guidance, which a school cannot offer, a school is for responsible directing him or her to further treatment. The promotion of healthy eating habits is part of the Finnish education system, while Sports and Health education are both mandatory subjects in educational institutions. Health education is a standalone academic subject, which is taught in all comprehensive schools and it must have dedicated teaching staff. Topics of health education include sexual education, healthy eating and nutrition, and preventing risky behaviour. For more information, visit: Youth Wiki/Finland: [7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition](#).

Since the goal is to offer comprehensive health and welfare services to all young people, mechanisms of early detection are not primarily based on identifying target groups. The implementation of student welfare may vary in educational institutions. However, education providers are always responsible for organising statutory welfare services for students. Those young people who are not attending school are entitled to the same health services as other residents in the municipality. Additionally, several municipalities offer tailored services to young people.

There is a broad consensus among political parties, government officials and experts that social and health services need to be reformed. Since June 2019, new Government has started preparations for restructuring health and social services, taking into account the work done during previous electoral terms and making sure that relevant constitutional requirements are met.

7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

According to the Youth Barometer 2015, young people seem to be merely satisfied with their health. However, although the majority of young people are doing well, there is a minority whose well-being is significantly worse than that of their peers. Health inequalities are strongly related to this. In 2019, this still seems to be the case. According to the ‘Child’s Time: Towards a National Strategy for Children 2040’, one of the reasons to start preparations for a national strategy for children are the existing inequalities among children and young people. Although many of them are doing better than ever before, problems are accumulate. (For more information, see: ‘[Child’s Time: Towards a National Strategy for Children 2040](#)’ and ‘[Enabling growth, learning and inclusion for all](#)’)

Young people's well-being is connected to their parents' well-being as well. Life satisfaction is poor among those who are not in education or employment. The results differ considerably from the core sample in the Youth Barometer and the difference is particularly wide in terms of mental health and financial circumstances. (For more information, visit: [The Finnish Youth Research Network together with outreach youth workers examined: Surprised by the depth of ill-being among NEET youth](#), 5.12.2017; see more about [the study on-going 2018-2019](#)).

Reducing health inequalities is one of the cornerstones of health promotion in Finland, and this is also specified in the objectives of the [Health Care Act](#).

Based on the information offered by [Statistics Finland](#), suicide is one of the main causes of death among young people. Young people's suicide mortality is relatively high by European standards. In 2017, 179 young people between the age of 15 and 29 committed suicide (134 males, 45 females). For more information, visit: [Statistics Finland](#)

Drinking and regular smoking among young people has decreased quite rapidly in Finland in recent years. Young women still drink slightly less than young men, but the difference is smaller than it has been in previous years. Those young people whose own alcohol use has affected their relationships and health have often grown up in a home where alcohol abuse was a problem ([Youth Barometer 2015](#)).

Main concepts

There are no specific concepts relating to well-being and health that would differ from those in the common European discussion.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The legal framework for health policy is set by the [Constitution of Finland](#), the [Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity](#), the [Local Government Act](#), the [Youth Act](#), the [Health Care Act](#), the Student and Pupil Welfare Act (in [Finnish](#)) and relevant decrees issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The Health Care Act promotes and maintains the population's health and welfare, work ability and functional capacity and social security. It also:

- reduces health inequalities between different population groups
- ensures universal access to the services required by the population and improves quality and patient safety
- promotes client-orientation in the provision of health care services
- improves the operating conditions of primary health care and strengthens cooperation between health care providers, between local authority departments, and with other parties that promote health and welfare and provide social services and health care.

According to the Act, health promotion means actions aimed at individuals, the population in general, communities, and living environments with a view to maintain and improve health, work ability and functional capacity, influence determinants of health, prevent illnesses, accident injuries, and other health problems, strengthen mental health, and reduce health inequalities between different population groups, as well as systematically to target resources in a manner that promotes better public health. At the national level, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is primarily responsible for guiding and overseeing health promotion in Finland.

In addition to the Health Care Act, health promotion is regulated by legislation concerning infectious diseases, tobacco control and alcohol. Reducing health inequalities is one of the prime objectives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Other ministries

participate in health promotion in these subjects, which are central to their areas of expertise. The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is responsible for creating favourable conditions for sport and physical activity as well as the reconciliation and development of sport policy. For example, the Ministry of Education and Culture promotes physical activities by allocating state subsidies to national sport organisations and institutes and financing sport and health sciences.

At regional level, the Health Care Act obligates municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) to monitor the health of its inhabitants by population subgroup. According to the Act, health and welfare promotion are central responsibilities of municipalities. The purpose is to prevent the onset of health problems and the resultant increase in the need for services. Also, according to the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity, municipalities are responsible for creating opportunities and facilities for engagement in physical activities at the local level. This means providing physical exercise services and organising physical activities that promote general health and well-being with due regard to the various target groups; secondly, supporting civic action including club activities; and thirdly, constructing and maintaining facilities for physical activity.

Additionally, municipalities are responsible for arranging and developing child welfare services. According to the [Child Welfare Act](#) (Section 12), each municipality, or two or more municipalities together, must draw up a plan, concerning the actions of the municipality or municipalities to promote the well-being of children and young people, and to arrange and develop child welfare services.

The [National Institute for Health and Welfare](#) works to protect and promote the welfare and well-being of the Finnish population. In 2017, its priorities are to create a sustainable welfare society, to reduce inequality and social exclusion, to monitor the changing rate of diseases, to be prepared for health threats and to reform the service system. The National Institute for Health and Welfare follows the strategy 'From health to well-being – 2020 – from well-being to health', which promotes the Finnish population's health and well-being (the strategy is available in [Finnish](#)). The strategy explicitly focuses on those people whose voices are not easily heard in Finnish society. However, the strategy concerns the whole population, not only young people. The strategy was launched in 2011 and it will last until 2020. The National Institute for Health and Welfare has updated its strategy in order to make it more accurate in a changing situation (e.g. the ongoing process of renewing social and health services)

Since 2018, there has been youth work centre of expertise, which promotes the health and well-being of young people. A consortium which consists of the Finnish Mental Health association, EHYT Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention and Youth Mental Health Association YEESI promotes mental health and substance abuse prevention by educating youth workers and professionals. Its goal is to strengthen young people's participation in the promotion of well-being as well. For more information, see [7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition](#). (More about the youth work centres of expertise, see [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) and Youth Wiki/Finland [1.4 Youth policy decision-making](#)).

Cross-sectorial cooperation

There is a consensus in Finland that health promotion must be based on cross-sectorial cooperation. Legislation reflects this approach. The Health Care Act specifies responsibilities for different sectors and levels. As mentioned above, the Child Welfare Act requires municipalities to draw up a plan to promote the well-being of children and young people. Cooperation between municipalities in planning and implementation is possible: two or more municipalities together can draw up a plan concerning the actions of the municipality or municipalities to promote well-being, and to arrange and develop child welfare services. This plan will be subject to approval by the council of each municipality involved and must be reviewed at least once every four years. The plan must cover the circumstances in which children and young people are being raised, and

the state of their well-being. (For more information, see [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.2 Administration and Governance](#))

The National Youth Work and Policy Programme and forthcoming National Strategy for Children both emphasise that youth policy needs cross-sectoral cooperation.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

Legislation

The most important acts, which contain provisions on physical activity promoting health and well-being, are the Constitution of Finland, the Act on the [Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity](#), the Health Care Act, the Local Government Act and the Youth Act. Under the Constitution of Finland, physical activity is a basic cultural right. The goal of the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity is, as the name suggests, to promote the well-being and health of the population and to support the growth and development of young people by means of physical activity. The Act defines physical activity promoting health and well-being as “all types of physical activity in the course of human life designed to maintain and improve the state of health and functional ability of the population”. Under the Health Care Act, municipalities must include health counselling in all health-care services and arrange health checks and advice for all age groups, including young people. In terms of young people’s physical activity, the Youth Act is also important. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is one of its objectives, and youth work and youth policy of the municipalities include sports activities for young people.

On the Move – a national strategy for physical activity promoting health and well-being 2020

In the beginning of the millennium, close cooperation started between different administrative branches in the development of physical activity. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture jointly appointed a [steering group](#) for health-enhancing physical activity (2011–2015). The steering group planned a joint strategy and an action plan for the promotion of physical activity. As a result, [On the Move – national strategy for physical activity promoting health and well-being 2020](#) was published. The strategy was adopted in 2013 and lasts up to 2020. The strategy describes the current state of the population’s physical activity, the actions and objectives for physical activity as well as critical factors to achieve the objectives of the strategy. There are four main guidelines.

- *Guideline 1. Reducing sitting in daily life in the course of life.*
- *Guideline 2. Increasing physical activity in the course of life.*
- *Guideline 3. Highlighting physical activity as a vital element in enhancing health and well-being, in the prevention and treatment of diseases and in rehabilitation.*
- *Guideline 4. Strengthening the status of physical activity in Finnish society.*

The main purpose is to activate those people who engage in too little physical activity and to make the operating cultures of organisations more oriented towards physical activity during different stages of life. According to the strategy, measures are targeted at groups whose level of physical activity should be the greatest cause for concern and on whom few development measures have been focused. These groups include e.g. young people and families with children who are in the weakest socio-economic position, young people at the lower secondary level, and vocational students. The strategy displays several objectives and measures for actors at the national, regional and local levels.

The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in cooperation with the steering group for health-enhancing physical activity are responsible

for coordinating the follow-up. The follow-up and assessment are carried out as part of the work of the steering group. Reporting the follow-up is done as part of the follow-up on the government programmes and the annual reports of the ministries. Separate reports are produced in 2015 and 2019.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

There are several programmes and projects under the national strategy that promote health-enhancing physical activity. One of the most important programmes specifically targeted at young people is [Finnish Schools on the Move](#). It is a national action programme aimed at establishing a physically active culture in Finnish comprehensive schools. In 2017, the programme was expanded to upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education and training. In 2018, more than 80 percent of comprehensive schools participated in the programme, implementing their individual plans in order to increase physical activity during the school day. The programme is a joint programme between the public sector and the third sector, funded by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Culture supports sport and physical activity among young people by allocating subsidies. These allocations are based on national guidelines on promoting physical activity, the Act on the Promotion of Sports and Physical Activity and the Government Programme. Projects which target young people should emphasise especially females' physical activity, which is lower than males'.

According to the School Health Promotion study, physical activity has increased among young people and the number of those who engage in too little physical activity has decreased.

For more information, see:

[School Health Promotion Study](#)

[Finnish Schools on the Move](#)

Physical education in schools

There are projects (e.g. Finnish Schools on the Move), which are aiming at increasing physical activity in educational institutions and to reduce time spent in a sedentary position. Therefore, sport and health education are important subjects in Finnish schools, but the purpose to promote physical activity is not limited to them.

According to the national core curriculums, sport and health education are mandatory subjects in single-structure basic education and upper secondary education. According to the national core curriculum for single-structure basic education, sport in lower secondary education supports pupils' physical, social and emotional competences. The ability to take action and in finding sports as hobbies are important emphases in classes 7–9. The teacher must take pupils' state of health and special needs into consideration when he or she plans teaching and evaluates performances. Health education emphasises comprehensive understanding of health and health promotion. People skills, identity and sexuality are themes as well as prevention of illnesses, stress and crises.

Sports and health education are mandatory parts of the national core curriculum for upper secondary education as well. According to the national core curriculum, sports supports healthy lifestyle choices and well-being whereas evaluation should not be based on a level of fitness. There are two mandatory courses (1 course = 38 lessons) and optional advanced courses available. There is one mandatory health education course for everyone, and it covers the basics of health. The course deepens the knowledge gained in lower secondary education and supports everyday life management. The national core curriculum for upper secondary education will be published in 2019.

Vocational upper secondary education and training does not have a common national core curriculum, which would be same for everyone regardless of qualification, but

education providers follow guidelines and draw up curriculums according to them. A mandatory, competence-based study module called Maintaining working capability, sports and health education is part of studies in vocational upper secondary education and training, but its content and implementation may vary according to one's qualifications. For example, it may be possible to carry out health education as an online course or to accept one's free-time sport hobbies as credits in some cases. The goal is to teach skills and knowledge that young people need to maintain and develop their physical, social and mental ability.

The Cultural and Sports Association of Finnish Vocational Education and Training, [SAKU](#), is responsible for developing physical activity among vocational students. The Finnish National Agency for Education, the Ministry of Education and Culture and SAKU have developed a professional's work capacity pass. The purpose of the passport is to motivate students to improve their work and functional capacity on their own initiative already during their studies.

For more information, visit:

[National core curriculum for upper secondary school](#) (in Finnish)

[National core curriculum for basic education](#) (in Finnish) National core curricula available in English: [here](#).

Collaboration and partnerships

Several actors at national, regional and local levels have committed to the national strategy to promote physical activity. As mentioned above, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education and Culture jointly appointed the steering group for health-enhancing physical activity. Especially in terms of young people, cross-sectoral approaches are emphasised. The third sector is actively involved in the implementation of the national strategy, and schools and municipalities cooperate in this area as well. For example, Finnish Schools on the Move programme is organised by the National Agency for Education, regional state administrative agencies and various other organisations, and it is part of the Government Programme in Finland. The Cultural and Sports Association of Finnish Vocational Education and Training, SAKU, cooperates with vocational education providers, and offers support and materials for them as part of the Finnish Schools on the Move project.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

Legislation

As mentioned above, the legal framework of health policy is set by the Constitution of Finland, the Sports Act, the Local Government Act, the Youth Act, the Health Care Act and relevant decrees issued by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (for more information, see: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.2 Administration and governance](#)). This legislation promotes healthy lifestyles as well. For example, the Youth Act explicitly mentions that the implementation must be based on healthy lifestyles.

Sexual health & fighting risky behaviour

The Action Plan on Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014–2020 is based on the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's Action Plan on the promotion of sexual and reproductive health 2007–2011. On commission by the Ministry, the National Institute for Welfare and Health updated the action plan in collaboration with experts and organisations. The action plan on sexual and reproductive health aims to improve the population's sexual and reproductive health and, thereby, reduce health and social inequalities. According to the Action Plan, sexual and reproductive health is promoted by providing more information, by enhancing co-operation, and by developing related services. Priority

action areas in the action plan include sex education, good care at birth, multiculturalism, as well as male sexual and reproductive health.

The Action Plan follows the standards set by the WHO. Upper secondary vocational education and training and general upper secondary school must provide services, which promote sexual health (e.g. sexual and relationships guidance, including supporting sexual orientation and preventing infertility, sexual violence and venereal diseases). If a young person needs further guidance, which a school cannot offer, a school is responsible to direct him or her to further treatment.

For more information, see:

[Action plan - Promotion of sexual and reproductive health can reduce health and social inequalities](#)

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

The promotion of healthy eating habits is part of Finnish education system. According to the Basic Education Act, a pupil who is attending basic education shall be provided with a balanced and appropriately organised and supervised meal on every school day. Nowadays, approximately 900 000 pupils and students enjoy a free meal in school. A provided meal must support the objectives of health education. Free school catering has been practised since 1948 and it promotes healthy eating habits, well-being, and Finnish food culture. Also, pupils have the right to participate in planning school catering, which supports their participation and community spirit.

Curriculums at a local level, which are based on the national curriculum, usually include a plan of school catering as part of student welfare and education. Special diets and allergies are taken into account. In some places the minimum timeframe for lunch is set, in order to ensure that pupils do not have to eat in a rush.

