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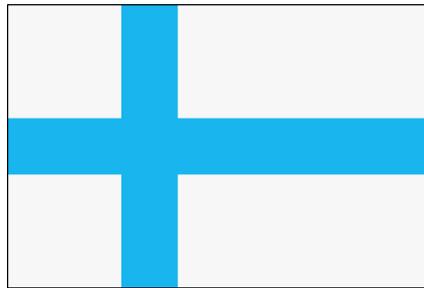
European Union  
Union Européenne

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

# INFORMATION SHEET

## PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE

### FINLAND



Last updated: 01/30/2011

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# 1. Youth participation in Finland

*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?*

Youth Act (72/2006), which made the participation and the right of the youth to be heard in the municipalities obligatory, came into force in 2006. Section 8 of the Youth Act states that “the opportunity to participate in the handling of issues relating to local and regional youth work and policy must be provided for young people. Additionally, young people must be heard during the handling of issues concerning them.”

Participation and action opportunities, for all individuals without age limits and also beyond voting have been taken into account in chapter 2 section 14 of the Constitution of Finland (731/1999) requiring that “public authorities shall promote the opportunities for the individual to participate in societal activity and to influence the decisions that concern him or her.” Constitution gives the frame for every new law or additions to laws enacted in Finland, so it is important that the aspects of participation of individuals without age limits are mentioned there.

At the municipal level, section 27 of the Local Government Act (365/1995) defines the participation and action opportunities of local citizens. The law states that the municipal “council shall ensure that local residents and service users have opportunities to participate in and influence their local authority's operations. In the same law, the section 28 also gives all local residents the right of initiative: “Local residents have the right to submit initiatives to the local authority in matters related to its operations. Persons submitting initiatives shall be informed of action taken as a result of an initiative.” Everyone has the right to make an initiative despite of their age.

The Basic Education Act (628/1998) (for classes 1–9) in turn, comments on participation and being heard in the context of school environment. Section 47 (addition, in force from 1.8.2007) states that a school can have a student council consisting of its students. Student participation and being heard is also regulated by the Upper Secondary School Act (629/1998) and the Vocational Education and Training Act (630/1998) (both are for classes 10–12). Both acts state that organiser of education must provide the opportunity for students to take part in the development of education. They are to hear students before they make decisions which will essentially affect their studies or their role as students. The acts named also state that every educational institution, which provides upper secondary education and vocational education and training, has a school council formed of students.

Land Use and Building Act (132/1999) ensures that everyone has the right to participate in the preparation process of planning, the use of land and water areas, and building activities on them, and that planning is high quality and interactive.

According to the Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011, all municipalities in Finland are, by the end of 2010, actively implementing an influencing and hearing system for 5–17-year-olds, which functions in accordance with the various requirements and prerequisites of different age groups. This aim is supported by the development of eDemocracy tools.

Student unions are actively heard in matters concerning them.

<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=en>

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

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

According to the governmental decree on youth work and youth policy (103/2006), a national youth organization is an organization that has at least 1000 individual members and of whose total number of members at least 2/3 are under 29 years old. National youth organizations and national youth work organizations are given general subsidy from the Ministry of Education and Culture based on their plan of action and budget and their resultant activity.

The Youth Organisation Subsidy Committee, whose members are nominated by youth organisations, submits an annual proposal to the Ministry for state subsidies that should be allocated to national youth organisations. It also evaluates and develops the subsidy system.

The Ministry of Education and Culture supports youth work of municipalities by state subsidies that are based on the number of young people in a given municipality. The Ministry of Education and Culture also supports renovation and equipment of youth premises of municipalities or other communities. Some activities receive targeted state grants. For example development of adventure education and international projects of civic organizations or youth centres of municipalities are granted this way.

Youth participation is supported nationally and on a local level through separate projects by the EU- funded Youth in Action programme.

Local, political or other, youth organizations also receive grants from their respective municipalities.

