

QUESTIONNAIRE

“VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES”

FINLAND

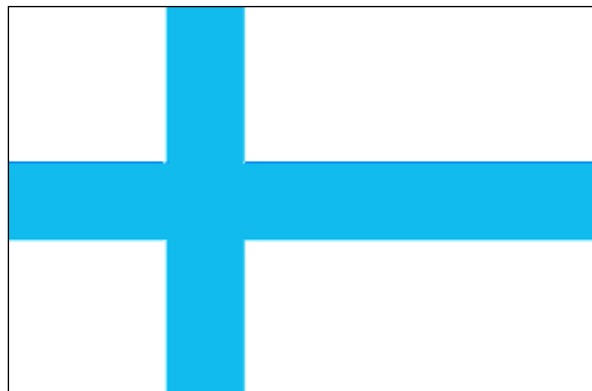


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1. Which types of voluntary activities exist in your country for young people, explain the different fields of activities and if possible give numbers of how many young people engage in them per year, in totals and by gender?

Young people participate in voluntary activities through different, generally non-governmental, organizations. 21% of the young people are members or involved in the activities of sports associations. Here a young person is defined as someone from 10 to 29 years old. 11% are members or participate in activities of trade unions, 7% of scouts and 6% of student unions. Other associations to be member of or to participate in the activities of, are different hobby groups, parishes, especially their activities for young people (90 % participate in confirmation class), benevolent organizations, nature or environmental organizations, peace movements or political parties and their youth organizations. There is no statistics on the gender balance of the participants in these activities.

2. Which kind of voluntary service exist in your country and how many young people engage in them per year, in totals and by gender.

It is not possible to get a complete picture of the areas of voluntary service and of the total number of young people engaging in voluntary service, because these statistics are not collected or compiled completely.

Approximately one fourth (24%) of the young people take part in voluntary activities (Grönlund & Pessi 2008). In 2008, there were 1 824 000 people under 29 years old living in Finland.

Most popular types of voluntary service are children and youth work (8% of young people volunteer in it) and sports (6% of the young people volunteer in that area). The youth is also recorded to have positive attitudes towards volunteering in aiding old people, handicapped people and those worse off, towards protection of nature and animals, and for human rights.

3. Financial and legal status of voluntary activities

The taxation of voluntary work is subject to a number of different interpretations. The Finnish Centre for Pensions has stated that voluntary activity should not be compared with a contract of employment and related pensions legislation, thus, does not apply. Voluntary activity should correspond to education. The opportunity provided for a young volunteer to learn non-formally is not equal to a contract of employment. The pocket money received by the volunteer cannot be regarded as valid remuneration for the work she or he does. Furthermore, work performed by a volunteer cannot replace the basic functions of the receiving organization.

In practice, the legal status of volunteers is ambiguous. Volunteers are sometimes regarded as (corresponded to) employees, and voluntary service has usually been treated according to the taxation practices of the Employment Contracts Act. According to the definition in the Employment Contracts Act, an employment contract is characterized by working for remuneration. Neighbourly help, for example, has not been regarded as subject to employment contract legislation, even if the parties had clearly agreed on the benefits and responsibilities involved.

4. Name the main actors of voluntary activities of young people on national, regional and local level in your country

Governmental actors:

Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, www.stm.fi

Ministry of Education, www.minedu.fi

On a national level, Finland's Slot Machine Association RAY (<http://www.ray.fi>) and Finnish National Lottery Veikkaus (www.veikkaus.fi) are significant public funding sources. Municipalities provide facilities for voluntary and other activities. Municipalities also grant funds for local cultural, youth and sports associations.

Non-governmental actors:

Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi is a national service and interest organization in youth work and independent of any political and denominational affiliation. Almost all national youth or education organizations are its members, the total number of which is ca. 100.

http://www.alli.fi/index.php?lk_id=18

The Evangelic-Lutheran church is an important player in Finnish society, both as a civil activity forum and as an organizer of services. The church has the right to levy taxes just as does the state, which gives it a broad basis in funding youth activities, <http://evl.fi/EVLen.nsf>

Finnish Sports Federation (FSF) is a co-operation, interest and service organization for sports organizations, with promotion of civic sports activities as its main mission. Established in 1993, FSF has 127 member organizations and through them more than 1.1 million individual members,

http://www.slu.fi/eng/finnish_sports_federation/

Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA) is an umbrella organization for Finnish NGOs involved in development co-operation or other global issues,