Substance abuse prevention

The Action Plan on Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs and Gambling supports the statutory substance abuse prevention work done in municipalities and regions. On the national level, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for coordinating the organisation of substance abuse prevention as well as other aspects of health policy. In practice, substance abuse prevention is developed and coordinated by the National Institute for Health and Welfare on the national level and by the Regional State Administrative Agencies on the regional level, together with other authorities. According to Maria Normann, Heidi Odell, Mari Tapio and Elsi Vuohelainen, the implementation of youth substance use prevention can be divided into three modes of operations:

- 1) social strengthening
- 2) universal prevention
- 3) risk prevention

Social strengthening and universal prevention concern all young people. Risk prevention focuses on those young people who have a higher risk for substance use and/or who already have a substance-related problem in their lives. In an ideal situation, risk prevention is only a small part of substance abuse prevention. Generally, substance abuse prevention is based on promoting a substance-free way of life. In this way, it can be said that all people who work with young people are doing substance abuse prevention. (See: [Youth Substance Use Prevention – let's do this together!](#))

In 2018, a consortium which consists of the Finnish Mental Health association, EHYT Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention and Youth Mental Health Association YEESI was appointed as one of the youth work centres of expertise. It promotes mental health and substance abuse prevention by educating youth workers and professionals. Its goal is to strengthen young people's participation in the promotion of well-being as well.

For more information, visit:

[Youth Substance Use Prevention – let’s do this together!](#)

[And yet it works! Sober notes on public substance education](#)

[Views on substance use prevention in Finland](#)

[Youth substance use prevention - let's do this together](#)

[Alcohol, tobacco and addictions - substance abuse prevention](#)

[Ehkäisevän päihdetyön toimintaohjelma](#) (In Finnish)

[Laki ehkäisevän päihdetyön järjestämisestä](#) (In Finnish)

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Sports and health education both are mandatory subjects in educational institutions. As mentioned above, in vocational upper secondary education sports and health education are combined into one study module, which supports the maintaining of working capability as well (for more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity](#)). Topics of health education include healthy eating and nutrition and preventing risky behaviour. Sex education is a mandatory part of health education in single-structure basic education, upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education. According to the Family Federation of Finland, this has been the most effective way to carry out sex education in schools. Health education is a standalone academic subject, which is taught in all comprehensive schools and it must have a dedicated teaching staff. This ensures that teachers effectively self-select to study this subject, and they are interested and able to teach it ([UNESCO - Comprehensive Sexuality Education: The Challenges and Opportunities of Scaling-up Sex education](#)).

Sex education includes emotional and biological aspects of sexuality. The starting point is to offer information for young people in order to support their sexual identity and to help them to see sexuality as a source of resources, which brings joy and happiness to their life. Relationships, communication, safe sex, availability of sexual health services, sexuality in media, sexual violence, venereal diseases, and anatomy are mandatory themes of sex education.

Peer-to-peer education approaches

Single-structure basic education supports peer-to-peer learning by supporting working as a group and/or with one’s peers. According to the national curriculum, one of the goals of health education is to guide pupils to think about individuality, communality and equality from the perspective of health and to support pupils’ ability to make responsible choices.

Also, studying in upper secondary school must support communality, participation and well-being by strengthening communication and cooperation skills. Teamwork and peer learning are encouraged. The goal is to offer possibilities to invent solutions together, to share knowledge and know-how and to support peer review.

“*Maintaining working capability, sports and health education*” study module in vocational upper secondary education and training may include team sport and peer review and supports communality as well. Tutoring is an important part of vocational upper secondary education and training as well as upper secondary education. Tutoring supports peer-to-peer approaches and participatory activities as well as strengthens communality among students in educational institutions. These are part of educational institutions’ student welfare.

Collaboration and partnerships

Collaboration between schools and youth work has a long tradition in Finland. However, planning and actions have not always been based on permanent structures. In 2000s, formal education providers and youth workers have started to identify mutual goals and

a more structured dialogue with each other (Kiilakoski 2016; [Kolehmainen & Lahtinen 2014](#)).

Legally, the Youth Act obliges outreach youth work and education providers to collaborate in certain situations, which may threaten a young person's health and well-being, such as:

- *An education provider must deliver information about a school-leaver who has not sought or gained entry to post-compulsory education;*
- *An education provider must deliver information about a person under 25 years of age who discontinues their studies in vocational or general upper secondary education;*
- *The Defence Forces and the Non-military Service Training Centre must deliver information about a person under 25 years of age who has exemption from military or non-military service owing to non-fitness for service or who discontinues the service.*

An education or training provider may decline to disclose information on a young person if they judge, based on the information available and in consideration of the young person's situation and need for support as a whole, that the young person is not in need of services of outreach youth work.

The Student Welfare Act, the Basic Education Act and the Governmental Decree on Maternity and child health clinic services, school and student health-care, preventive oral health care for children and young contain provisions on collaboration between social and health authorities and education providers. According to legislation, a young person is entitled to have school health-care, dental care, contraception and other sexual health counselling for young people. Also, an examination by a child or youth psychiatrist to determine their mental health status must be available if necessary. The national core curriculum requires collaboration as well: education providers draw up local curriculums in cooperation with the local executive social and health authorities. The education provider shall also determine the organisation of home school cooperation and of pupil welfare laid down in the core curriculum.

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

Since physical activity is strongly connected to the healthy lifestyles and well-being of young people, *On the Move – national strategy for physical activity promoting health and well-being 2020* and *Finnish Schools on the Move* should be taken into account as youth-targeted information campaigns as well as concrete measures to increase young people's physical activity. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity](#).

In addition, there are information campaigns, which focus on different themes in the area of healthy lifestyles. For example, the Family Federation of Finland, the National Institute for Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health organise the campaign ("*Kumita!*"), which promotes safe sex practices and offers condoms free-of-charge to young people, and several non-governmental organisations organise the campaign ("*Selvin päin kesään*"), which aims at increasing information about drinking among young people. The goal is to encourage young people to party without alcohol.

Besides youth-targeted information campaigns, information providers have been established and counselling has been made available to young people. Schools are one of the most important places to disseminate information and raise awareness about healthy lifestyles among young people (e.g. health education, physical examinations, school health-care). For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity](#). Secondly, public health-care may offer counselling specifically tailored to young people. Thirdly, NGOs may offer health services to young people as well, but according to legislation, local authorities are primarily responsible for arranging such services. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.6 Access to Quality Services](#).

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

Mental health work is based on the [Health Care Act](#) and the Mental Health Act. According to legislation, municipalities must provide mental health services and their quality and availability must be adapted to needs. The role and duties of municipalities regarding health services may change in the future when the structure of health and social services is reformed. (For more information, see: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.8 Current Debates and Reforms](#))

The Health Care Act sets the statutory care guarantee, which includes maximum limits for waiting times. As regards mental health services for children and young people, an assessment of the need for treatment must commence within three weeks of hospital or other specialised medical care unit receiving a physician's referral. In situations where the assessment of the need for treatment requires consultation with a specialist, the assessment and any required tests must be carried out within six weeks. According to the Act, any treatment of a person who is under the age of 23 year old and is deemed necessary on the basis of the assessment of the need for treatment must begin within three months from when the need for treatment was ascertained, taking into consideration the urgency of the case, unless otherwise required on medical, therapeutic or other comparable grounds.

The [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#) is responsible for planning, coordinating and monitoring national mental health work. The goal is to strengthen the mental health and to reduce factors which undermine it. Additionally, the strategy for social and health policy of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health emphasise the reform of the Mental Health Act as well. Other objectives of the Ministry are improving the availability of mental health and services for substance users, continuing to implement the development plan on mental health and services for substance abusers and instilling practices concerning depression prevention and preventing work incapacity due to depression.

In 2018, the steering group was appointed to prepare the national strategy for mental health (2019–2030). According to the Government programme, the Government prepares a mental health strategy with a focus on mental health as a resource. The aim of the strategy is to "*secure people's mental health rights and mental health services, incorporating them into existing structures*". The forthcoming national strategy will include a strategy for preventing suicides. The legislation on mental health and substance abuse services will reformed at the same time. In addition, the Finnish Mental Health Association has established the national centre for preventing suicide.

For more information:

[Finnish Mental Health Society](#) (in Finnish)

['Mitä kuuluu' – What's Up?!](#) (In Finnish)

[Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#) (in Finnish)

[Government programme](#)

Improving the mental health of young people

Promoting the mental health of young people is an important part of youth policy. As mentioned above (see: 7.2), one of the youth work centres of expertise, a consortium which consists of the Finnish Mental Health association, EHYT Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention and Youth Mental Health Association YEESI, focuses on these issues. The consortium unites the organisations' expertise and knowledge in mental health work and substance abuse prevention. It aims to increase national expertise in the field of mental health promotion and preventive work. The consortium offers education to youth workers, produces material for professionals and emphasises a resource-oriented

approach. One of its goals is to strengthen young people's participation in the promotion of mental well-being as well. For example, YEESI describes on its website that "*the members of the organisation have an opportunity to enhance their generation's mental well-being*". For more information, see: [7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition](#)

As mentioned above, municipalities are primarily responsible for organising health services and these services should cover mental health as well as physical health. Physical examinations in school and school health-care are not limited to only checking a young person's physical health. An examination by a child or youth psychiatrist to determine young people's mental health status must be made available if necessary. For example, a young person has the right to discuss their life situation with a psychologist seven days at latest after he or she has requested the meeting. If the issue is urgent, the meeting must be organised on the same or following day. The statutory care guarantee regulates maximum waiting times in public health-care.

Public health-care services provide the website called mentalhub.fi for young people facing mental problems. The website enables self-evaluation and lists places where young people can get help. However, the website highlights that self-evaluation is suggestive only and cannot replace a physician's evaluation. As mentioned, municipalities are primarily responsible for organising services, including 24-hour social service in urgent crises. Implementation may vary: in Helsinki, this can be counselling over the phone or 1-5 meetings. A psychiatric emergency service is available for all individuals over 16-year-olds.

Besides these statutory services, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is financing several initiatives under the key project Health and well-being will be fostered and inequalities reduced. For example, the Ministry and the Institute for Health and Welfare in cooperation are financing a project, which aims at increasing basic health care professionals' knowledge and competences to prevent suicides. Also, the [Finnish Mental Health Association](#) has been supported financially. The Finnish Mental Health Association offers training and education in order to promote mental health and life management skills among young people and it has developed training modules and methods for promoting mental health in youth work. The Association sees that supporting adults' mental health skills strengthens their ability to support young people.

The Finnish Mental Health Association organises intensive courses and peer support groups for young people and young adults who are in need of support. Groups are tailored according to young people's needs: there are different groups for young people whose family members have a drinking problem, who have experienced relatives' or friends' suicide or who need support in their transition to working life, etc. A crisis line is available in urgent situations. In Helsinki, Kuopio and Seinäjoki there are SOS crisis centres, which offer conversational therapy meetings without a physician's referral and are free-of-charge.

The Finnish Red Cross provides emergency youth shelters for young people who are between the age of 12 and 21. Emergency youth shelters offers conversational therapy or a temporary overnight bed if needed. Young people can also call to seek advice if needed. Online support is available twice a week. The services at the shelter are free of charge for young people. For more information, visit: [Support from emergency youth shelter](#)

7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

The purpose of the Act on Pupil and Student Welfare is to promote pupils' and students' learning, health and well-being and inclusion, and the prevention of problems; to ensure support at an early stage for those who need it and to make sure that student welfare

services are of equally good quality and available to everyone, and that the school community and environment are safe, healthy, and accessible. In this way, the whole Pupil and Student Welfare Act is based on the principles of ensuring early detection. There are several mechanisms, which promote this idea. As mentioned above, a young person is entitled to have school health-care, dental care, contraception and other sexual health counselling for young people. (For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.5 Mental health](#)) The Act on Pupil and Student Welfare regulates a single-structure basic education as well as upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education. The implementation of student welfare may vary in educational institutions. However, education providers are always responsible for organising these welfare services for students. School health care includes annual physical examinations for every pupil. Wide physical examinations are being carried out in the first, fifth and eighth grades. A wide physical examination includes parents' interviews and a teacher's evaluation of the pupils' performance. One idea behind these meetings is to detect possible risks as early as possible (for more information in Finnish, visit [here](#)).

In addition, the national curriculum of single-structure basic education sets guidelines for early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks. According to the national curriculum, the teacher is responsible for promoting and following pupils' well-being, supporting and guiding them, and identifying possible difficulties.

Stakeholders

In terms of everyday practices in school, teachers, school nurses and school psychologists are the most important stakeholders in the area of early detection and signposting of young people who face health risks. Their cooperation in this area is fundamental. As mentioned above, a teacher has an important role in promoting and following pupils' well-being, supporting and guiding them and identifying possible difficulties in their everyday life. The teacher participates in wide physical examinations by giving an evaluation of pupil's performances. According to legislation, a young person is entitled to have school health care, which includes also early detection. Therefore, school nurses, school psychologists and teachers have a key role in this task. Secondly, education providers must follow and evaluate the realisation and impact of the Pupil and Student Welfare services in cooperation with the municipality's social and health services and participate in the assessment, which is carried out by an external evaluator. The results must be made public. Thirdly, the National Institute for Health and Welfare and the National Agency for Education must follow the realisation and impact of the Pupil and Student Welfare services at the national level.

Guidance to stakeholders

Since the most important documents regulating mechanisms of early detection are the Pupil and Student Welfare Act and the national curriculums (single-structure basic education, upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education and training), these must be taken into consideration as the primary documents providing guidance for teachers and school health care professionals. The Finnish National Agency for Education organises training for stakeholders concerning the national curriculum, its goals and how to plan local curriculums are based on the national one. Additionally, the National Institute for Health and Welfare has a list of published recommendations for school health care, school catering, mental health work, and sex education on its [websites](#). Also the NGOs produce handbooks and materials and offer training and education for stakeholders. For example, the Finnish Association for Mental Health offers mental health work training for adults who are working with young people. (For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.5 Mental health](#)). The Mental Health Act covers the prevention of mental health problems, not only how to treat them. The Cultural and Sports Association of Finnish Vocational Education and Training SAKU has published a guidebook on student welfare in vocational upper secondary education. The guidebook includes central acts and decrees, which regulate educational institutions' responsibilities, and presents operation models and suggestions. The guidebook is available in Finnish

[here](#). In addition, the website called [TEAvisari](#) introduces how student welfare services have been carried out in vocational education institutions. The website is based on self-evaluations by education providers.

Target groups

If a young person does not participate in school health care's physical examinations, their need for support will be assessed. The reason is that young people who do not participate in these examinations tend to be more often at risk of social exclusion than their peers. One way to assess a young person's situation is to contact his or her parents or to organise meetings at home. Secondly, as mentioned above, the Youth Act obliges outreach youth work and education providers to collaborate in certain situations, in which there may be threats to a young person's health and well-being. For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition](#).

Funding

School health care is funded by municipalities and the state. In future, the forthcoming social and health reform will affect the structure of funding.

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

As mentioned above, until the social and health care reforms come into force, municipalities are responsible for organising health services. According to the Health Care Act, municipalities must organise health services for pupils in its area. Each school has a designated school public health nurse and a school doctor, whose contact information and appointment hours are printed on pamphlets distributed to pupils' homes. Provision of health care services is based on the number of pupils at each school. Numbers may vary. For example, the City of Helsinki Health Department recommends that one school public health nurse and one school doctor should not be responsible for more than 800 and 6,000 pupils respectively. Those young people who are not attending school are entitled to same health services than other residents in the municipality. Additionally, several municipalities offer tailored services for young people. For example, the City of Helsinki has the Youth services, which organises health services for young people who are outside of school health care and occupational health services. These services are free-of-charge. All contacts are confidential. (For more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 4.6 Access to quality services](#), [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition](#) and [Youth Wiki/Finland: 7.5 Mental health](#)).