The workshops for young unemployed people received 9,2 million euro financial aid of the youth work allocations of the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2010. The appropriations are distributed by the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and Environment.

The Ministry of Education and Culture also allocated 6,8 million euro for outreach work pair activity ("street work" where youth workers go in work pairs to "seek" young people otherwise not taking part in youth services) in 2010. Seeking youth work activity is meant for finding and giving support to those young people who have fallen out of work or place to study and are socially excluded.

- *Do any of the above mentioned measures target specific groups? (please tick)*

- females
- males
- migrants
- young people with fewer opportunities
- young people in specific regions
- minorities (which):
- certain age groups within the age range 13-30(which):
- other:

## 2. Youth participation in representative democracy in Finland

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

- Is voting compulsory in your country?

No. In every election it is voluntary to vote.

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

European <sup>1</sup>	18	National:	18	Regional:	18	local	18
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- What are the legal requirements for voting in local, regional, national and European elections?

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 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. Recently there has been discussion about possibility for 16 years old to have right to vote, at least in municipal elections. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland decided in 2006 that parishioners who are 16 can vote in Church elections.

Entitled to vote in European elections held in Finland are regardless of domicile every Finnish citizen who has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election, and every citizen of another Member State of the European Union who has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election and whose municipality of residence, as defined by law, is in Finland on the 51st day before election day, unless he or she has lost the right to vote in the Member State whose citizen he or she is. A prerequisite for the right to vote is, however, that the person enrolls with the voting register in Finland. A person entitled to vote may only vote in one Member State in the same European elections, either in his or her home state or in his or her country of residence. A Finnish citizen, who has registered as a voter in another Member State, is not entitled to vote in the European elections in Finland.

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

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 selected 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. According to the Orthodox Church of Finland, a clergyman may not stand as a candidate or hold a post entitled to in general elections.

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<sup>1</sup> If applicable

## 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

	Participation in European elections in % of people with the right to vote			Participation in national elections in % of people with the right to vote		
	Total	female	male	total	female	male
% of total population						
13 – 30 year olds						
16 – 19 year olds <sup>2</sup>						
20 – 24 year olds						
25 – 30 year olds						

There are no accurate statistical information on how young people votes or have voted in different types of elections (Development programme on child and youth policy of the Government, 2007).

However, according to estimations based on several surveys (e.g. Peltola 2007; Pekonen, Sänkiäho, Borg 1993), approximately 56 % of young people aged 18 to 29 would have voted in the parliamentary elections in 2007. The overall turnout was about 68 %.

## 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.

	MP ≥ 30		All MP	
	Number	%	Number	%
Women	0	0 %	84	42 %
Men	2	2 %	116	58 %
Total	2	2 %	200	100 %

[http://www.stat.fi/til/evaa/2007/evaa\\_2007\\_2007-03-22\\_tie\\_002\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/evaa/2007/evaa_2007_2007-03-22_tie_002_en.html)

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<sup>2</sup> If applicable

### 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.

	NGOs, including political NGOs and youth NGOs			Youth NGOs			Political parties		
	Total	female	male	Total	female	male	total	female	male
% of total population									
13 – 30 year olds									
16 – 19 year olds									
20 – 24 year olds									
25 – 30 year olds									

According to the survey of leisure time activities of the youth (Myllyniemi 2009), approximately 45 % of the young people (here 10 to 29 years old) in Finland are members of a non-governmental organization. This means approximately 587 770 youngsters and so 11 % of total population. Young males are as often as young females members of some NGO.

32 % of young people aged 10-14, 48 % of aged 15-19, 42 % of aged 20-24 and 58 % of aged 25-29 are members of a NGO.

Approximately 1 % of the young people in Finland are members of a political party or political youth organization. There are more men than women who are members. The number of young people that are members of a political party is decreasing.

