

Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



European Union
Union Européenne

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

INFORMATION SHEET

PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Estonia



Last updated: 23.03.2011

By: Marti Taru

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Youth participation in Estonia _____	2
2. Youth participation in representative democracy in Estonia _____	4
2.1. Participation in elections _____	6
2.2. Young people elected into representative bodies _____	6
3. Youth participation in civil society _____	8
3.1 Membership in NGOs _____	8
3.2 Youth participation structures on local, regional or national level _____	8
4. Learning to participate _____	10
4.1 The formal education system _____	10
4.2 Non formal education _____	10
5. Youth information in Estonia _____	11
5.1 The structure of youth information _____	11
5.2. The youth information services _____	11
5.3. Topics of youth information _____	13
5.4. Young people's involvement in youth information _____	13
6. Informal ways of young people's participation _____	14
7. Sources of information _____	15

1. Youth participation in Estonia

Give an overview on participation of young people (13 – 30) in your country on the national and regional level (in federal states) answering the following questions:

- Are there official national/regional recommendations (policies) establishing the right of young people to participate in society?

- If so: how is the concept of youth participation defined?

Legal framework for youth participation is defined in national legislation.

Youth Work Act, adopted in 2010, gives legal definition of youth council. Establishing and supporting youth council is optional for a local municipality. If youth council is formed and active, its role would be to discuss problems as well as to make proposals to solve problems and realise goals pertaining to youth residing in the territory of the municipality. In 2010, youth councils were active in 45 local municipalities.

The YWA also provides legal basis for creating county youth council. In 2010, county youth councils were active in all 15 counties of Estonia.

The Youth Work Act also gives legal definitions of youth organisation and union of youth organisations. Organisations, conforming to the definition, are entitled to apply for financial support from national budget. In 2011, 15 youth organisations received financial support.

Registered youth organisations have the opportunity to partake in national policy process through National Youth Policy Council (first created on 01.04.2003 by the Minister of Education and Research, renewed on 16.11.2010). In the renewed NYPC, 7 youth organisations and umbrella organisations are represented. In addition to youth organisations, the NYPC contains also other institutional actors in the youth field.

National Students' Council is another institution that provides young people with opportunities to participate in policy processes at national level. NSC consists of 3 members: representatives of the Estonian School Councils' Union (www.escu.ee is an umbrella organisation of students' self-governments of elementary schools, high schools and vocational schools), representatives of Federation of Estonian Student Unions (www.eyl.ee is an umbrella organisation of college students' self-governments) and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Research (<http://www.hm.ee/index.php?1511897>).

Importantly Universities Act, Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act Vocational Educational Institutions Act, Institutions of Professional Higher Education Act and Private Schools Act all stipulate that students have the right form a student representative board in the school and students also have the right participate via the elected student representatives in solving the problems of school life.

National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 defines youth participation as the creation of diverse opportunities for youth for participating in decision-making processes and the development of participation motivation.

According to the National Youth Work Strategy, youth participation is young people's active or passive intervention in social processes, their impact on the decisions made in society.

Active participation – young people make and propose decisions themselves.

Passive participation – participation in activities provided by society.

- *What are the measures envisaged to promote different forms of participation on local, regional and national level?*

Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 foresees three measures to promote youth participation.

- create possibilities for non-organised youth to be represented at national, county and local levels
- support the formation of youth councils and their sustainability through elaboration of their operation principles and advising local governments
- development of participation motivation of youth and participation habits

Goals to promote youth participation include: instructions presenting the possibilities of youth to participate in the work of local governments have been published; a youth council will function in every county; a campaign introducing youth participation has been carried out.

National Youth Work Centre (www.entk.ee) employs chief expert on youth participation and information who oversees services offered to young people and also is involved in advising young people.

A number of materials and handbooks published in recent years provide guidance for young people wishing to be socially active. The materials include guidance on project management, organisation development and other related topics.

Several webpages provide information and guidance and also act as motivational sources to young people who want to engage in activities of youth councils and/or youth organisations.

