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The history of youth work in Estonia

Introduction

The main goal of this chapter is to chart briefly the most important moments in the development of youth work in Estonia, from the middle of the 19th century to the present day. As we move across the years we shall see how youth work transformed from voluntary and spontaneous activity to a state-controlled tool for ideological conditioning, and then to providing young people with the opportunity to acquire various (life) skills and competences.

Estonian history of the last 150 years can be divided into five fairly distinct periods, all of which have witnessed developments in the field of youth work:

- the national awakening before national independence, 1860s to 1918: prehistory of youth work;
- the democratic period of the first independence, 1918 to 1940: the beginning of organised youth work within the education system, the authoritarian period of the first independence and emergence of state-controlled youth work;
- the beginning of Soviet occupation, the Second World War and youth work under the German occupation, 1942 to 1944;

- the Soviet occupation, 1945 to 1989: explosive increase in youth work opportunities as a tool for ideological socialisation;
- the restoration of independence and independent statehood, 1990 onwards: youth work as developmental experience, and contemporary methods of youth work.

The prehistory of youth work: national awakening and civic activism

The second half of the 19th century, during which time Estonia was a part of the Russian Empire with local government run by a nobility of German background, witnessed the rise of Estonian societies, which were founded all over the country. This played an important role in national awakening. Choirs and orchestras were established in parishes, and literary, musical and theatrical societies, for instance, brought together Estonian intellectuals. Young people were attracted to these activities, and as the societies were often led by schoolteachers, the link between societal life and youth was straightforward.

➔ Rural youth activism

In the mid-19th century, the village school was the institution which carried out the role of local cultural awakening. Village schoolteachers were responsible for local libraries, the distribution of newspapers and various activities in local societies which followed the German example. They were often motivated by the struggle for educational and cultural development, and they volunteered to found choirs and orchestras that existed in practically all schools. Rural youth – and in the 19th century Estonia was a rural country – joined societies that emerged in the process of national awakening: reading societies, discussion groups, study groups, and societies for theatre, singing, musical performance as well as farming and housekeeping. Quite often the societies were started and led by young people.

The activities of these societies were educational and supported the personal development of participants. While it is obvious that particular skills like singing, acting, reading, debating and playing an instrument were developed, the societies also played a significant role in developing national identity and creating contacts among people. Promoting temperance was also amongst the goals of many societies.

In the second half of the 19th century, the education provided in village schools was to a significant extent standardised, though practical arrangements depended on teachers' experience and skills. The societies were often led by teachers, but it cannot be said that they carried out professional youth work as they had no special training in non-formal education or youth-specific methods. In any case, the societies and grassroots activism groups were open to all people. The volunteers and young people who participated in the work did not have a pedagogical background. The societies involved people from a very early age – education at the time constituted only three years, usually between the ages of 10 and 13. So 13-year-olds, having already finished their schooling, had free time they could spend on other activities.

➔ Urban youth activism

In towns, youth activism was motivated by national ideas as well as by the socialist movement, which played workers against capitalists and employers and had

connections with the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party as well as the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Illegal gymnasium pupils' groups emerged, led by more active fellow pupils who had no training in youth work. The groups were primarily places where the young could "let off steam" and realise their desire for nationally-motivated activism. Many such illegal pupils' organisations appeared in different places in the first decade of the 20th century. Some of the best-known were Taim, (A Plant), Amicitia (Friendship), Noorus.Õppurite Eneseharimise Rühm (Youth. Pupils' Self-development Group), and *Noorte Ühendus* (Youth Association). The neo-romantic Estonian literary group Noor Eesti (Young Estonia) devised the slogan "More European culture! Be Estonians but remain Europeans!", and was quite influential in society before 1918 (Järvesoo 2006; Vallikivi 2008).

➔ Church congregations

In the 19th century, the Church was the only institution which could legitimately organise people. Various church congregations attempted to mobilise and organise youth around Christian values using a range of methods: Sunday school, boarding schools, special church services for youth, as well as societies for boys and girls. However, these attempts were rather unsuccessful, partly because of economic development and the development of science and a secular worldview among people (Meikop 1927:48-9). The Church was also strongly associated with oppression, so did not enjoy popularity among the Estonian people. Its role diminished further as the national awakening movement gained momentum.