21 % of the youth are members of a sport association, 7 % are members of scouts, 6 % are members of student associations, 3 % are members of a charity or benevolence organization of disabled people, 3 % are part of environmental organizations and 1 % part of human rights or peace organizations.

#### 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?

Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi ra is a national youth council, an interest organization which has some 118 member non-governmental organizations. Member organizations of Allianssi are found here: <http://www.alli.fi/allianssi/jasenjarjestot/>

Suomen Nuorisovaltuustojen Liitto - NUVA ry (Federation of Finnish Youth Councils) works as the co- operational organisation between the local youth councils, and one of its main goals is to support the work of the local youth councils by providing services. NUVA (<http://www.nuva.fi/>) is

also a member of Finnish Youth Co-operation - Allianssi. Members of local youth councils are about 14-18 years old.

The Children's parliament association of Finland was founded in February 2004. The aim of the association is to improve children's participation and use of influence in Finland. Association's ideological ground is based on the Children's Rights Agreement of the United Nations. The Children's Parliament Association of Finland is the uniting element of the children's parliaments. This Association is helping the municipalities to found children's parliaments, promote attitudes and declarations and to support the progress of initiatives already taken. Members of Children's parliaments are about 9-13 years old.

[http://www.lastenparlamentti.fi/in\\_english](http://www.lastenparlamentti.fi/in_english)

Students are represented by National Union of University Students in Finland (<http://www.syl.fi/english/>), Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences – SAMOK ra (<http://www.samok.fi/content/view/2/3/>), The Union of Finnish Upper Secondary School Students ra (<http://www.lukio.fi/en/main>), Finnish Federation of Vocational Trainees ra (<http://www.sakkinet.fi/>), and their respective member organizations on local level.

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 program evaluation conducted by the regional growth project and North Karelian Youth Forum and young peoples comments on it, as well as plans on the regional youth council. Youth Parliament of Pyhäjärvisseutu functions in the area of four communities (Eura, Säskylä, Kiukainen ja Köyliö). Each community organizes elections every second year to choose four young people (13-25- years) to represent their community.

Some of local youth councils are simply called “youth council”; others are called “student councils” or “pupil councils”. You may find other councils representing particular groups of young people.

Results from Evaluation of basic services 2010 made by the Regional State Administrative Agencies (quantitative questionnaire survey responded by main official of youth work in each municipality).

The regional state administration reform entered into force on 1 January 2010. The task and functions of the State Provincial Office have been transferred to the Regional State Administrative Agencies, the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Finnish Regional Councils.

In 2010 there were youth or children action groups (of which mostly are called youth councils but some of them are also called for example youth parliaments even if there is no structural difference to youth councils) in 70 % of municipalities of those who responded to the questionnaire. A majority of these groups have been established during the 21st century. The situation was particularly good in the Province of Lapland. The worst situation was in the Province of Western Finland.

The most common target group consisted of 13–18-year olds since a fourth of all the groups' activities were aimed at this age group. The majority of the action groups (approximately half of them) were chosen by vote. Approximately a fifth of the groups was selected by appointment. The remaining groups were formed in some other way e.g. by interview. Elections are an important part of democracy and democratic education. It is therefore also necessary to promote democratic selection processes in the formation of child and youth action groups.

The groups' operations were based on decisions made by the municipal council, the municipal board or a committee. A little under half of the groups had obtained a mandate for their activities from the municipal council or board. A little under a fourth of the groups' activities were based on a committee's decision and a tenth of the groups' activities, on a municipal official's decision. A few groups' activities were based on municipal rules and regulations. The support of decision makers is essential for the activities of youth action groups and thus such group operations should be given a mandate based on a decision by the municipal council or board.

The action groups' activities were fairly evenly divided between having a say, representation of interests and organising events. In 100 municipalities the local youth council has seated its representatives to take part in official committee work, this method of co-working and regular interaction between adults and youngsters in system level is determined in core rules of each of these 100 municipalities.

