

# The European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy

Key priorities for youth policies answers on  
**Participation**



Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe in the field of youth policy, youth research and youth work.

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## **FINLAND, 2005**

### **1 Structures of participation at the local, regional or national level**

#### **1.1 Youth parliaments**

##### **1.1.1 Local youth parliaments**

There are no official Youth Parliaments. Nevertheless, the usage of terms #parliament# and #council# is somewhat ambiguous. A new form of participation is the recently introduced children's parliament, which is an Internet-based parliamentary forum for children to participate in through their schools. The project is facilitated, for example, by the national teledemocracy portal [www.valtikka.net](http://www.valtikka.net). The activity has been launched in a few municipalities, but the aim is to establish the Children's Parliament of Finland, once the project has properly taken off in a wide scale.

##### **1.1.2 Regional youth parliaments**

North Karelian Youth Forum Youth Parliament of Pyhäjärviseuutu, functions in the area of four communities (Eura, Säskylä, Kiukainen ja Köyliö). Each community organizes elections every second year to select four young people (13-25-years) to represent their community.

##### **1.1.3 National youth parliament**

Annual National Youth Parliament gathers annually in the Parliament of Finland in plenary session. In this question hour MP's answer young ones' questions. The session is broadcasted live in national television.

#### **1.2 Youth councils**

##### **1.2.1 Local youth councils**

There are two types of youth councils: those (ca. 20) that are elected by local authorities, and operating within municipal structures (with members who are not necessarily young), and those elected by young people themselves. In recent years, local youth councils, representative bodies and other institutions supporting the direct participation of young people have become increasingly widespread. Some (e.g. City of Helsinki project for young people's participation, Youth Forums) are based on free participation, while others have members elected either by voting in schools or through the post (youth councils, parliaments and representative bodies). In some cases, the members are elected from among candidates nominated by local youth organisations. There are approximately 180 local youth councils in Finnish municipalities (in 2005 there were over 400 municipalities). First youth council was established in 1995. The average number of members is 10-20, the age of members being usually 13-21 years. The terms #parliament# and #council# are nevertheless used somewhat ambiguously.



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### 1.2.2 Regional youth councils

In addition to local participation projects, regional networking among young people has taken place. Examples include the projects by the Regional Council of North Karelia and North Karelian youth, the regional programme evaluation conducted by the regional growth project and North Karelian Youth Forum and young people's comments on it, as well as plans on the regional youth council.

### 1.2.3 National youth councils

Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi ry is a national youth council # an interest organisation which has some 100 member organisations. [www.alli.fi](http://www.alli.fi)

### 1.3 Others structures of participation

The Youth Work Act stipulates that, in public administration, supporting young people's civic activities falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. On the regional level, these duties are the responsibility of the State Provincial Office's youth affairs divisions. On the local level, youth work is the responsibility of the municipal government. Student councils (representing Student bodies). Another national-level organisation is Nuoret Vaikuttajat (Young Opinion-makers), which is an open co-operation and support organisation for all influence groups for young people (<http://www.nuoretvaikuttajat.fi>).

## 2 Percentage of young people who are members of

### 2.1 Percentage of young people in global population n(100%)who are members of a political party

2 %

#### 2.1.1 Percentage of young people in global population who are members of a political party (by age groups)

13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-27	28-30
N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %

#### 2.1.2 Percentage of young people in global population who are members of a political party (by gender)

female	male
N/A %	N/A %

#### 2.1.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a political party in



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## global population by rural-urban

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

## 2.2 Percentage of young people who are members of a trade union from the ages of 13 and 30 in global population

10 %

### 2.2.1 Percentage of young people who are members of a trade union in global population by age groups

13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-27	28-30
N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %

### 2.2.2 Percentage of young people in global population who are members of a trade union (by gender)

female	male
N/A %	N/A %

### 2.2.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a trade union in global population by rural-urban.

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

## 2.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation from the ages of 13 and 30 in global population

51 %

### 2.3.1 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation in global population by age group

13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-27	28-30
N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %	N/A %

### 2.3.2 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation in global population by gender

female	male
N/A %	N/A %

### 2.3.3 Percentage of young people who are members of a youth organisation in global population (by rural-urban)

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

### 2.3.4 What type of youth organisations are people involved in

In 2001 28 percent of young people were members of, or otherwise involved in, sports clubs or organisations. 12 percent of young people were members of student organisations, 7 percent in music, crafts or photography clubs, 5 percent in the youth work organised by religious communities, 4 percent in school clubs, 3 percent in charities, aid organisations or organisations for the disabled, 4 percent in scout organisations, 3 percent in various nature preservation organisations and clubs, 2 percent in national defence and reservist clubs, and 1 percent in human rights and peace organisations.