Youth movements in independent Estonia

The independent Republic of Estonia was declared on 24 February 1918.

Legislative developments

We can locate the start of organised youth work as a set of activities and environments aimed at supporting the development of young individuals in the 1920s. Extra-curricular activities were perceived to be an important part of youth education from the very beginning of the establishment of the formal education system in Estonia. At that time a legal framework for the formal education system was created that also provided a legislative basis for extra-curricular activities. In 1921, the Ministry of Education adopted "template constitutions" for pupils' societies and associations. These foresaw activity areas for pupils' associations as well as how these were to be managed; the involvement of a teacher was mandatory and the school management board had control over pupils' associations. In 1922, the Public Gymnasiums Act was adopted. It had a central role in framing extra-curricular activities. The act stipulated that secondary school pupils had the right to establish student societies and groupings, which had to be registered with the school pedagogical management board. The act also stipulated that though pupils could participate in organisations active outside the school, they needed to obtain permission for participation from the school pedagogical management board. The act gave the board the right to ban pupils' participation in other organisations.

Several other acts were adopted until the early 1930s, and another significant wave of legal initiatives swept over Estonia in the latter half of the decade. An

important development affecting youth work was the military *coup d'etat* of March 1934, which marked the beginning of the "silent era" of authoritarianism. This lasted until 1940, when Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union.

In 1936, the Organising Youth Act was adopted. This act introduced several significant definitions. First, it defined youth as all individuals below 20 years of age. The act set out goals for youth organisation. The first goal was to support young people so that they could become strong, healthy and active citizens with a strong sense of national cultural identity, contributing to building Estonian statehood. The second goal was to provide young people with opportunities to learn new skills and develop their strengths. Third, youth organisation was meant to contribute to Estonia's goals in the fields of national progress, national security and cultural development. The act defined youth organisations as entities which carried out activities that were compatible with the goals and values defined by the act; youth organisations had to follow regulations issued by the Ministry of Education. Organisations which met standards set forth by the ministry were eligible for state financial support. In 1938, the president issued a decree on the reorganisation of Estonian youth organisations into a new youth organisation called *Eesti Noored* (Estonian Youth). This new organisation was to be chaired by the Army's Supreme Commander. However, plans to form a central youth organisation did not materialise. One of the probable reasons was that by that time, the independence of Estonia was under threat from the Soviet Union, so organising youth received less attention.

➔ Youth work in schools: hobby rings

Following ministerial guidelines, hobby rings were established in schools, supervised and organised by teachers. Though the aim of the rings was to encourage pupils to pursue their interests, their initiatives and self-actualisation, they were actually controlled.

From 1923 to 1924, 65% of secondary school pupils and 10% of elementary school pupils took part in the activities of hobby rings. Thematically, there were more than 10 different types of hobby rings, with temperance, sports and literature rings being the most popular. Though the opportunities for school-based leisure time were meant to encourage youth activism and help youth become full members of society, pupils participated without great enthusiasm. These practices were also questioned by educational experts and practitioners themselves.

Fifteen years later, in 1937/38, 82% of schools had operating youth organisations and 43% of pupils were members of one. Compared to the beginning of the 1920s, the percentage of pupils taking part in youth organisations had increased notably. The list of rings and clubs that were operating in schools now comprised 71 different types of activities. The total number of rings in schools had reached 1 163, with a total of 48 127 participants. According to a ministerial report, the number of school-based youth organisations had reached 2 529 by the end of 1937.

➔ Pupils' Societies

The Pupils' Societies movement grew out of illegal pupils' groupings established already when Estonia was part of the Russian Empire. The movement's heyday was between 1921 and 1922. Societies were active in many towns, and membership

in larger societies was counted in the hundreds. Organisationally, the movement was divided into thematic branches along the lines of the school-based hobby groups. Activities were carried out in the form of debates and meetings, discussion groups of literature reviews, working groups, and other similar group work formats; the movement also had its own libraries and held several public events.