There are no official Youth Parliaments in Finland. 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 through their schools. The project is facilitated, for example, by the national teledemocracy portal [www.valtikka.fi](http://www.valtikka.fi).

The e-democracy Initial Channel (aloitekanava, <http://www.aloitekanava.fi>) was in use in about 40 % of municipalities.

*what is the degree of participation to decision making allowed by these structures (please fill in the table below):*

type of youth participation structure	% of local structures			% of regional structures			% of national structures		
	Share of power	consultation	information	Share of power	consultation	information	Share of power	consultation	information
.....									

## 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.*

Schools organize youth parliament-discussion groups in order to support young people's participation. They are not, however, official in such a way that their aim would be actual participation in the political system. Annual National Youth Parliament gathers each year in the Parliament of Finland in plenary session. In this question hour members of parliament answer young people's questions. The session is broadcasted live on national television.

In vocabulary and upper secondary schools there are mandatory student associations.

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

### 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.*

The Finnish Government's Child and Youth Policy Programme 2007–2011 names several measures on how hearing children on matters pertaining to themselves are addressed. For example, children's activities and youth councils as users of eDemocracy (internet hearing and participation tools) are supported, a provision for allowing universities and military garrisons to be advance polling stations is added to the Election Act; and student unions will be actively informed about the right of every resident in the municipality regardless of their age to submit initiatives to the municipal authorities.

Respectively, children and young people's opportunities to influence the content of leisure time activities are promoted by increasing organisations' and schools' awareness of children and young people's right, willingness and ability to influence matters concerning them; attention is paid to the quality of youth facility activities particularly from the perspective of young people's active citizenship and social empowerment; an information campaign on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child will be implemented in collaboration with the Ombudsman for Children in Finland and non- governmental organisations in 2009.

<http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Julkaisut/2008/liitteet/opm21.pdf?lang=en>

The State Provincial Offices (the tasks and functions of the State Provincial Offices have been transferred to the Regional State Administrative Agencies, the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Finnish Regional Councils by the regional state administration reform) estimate the implementation of the Child and Youth Policy Programme yearly in their Evaluation of basic services made in co-operation with the municipalities. Several mechanisms for the evaluation and follow-up of actions promoting youth participation have thus been developed. Also Finnish Youth Research Network and the Advisory Board of Youth Affairs have annual publication Youth Barometer, which gauges young peoples 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.

## 5. Youth information in Finland

### 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? Yes.*
- *Does youth information coordinated at the national level exist?*

Yes. The Ministry of Education and Culture instructed the Department of Youth Affairs in the city of Oulu to establish the national coordination unit. Work started under the responsibility of the National Coordinator in January 2006. The main goal is to create equal opportunities locally and regionally for young people to find and use information services. The aim of this national co-operation is to reach a high level of quality in all services: centres, points, web services, phone services and face-to-face work, in accordance with the European Youth Information Charter.

<http://www.nettinappi.fi/nuorisotiedotus/nuorten-tieto-ja-neuvontapalveluiden-kansallinen-koordinaatio-ja-kehittamiskeskus/>

The Ministry of Education and Culture supports the National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services, the national youth information network and general developments in this field. The Ministry also financially supports national and regional youth information and youth media service projects.

- *Does youth information coordinated at the regional level exist?*

Yes. According to the National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services there are 271 municipalities offering youth information and counselling services for young people in Finland. The network includes 146 youth information points, 36 local or regional level web services.

<http://www.koordinaatti.fi/sivu.php?id=6#129>

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

Yes. The National Network of Youth information and counselling services follows ERYICA charter in their work.

### 5.2 The youth information services

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

Approximately 81 % of municipalities in Finland offers youth information.