Additionally, there are campaigns that concentrate specifically on issues, which are important for young people's health. For example, one of the initiatives to make health facilities more youth friendly was the NGOs' campaign concerning free contraception for under 25-year-olds. The campaign was carried out during municipal elections and several candidates supported the initiative. In some municipalities, all young people are already entitled to free contraception. This practice is also recommended by the [National Institute for Health and Welfare](#), the [Family Federation of Finland](#) and the [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#).

7.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

There is a consensus among political parties, government officials and experts that social and health services need to be reformed. It was one of the most central goals of Juha Sipilä's Government (2015–2019) to create health, social services and regional government reform. The planned reform did not fulfil the necessary requirements to move forward to the Parliament, due to constitutional problems and a tight timetable. Therefore, the Prime Minister submitted the Government's resignation to the President of

the Republic on Friday 8 March 2019. The parliamentary elections took place on Sunday 14 April 2019. In June 2019, five political parties (the Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, the Green Party, the Left Alliance and the Swedish People's Party) formed the Government. According to the Government Programme for the years 2019- 2023, the Government will start preparations for restructuring health and social services, taking into account the work done during previous electoral terms. Based on the [press-release](#) from The [Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#) on February 14th, 2020, a parliamentary committee will be set up for the preparation of the social security reform, and due to the need to 'achieve a common understanding of a sustainable model for the future by increasing awareness and knowledge of social security throughout our society', as Minister of Social Affairs and Health, Mrs Aino-Kaisa Pekonen commented, the work of the committee will take two parliamentary terms.

Ongoing debates

Since autumn 2019 there has been much domestic discussion among citizens, experts and the media about the mental health issues of young people who are studying. Based on the [press-release](#) from [The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health](#) on February 11th 2020: 'The service structure for treating mental health disorders among young people is particularly fragmented. More and more young people, who suffer from mental health disorders, are currently directed to specialised medical care. In contrast, there are scarce opportunities for young people regarding early treatment of mental health disorders in primary health care. Basic care for school pupils, in particular, does not materialise. The government will now strengthen young people's access to psychosocial interventions within publicly funded basic services.'

8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

The most important public funded arenas offering young people the exposure to culture and creativity are arts in school education, basic art education (see [Glossary](#)) and cultural youth work. The non-governmental organisations and municipalities organise cultural activities and events for citizens of all ages, but there are also those especially offered to young people. What is preferred as culture by young people is continuously changing. The challenge is for the state aid structures to keep in step with the pace and direction young people are going. So, when it comes to young people as both the creators and consumers of culture, the new government's promise to 'support the expansion of new artistic fields in addition to the visual arts' is an important one for the next generations. Equally as important is the government's aim of investing tens of million euros to guarantee opportunities for every child and young person a genuine opportunity to pursue a leisure activity of their choice free-of-charge. (More about the [Government Programme \(2019-2023\)](#) in Youth Wiki/Finland [8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people](#)).

8.1 General context

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

Based on the 'Study of young people's leisure activities', occurring every two years, visual mobile activities, such as photography and making videos have become increasingly frequent means of spending free-time. The existence of both social media as arena, and smart phones as equipment, which together offer opportunities for online exposure, may explain the phenomenon. Overall, it seems that the popularity of cultural activities among young people is high. Three out of four respondents go to the cinema, theatre, concerts or art exhibitions, at least sometimes. Console and computer games and reading were the most popular activities done on a regular basis. In addition, playing an instrument and singing were regular hobbies – half of the young people who were

singing or playing an instrument even said that they sing and practise daily, and two out of three, at least once a week (Myllyniemi & Berg 2013, 41; Hakanen, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2019).

Based on the annual study called [Youth Barometer](#), almost 90% of young people aged 15-30 years old have recent years reported that they have at least one leisure time activity they prefer doing. However, there were also young people who have had to interrupt their favourite pastimes, or who were not able to start them at all, due to shortage of money and/or other difficulties, such as location (Myllyniemi 2016, 70; Myllyniemi & Kiilakoski 2018, 84). Partly based on these studies, there has been a notifiable rise in political interest towards leisure time. A working group, appointed in 2018 by Minister Mr Sampo Terho to develop leisure activities, summarized its work as 'A Strategy for Leisure Activities' ([Harrastamisen strategia](#), includes a description sheet in English) in February 2019 and proposed objectives for the [Government Programme 2019-2023](#) electoral term. The main objectives of the those proposals were the increase in leisure activities available around school hours (before, between or after lessons), to reach those who cannot take part in their favourite leisure activities, and to develop strategic level steering and co-operation across the sectors, in order to improve the equality and accessibility of free-time offers. Moreover, the government incorporated those goals surprisingly effectively into its programme (for more information see Youth Wiki/Finland [8.2 Administration and governance](#) and [8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people](#).)

When it comes to the evidence base in the development of free time offers concerning also creativity and culture, the previous government had a key governmental project that relates to the accessibility of arts, culture and sport. What this has meant in practical terms, for example, was a country-wide listening to children and young people about how they wish to spend their free-time. This was executed in early 2016 in the format of a questionnaire, sent to Finnish schools via email. All in all, 1107 schools, in 230 municipalities, with more than 118 000 pupils participated in the survey. The Finnish pupils named photography and parkour/street/showdance as the most interesting hobbies within arts and culture. For girls, photography, dance and visual arts were the most important, while the boys mentioned most often parkour, cinema, animation and video- and media arts. The need to include free time offers within the time spent on school premises, which has now been addressed by the new government programme, was also one of the findings of the questionnaire. The previous government already granted more than million euros to support arts and culture-related hobbies in schools, with an additional 800 000 euros to promote access to basic education in arts (see [Glossary](#)).

Main concepts

In recent years, both the 'Study of young people's leisure activities' and the [Youth Barometer](#) have suggested that the definition of creativity is not unambiguous. For example, the respondents have described physical exercise, such as boxing, riding and football, as creative hobbies (see Merikivi, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2016). From young people's perspective, the old limits also between cultural and physical activities are not necessarily useful for them. Additionally, possibilities produced by social media and smartphones may even further blur these lines (Merikivi, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2016; Vilmilä & Mulari 2016). Phenomena, such as gamification, Vlogs and Tubecon, also have their roles as an important part of young people's cultural activities (e.g. Lauha 2014). The definitions of concepts, such as culture and creativity, have far-reaching consequences for cultural policy. At the structural level, the question is whether state aid for young people's cultural activities acknowledges these changes and autonomic cultural activities, including blogging and vlogging, coding, Tubecon, games and graffiti (for more information, visit: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people](#)). The [Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025](#) by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) (published 2017) acknowledges how "demographic changes will diversify consumption habits, service expectations and service needs in arts and culture." In

Finland, there are now examples of that kind of new, emerging discussion. For more information, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 8.10 Current debates and reforms](#).

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

As mentioned in [Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025](#), the public sector has, generally speaking, an important role in Finland's cultural policy due to the small domestic market. Just as it does the youth policy, the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) coordinates youth policy as well as cultural policy in Finland. The Ministry is responsible for legislation, central government financing and strategic steering and for providing prerequisites for artistic and cultural activities. It promotes work in the arts and other creative work, the conditions for the production and distribution of art, the availability of art and cultural services, as well as the conservation of cultural heritage and cultural environments. It sees to the resources needed by the sector and prepares the related legislation. Therefore, its role is extremely important in the fields of culture and arts.

The ministry's agencies operate in different areas of arts and culture. The most important of these are the [Arts Promotion Centre Finland](#), the [Finnish Heritage Agency](#) and the [National Audiovisual Institute](#). The arts council system, which awards grants funds to artists based on peer assessments, operates as part of the Arts Promotion Centre Finland. The [Finnish Film Foundation](#), the [National Gallery](#), the [Finnish National Opera](#) and the [Finnish National Theatre](#) are all under the Ministry of Education and Culture's performance management, as they are for the most part funded by the state. Young people's cultural activities can be funded as part of youth and/or cultural field.

Finnish municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) are self-governing entities and promotion of general cultural activities is one of their tasks. They encourage cultural activities among local residents by providing grants, by making facilities available and by organising events. Municipalities also maintain arts and cultural institutions.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Based on the [Youth Act](#), the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is responsible for the overall administration, coordination and development of the national youth policy, and for the creation of favourable conditions for the pursuit of the policy in the central government. In practice, as stated also in the Youth Act, the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#) is prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture in consultation with other relevant ministries. Other ministries also have important roles in taking the programme into action. During the years there have also been several youth thematic related cross-sectorial ministerial working groups, for example related to youth unemployment.

In 'A Strategy for Leisure Activities' ([Harrastamisen strategia](#), includes a description sheet in English) published in spring 2019 by the working group appointed by the former Minister for European Affairs, Culture and Sport (Mr Sampo Terho) suggested the need for sharpening the co-operation model between the ministries when it comes to offering public funded leisure-time activity that are organised with and for young people, including cultural services. The working group was established to suggest objectives for the [Government Programme 2019-2023](#) electoral term, much of proposals of which have been actually taken into the Government Programme, published in June 2019. However, due to the high number of measures mentioned in the programme, it will take some time before we can clearly see how cross-sectorial ministerial cooperation will be newly put into practice.

At the local level, the Youth Act obliges municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) to form a cross-sectorial coordination network for counselling and planning services for young people. For the purpose of planning cross-sectorial cooperation between local authorities and developing such cooperation, local governments must establish a steering and service

network or appoint a cooperation team whose activities target all the young people living in the municipality. Two or more municipalities may have a shared network. The network includes representatives of the local authorities for education, social and health care services, youth work and the employment and policy authorities

The network or other equivalent cross-sectorial local cooperation team is to:

- 1) gather information on young people's growth and living conditions and assess their situation in light of this information in support of decision-making;
- 2) improve the coordination of services intended for young people and promote shared procedures in referring young people to the services while ensuring a smooth exchange of information;
- 3) promote cooperation in the implementation of youth activities.

For more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland: [4.6 Access to Quality Services](#).

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

Legislation

Since the cultural field is very diverse, there is no one comprehensive act, which would cover the whole field. However, the [Constitution of Finland](#) guarantees that everyone has the right to one's language and culture. Other important acts setting the legal framework of cultural policy are the [Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural Provision](#), the [Municipal Cultural Activities Act](#), the Lotteries Act (which is under [renewation](#)), the [Act on Liberal Adult Education](#) and relevant decrees. With regards to young people's cultural activities, one of the underlying principles of the [Youth Act](#) is cultural diversity. In addition, cultural youth work is supported by the Youth Act.

The Government Programme 2019-2023

At the national level, the [Government Programme](#) (2019-2023, published in June 2019) is the most important public document that sets the major objectives to be pursued. In the programme, it is said that culture is a key element in the value system of Finnish society: 'A dynamic cultural life has intrinsic value and as such, it creates the foundation for a society in which education and culture are highly regarded, where democracy is strengthened and freedom of speech reinforced. Furthermore, the production and service sectors in the arts, culture and creative industries are not only labour-intensive areas but they are also continually growing.'

The Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025

The [Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025](#) of the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) (published 2017) describes the government duties in cultural policy, evaluates the current state of arts and culture and changes in the field and sets strategic targets for the strategy period. The strategy also describes different dimensions of cultural policy impacts as well as central development measures in the coming years. The Strategy corresponds to Government Programme. However, its guidelines and core principles are not limited to the period of office.

The Cultural Environment Strategy 2014-2020

The first national [Cultural Environment Strategy](#) was prepared through widespread cooperation coordinated by the [Ministry of the Environment](#) and the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). The cultural environment, with its social and cultural values, is taken to be the basis for the memory and identity of a community and its people. When pursued strategically, when it is well taken care of, and when the regional characteristics are revealed and constructed over different time periods, such a cultural environment

enhances the well-being of people. The strategy offers tools for maintaining the values of our national heritage and improving the vitality and attractiveness of regions (more about the connections between the national heritage and young people, see Youth Wiki/Finland [8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation](#)).

The National Youth Work and Policy Programme 2017-2019

According to the [Youth Act](#), the Government shall adopt the [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#) every four years. The programme specifies detailed objectives for the national youth work and policy, and the support to be provided for these efforts. The programme is prepared by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) in consultation with other relevant ministries. Young people and key actors engaged in youth work and policy are to be consulted over the course of its preparation. The programme lays down guidelines for youth policy as well as cross-sectorial cooperation within it at the national level. The National Youth Work and Policy Programme provides guidelines for youth field in general. Also, it is the main strategy applied to young people's cultural activities. The new programme for the period 2020-2023 has been under preparation, hearings were organised during the summer and the autumn 2019, and the programme will be published by the end of the year. (For more information, see: Youth Wiki/Finland: [8.2 Administration and Governance](#)).

Scope and contents

Government Programme 2019-2023

The Government Programme 2019-2023 (published in June 2019) emphasises the role of "strong and vibrant civil society" as a base for well-functioning culture, youth and sport sectors. When it comes to young people as both the creators and consumers of culture, the government promise to "support the expansion of new artistic fields in addition to the visual arts" is an important one for the next generations. The government will also be continuing the promotion of children's culture, which was started by the previous government. This is achieved by further developing basic education in the arts and increasing the grant opportunities within the field of children's culture.

To be clear, children are understood to be under 18 years old, whereas young people — who are explicitly mentioned in the context of leisure activities — are considered to be under the age of 29, according to the Youth Act. The government will continue what the previous government began, which is to guarantee opportunities for every child and young person a genuine opportunity to pursue a leisure activity free-of-charge of their choice, as part of the school day. As such, it is intended to reinforce and improve the quality of the schools' morning and afternoon activities, clubs and the cooperation with the municipalities and third-sector providers. The government is even investing 40 million euros over the course of the following two years.

The Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025

As mentioned above, the Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025 describes the government duties in cultural policy, evaluates the current state of arts and culture and changes in the field and sets strategic targets for the strategy period. The target areas for cultural policy and related strategic objectives are:

Creative work and production

- The conditions for artistic and other creative work will be improved, and there will be more diverse ways to produce and distribute creative works.

Inclusion and participation in arts and culture

- Inclusion in arts and culture will be increased and differences between population groups in terms of participation will be smaller.

Cultural basis and continuity

- The cultural basis will be strong and vital.

The Cultural Environment Strategy 2014-2020

The strategy envisions the cultural environment as a source of well-being and vitality, where:

- People value the cultural environment and work actively for it.
- A well-tended cultural environment lives through time, while preserving its unique characteristics.
- The resources of the public administration are directed to guiding its orderly change.
- For the business sector, the diversity of the cultural environment opens up opportunities for success.

National Youth Work and Policy Programme 2017-2019

With regards to young people's cultural activities, one of the most important objectives in the National Youth Work and Policy Programme by the end 2019 is to guarantee young people the opportunity to have at least one leisure activity of their choice. As one of the measures to guarantee this right, a questionnaire has been sent to all young people between the age of 7 and 16. This measure has now been successfully executed twice since the launch of the programme.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

Government Programme 2019-2023

As mentioned above, the Ministry of Education coordinates youth policy as well as cultural policy (for more information, visit: Youth Wiki/Finland [1. Youth Policy Governance](#)).

The Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025

The Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025 sets guidelines for cultural policy, which is coordinated at the national level by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Cultural Environment Strategy 2014-2020

Together with key operators in the cultural environment sector, a working group led by the Ministry of the Environment prepared an implementation plan ([Toimeenpanosuunnitelma](#), [Genomförandeplan](#)) for the strategy. The plan includes 54 concrete actions, the majority of which fall under the responsibility of the public administration. However, it has been made clear that the building of a better cultural environment also requires the contribution of other organisations and individual people. Because of this, the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Education and Culture have invited various parties to take action by making their own cultural environment commitments.