The movement started to experience problems in 1922 when several chapters expressed a desire to become independent. Some of its individual members were involved in public unrest. The Ministry of Education had been sceptical about the movement from the start. The template constitution, which was mandatory for Pupils' Societies' groupings, downgraded autonomous organisations into hobby groups. As a result, the Pupils' Societies movement lost several of its local chapters. The movement also experienced conflict with its sports branches, which led to the establishment of an independent Pupils' Sports Society in 1923. Though the sports society vanished quietly after several years, it noticeably weakened the Pupils' Societies movement. In addition, a temperance movement established its own independent society in 1923. The new society also took with it a number of activities that formerly were part of the Pupils' Societies movement, and weakened it further. As a result of these negative developments, the Pupils' Societies movement gradually lost momentum and by 1927, it ceased to exist (Lenotammi 1929:9-34).

The movement did provide many young people with opportunities to participate in developmental experiences. As its activities were planned and implemented by young people for young people, and the role of adults was minimal, we might recognise here features of the contemporary concept of youth participation. The management of the national organisation, which consisted of several tiers and communication with external actors, was also the responsibility of young people.

➔ Countrywide Union of Estonian Youth Societies

In 1919, the Countrywide Union of Estonian Youth Societies (CUEYS) was established. This organisation was an apolitical and non-religious youth movement. Its main goal was to support the personal development of young people through both relevant activities and contacts with other like-minded young people. It had its beginnings in rural areas, where young people found opportunities offered by the village school or by other societies (for adults) either inappropriate in terms of content or insufficiently youth oriented. They began to organise activities themselves. CUEYS was based on such youth activism, and as such it was clearly separate from societies for adults which also allowed the participation of young people.

CUEYS focused on activities which had potential for supporting personal growth and cultural development such as sports, music, literature, drama, Esperanto, chess, and activities in libraries and reading societies. A range of training courses was offered. There was a strong component of temperance, along with the promotion of patriotism and other human values (Meikop 1927:159-60, 197-98).

In the beginning, CUEYS was mainly a movement of school pupils, also involving some teachers, in the capital city of Tallinn and other towns. When in 1922 the Secondary Schools Act came into force, pupils' participation in organisations outside schools was more controlled. However, while the act controlled youth in the educational system, it did not apply to young people who had left school. The number of such young people was high in rural areas. Taking this

into consideration, the leaders of the movement decided to move CUEYS from urban to rural areas (Meikop 1927:194-97).

In 1919 CUEYS had seven local clubs, which increased to around 130 by 1927. In the second half of the 1920s, the total number of young people affiliated with CUEYS was between 5 000 and 10 000. In 1937, CUEYS reported 296 local clubs with around 15 000 participants aged 17 to 25 years, and altogether, 22 different types of rings.

Like the Pupils' Societies movement, CUEYS was a manifestation of youth activism rather than professional youth work. Its activities and organisation were led by young people themselves, schoolteachers and other active adults who had no special youth work training. Nevertheless, participation in clubs, rings and societies was probably a developmental experience for the participants, who would have acquired a range of personal qualities and skills, new knowledge, and new contacts.

➔ Countrywide Union of Rural Youth

By the end of 1920s Estonia, like several other European countries, was facing rapid urbanisation. To slow the phenomenon, farmers established agricultural commercial associations in rural areas, beginning in 1926. Young people joined the associations, as the threshold age for entrance was 14, but most youth members were 17 to 18 years old. In 1931 the National Agricultural Association, which had 72 local conventions, started to establish youth groups. This resulted in the integration of all rural youth groups under a single roof. In the early 1930s, an umbrella organisation was established: the Countrywide Union of Rural Youth (CURY). Unlike the Pupils' Societies movement and CUEYS, this organisation was managed by adults and also employed paid instructors to carry out activities for young people. Its main activities were training courses in agricultural and farming skills, study trips and agricultural contests, as well as "summer days" and other leisure activities. Its members were mostly young people between 13 and 25 years of age who were interested in self-development. Participation in the activities of CURY groups provided good agricultural and vocational skills, too. The organisation published two journals (Nassar 2002:223-53).

In 1935, CURY had 99 local chapters with 3226 registered members. In 1937 it had 250 chapters and 7785 members, which had increased by 1939 to 446 chapters and 13 500 members (Martinson, Bruus and Sikk 2000:35-50).

➔ Noorte Punane Rist

The Noorte Punane Rist (Estonian Youth Red Cross) was founded in 1923 by education activists. Its activities centred mainly on first aid, hygiene, health care and social care and as such, were not very attractive to young people. Youth did not have many opportunities to initiate activities they were keen on, therefore most Youth Red Cross members were primary school pupils. In 1924 the organisation had 3 310 members (Meikop 1927:190-91), which had increased by 1938 to approximately 9 000 (Roose 1939:52-63).