Website of local and county youth councils: www.noortekoqud.ee

Participation website of national youth council: osale.enl.ee

Shadow elections project: <http://www.varivalimised.ee/valimised2011/?keel=eng>

All major youth organisations and umbrella organisations have established websites which provide information on their activities. Also some youth councils do have websites. An overview of institutions providing access to policy processes is offered at the webpage of Youth Affairs Unit in the Ministry of Education and Research.

Youth, youth organisations, youth councils and youth projects have the opportunity to apply for financial support from different sources. Young people and youth organisations have many opportunities to participate in trainings.

A national program on development of youth work (<http://www.entk.ee/esf>) provides local municipalities with a tool for evaluation content and quality of youth work service at the municipality, including youth participation opportunities.

The program also provides youth workers and central youth work institutions with training opportunities to develop skills and knowledge relevant for supporting youth civic activism, youth projects and youth organisations.

- *Do any of the above mentioned measures target specific groups?*

- **young people in specific regions.** Members of county youth councils must be registered permanent residents of a concrete county, age 15-26. Members of local government youth councils must be registered permanent residents of a concrete local municipality, age 13-26.
- **certain age groups within the age range 13-30(which):** High school student councils represent young people aged 13-19 years. College, university student councils represent young people aged 19-26 years.

2. Youth participation in representative democracy in Estonia

Please describe the rules of representative democracy related to young people answering the questions below:

- Is voting compulsory in your country? Y/N

No

- What is the legal minimum age to vote in elections?

It is 18 years, all elections.

- What are the legal requirements for voting in local, regional, national and European elections?

Riigikogu Election Act

§ 4. Right to vote and to stand as candidate

- (1) Estonian citizens who have attained 18 years of age by election day have the right to vote.
- (2) A person who has been divested of his or her active legal capacity with regard to the right to vote shall not have the right to vote.
- (3) A person who has been convicted of a criminal offence by a court and is imprisoned shall not participate in voting.

Local Government Election Act

§ 5. Right to vote and to stand as candidate

- (1) Estonian citizens and citizens of the European Union who have attained 18 years of age by election day and whose permanent residence, i.e. residence the address details of which have been entered in the Estonian population register (hereinafter population register), is located in the corresponding rural municipality or city have the right to vote.
- (2) An alien has the right to vote if he or she meets the conditions specified in subsection (1) of this section and:
 - 1) resides in Estonia on the basis of a long-term residence permit or the right of permanent residence;
 - (3) A person who has been divested of his or her active legal capacity with regard to the right to vote does not have the right to vote.
 - (4) A person who has been convicted by a court and is serving a sentence in a custodial institution shall not participate in voting.

§ 5. Alien

For the purposes of this Act, an alien is a person who is not a citizen of the Republic of Estonia or of a Member State of the European Union.

European Parliament Election Act

§ 4. Right to vote and stand as candidate

- (1) An Estonian citizen who has attained 18 years of age by election day shall have the right to vote.
- (2) A citizen of the European Union who is not an Estonian national (hereinafter citizen of the European Union) shall have the right to vote if:

- 1) he or she has attained 18 years of age by election day;
 - 2) his or her permanent residence is in Estonia, i.e. the address details of his or her residence have been entered in the Estonian population register (hereinafter population register);
 - 3) he or she has not been deprived of the right to vote in his or her home Member State.
- (3) A person shall not have the right to vote if:
- 1) divested of his or her active legal capacity with regard to the right to vote;
 - 2) he/she has been convicted of a crime by a court and is serving sentence in a penal institution.

- *What are the legal requirements for being a candidate in elections ?*

Riigikogu Election Act

§ 4. Right to vote and to stand as candidate

(4) Estonian citizens who have attained 21 years of age by the last day for the registration of candidates have the right to stand as candidates.

(6) A person who is a regular member of the Defence Force or has been convicted of a criminal offence by a court and is imprisoned shall not stand as a candidate for election to the Riigikogu.

Local Government Election Act

§ 5. Right to vote and to stand as candidate

(5) Every Estonian citizen and citizen of the European Union who has the right to vote and whose permanent residence is located in the corresponding rural municipality or city not later than on 1 August of an election year has the right to stand as a candidate.

(6) A regular member of the Defence Forces or a person who has been convicted of a criminal offence by a court and is serving a prison sentence shall not stand as a candidate for election to a council.