National Youth Work and Policy Programme 2017-2019

The National Youth Work and Policy Programme is prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture in consultation with other relevant ministries. The programme specifies responsible authorities for every objective.

Revisions/updates

The Government programmes are limited to the electoral periods of office, which are then also renewed according to political standpoints. As summarised in the Compendium/Finland [1.2.6 Transversal co-operation](#), in the previous governments of the Centre-Socialist (2003-2007) and Centre-Conservative-Green (2007-2011), culture was not explicitly included in the programmes. The programmes of Conservative-Socialist-Green government (2011-2015) and the Centre-Conservative-Populist (2015-2019) had more connections to culture. The content of the programme of the latter, as regards to cultural policy, put the main government priority on facilitating access to art and culture. The programme stated that:

- Children and young people will be supported in becoming more active.
- Basic education in the arts and cultural activities will be increased.
- Access to basic art education and children’s culture, which is currently not available to all in every part of the country, will be improved.
- Greater recognition will be given to the wellbeing aspects of culture.
- Art exhibitions in public spaces and institutions will be promoted to bring culture more accessible to every Finnish citizen.
- The principle of investing up to 1% of the construction costs of public buildings in the acquisition of artwork will be expanded in cooperation with the social welfare and health care sector in order to support the welfare impacts of the arts.” (Compendium-database)

The updated Government programme was published after the parliamentary elections in Spring 2019, and it is expected to be in force for four years. The Strategy for Cultural Policy was published in 2017 and the Cultural Environment Strategy in 2014. Those are effective until end of the years 2025 and 2020, respectively.

According to the Youth Act, the government adopts a national youth work and policy programme every four years, usually shortly after the government programme has been published. The National Youth Work and Policy Programme (2017–2019) is the third programme; the earlier programme was called the Child and Youth Policy Programme (2012–2015) and it was prolonged also to 2016 because of the revision of the Youth Act. The major changes between the programmes are summarised in Youth Wiki/Finland [1.3 National youth strategy](#).

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

One of the cornerstones of cultural policy is to improve the accessibility of arts and culture. As mentioned above (Youth Wiki/Finland [8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people](#)), there is a strong strategical base for incorporating culture into children’s and young people’s daily lives, support the creativity of children and young people, and make art and culture easily accessible to all, regardless of for example location, financial barriers and disabilities. The government has planned to use about 40 million euros in 2020-2022 so as to guarantee that every child and young people can have a leisure activity of their choice — whether from the culture, sport or other sectors.

The working group set by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) in called “*Working group on ensuring possibilities for recreational activities for every child and young person*” (Report of the working group was published in 2017 in [Finnish](#)) made mention of what kind of such a good practices can be when improving the accessibility of arts and culture:

1. Youth Pass system offering free visits to young people to culture and sport activities, events and also in public transport.
2. Individual economical support related to recreational time.
3. Recreational time after school hours for pupils with the purpose aspect of combining different kind of forms of art, sport and culture.
4. Motivation and support given by youth workers in the schools to whole classes in order to test different kind of recreational activity.
5. Assistant Pass allowing free entrance to assisting persons.
6. Possibility to borrow recreational equipment, for example in public libraries.

The Ministry of Culture and Education has a long tradition of supporting the establishment of The Children's Cultural Centres in the areas where such services are not yet available for under 18 year olds. The network of the centres was registered as an association in 2015. The [Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centres](#) offers networking days for the centres and other organisations working with children's cultural activities and art. It is also involved in several national co-operative projects, including for example:

1. [Art Testers](#), where all 15 year olds (grade 8th) are invited to visit a local and national art institution as part of the cultural education given in the schools. The opportunity is equal and free for all regardless of which part of the country the pupils are living. Project leader: The [Finnish Cultural Foundation](#).
2. School Cinema Week where the main idea is to produce an educational scheme on how such a week can be organised in every school. Project leader: Cultural Centre Valve, Oulu
3. ArtsEqual (The Arts as Public Service: Strategic Steps towards Equality) - research project where art and art education are elaborated from the perspective of what it means to be a basic service the society should be able to offer to all. Project leader: Uniarts Helsinki.

About the Culture for All Service see Youth Wiki/Finland [8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture](#).

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

At the local level the municipalities (see: the [Glossary](#)), cultural institutions and NGOs offer information on cultural opportunities to young people. Youth Passes and the collective visits to art and culture institutions can also be seen as one dissemination channel for information.

Based on the previous government's programme (2014-2019), the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) launched a project in 2017 whereby a new, nationwide Activity ePass targeting all young people in grades 7–9 was designed. In autumn 2019, it was already taken into use by the first municipalities. The idea is that young people can download the ePass application onto their smartphones. With the application, youngsters can see what kinds of activities are being offered to young people nearby by their municipalities, by companies, foundations, social services and associations. The same system also allows young people the possibility to a variety of facilities and events. "The purpose of the Activity ePass is to promote equality of opportunity: young people should be able to choose their hobbies and leisure activities based on their interests and time available, and the financial situation of their families should not be an issue," stated the previous Minister for European Affairs, Culture and Sport, Mr Sampo Terho, in summarising the idea of the application. (For more information, see Ministry of Culture and Education, [Press Release 23.5.2018](#); information in [Finnish](#) about the application developed in co-operation by the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the City of Helsinki.

Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

As mentioned in the [Cultural Environment Strategy 2014–2020](#), one of the goals is that "children, young people and adults have acquired good skills and competence in recognising and understanding special features of the cultural environment and know how to work actively for it. Museums act as regional and local centres of lifelong learning of the cultural environment. Associations working with the cultural environment are active and disseminate information on the cultural environment, thereby strengthening the appreciation of the cultural environment."

The strategy, for example, mentions that cultivating knowledge of the cultural heritage in preschool and basic education and in upper secondary education is under the curriculum, and is a basic part of vocational upper secondary qualifications (more information see [Youth Wiki/Finland 8.5](#)). (See also [Cultural Environment Commitment](#), Implementation

Plan of the Cultural Environment Strategy/[Kulttuuriympäristöstrategian toimeenpanosuunnitelma](#), National World Heritage Strategy/[Yhteinen perintöme – Kansallinen maailmaperintöstrategia](#))

[The Association of Cultural Heritage Education in Finland](#) promotes education in cultural heritage and cultural environment. It serves as an expert, influencer, promoter, developer, and communicator of cultural heritage education and education of culturally sustainable development. The target is to strengthen the cultural competence of especially children and youth – information, skills, and experiences regarding diverse cultural heritage – and to support identity building, involvement in culture and society, and the fulfilment of cultural rights.

The association provides educators and other professionals with information, material, expertise, ideas for activities, operating models, and new networks. The association co-operates with actors of education, culture, environment, and youth sectors. The partners of the association include the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), the [Ministry of the Environment](#), the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#), and the [Finnish Heritage Agency](#) as well as different organizations and associations, schools and educational establishments, museums, archives, World Heritage Sites, and many professionals and experts in different fields.

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

As described by the [Ministry of Culture and Education](#) about [Creative expertise](#), 'Early childhood education and care and general education, such as comprehensive school education, general upper secondary education, liberal adult education and basic education in the arts, form the foundation for creative expertise. Studies preparing for occupations in the fields of arts and culture can be completed both in vocational institutions and at universities and other higher education institutions.

To increase creative expertise, training is provided within projects that receive funding for example from the [Centre for economic development, transport and the environment](#) and the [Public employment services](#) (TE services). Such projects may include, for example, labour policy education and structural fund activities such as projects of the [European Social Fund](#) (ESF).

During the programme period 2014–2020 of the EU structural funds, a package of actions called Creative Expertise (ESF) is being implemented. The funding authority is the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment of Häme. The [Creative and Inclusive Finland](#) network was the umbrella project responsible for the activation and coordination of the ESF package on years 2015- 2018. On years 2018-2020 [Creative Finland](#) takes care of the coordination.'

Like already mentioned, education in the fields of art and culture form the foundation for creative expertise. The government decides on the allocation of hours between subjects in education. The core subjects taught in comprehensive schools are laid down in the [Basic Education Act](#). These subjects include physical education, music, visual arts, and arts and crafts over the nine years of basic education. For more specific information about the content of basic education, general and vocational upper secondary education, see the [Finnish Education system](#) described by the [National Agency for Education](#).

Cultural youth work is described below in subchapter 'Providing quality access to creative environments.'

Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

Based on the presentation of Kristina Kaihari, it can be described that in Finland, teachers everywhere have the same qualification requirements. Teachers are highly trained (Master's degree) as well pedagogically, which is crucial in the conceptualisation and implementation of the curriculum with motivating and inspiring pedagogies, learning methods and skills to think critically. (Kaihari 2017.)

The Association of Finnish Children's Cultural Centres maintains [a nationwide portal of Finnish children's culture field](#). It aims to gather and distribute information and to promote networking and relationships of various professionals connected with the branch.

Youth work (see [Glossary](#)) has a strong position compared to other European countries. It has statutory basis and youth work programmes offered by educational institutions are highly regarded and development oriented when compared internationally. 'Creative methods' are part of the core curriculum competence in a Bachelor degree in Civic Activities and Youth Work, for example, in [the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences](#). A Bachelor in Civic Activities and Youth Work can be studied also in [HUMAK University of Applied Sciences](#) and [Novia University of Applied Sciences](#). 'Creative methods are used in wellbeing work' as mentioned in relation to the core curriculum of the Bachelor of Social Services in [Laurea University of Applied Sciences](#). Bachelor of Social Services can be studied also for example in [Metropolia University of Applied Sciences](#) and in [Diaconia University of Applied Sciences](#).

With concern to youth work studies offered by a university, [University of Tampere](#) offers a [Master's Programme in Youth Work and Youth Research](#). Moreover, a possibility to specialise in youth research as part of doctoral studies is available from Autumn 2016 onwards. The studies are organised at the School of Social Sciences and Humanities, as part of the [Doctoral programme in social sciences](#).

Providing quality access to creative environments

About renewing the learning environment in formal education for providing increased quality access to creative environments, see Youth Wiki/Finland [6.7 Skills for innovation](#).

Based on the definition given by [Finnish Youth Association](#), the [Cultural youth work](#) is a form of youth work that uses easy access cultural and participatory methods as its tools to foster growth, learning, dialogue and a sense of community. Cultural youth work uses various forms of art to promote young people's means of expression, enhance their ability to voice their opinions and encourage them to define their own culture.

Young Culture and Finnish Youth Association

[Young Culture](#) is both an organisation and a form of cultural youth work. It aims to encourage and inspire young people to engage in cultural hobbies, regardless of their hometown, education, ethnicity, language or socio-economic background. Yearly art events organised around Finland form the core of Young Culture. Every year around 5000 young people participate in 20-30 regional events, from which some groups are chosen to perform in the yearly national main event in Spring. Young Culture is a part of the Finnish Youth Association and funded by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).

[The Finnish Youth Association](#) is a major player in the field of cultural youth work in Finland. The Youth Association offers cultural hobbies, such as dance, theatre, circus, music, and sports, for all ages. About 700 Finnish Youth Association clubs operate locally, all around Finland. The national organisation along with its 15 regional offices organise events and courses, produce materials for further use, and support the local clubs with their needs. The aim is to generate genuine participation and let everybody's creativity show. For example, the instructors of the dance and theatre groups draw ideas and suggestions from the children, rather than giving a ready made choreography or manuscript.

Oranssi Association and Oranssi Apartments Ltd.

[Oranssi](#) has a youth cultural centre close to the centre of Helsinki and inexpensive communal housing for young people in old protected wooden buildings, forming several communities that are located around Helsinki. The idea of Oranssi is to provide young people with the opportunity to independently produce their own kind of culture and to self-create their living environment. Oranssi housing and cultural activities are organised by young people, and aimed for the young, who also get to strongly participate in every level of the organisation, from decision-making to the actual physical work.

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

Kainuu vocational College ([Kainuun ammattiopisto](#)) is a vocational upper secondary institution that offers education in six different fields, one being studies in the field of culture. Education is organised in several municipalities in north-east regions, mostly in region Kainuu but also in the city Vantaa in south of Finland. From the beginning of the school year 2015-16 the institute has carried out entrepreneurial learning pedagogics called the [Entrepreneurship College \(YritysAmis\)](#) originally developed during a project funded by the European Social Fund. The students work for real clients, the idea being that whether or not they decide to become the owner of company, it is a useful way of gaining the knowledge required to achieve the qualification, but also what is needed to succeed in working life, in general. There are companies inside the structure of the vocational institute itself offering learning spaces, or in some cases, learning can happen with real companies externally, by studying a web course, in contact teaching in a classroom or by establishing one's own company as a part of the [JA Company Programme](#).

The [Development Centre Opinkirjo](#) organises an annual contest for entrepreneurship ([Yritys Hyvä](#)), which has attracted some 1,500 young participants yearly. Taking part entails describing one's own entrepreneurial idea by writing, videotaping, drawing, songwriting or doing something else. One category that is taken into account in the evaluation is whether the idea brings added value related to culture and cultural life. Over the years, for example, music, music videos, musicals, movie productions and other form of designs have been realised as a part of the contest. The contest is organised into separate groups, respectively targeting pre-primary education, basic education, upper secondary education (general and vocational) and for those learning to be teachers. The contest observes the curricula of schools and educational institutions especially from the multidisciplinary learning modules and transversal competences perspective such as cultural competence, interaction and self-expression, ICT competence, working life competence, and entrepreneurship, as well as the participation, involvement and building of a sustainable future.

More information on developing entrepreneurial skills of young people see Youth Wiki/Finland [3.8 Development of Entrepreneurship Competence](#).

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

As described in the [Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025](#), one of the target areas for cultural policy are 'Creative work and production' and the aim is that: 'The conditions for artistic and other creative work will be better, and there will be more diverse ways to produce and distribute creative works.' When it comes to the development entrepreneurial skills of young people through culture, one example of this kind of approach is the [StepDemo](#) grant by the [Promotion Center for Audiovisual Culture](#), (in Finnish, known as AVEK). The aim of the grant is to encourage young people to employ their cultural knowledge and skills in order to create added value and apply new perspectives to the creative economy. Either a concept or demo can be supported for persons under the age of 29 in the games & music scene. The grant was made available for the first time in 2017, the amount of

which was approximately 100 000€, while in 2018 more than 140 000€ was shared amongst 20 projects, games mainly. Such support is issued from the subsidies granted to the centre by the [Ministry of Culture and Education](#).

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

As mentioned in [Education Finland](#) by [National Agency for Education](#), Finland 'enjoys one of the most advanced and expansive applications of digital technology in education, starting from the first grade of primary school throughout the education system, and consisting of formal as well as extracurricular learning through technology.' Advancing and promoting digitalisation is also an important aspect in the current [Government Programme](#) (2019-2023).

[Business Finland](#) is a Finnish government organisation supporting innovation funding and trade, travel and investment promotion. As known previously as Tekes, it has supported the development of educational technology in Finnish schools, related to that see for example ["Finnish Innovations and Technologies in Schools - A Guide towards New Ecosystems of Learning"](#) (Niemi, Multisilta, Lipponen & Vivitsou eds. 2014).

[Verke is the national centre of expertise for digital youth work in Finland](#) nominated by the Ministry of Culture and Education. Verke's vision is to provide everyone who works with young people with the opportunity to use digital media and technology as part of their work. Verke aims to promote welfare, inclusion and equality among young people by means of digital youth work. Verke trains approximately 2500 youth workers annually and provides materials about different aspects of digital youth work. Creative use of technology is a big part of digital youth work. Verke's operations are managed by City of Helsinki Culture and Leisure Division.