<http://www.kepa.fi/international/english/index.html>

Nuorten Akatemia (Youth Academy) is a national organization that supports young people's own activity and learning in it. Activities of the organization are aimed at young people aged 13 to 19, also for young people that are not members of other associations. Nuorten Akatemia channels funds

activities and provide its know-how for the benefit of young people and the future of society, and provides information on views and ideas of young people. <http://www.nuortenakatemia.fi> ; <http://www.homma.fi>

All the organizations mentioned above work or affect the work on regional as well as on local level.

5. What is the social protection of young volunteers in your country and are voluntary activities compatible with social benefits?

No specific social security system for volunteers exists.

6. What Programmes and plans are there in your country on volunteering ?

A great number of youth organizations have programmes on volunteering. More information can be found here:

Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi, (see above question 4), http://www.alli.fi/index.php?lk_id=30
Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA, see above question 4), <http://www.kepa.fi/international/english/index.html>

7. Does a strategy (plan) or specific measures for the development of voluntary activities of young people exist in your country?

Methods for assessing the quantity and quality of civic activity are under constant development. A national evaluation system does not exist as such; civic activity is traditionally not under state guidance. The state has a result-based support system, which provides means for assessing the impact of the activities carried out by associations receiving funding from the state.

Associations are continuously carrying out self-evaluations. The State Provincial Offices are responsible for evaluating their services according to the State Provincial Offices Act (348/2000). These evaluations produce local information on the youth work services of municipalities. In this context, information on youth activities, including voluntary activities, is received. Associations must fulfill certain criteria to receive state funding. On the organizational level, young people can participate in both decision-making and actual operation.

The Citizen Forum, a volunteer association, which works towards active citizenship and participation, and promotes voluntary activity as well as cooperation between different actors within the voluntary sector in Finland is currently formulating the first national strategy for volunteering in Finland in general (not specifically for young people's volunteering). The same association is a member of The European

Volunteer Centre, CEV among other European level networks

(<http://www.kansalaisareena.fi/index.php?sivu=english>).

The Finnish Red Cross provides volunteers with training, support and work counseling

(<http://www.redcross.fi/>).

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO provides training for (EVS) volunteers going abroad and for both receiving and sending organizations (<http://www.cimo.fi>).

The Evangelic-Lutheran church (see above question 4) arranges courses on social skills for young volunteers. They provide volunteer club leaders with an opportunity for personal growth and developing their interpersonal and social skills. Volunteers in church social work are provided with training and – particularly those who serve as visiting friends or in corresponding tasks – with work counseling (http://www.nuortenkeskus.fi/index.php?lk_id=4).

Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi (see above, question 4) organizes training and courses for its member organizations.

Ministry of Education organizes training for organizations in fund raising.

8. Please, describe which obstacles to volunteering of young people do still exist in your country and which measures are taken to remove them?

In practice, the legal status of volunteers is ambiguous. The taxation of voluntary work is subject to a number of different interpretations. Most young people who are not currently engaged in organizational activities would like to participate, but have not found a suitable form of activity. On the other hand, according to survey the most common reason (44%) not to participate in voluntary activities is the lack of time. On the other hand “no one has ever asked me to” is a significant reason as well. Especially young people in threat of marginalization need encouragement and opportunities to volunteer (e. g. minorities and the unemployed).

9. How are voluntary activities of young people promoted in your country, particularly among young people with fewer opportunities?

Young people receive information from the media and educational establishments. Positive word of mouth communication is also an important channel.

Organizations and congregations maintain websites, which are frequently updated. Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi (http://www.alli.fi/index.php?lk_id=18, see above question 4)), and individual

organizations distribute information on current forms of voluntary activities. Youth information service centres are also an important forum. (see: http://www.alli.fi/sivu.php?artikkeli_id=1389)

Valtikka is a online-democracy project, funded by the Ministry of Education, that provides information, e.g. of organizations of whose voluntary work a young person can take part in (<http://www.valtikka.fi/>).

Youth Academy (Nuorten Akatemia) is a co-operation organization aiming at building bridges between spare time activities, education and working life (http://www.nuortenakatemia.fi/index.php?lk_id=64)

International Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development (December 5th every year).