European Parliament Election Act

§ 4. Right to vote and stand as candidate

(4) An Estonian citizen who has attained 21 years of age by election day shall have the right to stand as a candidate.

(5) A citizen of the European Union shall have the right to stand as a candidate if:

- 1) he or she has attained 21 years of age by election day;
- 2) his or her permanent residence is in Estonia, i.e. the address details of his or her residence have been entered in the population register;
- 3) he or she has not been deprived of the right to vote in his or her home Member State.

(6) The following shall not stand as candidates in elections to the European Parliament:

- 1) a person who has been divested of his or her active legal capacity with regard to the right to vote;
- 2) a person who has been convicted of a crime by a court and is serving sentence in a penal institution;
- 3) regular members of the Defence Forces.

(7) No person may vote or stand as a candidate in more than one Member State of the European Union in the same election to the European Parliament.

2.1. Participation in elections

Please give the percentage of young voters (young people who are allowed to vote below 30 years old) on European (for EU-countries only) and national level. If detailed data on young people is not available please provide the general turnout of all voters and describe the young voter's participation.

Survey data from European Social Survey 2008.

		Participation in national elections in % of people with the right to vote	
		female	male
% of age group			
20	Voted	37%	38%
	Did not vote	35%	40%
	Not eligible to vote	27%	22%
21	Voted	52%	61%
	Did not vote	36%	30%
	Not eligible to vote	12%	9%
22	Voted	59%	65%
	Did not vote	38%	32%
	Not eligible to vote	4%	4%
23	Voted	70%	62%
	Did not vote	30%	36%
	Not eligible to vote	0%	2%
24	Voted	66%	64%
	Did not vote	33%	34%
	Not eligible to vote	1%	2%
25	Voted	70%	66%
	Did not vote	30%	31%
	Not eligible to vote	0%	3%
26	Voted	64%	64%
	Did not vote	36%	36%
	Not eligible to vote	0%	0%
27	Voted	66%	74%
	Did not vote	31%	25%
	Not eligible to vote	3%	1%
28	Voted	66%	65%
	Did not vote	33%	34%
	Not eligible to vote	0%	1%
29	Voted	74%	73%
	Did not vote	25%	26%
	Not eligible to vote	1%	1%
30	Voted	75%	75%
	Did not vote	25%	24%
	Not eligible to vote	0%	1%

As the survey took place in 2008 and previous parliamentary elections were in 2007, only those at least 20 years of age at the time of the data collection were included. 'Not eligible to vote' option was probably ticked by those young people who were not aware of the right to vote, as all respondents were at least 18 years old at the time of data collection.

2.2. Young people elected into representative bodies

Please provide the number (in total and by gender) of young people under the age of 30 who are members of the national parliament. Please provide the total number of parliamentarians on national level.

Elections to Estonian parliament Riigikogu took place in March 2011. Altogether 9 persons out of the total 101 were not older than 30 years.

	MP < 30 or MP = 30		All MP	
Women	1	11%	19	19%
Men	8	89%	82	81%
Total	9	100%	101	100%

3. Youth participation in civil society

3.1. Membership in NGOs

Please give the percentage of young people aged 13 to 30 (if possible in total and gender) who are members in non-governmental organisations (including political and youth NGOs) and if possible for youth NGOs. Please provide the same data for political parties as well. For comparison, please provide the same data for the whole population.

Total number of members (18+ years old) of political parties in March 2011: 53 616

Estimated number of members of youth chapters of political parties in March 2011: 15 000

Percentages of young people in the age group of 15-30 who are members of NGOs, youth NGOs and youth political organisations. July 2009

	NGOs, including political NGOs and youth NGOs			Youth NGOs, excl. youth chapters of political parties			Youth chapters of political parties		
	Total	female	Male	Total	female	male	Total	female	male
15 – 19 year olds	18%	18%	18%	15%	14%	16%	4%	3%	5%
20 – 24 year olds	9%	10%	8%	7%	8%	6%	2%	2%	2%
25 – 30 year olds	10%	10%	11%	6%	4%	9%	1%	1%	1%

Estimates based on a representative survey of young people in Estonia aged 15-30 years, conducted in July 2009

3.2 Youth participation structures on local, regional or national level

Please give a picture of how young people can/do participate in formally recognized ways in civic society/policy in your country by answering to the following questions:

- which types of youth participation structures exist in your country and which group of young people these structure do represent
- what is the degree of participation to decision making allowed by these structures (please fill in the table below):

Organisational/school level

School self-government councils in gymnasiums, vocational schools, colleges. Represents pupils and students of a school.