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

As described in 'Compendium/Finland [2.4 Digital policy and developments](#): 'Since the late 1990s, the Finnish government has emphasised the central role of the new ICT in economic and social development. In the early 2000s, new information policy programmes were outlined and strategic plans written by governments and ministries, but most of them were concerned either with instruments (the techniques of distribution and reception) or content (knowledge, educative material). This division corresponded by and large with the division of jurisdictions between the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Economy](#) and the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).' As a more recent development the Compendium mentions for example the wiki-inventory for intangible heritage.

There are also examples of activities which encourage young people to take active roles in observing, exploring and analysing their immediate surroundings, such as the Heritage Makers competition for children and young people, which originally was part of the [Finnish programme of European Heritage Days](#), but since 2018 has extended to the rest of Europe.

8.8 Synergies and partnerships

Synergies between public policies and programmes

Based on the [Youth Act](#), cross-sectoral co-operation — supposedly the strongest form of synergy — has been put into force regarding all youth policy themes. For more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland [1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries](#). A similar tone of appreciation for the cross-sectoral approach was expressed by former Minister Mrs Sanni Laasonen-Grahn, in her foreword for the [Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025](#): 'The strategy sets the framework and steers the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#)'s development efforts in the right direction. The strategy supports the Ministry in

structuring its own objectives and measures, for example when preparing budgets or allocating central government funding. It is a tool that keeps the cultural sector stakeholders informed about the Ministry's ideas in the long term, and it helps other actors to observe policies they have in common with the Ministry when developing their activities.' On the other hand, when taking a thematic approach on how equal and accessible the free-time offers are from young people's point of view, there seems to be a need to sharpen the steering and co-operation across the sectors, as it was suggested 'A Strategy for Leisure Activities ([Harrastamisen strategia](#), includes description sheet in English) published in 2019. For more information about the strategy, see Youth Wiki/Finland [8.1 General Context](#)).

Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

It seems there is no systematic way for the national authorities to support partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers. Despite this, there are many fruitful examples of how different bodies work together for common aims, see for example the examples reported in the next sub-chapter Youth Wiki/Finland [8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture](#).

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

[Break the Fight! – Breakdance against bullying](#) is a set of art education actions launched by the [Aria Tiili Dance Company](#) already in 2014. The action includes open art workshops in schools for 6th–9th graders and professional dance performances. The workshop tour 2017–2018 in four municipalities outside the capital region was funded by the [Finnish Cultural Foundation](#). Thanks to the well-working workshop model, and to the efforts of making the need for development visible thanks to research studies (see the [evaluation study](#) edited by Sofia Laine by the [Finnish Youth Research Society](#), the study was partly funded by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#)) as well as the funding received from the [City of Helsinki](#), the "Break the Fight" action will continue its work to reduce school bullying in East Helsinki during the period 2018–2021.

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

The [Government Programme](#) (2019–2023) emphasises (as did the previous one) the importance of wellbeing opportunities offered by the Culture field. The goal is to bring culture closer to everyone by increasing the amount of art on show in places that are easily accessible to all, such as public spaces and institutions. Access to culture is carried out by incorporating it into children's and young people's daily lives, such as activities offered before, after and during school days. One of the main actions is a regular nationwide survey on free-time activity wishes (for more information, visit Youth Wiki/Finland [8.3 National Strategy](#)). The emphasis on accessibility highlights that a lack of funds, nor any other factor, need not become an obstacle when it comes to participating in cultural activities, and that wellbeing opportunities for wellbeing offered by the cultural field ought to be recognised.

[Culture for All](#) is a service, which operates nationally in the field of arts and culture and promotes cultural services that are inclusive and take diverse audiences into account. The service is run by the [Association for Culture on Equal Terms](#). The service offers information and support for operators in the cultural field in order to improve accessibility and knowledge of diversity. It collaborates at the development stage towards the inclusion of diverse audiences not only with art and cultural institutions but also with different audience groups. In 2019 a project called "[Avaus - Opening. Becoming an agent in the field of arts and culture in Finland](#)" was realised. The idea is to support the participation of artists and cultural workers of non-Finnish origin or background in the

Finnish arts and culture scene. The project is carried out together with the Center for Cultural Policy Research Cupore and Globe Art Point, and it is supported by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) and the [National Agency for Education](#).

8.10 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

As described throughout this Chapter 8, the Finnish Government has big plans to invest in the development of leisure time activities when it comes to aspects of equality and accessibility. The sum mentioned in the Government Programme 2019-2023 exceeds 40 million € to be used over the next two years. The Government was chosen after the parliament elections in spring 2019. Mr Antti Rinne from the Social Democratic Party was chosen to be Prime Minister, and the Government Programme was published in June. In December, a new Prime Minister was elected due to a 'loss in confidence' crisis within of the Government: Mrs Sanna Marin, from the same SDP party is to take office from December 2019 onwards. Nonetheless, the Government Programme is to remain the same (See the [Current Issues published by the Government 10.12.2019](#)). When it comes to the forthcoming policy developments, it is yet to be seen how the government's plan will substantiate the processes in the field of culture and creativity.

Ongoing debates

Several authors of the publication entitled 'Afterimages, Traces of Images – Archiving and Studying Art by Children and Youth' ([Jälkikuvia, kuvan jälkiä – Lasten ja nuorten taiteen tallentaminen ja tutkiminen](#), includes Abstract in English, published 2019) have instigated a genuine discussion about what is to be understood as art and how old power structures and stereotypes have kept society from being aware and perceiving matters differently. The publication takes the reader through the entire landscape: the role of young people in arts education, the level of freedom of their expression, what is understood by the term 'cultural heritage' and the questions about what (whose art) is seen to be worth archiving or giving exhibition space to within a cultural institute, such as an art museum. The publication was produced as a project by the [Art Centre for Children and Young People](#), the [Finnish Youth Research Society](#) and five Finnish Universities. The project was funded by the [Kone Foundation](#). The Art Centre as such receives funding from, for example, the [City of Hyvinkää](#) and [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).

The sub-project 'Digital Solutions for Digital Generation' in the ongoing [ALL-YOUTH research project \(2018-2023\)](#) focuses on youth participation and digital services. The project studies young people's views on digital participation and their experiences of using fast developing digital services, such as social media platforms, survey tools, online collaboration services, and other online platforms. During the funding period the project aims at developing, together with young people, innovative digital models and services that support and promote the societal participation of youth. The study is funded by the Government.

One of the studies in this sub-project focused on the design of societal participation platforms for youth who were active users of digital technology (see [Pietilä, Varsaluoma & Väänänen, 2019](#)). The findings indicate that when designing digital services to support youth in societal participation, designers should aim to provide a safe environment for discussions, offer information that entices participation, match digital participation to personal needs and make the participation rewarding, for instance by creating a visual display of the results from the participation.

A practical development process of the digital Virtual Council -service explores the design and evaluation of a societal discussion platform together with youth from various backgrounds and officials from ministries. The aim is to provide a grassroot-level service

for youth and officials to take part in societal discussions. The development and evaluation of the prototype version of the Virtual Council service continues in 2020.

9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

The [YouthAct](#) highlights solidarity, cultural diversity and internationality as the principles underlying the purpose of the Act. Overall, promoting young people's participation in global issues is an integral part of youth policy. Therefore, the main governance approach to youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making cannot be examined separately. Mechanisms of consultation and representation bodies are not limited to domestic issues. Instead, young people can take a stand on global issues as well as anything else within these mechanisms. With regards to young people's participation in global issues, this is one of the central features of youth policy in Finland.

9.1 General context

Main concepts

There are no specific concepts relating to global issues that would significantly differ from those in the common European discussion.

Youth interest in global issues

In 2018 (published in 2019), the [Youth Barometer](#) (the volume is titled as 'Influence on the Edge of Europe' see [infographics](#) and the [press release](#)) conducted research on the theme of politics and young people's expectations for the future, among other topics. The Youth Barometer annually measures the values and attitudes of young people, aged 15 to 29 living in Finland. The Youth Barometer addresses issues that are topical from young people's perspective, although some survey questions are repeated regularly. The Youth Barometer is published by the [State Youth Council](#) in cooperation with the [Finnish Youth Research Society & -Network](#). The Youth Barometer 2018 was edited by Elina Pekkarinen and Sami Myllyniemi.

According to the results, 61 per cent of young people are interested in politics and the share has — to a certain extent — increased. Correspondingly, the proportion of those who are completely indifferent to politics is lower today than it has ever been in the last 20-year studied period. The number of respondents who have participated in political activity has also increased, especially among those under the age of 20. Young people felt that the most effective ways to have an influence are to stand for election, to vote and to actively participate in an organisation or youth council. The share of young people who believe that purchase decisions are an effective way to take a stand has increased, from under one third in 2013 to 57 per cent. The share of those who consider political discussion an effective way of having an impact has also grown. Young people have chiefly participated by voting, with purchase decisions and by discussing political issues. The share of those who have demonstrated their influence with their purchase decisions has risen significantly.

There is roughly the same amount of young people who are optimistic (32%) about the future of the world as there are pessimistic (33%), and both ends of the continuum seems to grow when compared to earlier years. What has also grown, is the amount of young people feeling insecure when it comes to worldwide threats such as climate change (67% of the respondents are feeling very or fairly threatened), international terrorism (60%), world policy situation (40%) and weapons of mass destruction (40%). On the other hand, young people were asked their opinion on whether 'young people should be taught how to solve conflicts.' Almost 90% of the respondents agreed. 80% also took stand on 'peace being a matter of will' and two thirds expressed the opinion that conflicts can be solved through negotiation.

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Ministry of Education and Culture

Promoting young people's participation in global issues is an integral part of youth policy. Therefore, the main governance approach to youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making cannot be examined separately. The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is a key player in the field of youth policy. The Ministry takes part in multilateral co-operation between the governments, which include the Council of Europe, Nordic Council of Ministers, as well as regional councils. In addition, Finland has agreements and programmes for cultural exchange with over 50 countries. Some of the [bilateral agreements or memorandum of understandings](#) include a section on youth cooperation to promote cooperation between the countries (for more information, see [Youth Wiki/Finland: 1.8 Cross-border cooperation](#)).

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

The [Ministry for Foreign Affairs](#) is responsible for the global process of policy-making, including Nordic cooperation, human rights, development policy and development cooperation, EU affairs, Team Finland activities and several other global issues. One example of young people's contribution to these global processes is their participation in Team Finland activities by "ThisisFINLAND" Youtube videos: [ThisisFINLANDtube - ProudtubeFIN](#)

State Youth Council

According to the Youth Act, the [State Youth Council](#) monitors international developments and cooperation in the youth field.

National Youth Centres

According to the definition provided by the [Youth Act](#), [national youth centres'](#) main all-around activity is to offer young people guided adventures, nature- or environment-related or cultural or camping activities. In addition, youth centres seek to promote the international orientation of young people and sustainable development in accordance with the Youth Act, see also [Finnish Youth Centre Network](#).

National Agency for Education

The [National Agency for Education](#) promotes international mobility and cooperation and provides information on internationalisation and the concrete possibilities that it offers for young people. For more information, see: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 2.8 Cross-border Mobility Programmes](#).

Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi

[Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) is a politically and religiously independent trustee with over 130 national youth and educational member organisations. Allianssi represents the Finnish youth work in Finland and in international forums. It organises training, disseminates information and arranges youth exchange programmes abroad; it supports youth participation, work for immigrants and mobility.

For more information about administration and governance of youth policy, see [Youth Wiki/Finland: Chapter 1: Youth Policy Governance](#).

Cross-sectorial cooperation

As illustrated above, ministries, the State Youth Council, youth centres and other actors in the youth field have very different kinds of duties related to the promotion of young people's participation in global issues. The Ministry of Education and Culture allocates funding for youth organisations and youth centres in accordance with the Youth Act. In order to be eligible to apply for state aid, these organisations must follow the core values

of the Youth Act and support their realisation. The core principles are solidarity, multiculturalism, internationalism, sustainable development, healthy lifestyles, respect for life and the environment and cross-sectoral cooperation.

9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

[Youth Representation Bodies \(Youth Wiki/Finland: 5.3\)](#) and [Young People's in Policy-Making \(Youth Wiki/Finland: 5.4\)](#) are described in [Youth Wiki/Finland: Chapter 5: Participation](#). These described mechanisms of consultation and representation bodies are not limited to domestic issues. Instead, young people can take a stand on global issues as well as anything else within these mechanisms. Agendas of representation bodies often include international issues. For example, the [National Union of University Students SYL](#) describes itself as a promoter of wide-ranging internationality. SYL is involved in development policy as well; its projects promote education, support students and aim at increasing awareness in Finland. There are no separate mechanisms of consultation related to global issues.

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

UN Youth Delegate Programme

[The UN Association of Finland](#) and [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) have chosen a youth delegate every year since 1997 within the framework of the UN Youth Delegate Programme. The Youth delegate programme (in [Finnish](#)) is an important way to enable and support young people to exchange views with policy-makers at the international level. A youth delegate has the possibility to represent Finnish young people abroad and to raise issues that are important for them. In 2017, Finland's UN Youth Delegate was 25-year-old Ilmi Salminen. In her statement at 55th session of Commission for Social Development, Salminen emphasised gender equality and the need to transform the normative gender roles. In 2018, the delegate was Jonne Juntura, whose statement (available in [YouTube](#)) handled young people's rights to have accurate mental health services: "High barriers to access to mental health services, strong stigma and discriminatory policies all stand in the way of us receiving the help we need in order to be healthy, active members of the society. These barriers are even higher for several vulnerable groups, like the LGBTIQ+ community, pregnant women, people living with disabilities and migrants. Acting on youth mental health is crucial for realizing the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and also fundamental in building socially cohesive communities for the future."

In 2019, talks about 'increasing inequality', 'the consequences of social polarisation' and 'the importance of civil society' were the main concerns positioned by the Finland's UN Youth Delegate Jenni Sundqvist, presented during the National [Statement of Finland](#) under the third Committee of UN General Assembly on October 2nd, 2019. According to Sundqvist, 'due to shrinking civic spaces and increased inequality, we longer meet people who come from different backgrounds. We are sectioned off into separate neighbourhoods and bubbles of like-minded people. While the Internet has created new platforms to engage and connect people, algorithms have further triggered the social polarisation of our opinions and lived experiences. More needs to be done in building of bridges of trust', concludes Sundqvist.

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

As described in EKCYF's [Information Sheet: Youth and the World](#), global education is one of the most important tools to promote global issues among young people. International education was already introduced as a curricular theme in the newly adopted comprehensive school during the 1970s. Traditionally, global education has been perceived as part of development education. In the 2010s, especially in Finland, other aspects of global responsibility have been stressed (human rights, sustainable development, cultural diversity and the promotion of peace and conflict prevention). Global education plays an important part in inculcating knowledge, skills and attitudes needed in a multicultural society. Since global education plays such an important part in building up knowledge and skills needed in contemporary society, it must have an accordingly strong and important status. Global education has its place both at school and outside it; therefore, global education is promoted as a type of formal learning as well as a kind of informal and non-formal learning. The national core curriculum for basic education emphasises global responsibility and sustainable development. Depending on the context global education is defined in several ways.

The most common themes of Finnish global education are as follows:

- education on human rights and equality
- development education
- culture education
- peace and safety education
- communication and media education
- environmental education

To grow into an understanding of global responsibility is a process that helps us to respect diversity and to develop our ability to work in a globalising world as active citizens. There are several initiatives and projects with the ambition to promote global education in Finland. The Global Education 2010 Programme paved the way for a broader, cross-sectorial understanding of global education. The purpose of the project was to cover not only the educational system but the whole of Finnish society.