➔ Scouting

As early as 1911, pupils of a gymnasium in Tallinn had attempted to establish a scouting group. But the first functioning scouting group was founded in 1912 in the city of Pärnu. Exact membership figures are not known but between 30 and

100 teenage boys were engaged in weekly meetings and a range of summer and winter activities.[1] The group's activities came to an end in 1917 because of the German occupation (Tilk 1991:23).[2] In the same year, however, two scouting groups were started in Tallinn (Rannap 2012:83), following which other groups were quickly set up in other localities even though they were banned during the German occupation that lasted until 1919 (Tilk 1991:24).[3]

The Estonian Scouting Union was established in 1921 (Rannap 2012:93). It was one of the 22 founding members of the World Organization of the Scout Movement. The statute of the Estonian Scouting Union was adopted in 1923; in the same year, the Union of Scoutmasters was established (Tilk 1991:25). The organisation developed into a strong youth organisation and in the 1930s several activity branches (such as senior-scouting for young men above 18 and sea-scouting), were active within the Estonian Scouting Movement (Tilk 1991:27).

In 1920 there were about 1000 Boy Scouts in Estonia. Numbers fluctuated over the years, but in 1937/38 there were between 3 528 (Roose 1939:55-56) and 5 314 (Tilk 1991:28) Boy Scouts. There were slightly more members in the towns, but a roughly equal number of groups were active in schools and outside schools. The Girl Guides movement – scouting for girls – emerged in 1919 in Tallinn with the establishment of the first Girl Guide group. In 1924, there were 292 Girl Guides and 70 Brownies in Estonia, and by 1937/38 the organisation had 2 189 members (Roose 1939:52-63).

Both Boy Scout and Girl Guide organisations were dissolved when the Soviet Union occupied Estonia in 1940.

➔ Scouting-based organisations with an emphasis on patriotism

Young Blacksmiths

In 1920, the scouting movement split when a national movement emerged which accepted only Estonians as members. The movement was called Noored Sepad (Young Blacksmiths), and it also had a girls' chapter. The rationale for starting this new movement was dissatisfaction with the "cosmopolitan" nature of scouting and a wish to promote patriotism (Paalmann 1929:64-69). The organisation had approximately 2 000 members (Tilk 1991:28).

Defence League Boys Corps

Young Blacksmiths was reorganised in 1930, when it was incorporated into the Estonian Defence League's own youth organisation, *Noored Kotkad* (Young Eagles) and it ceased to exist as an independent organisation.[4] Young Eagles was a scouting-based organisation. It was supported by the defence league and rapidly gained popularity amongst young people. Membership consisted of two age groups: 8-to-12-year-olds and 13-to-18-year-olds. In 1937/38, with 15 632 members, the organisation was still growing. Most of its groups were active in rural areas and in schools.

1. *Skautluse ajalugu, Eesti Skautide Ühing*, www.skaut. ee/?jutt=10154, accessed 11 September 2013.
2. Ibid.
3. *Anton Õunapuu lühike elulugu*, www.skaut.ee/?jutt=10156, accessed 11 September 2013.
4. See www.hot.ee/tsgkotkad/ajalugu1.htm, accessed 11 September 2013.

Defence League Girls Corps

The Defence League Girls Corps was set up in 1932. As with the boys corps, it was popular among girls, and recruited them in the same age groups. With just 1 820 members in 1933, the organisation grew to include 19 601 members by 1939, the majority members of units organised in rural schools.

The Defence League youth organisations were dismissed in 1940 with Soviet occupation.

➔ Youth temperance movement

The Youth Temperance Union was founded in 1923. Its activities included organising congresses and meetings, training courses and essay competitions. This was a state-initiated movement, and did not meet with a very enthusiastic reception among young people.

The temperance movement was, in a sense, a "horizontal" organisation, as it was actually an umbrella organisation for groups from other movements such as scouting and CUEYS. But it also had its own chapters. Its organisational focus was on elementary and secondary schools. It had 7 620 members in 1923 (Elango 1925:168-76; Elango 1926:108-11), and a similar number in 1926/27 (Küng 1929:53-63). However, a decade on, membership had dropped to below 500 (Roose 1939:57), mainly because other youth associations offered similar opportunities for leisure and also included temperance as a principle (Meikop 1927:190).