The International Award for Young People (http://www.avarti.fi/sivu.php?artikkeli_id=25) which is a method of youth work allowing young people to develop their social skills through various voluntary and recreational activities. Young people participating in this scheme acquire certificates from their achievements defined in different levels. Promoting the Award as a youth work method is one of the development projects of the Ministry of Education.

The Centre for International Mobility CIMO has a web information service for young people going abroad (www.maailmalle.net).

In addition, individual schools and universities have developed service learning type projects. Experiences are positive, but no state level program for service learning has been developed yet.

10. Explain how (by which means) voluntary activities of young people are recognised in your country. Name certificates and other measures used for that purpose.

According to the Information Strategy for Education and Research 1999–2004 (www.minedu.fi) the assessment and recognition of knowledge should be developed in a manner that allows young people and adults to make use of the knowledge they have acquired earlier during work, civic activity or studies.

The Recreational Activity Study Book of the Youth Academy, where young people can gain entries for activities they have been involved in. It gives the reader a broad view of the young person's skills and learning experiences. It serves as a CV, as participation in all forms of recreational activities can be recorded in it. The Study Book is aimed at all young people above 13 years of age who are involved in recreational and voluntary activities

(http://www.nuortenakatemia.fi/Nuorten_Akatemia/Harrastaminen/Opitun_tunnistaminen_ja_tunnustaminen).

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defined in different levels. Promoting the Award as a youth work method is one of the development projects of the Ministry of Education.

11. Which co-operations, networks and exchange programmes do exist in your country for supporting voluntary activities of young people?

Finnish organizations actively engage in international activities through their own networks or umbrella organizations as well as through the United Nations system. Finnish organizations also participate in a number of European youth activity structures such as the Youth Forum Jeunesse (YFJ), European Youth Card Association, European Youth Information and Counselling Agency.

Allianssi Youth Exchanges is a youth exchange agency providing young Finns opportunities to work abroad. Annually it recruits about 1000 young Finns in programmes abroad, and places about 100 international volunteers in work camps in Finland every year. Those volunteers are recruited from the member and partner organizations of the Alliance of the European Voluntary Service Organizations (http://www.alli.fi/index.php?lk_id=30).

Finnish Branch of Service Civil International (KVT) is a peace organization that aims at promoting equality, social acceptance and respect for the environment. KVT's most important activity is organizing international work camps in Finland and sending volunteers to work in camps abroad. In addition, KVT coordinates long-term volunteering. KVT is run by volunteers working in various working groups and local groups (<http://www.kvtfinland.org/>).

International Cultural Youth Exchange, ICYE (Maailmanvaihto) is an international non-profit youth exchange organization promoting youth mobility, intercultural learning and international voluntary service (<http://maailmanvaihto.fi/english>)

European Voluntary Service project (EVS): The European Union supports non-formal education opportunities for young people through transnational voluntary service which directly and actively involves young people in activities designed to meet the needs of society in a wide range of fields. The EVS Action is open to all young people who are legally resident in a programme country or in an eligible third country and are, in principle, aged between 18 and 25.

12. Do collective volunteering projects exist in your country?

There is a great variety of NGOs which organize events for large number of volunteers. Some examples:

– Finnish Natural League (nature protection and environmental education NGO for young people) has many collective projects.

- The Finnish Red Cross has approximately 12 000 under 30 years old members, and thousands of active volunteers for such projects as fundraising in context of Hunger Day and first aid groups.
- Many sports events, as well as religious gatherings and scout's camps, are assisted or carried out to a great extent by volunteers.

13. Which recent survey or research has been carried out on the topic of voluntary activities?

[Youth Leisure Time Survey 2009](#): Survey about young Finns' attitudes and values, based on 1200 phone interviews. Age group 10 to 29. Published by The national Advisory Council for Youth Affairs & Finnish Youth Research Network)

[Youth Barometer 2008](#): Survey about young Finns' attitudes and values, based on 1900 phone interviews. Age group 15 to 29. Published by The national Advisory Council for Youth Affairs & Finnish Youth Research Network.

[Citizen survey of Finland's Slot Machine Association RAY 2008](#): A study on attitudes towards voluntary activities.