## 3 Existing actions/support, of national or regional scope, to promote the participation of young people in local life and follow-up mechanisms

Prior to previous municipal elections in 2004 a seminar tour was organized with intention not only to collect knowledge about youth participation in local level, but also to inspire young people to vote. In each seminar there were representatives of youth research, youth policy, members of youth influence groups and one member of Finnish Government present. Young Culture is a series of cultural and educational events. Local and regional events are organised by local authorities and joint municipal boards and national events by a local authority jointly with the Young Culture committee appointed by the Ministry of Education. At present, no actual indicator system exists, but several mechanisms for the evaluation and follow-up of actions promoting youth participation have been developed. Also Finnish Youth Research Network and the Advisory Board of Youth Affairs have annual publication Youth Barometer, which gauges young people's attitudes and opinions. Local and regional level participation are charted by the Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi and the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities.

### 3.1 Legal actions to support the structures for participation of young people in local life

Finnish legislation regulates on the eligibility and right to vote in national and municipal elections. The age limit is 18. In addition, the Associations Act stipulates that a 15-year-old can be a full member of an association, but may not take responsibility for financial matters until the age of 18.



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Civil Participation is one of Finnish Government's Policy Programmes.

### 3.2 Financial actions to support the various structures for youth political and NGO participation

The Ministry of Education grants annual subsidies to national youth organisations and their district associations. The annual grants are based on performance, that is, the quality, extent and effectiveness of activities. Eligible for state aid are organisations which have over 3 000 person members, and two thirds of them are under 29 years. The City of Helsinki Youth Department and Education Department have jointly realised a participation and influencing system for the young, which involves, for example, a meeting session at the City Council premises in which the young can allocate a relatively large sum of money (EUR 250,000) on their own initiative. (Hesari nuorten ääni) Different facilities reserved for young people's use also play an important part in youth work and increasing the influencing opportunities for the young. There are approximately 1,000 youth club facilities owned or leased by municipal authorities in Finland. The national youth centres are subsidised by the Ministry of Education.

### 3.3 Other initiatives planned in the short term

N/A

## 4 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at certain specific groups of young people?

yes ~~no~~

If yes, what groups?

Youth workshops are the Ministry of Education's response to the high youth unemployment rate. #Mahis# activities prevent social exclusion by encouraging 13 to 17-year-old young people in difficult life situations to take part in meaningful spare time activities. The youth co-operation networks with own projects for promoting young disabled people's activeness and participation.

## 5 The vote

### 5.1 Obligatory?

yes no

### 5.2 Age of the right to vote

*From 18 years old*

### 5.3 The right to vote

In the parliamentary and presidential elections, all citizens of Finland who have turned 18 before or on the day of the elections have the right to vote. In municipal elections, the right to vote belongs to every citizen of Finland and the European Union Member States, as well as those of Iceland and



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Norway, who has turned 18 before or on the day of the election and permanently resides in the municipality in question. Other foreigners who have turned 18 before or on the day of the election and permanently reside in the municipality in question, and have resided permanently in Finland for a minimum of two years without interruptions, also have the right to vote in the municipal elections.

#### **5.4 Age of eligibility to be a candidate**

*From 18 years old*

#### **5.5 Eligibility to be a candidate**

In the general elections, anyone with the right to vote, unless he or she is placed under legal guardianship, has the right to stand as a candidate. Those holding a post in the military may not, however, be elected as a Member of the Parliament. Only those Finnish citizens who are Finns by birth may stand for the presidential elections. In municipal elections, anyone permanently residing in the municipality in question and with a right to vote in the municipal elections in some municipality, unless he or she is placed under legal guardianship, is eligible to stand as a candidate.

### **6 The elections**

#### **6.1 Number of young people voting between the ages of 18 (or the age of the right to vote) and 30**

*N/A persons*

#### **6.2 Number of young people between the ages of 18 (or the age of the right to vote) and 30 registered on the lists of voters**

*N/A persons*

#### **6.3 Indicators of participation related to European polls**

##### **6.3.1 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote who are registered from the ages of 13 to 30.**

26 %

##### **6.3.2 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by age groups**

18-21	22-25	26-30
N/A %	N/A %	N/A %

18-21	22-25	26-30
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**6.3.3 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by gender**

female	male
N/A %	N/A %

**6.3.4 In European elections, the percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by rural-urban**

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

**6.3.5 In European elections, the percentage of young people's participation in relation to the total population to vote**