Local level

Youth councils working together with local municipalities. The number of local youth councils was 45 in the end of 2010. Represents young people aged 13-26, residing permanently in the area of a municipality.

Regional level

County youth councils working together with county governors. There is a county youth council in each of the 15 counties. Represents young people aged 15-26, residing permanently in the area of a county.

National level

National Youth Policy Council and National Students' Council. Potentially represents interests of all young people in Estonia.

Local youth councils			County youth councils			National Youth Policy Council National Students' Council		
Share of power	Consultation	Information	Share of power	Consultation	Information	Share of power	Consultation	Information
	X			X			X	

4. Learning to participate

4.1 The formal education system

Please describe existing mechanisms within the system of formal education aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate in your country.

Are there teacher trainings programmes at the national and/or regional level on this topic?

Teachers need to obtain teacher qualification and teaching of civic education needs to conform to requirements specified in national curriculum. Requirements for obtaining a teacher qualification depend on the level of the qualification; minimum requirements include higher education in the field of subject and pedagogical/teacher/youth worker training. Obtaining higher qualification ranks require additional pedagogical training and training in the area of the subject. Attesting of teachers is done by the National Examinations and Qualifications Centre. The Examination Centre is a governmental body administered by the Ministry of Education and Research. Its main objective is to implement the national education and language policy in the field of primary, basic and secondary education as well as in vocational and adult education (www.ekk.edu.ee/91429).

4.2 Non formal education

Please describe five to ten existing examples of actions/programmes/activities at national or regional level, outside the formal education system, aiming at developing and deepening learning to participate in your country.

Tegusad Eesti Noored (Active Estonian Youth, www.ten.ee) organises regional sessions of Youth Parliaments in Estonia, including European Youth Parliament. The sessions bring together youngsters, aged 15-19, from Estonia and the rest of Europe, in order to discuss on local and European matters, get to know each other and experience the unforgettable spirit of EYP sessions.

Eesti noorteühenduste Liit (National Youth Council, www.enl.ee) organises different activities to support civic activism of young people. The NYC organises local and national shadow elections for pupils aged 14-17 years, trainings and seminars devoted to the topic of civic activism, it has launched webpages and published handbooks that provide information and guidance to young people (osale.enl.ee, www.noortekogud.ee).

The NYC has organised consultation events in the framework of Open Method of Coordination.

Youth workers in open youth centres and in other youth work institutions support young peoples' initiatives through providing assistance for preparing and implementation of youth projects. Youth in Action national agency provides assistance and financial support to active young people.

Youth chapters of political youth organisations provide young active people with opportunities to get to know the policy processes, from planning and making to implementation and evaluation. Local youth councils and county youth councils provide young people similarly with opportunities to engage in civic activism at local and county level.

5. Youth information in Estonia

5.1 The structure of youth information

Please describe how youth information is organised in your country answering the following questions.

- *Do youth information points / centres exist? Y/N*

Yes. There are counselling centres in all county centres and also in some other bigger towns.

- *Does youth information coordinated at the national level exist? Y/N*

Yes. Three institutions coordinate information provision:

1. National Youth Work Centre coordinates provision of information and counselling services on various topics, including also studying and career.
2. Foundation INNOVE coordinates provision of study and career information and career counselling services.
3. NGO Estonian Sexual Health Association coordinates provision of information and counselling on topics of sexual health and sexual rights.

- *Does youth information coordinated at the regional level exist? Y/N. If yes, where?*

The counselling centres in county centres coordinate provision of youth information services.

- *Is youth information in your country member of any European network (ERYICA, EYCA, Eurodesk)? If yes, name the network.*

ERYICA and Eurodesk

5.2. The youth information services

Please provide the percentage of municipalities with a youth information point/centre.