➔ Church congregations

In the 1920s, a number of religious youth organisations were active in Estonia. However, the emphasis here should be on religion rather than youth, as the pattern was for religious organisations to have youth chapters. These organisations carried out mainly social care and religious activities.

Youth-targeted activities in the sphere of social care were motivated by two concerns: first, to keep youth safe and help them stay away from trouble, and second, to offer support and assistance to youth already in trouble. Conservative values and attitudinal and behavioural patterns were encouraged.

In terms of religious activities for youth, the societies promoted a Christian lifestyle within small (closed) communities. The religious societies had several hundred youth members, and the age of participants could be well over 30 years, which at the time was considered middle age.

The Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Young Men/Women Christian Association (YMCA/YWCA) had the largest youth organisations. In the Lutheran Church, youth work started in 1929 (Täheväli 1938:228-30; Toplaan 1999:219-45). Their "summer days" were popular among Christian youth. The activities of YMCA/YWCA started in the early 1920s. From 1923 to 1940, popular summer youth camps were organised. YMCA also supported the development of youth sports in Estonia. It was limited to the three or four bigger towns in Estonia, and was not really considered a youth organisation since it was managed by senior members; it was also considered an organisation driven by American rather than Estonian

values (Meikop 1927:182-85; Kelder 2001:59-61). However, it was popular with youth because of wide spectrum of its activities, in addition to religious activities, including training, educational and cultural activities, hiking and other social activities (Martinson, Bruus and Sikk 2000:35-50).

In 1934, YMCA had 20 local chapters with 3 000 members; YWCA had 1 500 members in 15 chapters. In 1937 they had 2 375 and 1976 members respectively, mostly above school age.

YMCA/YWCA were disbanded in 1940.

➔ Sports

It has been noted that sports were the most popular activity within the different youth organisations. Promoting the physical strength and good health of young people was identified as a significant or even central goal of youth work. At national level, youth sports were organised by the Central Union of Sports (CUS), which had been founded in 1922 and had a unit responsible for youth. At local level, the Tallinn Schools Sportsclub Union was active in the capital. Both organisations focused on preparing young people to compete and organised competitive sports events. The role of the youth unit in CUS was to organise sporting events and engage young people. CUS also trained youth trainers; in 1937, 459 people qualified as youth trainers. Under the auspices of CUS, well over 100 contests and scores of training courses were organised in 1937, and participation is estimated at around 19 000 (since some individuals took part in several events, the actual number of participants was significantly lower, but was still well over 10 000). These young people trained in the sports clubs of CUS. The Tallinn Schools Sportsclubs Union had 30 members with 1 249 individual members, of which 950 were competing athletes in 1936.

➔ Student organisations

Estonian language higher education became available in 1919, when the University of Tartu was founded as a national university (it was originally established back in 1632, and operated mainly in German at first, and in Russian later). The number of students was relatively small – from 1919 to 1939, altogether 5 751 students graduated from the university but most of them were members of academic student unions (Hiio 2009; Ruus 2002).

All student unions were dissolved in 1940 (Piirimäe 2012:101-10).

Youth work during the Second World War

During the Second World War, Estonia was occupied twice: by Soviet troops from 1940 to 1941, then by German troops from 1941 to 1944. Organised youth work took place from late 1942 to early 1944. In October 1942, a youth organisation called Estonian Youth was founded. Its activities were mostly "work education", or simply working in agriculture to support the wartime economy, but also involved leisure time opportunities and military training (unsurprisingly). The organisation was dissolved when Soviet troops invaded the country in 1944.

Youth work during the Soviet era

Estonia was forced to join the Soviet Union in 1940. In 1944, the Soviet administrative system was established on the territory of Estonia when German troops were pushed out of the country. The occupying power aimed at enforcing as much control as possible and centralised in all areas of society, including youth work. Virtually all youth organisations had already been dissolved before the war.[5]

→ Komsomol

From 1945, the organisation of young people's free time was the responsibility of the Communist Youth League or Komsomol, the Communist Party youth organisation. The main goals of Komsomol were to:

- support the Communist Party in the upbringing of a communist-minded young generation;
- involve young people in building a "new society";
- prepare young people to live in a communist society.