84 %

**6.4 National indicators of participation in the polls**

**6.4.1 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered**

56 %

**6.4.2 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by age groups**

18-21	22-25	26-30
N/A %	N/A %	N/A %

**6.4.3 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by gender**

female	male
N/A %	N/A %

**6.4.4 National elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by rural-urban**



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rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

### 6.4.5 National elections, young people as a percentage of participation in the total population to vote

84 %

## 6.5 Regional and local indicators of participation in the polls

### 6.5.1 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered

40 %

### 6.5.2 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by age groups

18-21	22-25	26-30
N/A %	N/A %	N/A %

### 6.5.3 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by gender

female	male
N/A %	N/A %

### 6.5.4 Regional and local elections, percentage of young voters in relation to the number of young people in age to vote registered, by rural-urban

rural	urban
N/A %	N/A %

### 6.5.5 In regional and local elections the percentage of young people participation in relation to the total population to vote

71 %

## 6.6 Number of young people (under the age of 30) who are member of the national parliament.

8 *persons*

### 6.6.1 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the national level, by gender

female	male
5 <i>persons</i>	3 <i>persons</i>

### 6.7 Enter the number of young people (under the age of 30) who are member of regional parliaments or are hold the position of a regional minister.

N/A *persons*

#### 6.7.1 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the regional, level by gender

female	male
N/A <i>persons</i>	N/A <i>persons</i>

### 6.8 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the local level

682 *persons*

#### 6.8.1 Number of young people elected (under the age of 30) at the local level, by gender

female	male
319 <i>persons</i>	363 <i>persons</i>

## 7 Existing actions/support, of national or regional scope, to promote the participation in the system of representative democracy and follow-up mechanisms

There is a national promotion campaign for young people to participate and vote on elections. Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi has during several years organized Youth Elections before the real elections in Finland <http://www.nuorisovaalit.net>. At national level, the ministry of Education is supporting the participation of young people by Valtikka project <http://www.valtikka.net> which consists interactive visits at schools done together with political youth organisations. Prior to previous municipal elections in 2004 a seminar tour was organized with intention not only to collect knowledge about youth participation in local level, but also to inspire young people to vote. In each seminar there were representatives of youth research, youth policy, members of youth influence groups and one member of Finnish Government present. At present, no actual indicator system exists, but several mechanisms for the evaluation and follow-up of actions promoting youth participation have been developed. One of the methods used were surveys gauging attitudes The

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voter turnout and organisational activeness have also been studied in a number of individual surveys, as have the functions of youth councils and the local-level youth participation.

### 7.1 Actions that have been undertaken this year

N/A

### 7.2 Other initiatives planned in the short term

In 2003 the Government launched a five-year project to prevent young people's exclusion and to strengthen young people's participation and inclusion. The 39 actions in it have 63 local authorities as partners. The Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi has organised, with the support of the Ministry of Education, voting campaigns targeted at enfranchised young people. In the past few years, this campaign has also been targeted at 14-19 year-olds, some of whom are not yet enfranchised. E-voting, using the Internet and the mobile phone, has been tested in some local youth council elections.

## 8 Do some of the existing or planned actions aim at specific groups of young people?

yes ~~no~~

Specific target groups of young people aimed at by existing or planned actions

The Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi has organised, with the support of the Ministry of Education, voting campaigns targeted at enfranchised young people. In the past few years, this campaign has also been targeted at 14-19 year-olds, some of whom are not yet enfranchised.

## 9 Learning to participate

### 9.1 Existing actions within the systems of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate

Students councils. Student unions are statutory in the upper secondary level (Upper Secondary Schools Act, Vocational Institutions Act). Legislation on education (e.g. Upper Secondary Schools Act 629/1998, 27§; Universities Act 645/1997) stipulates that upper secondary and tertiary education providers are to include students in the development of education and, prior to decision-making, hear students in study matters and other issues directly affecting the status of students.

#### 9.1.1 Mechanisms of participation at school

Students councils, which represent the student bodies. (= oppilaskuntatoiminta ) In matters concerning their school they can be cooperating with City Councils and their Youth Affairs Committees. The student organisations of secondary-level educational institutions and universities take an active part in promoting students' interests and their expertise is consulted especially in issues related to education and employment.