The [Global Education Network](#) supports this work by organising training, workshops, discussions, etc. Some of them are specifically targeted at education providers and teachers, who carry out the goals of the national core curriculum related to global education. For example, School Changing the World (2016–2017) was an updating training programme for teachers and education providers. The programme supported the goals of the new national core curriculum and offered training days, online seminars and materials in order to support education providers when they carry out the goals of the new core curriculum's global education. Training was organised according to the needs of participants and it was free-of-charge. The network is coordinated by [Fingo](#), which acts as a national umbrella organisation for about three hundred Finnish Development NGOs and an expert on global development issues.

The NGOs and their campaigns and initiatives play an important role related to informal and non-formal learning. For example, Fingo has offered possibilities for young people to tell what they think about sustainable development via Youtube videos. The campaign's name is *#meidäntulevaisuus*, which means "our future". In their videos, young people are talking about gender equality, global warming, health and well-being, and water and sanitation. The videos (in Finnish) are available [here](#).

Young people have also founded youth-led NGOs, such as [UN Youth of Finland](#), [Operation a Day's Work](#) and [JEF Finland](#), which focus on international issues. UN Youth of Finland was founded in 1967 and its goal is to raise awareness and promote the values of the

United Nations among Finnish students and young people. The organisation represents Finland in the international United Nations Youth Associations Network. Operation a Day's Work (ODW) is a NGO whose objective is to improve the living conditions and promote the human rights of children and young people in developing countries and to encourage Finnish young people towards global solidarity. According to their own description, they "work towards a world where children and young people have an active role". ODW is one of the first young people's own development NGOs in Finland and it organises the annual ODW Workday (for more information, see [Key initiatives](#)), campaigns and school visits. JEF Finland is a politically and religiously unaffiliated youth organisation whose aim is to "bring the EU closer to the Finnish youth". The organisation is for under 35-year-olds and it organises events where members can discuss, debate and influence European affairs. JEF Finland is a member of Young European Federalists Europe.

Young people are also actively participating in volunteering, which increases their knowing and understanding of global issues (for more information, see: Youth Wiki/Finland: [9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption](#)). At the same time, these activities (e.g. campaigns) raises awareness among those who are not actively involved in volunteering. The [World Village Festival](#) by Fingo is a festival, which has been organised every year since 1995. The festival is really popular; there is approximately 80 000 visitors every year. There are talks, workshops and discussions, films, music and food from all over the world. Anyone who is over 18 years old can volunteer at the event. The 2018 theme was the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. According to the website, the festival offers new perspectives on tolerant multiculturalism, development cooperation, global issues and expanding one's possibilities for affecting everyday life. The World Village Festival is one of the most visible events of the year that raises awareness about global issues.

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

The [Finnish Nature League](#) is an association for children and youth, who are interested in information about consumption and other factors in sustainable development. They also keep up the "Don't buy anything" day and other competitions for pupils and other young people. Other international events like Earth Day, Earth Hour and Water Day are implemented at varying degrees.

Educational institutions are important places to disseminate information concerning global issues among young people. "The World in 2030 " (in [Finnish](#)) is provided by the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#). The website offers material on development cooperation and its history for lower and upper secondary education.

As mentioned above, the World Village Festival (as well as other festivals and theme weeks) also disseminates information among young people. The main organiser of the World Village Festival is Fingo, as mentioned above, and its main partners include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Commission Representation in Finland.

Additionally, there are rising "fourth sector" events, such as Cleaning Day and Restaurant Day, in which young people are often active participants and organisers. These events have an environmental aspect as well and they are extremely popular among young people. Therefore, their role related to disseminating information is significant, although they are not directly funded and conducted by top-level authorities. For more information, see: Youth Wiki/Finland: [2.4 Youth volunteering at the national level](#).

Information providers

The [National Agency for Education](#) promotes international mobility and cooperation and provides information on internationalisation and the concrete possibilities that it offers for young people. However, the main emphasis is to promote young people's mobility and, in this way, to encourage them to study and volunteer abroad. This deepens young people's knowledge on global issues. For more information, see: Youth Wiki/Finland: [2.5 Cross-border Mobility Programmes](#). Secondly, the NGOs which are eligible to apply for public funding are often significant information providers; Fingo as an umbrella organisation is

one of the most important ones. The Global Education Network's coordinator works at Fingo. The Global Education Network has a dedicated website (in [Finnish](#)) which provides information. The Global Education Network offers training, workshops, discussions etc. and the members of the network can use Fingo's global education services freely.

Key initiatives

The [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) cooperates with the authorities of education to ensure that matters on global development have a strong position in general education. The nationwide reform of the core curricula for basic education provided an opportunity to promote pupils into global response. The new core curriculum for basic education came into effect in 2016. As mentioned above, the [Global Education Network](#) by umbrella organisation for Finnish Development NGOs [Fingo](#) provides assistance and training for education providers and teachers in order to support the goals of the national core curriculum.

The ODW Workday is organised annually. It means that Finnish pupils and students spend a day working and donate their pay to [ODW Finland](#) for projects that improve the conditions of children and young people in developing countries. This allows Finnish youth to help their peers in some of the poorest countries in the world while also catching a glimpse of what working life is like.

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

Several NGOs, which aim to protect, restore or improve the natural environment, offer volunteering opportunities. Some of these organisations have teams or groups specifically targeted at young people. On the other hand, the age of 18 is quite common age limit for volunteering. For example, Greenpeace Finland (in [Finnish](#)) and the [World Village Festival](#) accept only volunteers who are over the age of 18. [WWF Finland](#) has a youth team, which consists of young volunteers between the age of 18 and 25. The youth team participates in designing, planning and implementing the WWF projects. In 2017, the youth team promoted sustainable food consumption. The youth team had a campaign, which encouraged young people to reduce meat eating and to think about the consequences of their diets.

Green production and consumption

Most of the initiatives are not limited to raise awareness or to foster young people's active participation. On the contrary, in most cases these two goals overlap. Therefore, the goal of initiatives, such as Green Flag, "One trash a day", "Don't buy anything" etc. is to foster young people's active participation in environmentally friendly activities as well as to raise their awareness of these issues. For more information, see: [Youth Wiki/Finland: 9.4 Raising awareness](#).

In the sub-study group 'Creating sustainable well-being' of the [ALL-YOUTH research project 2018-2023](#), the focus is on the experiences and visions of Finnish youth regarding green transition and sustainable well-being. Young people may not be able to find solutions and create the new innovations that society, while adapting to climate change, requires, yet it is the youth who will live under changed access to opportunities and entitlements, including environmental risks and requirements. Knowledge transfer between the generations and knowledge co-creation are considered essential in this challenging situation. The research group proposes participatory and deliberative ways of knowledge creation as a key means for enhancing and supporting these processes.

In order to create genuine interaction between scientists, youth, project partners, decision-makers, and the public, and to develop trajectories relevant to both project partners and the young people involved, the project has used participatory action research.

This includes developing co-research and co-knowledge production methods with young people. Young co-researchers have been engaged in developing their research skills and producing auto-ethnographic data related to sustainable well-being. Additionally, co-researchers have engaged in conducting peer-interviews. We found that peer-research method brought added value to our studies for example, on young forest owners and, on young Muslim women's working life experiences (see Tokola et al. 2019).

The research group considers responsive natural resource governance as a key to sustainable well-being. The project studies to what extent young decision-makers, in this case, young Finnish forest owners, accept forest utilisation, and on what grounds: value-, knowledge- and decision-making power-wise. Additionally, with the project partners, the research group is keen on understanding whether and how active environmental citizenship can alleviate climate change worry that many, especially young citizens, experience. As a response to this growing worry, the project has co-developed the Tieto kierto model (in [Finnish](#)) targeted at youth aged 15-30 years, who are interested in the environment and sustainable development, but who have not yet found their way in terms of meaningful engagement. Volunteer adults act as mentors by listening, by assisting young people in recognising their know-how, and by sharing their experiences and values e.g related to environment or utilization of natural resources by giving statements for example (see in [Finnish](#) "Lausunto kansallinen metsästrategia 2025 päivityksestä"). This type of cross-generational knowledge circulation works as a two-way process, thus allowing the "more experienced" to also learn.

The project uses a systematic approach to rural development and bio-economy discourses by studying village tourism and young rural entrepreneurs as part of rural service structures related to forest and water management, agriculture and tourism activities. Initially, the analysis focused on networks and strategies involved in rural development initiatives (see Pakarinen et al 2020). In the ongoing research, participatory observation data and interviews with key persons in rural networks are used to analyze and forecast changes in rural micro-level working environment. Furthermore, the project aims to develop digital learning and knowledge-sharing methods for Tieto Kierto model.

The ALL-YOUTH-research project is funded by the government namely by the [Strategic Research Council under Academy of Finland](#). An important element of such "strategic" research is the active collaboration between those who produce new knowledge and those who use it, there is a lot of co-operation for example with the government when choosing the themes for research projects.

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

Studying and volunteering abroad are important ways to promote cooperation between individuals. The network of international voluntary work KaVa ([Kansainvälisen Vapaaehtoistyön Verkosto](#)) is comprised of [Allianssi Youth Exchanges](#), [KVT the Finnish Branch of Service Civil International](#), and [Maailmanvaihto – ICYE Finland](#). The goal is to provide challenging intercultural learning experiences for young people. For more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland: [2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes](#).

Development cooperation activities

For more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland: [2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes](#).

9.7 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

In the national newspaper Helsingin Sanomat, on November 1st 2018, Olli-Pekka Heinonen, the Director General of the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) – the organisation responsible for the development of education and training, and for outlining the core curriculums that define the objectives and core content of the different subjects – replied to the concern indicated by a newspaper reader, Jukka O. Mattila, about the invisibility of climate change in the re-drawing of the core curriculum for general upper secondary education after 2021. 'Already now, during the drafting of the core curriculum, a sustainable future is there in the middle', says Heinonen. He also mentioned how the building of a sustainable future has been emphasised as one of the strongest factors being taken into account in terms of the type of pervasive education that the educational institutions should offer, as well other factors such as 'good educational sophistication' and 'strong preparedness for further education and employment.' Heinonen welcomed any feedback in relation to the curriculum's drafting, which is meant to be a very open process. He also welcomed feedback from any of the 23 different working groups, in which 200 representatives from different stakeholders can have their say and co-operate with the experts of National Agency for Education.

Ongoing debates

On February 28th 2020, the [Ministry of Environment](#) issued the following press release: '[Government appoints Climate Policy Round Table to support the preparation and implementation of climate measures.](#)' From the youth's point of view, it is important to notice that the UN Youth Climate Delegate Ms Sara Nyman representing the [Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi](#) was chosen to be a one of the vice-chairs of the gathering, as was the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, Mrs Krista Mikkonen, Minister of Finance Mrs Katri Kulmuni, and Mr Jouni Keronen, CEO of the Climate Leadership Coalition. The Climate Policy Round Table will be chaired by Prime Minister Mrs Sanna Marin. The Climate Policy Round Table is to last the entire government period and it will hold 4-6 meetings annually. Based on the press release, the Round Table 'does not make decisions; instead, its work aims to support the preparation and implementation of climate policy at the national level. The aim is to increase the acceptability of climate policy and make it possible for stakeholders to participate more closely in the national preparation of climate action.' It was also mentioned, that: 'the purpose of the Climate Policy Round Table is to create a common understanding of how Finland can make a just transition to a carbon neutral society within an accelerated timeframe' and that 'Sanna Marin's Government Programme aims for Finland to be carbon neutral and a first fossil-free welfare society by 2035. This requires even faster emissions reductions in all sectors and the strengthening of carbon sinks.'

Ongoing sub-studies in the [ALL-YOUTH research project 2018-2023](#) focus on environmental conflict resolution and the creation of new methods opening up possibilities for youth to be part of the environmental conflict resolution processes (more about the process [background](#)). The related studies show that youth should not be "responsibilised" in a top down manner when it comes to rebuilding trust between the actors in the post-conflict situations when conflicts have a tendency to re-escalate. The strategies of making individuals responsible for their wellbeing is a feature consistent with the ongoing governance revolution in other social domains, such as illness and health, education, crime and legality, and corporate cost management. In sum, youth participation and inclusion for the prevention and resolution of conflict requires long-term state efforts to ensure the social protection of youth constituencies (example: [Event report](#) of the First International Symposium on Youth Participation in Peace Processes). Youth-led mediation efforts require the integration of conflict sensitive and "do-no-harm" principles. The mediation efforts as well as collaborative processes are long-term transformation processes that require time, recognition of the conflict roots, and dialogue

to respectfully restructure the “events” and “facts” that initiated and increased the dispute. The youth who are involved in these types of long processes need protection of their rights, including the right to withdraw from the process when their civic spaces or private life and families are at risk.

The ALL-YOUTH-research project is funded by the government namely by the [Strategic Research Council under Academy of Finland](#). An important element of such “strategic” research is the active collaboration between those who produce new knowledge and those who use it, there is a lot of co-operation for example with the government when choosing the themes for research projects.

See more about the ALL-YOUTH research projects in [Youth Wiki/Finland 5.10 Current debates and reforms](#); [Youth Wiki/Finland 8.10 Current debates and reforms](#) and [Youth Wiki/Finland 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption](#).

10. YOUTH WORK

In Finland, youth work holds a strong statutory position, which is quite a rarity when compared to other European nations. The role of youth work is not restricted to only offering targeted forms of youth work such as outreach youth work, youth workshops or peer support groups (see [Youth Wiki/Finland 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion](#)), but rather, it also offers youth work services to everyone in supporting their wellbeing and in having a good life in general. Youth work for all operates both through open access services in free-time facilities (buildings), in mobile spaces (such youth work vans) and in web spaces (self-service use of databases or receiving support from youth workers or/and peers), as a part of multi-sectoral services (one-stop guidance centres) as well as outdoors situated outside a school area, or on school premises after school hours or during the school day, in which case it is considered as ‘school youth work’. Recently, there has been more and more attention given to making youth work services more accessible. One reason for that is the [Non-Discrimination Act](#), which obligates the municipalities to organise, for example, an equality mapping in order to develop the accessibility of the services.

As in formal education, the responsibility of how to organise the services within non-formal learning processes is given to local-level municipalities. The civic society — the non-governmental youth and youth work organisations both at the national and local levels — plays a very active role as well.

Most of the youth work and youth activities are organised in the evenings, on weekends and during the school holiday. They are arranged by municipalities, non-governmental youth and youth work associations, national youth centres and parishes, and these are based on the funding regulations such those in the [Youth Act](#), while young people themselves need to have an active role in planning, realising and evaluating these activities.

10.1 General context

Historical developments

Based on university instructor in youth research and youth work at the University of Tampere Mr Juha Nieminen’s article in [‘The history of youth work in Europe’ \(Volume 4\)](#), the ‘modern youth work’ in Finland can be seen to originate at the end of the 19th century. According to Nieminen, at that time, youth work was usually done voluntarily, on a philanthropic basis, often by already existing occupational groups such as teachers, priests and officers. The first youth workers were employed by youth organisations, later also in municipalities, to organise voluntary-based youth work. Also, in Church organisations and temperance movement there were also employees who did youth work

as part of their job. There was no statutory financing system allotted for youth work but rather there have been incidental state grants for youth organisations in general since the 1890s. (Nieminen 2014, 35-44.)

The professionalisation of Finnish youth work gained momentum since the 1940s, as Nieminen describes. After World War II, the state and public authorities took care of many aspects of social life, even though youth work was still mostly realised by both paid and voluntary practitioners outside of state and municipalities (see [Glossary](#)). According to Nieminen: 'Youth work was increasingly differentiated as a field in its own right, various occupational interest groups emerged, higher education for youth workers was developed, legislation concerning youth work was enacted and scientific research on youth work increased.' During the 1980s, municipal youth work obtained permission to arrange youth activities also independently of voluntary youth organisations. Youth houses were the main resources for municipalities to arrange youth activities themselves. (Nieminen 2014, 35-44.)