*Is there an online national youth information system?*

In Finland there are in total 36 specialised youth information and counselling portals that are local or regional, following ERYICA charter and confirmed by the National YI body. Also some organisations and associations offers online services (regional and national level) for young people on different issues. i.e, health, relationships as for example Väestöliitto - The Family Federation of Finland ([http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/in\\_english/](http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/in_english/)), The Nyyti Student Support Centre, (<http://www.nyyti.fi/nyyti-ry/in-english/>), Tukinet crisis support (<https://www.tukinet.net/>), Elämä On Parasta Huumetta NGO (<http://www.eoph.fi/en/>). The Youth Co-operation Allianssi has information portal called Allison for young people ([www.allison.fi](http://www.allison.fi)).

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.

Yes. A list of the youth information portals can be found on:

<http://www.koordinaatti.fi/uploaded/nuti%20pisteet%20ja%20keskukset%202011.pdf>

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

### 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?

- career guidance
- studies and scholarships
- jobs and training
- general health matters
- relationships and sexuality
- social security benefits
- rights of young people
- consumer rights
- European opportunities for young people
- youth activities and exchanges
- Other (please explain)

### 5.4 Young people's involvement in youth information

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

The money invested by Ministry of Education and Culture in youth information is increasing, with a emphasis to include young people themselves in the creation of information. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture has financed development projects of digital democracy in many municipalities. From beginning of the year 2008 Aloitekanava.fi-service (Initiative Channel, <http://www.aloitekanava.fi>) has become part of the National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services. Initiative Channel is an online service where young people can express their ideas about improving their surroundings. Local youth workers moderate the service and forward initiatives to local decision-makers. The service also enables local authorities to hear young people in matters that concern them. In Finland the service is part of the governmental Youth Policy Development Programme, and mainly financed by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Young people have written for example the contents of the information publications Epeli Nuorten tuotanto (publication channel for the young media makers of the Akaa region; [http://www.epeli.fi/sivu.php?p\\_id=179](http://www.epeli.fi/sivu.php?p_id=179)) and Nettlehti Painovirhe (online magazine written by young people in the Jyväskylä region; <http://www3.jkl.fi/nuoriso/painovirhe/>). Nuorten Aani is a pilot project in which young people themselves write for other young people about societal topics especially important for the youth. It also has a discussion forum for young people about political and societal topics (<http://nuoriso.hel.fi/nuortenaanitoimitus/>).

## **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?*

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

## 7. Sources of information

The Family Federation of Finland: [http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/in\\_english/](http://www.vaestoliitto.fi/in_english/)

Federation of Finnish Youth Councils: <http://www.nuva.fi/>

Finnish Children's Parliament: [http://www.lastenparlamentti.fi/in\\_english](http://www.lastenparlamentti.fi/in_english)

Finnish Federation of Vocational Trainees: <http://www.sakkinet.fi/>

Finnish Initiative Channel: <http://www.aloitekanava.fi>

Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi: <http://www.alli.fi/english/>

Finnish Youth Information Online Magazine Koordinaatti: <http://www.koordinaatti.fi/>

Ministry of Education and Culture: <http://www.minedu.fi/>

Myllyniemi, S. 2009: Aika vapaalla – Nuorten vapaa-aikatutkimus 2009:

[http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisoasiain\\_neuvottelukunta/julkaisut/muut\\_tutkimukset/Aika\\_vapaalla - Nuorten vapaa-aikatutkimus 2009.pdf](http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisoasiain_neuvottelukunta/julkaisut/muut_tutkimukset/Aika_vapaalla_-_Nuorten_vapaa-aikatutkimus_2009.pdf)

National Teledemocracy Portal: [www.valtikka.fi](http://www.valtikka.fi)

National Union of University Students in Finland: <http://www.syl.fi/english/>

The Nyyti Student Support Centre: <http://www.nyyti.fi/nyyti-ry/in-english/>

Statistics Finland: <http://www.stat.fi/>

The Union of Finnish Upper Secondary School Students: <http://www.lukio.fi/en/main>

The Union of Students in Finnish Universities of Applied Sciences: <http://www.samok.fi/>