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### 9.1.2 Learning of citizenship

The City of Helsinki Youth Department and Education Department have jointly realised a participation and influencing system for the young, which involves, for example, a meeting session at the City Council premises in which the young can allocate a relatively large sum of money (EUR 250,000) on their own initiative. (Hesan nuorten ääni)

### 9.1.3 Other actions within the systems of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate

Youth elections. The supplementary activities organised in conjunction with youth elections activate young people, although it is difficult to estimate to what extent youth elections increase youth participation as such. The parliamentary clubs for the young. An example of bringing the democratic decision-making process closer to young people is the parliamentary clubs established in a number of pilot schools and the Basic education promotes young people's participation through the theme #Participatory Citizenship and Entrepreneurship#. Its aim is to develop the skills required for participation and influencing and to encourage schoolchildren to act in a responsible manner, respecting their own values. In the upper secondary school, the educational theme #Active citizenship and entrepreneurship# aims at cultivating the students into active, responsible and critical citizens.

## 9.2 Fields of actions and/or support # (national or regional scope, outside the formal education context) which aim at promoting learning to participate amongst young people

AVARTTI (The International Award Programme for Young People) supports young people's (aged between 14 and 25) growth into members of society. Avartti is one of the development projects of the Ministry of Education in 2003-2007. National Youth Centres (10) # training. Project of Youth Participation 2003-2007. (Nuorten osallisuushanke) a national action programme on young people's participation. This 5-year pilot programme will be carried out jointly by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the government in 30 pilot municipalities. The programme is led by the Ministry of Labour. The aim of the project is to provide solutions for such questions as what common actions could be employed to support parenthood and the growing environment of the young, to better facilitate preventive youth work in its support of young people's life management and to encourage young people to seek education and training. In 2003 the Government launched a five-year project to prevent young people's exclusion and to strengthen young people's participation and inclusion. The 39 actions in it have 63 local authorities as partners. A national teledemocracy portal Valtikka ([www.valtikka.net](http://www.valtikka.net)), funded by the Ministry of Education, offers young people, youth groups and organisations information, influencing opportunities and a discussion forum on issues concerning young people.

### 9.2.1 Nature of this support

Finland utilises Internet-based participation and influencing systems to a growing extent, and the



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aim is to improve their accessibility for young people through schools, youth clubs and libraries. A national teledemocracy portal Valtikka ([www.valtikka.net](http://www.valtikka.net)), funded by the Ministry of Education, offers young people, youth groups and organisations information, influencing opportunities and a discussion forum on issues concerning young people. The City of Helsinki Youth Department and Education Department have jointly realised a participation and influencing system for the young, which involves, for example, a meeting session at the City Council premises in which the young can allocate a relatively large sum of money (EUR 250,000) on their own initiative. Local authorities support the activities of the local youth organisations and manage youth workshops. Young people receive information on opportunities to influence and other issues, both on a local and regional level. Information is disseminated through the websites of municipalities, local papers, libraries, schools and other public facilities. In a number of municipalities, a youth information centre provides young people with information under all administrative sectors. Different facilities reserved for young people's use also play an important part in youth work and increasing the influencing opportunities for the young. There are approximately 1,000 youth club facilities owned or leased by municipal authorities in Finland. The national youth centres are subsidised by the Ministry of Education. The Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi has an extensive Internet-based databank, The Finnish Youth Info House, for youth-related information, which is accessible free of charge and provides information on a variety of issues.

### **9.2.2 Concerned sector of activities: company, associations and NGOs, training bodies, municipalities, medias**

Variety of NGO's, municipalities etc. Some important actors are: Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi is a national service and interest organisation in youth work. The Youth Academy is a cooperation organisation which builds bridges between learning in leisure-time activities, between education / training and working life. The idea underlying this activity is that young person learns independently and in working with others. Valtakunnallinen Työpajayhdistys - NWA (National Workshop Association) is a Finnish non-governmental organisation in the field of employment, training and rehabilitation.

### **9.2.3 Among these actions (question 9.2.1 and 9.2.2), actions that have been undertaken this year**

N/A

### **9.2.4 Other initiatives planned in the short term**

N/A

## **9.3 Are there specific target groups of young people aimed at by existing or planned actions?**

yes ~~no~~

The specific target groups

Youth workshops are the Ministry of Education's response to the high youth unemployment rate.



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Workshop projects are one way of integrating young people at the risk of marginalisation (or drug addiction) into (local) activities, which also promotes young people's life management. The EXIT project in the City of Joensuu is a good example of a broad-scale, municipal co-operation project aiming at improving the relations between young people with racist attitudes and young immigrants. #Mahis# activities prevent social exclusion by encouraging 13 to 17-year-old young people in difficult life situations to take part in meaningful spare time activities. The youth co-operation networks with own projects for promoting young disabled people's activeness and participation.



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