More lately, there has also been a development sphere into the digitalisation around youth work. The aim is for the 'digitalisation [is] to be gradually more and more understood not only as a media in Finnish youth work but also as content, culture and operating environment', as [Verke - the National Centre of Expertise for Digital Youth Work in Finland](#), has described. For more information about digital youth work in Finland, see Youth Wiki/Finland [10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work](#).

National definition or understanding of Youth Wiki

As stated in the [Youth Act](#), youth work means 'the efforts to support the growth, independence and social inclusion of young people in society. The Youth Act also defines the roles and responsibilities of the local authorities, youth associations and other organisations realising youth work. Based on the Act, the responsibility of providing youth work services offered at a local level in municipalities (see: [Glossary](#)) rests with the local government: 'local governments are obligated, with due consideration to local conditions, to create the necessary preconditions for local youth work and activities by providing services and premises for young people and supporting their civic engagement.'

Since the beginning of the year 2017 the newest Youth Act has been put into force. One of the differences from the earlier is that it no longer includes a list of the forms of youth work which should be available at the local level but refers to the responsibility of local authorities to consider the content based on the local need. Furthermore, the list included in the government proposal (PG 111/2016/Proposal of the Finnish Government to Parliament as regards the content of the Youth Act, in [Finnish](#)) related to the preparation of the updated Act describes what the content of youth work can be and traditionally has also been in Finland: educational guidance for young people; facilities and hobby opportunities; youth information and counselling; support for youth associations and other youth groups; sport-related, cultural, international and multicultural youth activities; young people's environmental education, youth workshop services and outreach youth work.

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

Governance

The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is the responsible authority for the overall development, coordination and drafting of national development plans on youth issues, including also youth work in the central government. The roles and tasks of the all institutional actors from the local to the national level are introduced in Youth Wiki Finland [1.4 Youth Policy decision-making](#).

Cross-sectoral cooperation

In Finland the cross-sectoral co-operation between youth work and other youth policy fields are ensured by both the [Youth Act](#) and the [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#). Those instruments are described from cross-sectoral point of view in Youth Wiki/Finland [1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries](#). Insight into the new Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme for the years 2020-2023 is available in Youth Wiki/Finland 10.8 Current debates and reforms.

10.3 Support to youth work

Policy legal framework

As researcher Tomi Kiilakoski describes in the [Finnish Youth Research Society & -Network](#)'s publication '[Youth Work Education in Finland](#)', in Finland the state is seen to have a positive role in supporting youth work; it is not seen as interfering with the work. The state finances youth work research, provides both formal and non-formal learning, legislates and governs youth work activities, allocates resources to grassroots youth work, takes part in professional networks and has several structures for developing youth work activities and training youth workers, as Kiilakoski describes. (See more about Youth Act in Youth Wiki/Finland [1.2 National youth law](#)). The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is also responsible for drafting the [National Youth Work and Policy Programme](#) (More about the programme 2017-2019 see Youth Wiki/Finland [1.3 National Youth Strategy](#) and about programme 2020-2023 see 10.8 Current debates and reforms.)

Funding

The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) annually allocates government funding to the national youth organisations, municipal youth work, statutory bodies, and other actors doing youth work. The Ministry has additional appropriations for measures that address topical issues, such as young people's social empowerment, international projects, and new forms of youth work and youth culture. In 2020, the state is putting approximately 77 million euro into youth work. For more information, see Youth Wiki/Finland [1.7 Funding youth policy](#) and [5.6 Supporting youth organisations](#).

Cooperation

The most important framework for cooperation amongst all youth work stakeholders is the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#), which is a statutory, cross-sectoral programme adopted by the [Finnish Government](#) every four years. Since the end of 2017 there has also been a network of [Youth work centres of expertise](#) established to support the implementation of the objectives set out in the programme by promoting competence, expertise, communications and networking in the youth sector in accordance with the [Youth Act](#). (See more about the newest programme Youth Wiki/Finland [1.9 Current debates and reforms](#) and [10.8 Current debates and reforms](#).)

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Quality assurance

In Finland youth work is statutory service, which is regulated by the law entitled the [Youth Act](#). Based on that act, the responsibility for youth work rests with the local government (in Finland these local self-governing entities are called municipalities, see [Glossary](#)). They are, with due consideration to local conditions, obligated to create the necessary preconditions for local youth work and activities by providing services and premises for young people and by supporting their civic engagement. The [Local Government Act](#), on the other hand, says that municipalities shall perform functions that they choose for themselves by virtue of their self-governing status and shall arrange the functions provided for them separately by law. What can be seen as a first step of quality

assurance for local youth work, is that youth work, just as any other service, must have some specific targets relevant to the nature of the work. Moreover, the Local Government Act stipulates that the 'municipality's operating and financial targets shall be approved in the budget and financial plan.'

The local body responsible for assessing the extent to which the operating and financial targets set by the local council have been achieved in the municipality, is working under the council and referred to as the Local Authority Audit Committee. Both the Youth Act and the Local Government Act also recognise the active role the (young) citizen ought to have in service planning, but still young people are quite seldom heard in setting targets for youth work or in evaluations. This fact is also highlighted in the latest report (2020) of yearly realised nation-wide evaluations of basic services by the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see [Glossary](#)). Based on the [Government Decree on Youth Work and Youth Policy](#), the regional state administrative agencies are responsible for assessing the adequacy, quality and accessibility of the services intended for young people. Because youth work is a statutory service, the youth work services are also evaluated by the regional agencies of the state. The main idea of these evaluations is to measure whether a Finnish citizen can have equal services regardless of where the person is living. The evaluations also monitor how and to what extent the municipalities are fulfilling their obligations (regarding youth work), as stated in the Youth Act, for example. The agencies choose which aspect of the evaluation they will concentrate on each year, while the latest report deals with the adequacy of the services.

In that latest report of the Regional State Administrative Agencies (2020), the adequacy of youth work services open to all young people were evaluated as being at quite a good level, as were the services of outreach youth work and youth workshops (see more of open youth work [Youth Wiki/Finland 10. Overview Youth Work](#) and about outreach youth work and youth workshops [Youth Wiki/Finland 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion](#)). Results from the assessment of open youth work services for 18 years old and above indicate that there aren't enough such services, while the report also provides area-specific details, indicating which areas have adequate services, as well as which areas are in need of improvement, also municipal level information is available (see [Finnish Youth Work Statistics](#)). The results of the evaluation of the basic services is part of the basic public services programme procedure, which in turn belongs to the negotiation process between the central and local government and is part of the central government's budget preparations. The results of the evaluation hopefully also have an impact on service planning at the local level within the municipalities, which is supported by the personnel of Regional State Administrative Agencies who provides information guidance, and who also administers the state funding for youth work quality development projects at the local and regional level (see for example the project entitled '[Taking the multifaceted evaluation tool into use developed for open youth work](#)' financed by the Regional State Administrative Agency for Southwestern Finland.)

Although Finland does a lot when it comes to youth work quality assurance, still, there is a need for further development related to open youth work, such as a nation-wide quality evaluation model and key-figures documentation system. Further development of those is one of the tasks the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) has listed to be fulfilled by the new [centres of expertise for youth work](#). (See more information [Youth Wiki/ Finland 10.8 Current debates and reforms](#)).

Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

As described at length in [Youth Wiki/Finland 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy](#), there is a remarkable number of activities that to raise the data base available that the the youth policy related decision-making can rely on. When it comes to youth work especially, [Finnish Youth Work statistics](#) is a portal with national statistics on municipal youth work (the so-called "open youth work"), youth workshops and outreach youth work. One of offices of the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) administers the portal. The portal has been developed in cooperation with the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).

Moreover, the bodies referred to as [Youth Work Centres of Expertise](#) have a strong role in creating the database for youth work, since their role is to 'produce and deliver the necessary information to the Ministry of Education of Culture', as described in the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme for the years 2020-2023](#). Youth Work Centres of Expertise nominated for the years 2020-2024 can be seen in [Youth Wiki/Finland 10.8 Current debates and reforms](#).)

At the local level, according to the [Youth Act](#), the coordinating body for cross-sectoral cooperation set by the local government is required to gather information on young people's growth and living conditions, and to distribute this information to decision-makers in order to broaden the database the decision-making processes are based on. (See more on research and evidence in [Youth Wiki/Finland 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy](#)).

As reported in the following chapter ([Youth Wiki/Finland 10.5 Youth Workers](#)), Finnish higher education is comprised of universities and universities of applied sciences, many of which offer youth work related scientific studies. As such, there has been many youth work-related theses over the years, even at a doctoral level. There are also two strong research institutions in the field, namely a scientific association called the [Finnish Youth Research Society and -Network](#) and [Juvenia – Youth Research and Development Centre](#), located in [South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences](#).

Participative Youth Work

Youth work as such is based on giving young people an active role in planning, realising and evaluating its activities. [Youth Act](#) reflects that in versatile ways. It states that young people must be given opportunities to take part in the handling of matters related to youth work and youth policy. At the national level, young people 'are to be consulted in the course of preparation' of the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme](#). Also, the [Youth Act](#) itself, like all legislation, is due to consultation processes whenever renewed. [Youth Wiki/ Finland 5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making](#) offers an in-depth description of such a consultation.

As stated in Youth Act, the responsibility to carry out youth work in the municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) 'rests with the local government.' On the other hand, like the Act reminds, local governments should not 'perform the duties' alone, but 'co-operate' with other authorities, young people, their families, youth work organisations, congregations and other parties engaged in youth work. The legislative basis that ensures young people's rights and channels to participate, starting from the [Constitution](#) itself, is described in [Youth Wiki/ Finland 5.4 Young people's participation in policymaking](#). Apart from evaluating the nation-wide existence and accessibility of the public services, such as youth work services in municipalities performed by local governments, the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see [Glossary](#)) also ask the municipalities if young people are included in planning, realising and evaluating those services. The reason for this two-fold approach lies in the Finnish legislation: the availability of the services is not seen to be enough alone, while the quality of the services is seen to have its basis in how young people's knowledge, experiences and preferences at all stages of service-development are taken into account, such as creating, maintaining or sharing the services.

Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

Finland has a long 40-year history of digital youth work. Youth work also receives support for digital development from the highest administrative bodies. In 2016, the [Finnish Government](#) described the importance of digitalisation in youth work in the following way: 'The digital world as an operating environment, which includes social media, has broadened and diversified the ways young in which people go for free-time activities, make impact, participate and communicate. Youth work is encountering service needs and challenges in the digital environmental, while the need to meet individuals and groups face to face has remained the same. These changes encourage youth work to

function in new environments.’ (PG 111/2016/Proposal of the Finnish Government to Parliament regarding the content of the [Youth Act](#)).

One of the main objectives of the [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme 2020-2023](#) is that ‘Young people have an opportunity to participate in a hobby they enjoy.’ The possibilities of digital technology have been recognised, and as such form the basis of one of the measures, suggesting to the municipalities that they have ‘trials of new types of instructor-led activities that will be made available in which digital media and technology will be used as a tool, content or the operating environment.’ (more about the Finnish model of promoting of ‘having a hobby’, see also [Youth Wiki/Finland 8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation](#)). The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) is coordinating the efforts related to this objective of the programme.

As mentioned earlier, in the section on ‘Quality assurance’, the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) assess the adequacy, quality and accessibility of the youth work services organised at the local level. Based on that assessment, in 2019 (published in 2020), about 60 % of the 311 municipalities were offering digital youth work when it was asked, when youth workers are using or dealing with digitality or technology in youth work, either in a physical or digital environment (see [Finnish Youth Work Statistics](#)). Another survey, also organised in 2019, by [Verke - the National Development Centre for Digital Youth Work in Finland](#) (infographic available about [the results](#)) – provides data that is actually gathered during the local digital youth work processes: 91% of youth workers have youth work interaction with young people via social media or messaging applications, and for example, 19% of this interactions include organised activities that incorporate digital games.

Besides the local services, there are several national-level digital youth work services. For example the platform called ‘Life of young people’, is for youth-related information and a counselling platform (in Finnish [Nuortenelama.fi](#)), which is organised by [Koordinaatti](#). Several non-governmental organisations working at the national level are subsidised, for example, by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) for doing digital youth work, such as the [Mannerheim League for Child Welfare](#), which is famous for its way of engaging young people when creating content for its online youth services, for example, in the form of a peer to peer - chat service ([in Finnish](#)).

Mrs Suvi Tuominen, Project manager of Verke, estimates that the Covid-19 epidemic in Spring 2020 significantly changed the landscape of digital youth work, in that digitality grew substantially as the main working environment for youth work. Some examples of this kind of development are easy to find. Based on the [Into – Association for Outreach Youth Work and Workshop Activities](#) (called earlier Työpajayhdistys) estimates, based on their survey ([results in Finnish](#)), that 90% of outreach youth work was realised online in Spring 2020 because of the Covid-19 epidemic. This is the kind of example where digitality has been able to offer a platform and / or an environment so as to realise discussions (chat) , counselling (opening hours to ask for help), sharing information (blogs) and organising small group meetings for example in ‘Discord’ (see the [Finnish version](#)). Discord has also been the platform used by the municipalities of the region of Southern Savo to offer and hold a space, when the physical locations of youth centres, with their evening and weekend activities, were closed (see a [YouTube video in Finnish on how to access the platform](#)). The virtual space was multi-purpose: an open youth centre to meet others, help with homework and a music club with concerts. This regional activity has proven itself as ‘here to stay’, it is currently ongoing, and is planned to continue after the epidemic is over. Also worth noting is that there are several municipalities in Finland that were not able to move their physical youth work activities into the digital environment, for example, because the youth workers were laid off due to the epidemic.

Suvi Tuominen continues, that on the other hand, some of the changes in digitality may be short-lived once the most critical times are over, while there were also plenty of digital actions that were impossible to realise during the epidemic – in addition, many digital activities can also only be accomplished by being in the same physical

environment, see for example one before the epidemic from [City of Lappeenranta youth services](#) called [Space Team – Digital Games in Lappeenranta](#). (This Digital Youth Work - project Lappeenranta and Verke co-operated in was funded by Erasmus+, besides of local funding from the city and national funding from the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#)). The high level of multiplicity in digital youth work is something which will hopefully be regained after the epidemic, meaning that in addition to being an environment for youth work, it can also, again, be used a tool, an activity or source of content, too (see European Commission 2018).

State funding for a digital approach to youth work and youth information as well as counselling services in local and regional level are shared by the [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#). The annual cost has been approximately one million euros in recent years. (More about digital youth work, see [Youth Wiki/Finland 8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies](#) and [6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media](#).) Like mentioned earlier, [Verke](#) regularly organises surveys in order to find out what youth workers actually do under the title 'digital' and also to find out, what kind of training needs the field has. Based on such a kind of survey in 2017, reported by Hernesniemi, Tuominen draws a vision about the need of being more innovative in Finnish digital youth work in the future: face-to-face work could be more supported by online elements and in general, there could be more maker culture approaches, digital craftsmanship and creative uses of technology.' (Tuominen 2017, 23-28.)