Information centres are located in all county centres (15) and in addition also in some bigger towns. In general, information centres provide information on education, working, leisure and hobby education, travelling abroad, volunteering, health, relations with peers and sexual relations. There is some specialisation between counselling centres so that counselling on all topics is not available in all centres.

Is there an online national youth information system? Y/N. If yes, please provide the links to the relevant webpage(s), state if the portal provides youth information only on a specific topic.

Yes, there are several websites that provide information and guidance to young people.

1. Youth information portal, a wide variety of topics: <http://www.nip.ee/>
2. Finding a job: www.firstjob.ee
3. Educational and career choices: www.rajaleidja.ee
4. Education and employment: www.stardiplats.ee
5. Sexual relations and sexual health: www.amor.ee

6. Eurodesk: www.eurodesk.ee
7. Euro26 card: <http://www.euro26.ee/www/sisu.php?id=9>
8. Youth in Action national agency: <http://www.euroopa.noored.ee>
9. Non-formal education and training opportunities: www.mitteformaalne.ee
10. Program for continuing education: <http://vota.archimedes.ee/>

Are there any online regional youth information systems? Y/N

If yes, please provide the links to the relevant webpage(s), state if the portal provides youth information only on a specific topic.

There are youth information centres located in all county centres and each of them has its own webpage plus there are also additional sources for online information. The websites normally provide information on more than one topic only. The following is a comprehensive list of webpages that provide information to youth.

1. www.taninfo.ee
2. www.koostyykoda.ee
3. www.keilanoortekeskus.ee
4. www.tulevikuredel.ee
5. www.hups.ee
6. www.noored.hiumaa.ee
7. www.ivnink.org.ee
8. www.noortek.ee
9. www.jmnk.ee
10. www.kenk.ee
11. www.noustamiskeskus.ee
12. lvnt.torni.ee
13. www.karjaar.edu.ee
14. www.polvanoored.ee
15. www.parnunoored.ee
16. www.onk.ee
17. www.rink.ee
18. raplamaanoored.blogspot.com
19. www.snip.ee
20. www.karjaaripold.ee/saarekeskus
21. www.tartunoored.ee
22. khk.ee/noustamine
23. www.valgaleader.ee/TANKLA
24. www.vanker.ee
25. www.majakas.ee

26. www.werro.ee/noored

27. www.zone.ee/VNNK

Please describe existing national or regional (federal states) print publications for information of young people in your country (e.g. magazines, folders/brochures).

Various leaflets and short information materials are published giving information on opportunities available to young people. Information materials are also published in connection with information fairs. No regular magazines are published.

5.3. Topics of youth information

In relation to the structures of youth information you mentioned above, what are the main contents of information delivered to young people?

The following topics are included in counselling services:

- career guidance
- studies and scholarships
- jobs and training
- general health matters
- relationships and sexuality
- social security
- rights of young people
- European opportunities for young people
- youth activities and exchanges

5.4. Young people's involvement in youth information

How do young people participate in the national/regional system of youth information?

Multitude ways exist how young people can and do benefit from guidance service:

- Consultation of online webpages
- Email, telephone call, letter to consultant
- Face-to-face consultation in one-on-one situation
- Thematic lectures at information centre
- Thematic lectures at schools
- Thematic lectures at other places and sites
- Consultation of printed information materials

In 2010, national career and education counselling service providers counted altogether 149 985 contacts with young people.

6. Informal ways of young people's participation

Please describe informal ways used by young people to make their voices heard in society in your country.

Please describe alternative ways of youth participation connected to the use of online technologies answering the following questions:

Top down approach (e.g. online consultations): in which occasion?

In recent years, consultations have been conducted in the framework of Structured Dialogue with young people on themes specified in the framework.

Unorganised young people are welcomed to events organised by various youth organisations.

Bottom up approach (e.g. organised actions through social networks and the internet): in which occasion?

None.

7. Sources of information

Youth Work Act (2010) and other relevant legislative acts

Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013

Webpages of different institutions

Statistics on youth work and youth in general

Communication with representatives of organisations