In the next chapter of [Youth Wiki/Finland 10.5 Youth Workers](#) the Finnish broad system for 'Education, training and skills recognition' are described based on researcher Tomi Kiilakoski's publication called '[Youth Work Education in Finland](#)'. As Kiilakoski describes: 'Finland has developed an educational system for youth work that spans all levels of the educational system.' Moreover, there are, like Kiilakoski names, hundreds of seminars and courses related to youth work in the non-formal education field organised by [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see [Glossary](#)) or several state-subsidised bodies like the [Youth Work Centres for Expertise](#), such as, for example the aforementioned Verke. Among the offered content for the trainings, digital youth work is well represented in Finland, even though there is still a need to have youth work centres of expertise to spread digital youth work knowhow, as mentioned in the new [National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme for the years 2020-2023](#). (See more about youth work centres of expertise for the years 2020-2024 in [Youth Wiki/Finland 10.8 Current debates and reforms](#).) Youth work centres for expertise work also as means for facilitating cooperation and partnerships in order to support the transmission of digital practices and technology between youth work and actors in other fields working with young people. It is also worth noticing, that youth work organisations using online environments have also built their own self-regulating body called Nusuvefo, meaning 'Network of Practitioners Working with Online Services Aimed at Young People' (about the network in [Finnish](#)). The network has been in use since 2007 and produced for example ethical principles and codes of accessibility, that facilitate their use in practice. In 2019 the development of the network was coordinated by [EHYT Finnish Association for Substance Abuse Prevention](#), [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters](#), [Exit Prostitution Association](#), [Koordinaatti - The National Centre of Expertise for Youth Information and Counselling](#) and [The Mannerheim League for Child Welfare MLL](#).

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

There is no competence description for youth workers, with exception to the formal qualifications required when working as a Parish Coordinator for Youth Work in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, for which a Bachelor's degree in Christian youth work is needed. Youth work providers such as municipalities and non-governmental youth associations are free to hire any worker whose professionalism seems to be suitable for the corresponding work. Some employers have also systematically used

young people as interviewers during the recruiting process. Additionally, if an employee is going to work longer than three months, he/she must obtain a [‘Criminal records extract for working with children’](#).

Education, training and skills recognition

At the end of the year 2019, researcher Tomi Kiilakoski finished a study called [“Youth Work Education in Finland”](#) published by The [Finnish Youth Research Society and - Network](#). The following text summarises some of its content.

According to Kiilakoski, it can be said that since the first youth work courses took place in the 1940s, Finland has developed an educational system for youth work that spans all levels of the educational system. Moreover, the Finnish youth work education model allows for many different routes into the field. For some, it is initially through formal education. For others, the route is less clear and involves studying a different subject prior to youth work. For others still, youth work might be learned through non-formal education and direct work experience.

After nine years of compulsory basic education, there is the possibility to choose either a general upper secondary education or a vocational education. When choosing vocational, among ten different fields of work, one is ‘Education and Instruction’ including four competency areas, one of which is ‘youth work and community instruction’. After the reform of vocational education in 2018, students are no longer required to study in the classroom. Prior learning is recognised through competency demonstrations completed in authentic working life situations (Act on Vocational Education, in Finnish [Laki ammatillisesta peruskoulutuksesta](#)). There are currently over twenty institutions providing vocational education in youth work.

Finnish higher education is comprised of universities and universities of applied sciences. A bachelor’s degree in Humanities entitled “Community Educator” is offered at three universities of applied sciences namely in the [Humak University of Applied Sciences \(HUMAK\)](#), the [South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences \(XAMK\)](#) and the [Centria University of Applied Sciences](#). The [Deacon University of Applied Sciences \(DIAK\)](#) offers a bachelor’s degree programme in social services called “Christian Youth Work”. Aside from degree programmes, one can choose to study open university courses of applied sciences, which enables students to study only the content they wish to study. Such courses are available at HUMAK and XAMK.

The [University of Tampere](#) offers Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctoral Degrees in social sciences in line of study of [Youth Work and Youth Research](#). Though Tampere is the only university offering degree level education in the field, there are other university courses that pertain to youth research and youth work in Finland. The [Finnish University Network for Youth Studies \(YUNET\)](#) is advancing the availability of those courses at universities all over the country.

As Kiilakoski also mentioned in his study, it is impossible to create a complete picture of the scope of non-formal youth work learning opportunities such as seminars and courses in Finland, because there are so many of them — the estimation being that there are hundreds of them. Kiilakoski names four examples: Youth work centres of expertise, youth associations and their umbrella organisation [‘Allianssi - National Youth Council of Finland’](#), [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) (see [Glossary](#)), municipalities (see [Glossary](#)) and the [Centre of Expertise for Municipal Youth Work Cannon](#). (See more about Youth work centres of expertise in Youth Wiki/Finland [10.8 Current debates and reforms](#)).

Out of principle, the Finnish education system is built in such a way that for those who initially chose a vocational education path, it is possible for them to later choose to apply to universities to pursue academic studies, and for the academically educated to enrol in vocational education. As mentioned earlier, the reform of vocational education emphasised the recognition of prior learning so that learners do not have to be reevaluated on material they have already covered. (More about content of the

curriculum and degree programmes in youth work, see the Kiilakoski's study called '[Youth Work Education in Finland](#)').

Mobility of youth workers

As afore-mentioned, there are hundreds of seminars and networking events available each year for youth workers working at the regional and national levels, and thus a youth worker's employer can be municipality, a non-governmental organisation or parish, if there is a possibility to participate in those. Lots of the opportunities are also available online nowadays. Regarding international mobility, such as the national agency of Erasmus+, the [Finnish National Agency for Education](#) provides information on the mobility programme of youth workers, provides assistance during the application process, offers trainings to youth workers, manages the selection of projects, supports and monitors their implementation and gives out information on the results of the programme in accordance with the Commission's guidelines.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

The competences of an individual, also those acquired through youth work, can be validated, see more in Youth Wiki/Finland [6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning](#). According to researcher Tomi Kiilakoski in his publication '[Youth Work Education in Finland](#)', the [Youth Barometer](#) - a national representative survey conducted annually - indicates that young people recognise the importance of informal learning, with 97 per cent agreeing in 2017 with the statement that they have learnt a great deal of important knowledge and skills outside school.

Skills

The contribution of the [Guides and Scouts as a Youth Work Centre of Expertise](#) in creating a model to validate the skills and competences acquired from participating in different kinds of spheres for the further integration of formal and non-formal learning in educational institutions, as well as development related to the open badge system (led by the OK Study Centre) are reported in Youth Wiki/Finland [2.7 Skills recognition](#).

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

Information providers

Public authorities at the national, regional and local levels share information about youth work as part of their statutory duties, according to the [Youth Act](#). In 2017-2019, for example, [Koordinaatti](#) — as one of the youth work centres of expertise chosen by The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) — offered training for youth work professionals in youth information and counselling related to youth work and youth policy, by creating collaborative projects and trainings, and by publishing and offering a platform for the distribution of different kinds of materials. Koordinaatti's cooperation partners in Finland are different ministries, other youth work centres of expertise, regional actors and networks as well as national youth organisations municipalities and educational institutions. International collaborators are, for example, [ERYICA - the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency](#), the Nordic-Baltic network for youth information and counselling, and the [USE-IT network](#).

Key initiatives

In Finland the key initiatives in terms of raising awareness about youth work lie more at the strategical level, because it has the status of a statutory service and its nation-wide availability is assessed by the [Regional State Administration Agencies](#) (see [Glossary](#)). To

exemplify some recent development related to awareness raising about youth work, here are two examples — both of which are discussed below in more detail:

As researcher Tomi Kiilakoski argues in '[Youth Work Education in Finland](#)' published by [Finnish Youth Research Society and -Network](#), one of the most popular current topics of youth work is increased multi-professional co-operation. According to Kiilakoski, what is important is that youth work is mentioned in the national core curriculum of Finland as a potential partner to schools. The curriculum also emphasises youth participation, children's rights and the importance of connecting schools to non-formal learning, which creates good opportunities for youth work to be a part of multi-professional teams in schools (National Agency of Education 2014). Youth work is also included in multi-professional networks in the field of social inclusion, child welfare and policy, employment, counselling for young people outside education and labour markets and crime prevention, to name only a few, Kiilakoski wrote. Youth workers and representatives of the youth work administration from local authorities also usually have an active role in running the coordination body for multi-professional co-operation.

Another example comes from South-West Finland where the [Regional State Administration Agency](#) has funded a pilot project to '[Taking the multifaceted evaluation tool into use developed for open youth work](#)'. During the evaluation cycle, various kinds of data-gathering methods are used, including interactive ones. During the process both young people and local decision-makers, as well as those who produce youth work services such as youth workers, are made aware of the level of quality involved youth work services and how their availability should be supported, for example, by making changes in how the information about them is distributed to and by young people. The piloting bodies are municipalities, non-governmental youth organisations and parishes that are testing the tool by evaluating a youth work service they offer with the tool. While most of the open youth work services that have been evaluated are produced in face to face contact with young people as "near-services", and while other services are online, the aim is for the tool to be fine-tailored to suit both types of services during the process. The [Finnish Youth Research Society and -Network](#) participates in facilitating the project by sharing the research expertise it has regarding the evaluation of youth work. Results of this piloting project will be reported in the summer 2020.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme for the years 2020-2023 was enacted by the [Finnish Government](#) on December 19th 2020 ([Finnish version](#), English translation is forthcoming; more information about the programme see [1.9 Current debates and reforms](#)). In addition to the Government's youth policy objectives and their related measures, the programme defines the priorities of Finland's selected national youth work centres of excellence. Based on the press-release (in [Finnish](#)) from the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) on March 5th, 2020, six youth work centres have been nominated by the Ministry for the next four years. All centres are consortiums including several organisations. The city of Lahti is leading the consortium for municipal youth work, the Guides and Scouts of Finland for youth organisations, the Youth Academy for youth participation, the National Workshop Association for targeted youth work, the city of Helsinki for digital youth work and the South-Eastern University of Applied Sciences for the youth work in schools and educational institutions.

Ongoing debates

The National Award for Youth Work has been affirmed yearly since 2002 by the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#), as based on the advisement by an expert jury containing representatives from non-governmental organisations, municipalities, research and state administration. In 2020 the award was given to '[LGBTI Rights in Finland – SETA](#)'-association. The award was worth 20 000 € and was presented by the minister Ms Hanna

Kosonen. In her speech, minister Kosonen pointed out the challenges SETA is facing in its field of work. 'The work for the rights of sexual- and gender minorities is demanding, because there have always been and still are, bodies that want to neglect or hinder it. A lot of action is still needed so that every young person can feel accepted just as they are,' said minister Kosonen (Press release of the Ministry of Culture and Education 15th of January 2020, [lehdistöiedote](#)). The prize ceremony took place in the [Youth2020 event](#) in Tampere, the largest youth work event ever in Finland with 2800 participants. The event was organised by [Allianssi - the National Youth Council of Finland](#), the Finnish Church Commission and The Youth Services of Tampere, as a local partner. The Youth2021 event (invitation in [Finnish](#)) is going to take place in Jyväskylä. In these seminars, English content is also available.

GLOSSARY

Basic Education in Arts

[Basic education in arts](#) (in Finnish: [here](#)) is one of the central concepts in the field of creativity and culture for young people in Finland. Basic education in the arts is provided primarily for children and young people on an extracurricular basis. Basic arts education is provided at music institutes and schools, art schools, dance institutes and schools, handicrafts schools and other educational institutions. Basic education in the different fields of art progresses in a goal-oriented manner from one level to the next and provides students with the skills to express themselves as well as the ability to apply for vocational training and education or higher education in this field.

Municipality

[Local authorities](#) (municipalities) have a broad responsibility for the provision of basic services to citizens. They have strong self-governance based on local democracy and decision-making, and the right to levy taxes. There are 311 municipalities in Finland (2019). A municipality has the responsibility for example to ensure how education but also youth work, cultural and other kinds of activities in collaboration with/by and for young people are offered at the local level. The highest decision-making authority is vested in local councils that are elected by residents. According to the [Local Government Act](#), all municipalities must also have a youth council or equivalent action group of young people. The youth council should be given the possibility to influence planning, preparation, implementation and follow-up activities in different sectors that are relevant to residents' well-being, health, studying, environment, living and traffic, as well as other matters that the youth council considers relevant. Municipalities can allocate resources as they see fit, within, however, the parameters of the national objectives and guidelines. The statutory body at the local level, which is responsible for coordinating cross-sectoral cooperation in youth services, plays a central role in developing local youth work and policy strategy.

According to the [Child Welfare Act](#), the municipalities must also draw up a plan to promote the well-being of children and young people. In the context of employment, entrepreneurship, and the Youth Guarantee, these plans are used, for example, to develop spending strategies on youth workshops and the availability of summer jobs for pupils and students. The social and health services are also arranged by the municipalities. In the future, these services will be managed at the regional level.

Regional State Administrative Agencies

The [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#) are responsible for the regional implementation of the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) in the field of education, culture, day care, libraries, sports, and youth work. The Ministry exercises result-based management and provides the resources for the Regional State Administrative Agencies. Their tasks include e.g. assessing the accessibility of basic services and producing

information on the impact of local and regional youth work and youth policy. They are also responsible for handling complaints and organising in-service training.

Additionally, the agencies distribute discretionary government transfers to youth workshops, outreach youth work, local hobby activities for children and young people, and local and regional projects organised for young people. The six regional state administrative agencies are: Southern Finland, Eastern Finland, Southwestern Finland, Western and Inland Finland, Northern Finland, and Lapland.

Youth Guarantee

In 2013, the government promised an allocation of 60 million euros per year for the establishment of the Youth Guarantee. The core element of the Guarantee was the reduction of the waiting time young people face when becoming a client of Labour Services, so that "young people under the age of 25, and recent graduates under the age of 30 are offered a place for work, a work placement, a study place, a place at a workshop, or rehabilitation placement no later than three months after registering as unemployed". The methods for implementing the Guarantee include measures related to the educational guarantee, the skills programme for young adults, public employment and economic development services for youth, and rehabilitation services, including municipal social and health care services and other individual services for young people, such as outreach youth work and workshop activities.

After the 2015 parliamentary elections, the new government announced the idea of 'turning the Youth Guarantee into a community guarantee.' The services for young people in need of support were transferred to a single place, namely to [One-Stop-Shops](#). This service centre gathers all the relevant employment and social services for young people under one roof. In 2018, almost 60 centres nationwide were established. There are also other measures for supporting the implementation of the Youth Guarantee, however in 2016, government funding was cut by ten million euros, over a three year period.

Youth Work

As a part of local youth work and youth policy, the Youth Act defines the roles and responsibilities of the local authorities, youth associations and other organisations doing youth work. Based on the Youth Act, the responsibility of providing youth work services offered at a local level rests with the local government. Since the beginning of the year 2017 a new [Youth Act](#) (1285/2016) has been put into force. One of the differences from the earlier is that it no longer includes a list of the forms of youth work which should be available at the local level, but refers to the responsibility of local authorities to consider the content based on the local need. Furthermore, the list included in the government proposal (PG 111/2016/Proposal of the Finnish Government to Parliament as regards the content of the Youth Act, in [Finnish](#)) related to the preparation of the updated Act describes what the content of youth work can be and traditionally has also been in Finland: educational guidance for young people; facilities and hobby opportunities; youth information and counselling; support for youth associations and other youth groups; sport-related, cultural, international and multicultural youth activities; young people's environmental education, youth workshop services and outreach youth work.

The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) annually allocates government funding to the national youth organisations, municipal youth work, statutory bodies, and other actors doing youth work. The Ministry has additional appropriations for measures that address topical issues, such as young people's social empowerment, international projects, and new forms of youth work and youth culture. Most of the youth work and youth activities are organised in the evenings, on weekends and during the school holidays. These are arranged by municipalities, non-governmental youth and youth work associations, national youth centres and parishes, and based on the funding regulations, young people themselves are expected to have an active role in planning, realising and evaluating these activities.

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