Communist youth organisation was divided into two large sections targeting different age groups:

- the Communist Youth League or Komsomol was an organisation for youth aged 14 to 28 years and
- the Pioneer Organisation was a children's organisation for the age group 10 to 15.

In addition, a special section for 6 to 10 year old children existed – pioneers were involved in organising leisure time for the children, who were called October Children.

The Pioneer Organisation was youth chapter of Komsomol ant itsmain function was to carry out youth (political) socialisation in different age groups.

The Estonian Communist Youth League was actually a local branch of the all-Union Komsomol, not an independent organisation. Though it started as an independent socialist movement in 1917, it lost its independence in 1940 when it was integrated into the all-union organisation (Herodes 1940:14). Its activities began, officially, after the Second World War.

Following the regime change, the Estonian Communist Youth League became the central organisation responsible for the "proper socialisation" of young people into Soviet realities. Joining the organisation was voluntary, although not joining could become an obstacle in acquiring education (getting into secondary school and university), as well as in finding a job in one's professional field.[6]

Komsomol was present everywhere. As shaping children's and young people's understandings, beliefs and attitudes was considered very important in becoming

5. See Museum of Occupations, www.okupatsioon.ee/et/andmed-ja-nimekirjad/214-oiguse-vastu-ei-saa-uekski?start=4, accessed 11 September 2013.

6. See Estonica, www.estonica.org/en/Komsomol, accessed 11 September 2013.

a "homo sovieticus" or Soviet citizen, Komsomol put a strong emphasise on dissemination and on youth work. In schools, socialisation into socialist conscience and morality was considered as important as providing good knowledge on different subjects (Lentsmann 1963:5-28; Sarri 1975:5-21). Carefully designed messages were communicated through school textbooks, youth-targeted newspapers and other mass media channels, exhibitions, public places, and even the interior decorations of kindergartens (Herodes 1940:35-37). Often the information disseminated was an outright lie (Pilve 2010:54-71; Mõistlik 2007; Tilk 2011). The teaching of ideology was not limited to schools but was made accessible to wider audiences through folk universities and various lecture courses. For instance, in 1981, 536 lecturers were working in this way. They gave 11 870 lectures to 451 061 people on eight broad themes, including subjects directly linked to youth such as the history of the Pioneer Organisation, youth and the ideological struggle, international youth movements, and youth and law. At the end of 1970, Komsomol set up pedagogical study groups and by 1982, 290 such groups with more than 3 000 participants were operational. Folk universities gave lectures on a variety of themes, and around a third of their audiences were below 30 years of age. Folk universities also offered a programme called Youth ABC which gave youth a brief introduction to different professions and vocations and fulfilled the function of youth counselling.

At an everyday level, Komsomol influenced life through Komsomol committees which were established in universities and larger enterprises and in towns and rural municipalities. Between congresses at which representatives of Komsomol committees gathered, Komsomol was led by its Central Committee. It was part of and controlled by the Communist Party, but actually its role was ambivalent, depending on the reigning Soviet Union political leader. For instance, during the Khrushchev era of political thaw in the 1950s and 1960s, the Komsomol committees of universities started several initiatives which were positively received by society (Adamson and Titma 2009:2287-303). Youth "summer days", started by the Estonian Komsomol Central Committee in the late 1950s to replace clerical customs, took place over 30 years.[7]

Komsomol had a notable influence on youth employment. Being an all-union organisation, it had the power to relocate young employees from one region to another. Thousands of members of the Estonian Communist League worked in other regions of the Soviet Union and hundreds of thousands of young people from other regions worked in Estonia.

Komsomol organised youth events like festivals, summer days and contests in various spheres ranging from sports to arts and music. These events and initiatives were rather popular among young people. Sputnik, Komsomol's travel agency, provided tens of thousands of young people with travelling opportunities.

Membership of the Estonian Komsomol grew from 1 191 in 1945 to 162 260 in 1985. There were several factors behind this, including political pressure and fear, which compelled young people to join Komsomol: Soviet ethnic policy, which relocated approximately 1.1 million young people to Estonia (Tiit 2011:111-12); the prolonging of the educational path in general, which made more young people available for propaganda and agitation; and the change in university

7. See Eesti Rahva Muuseum, Nõukogulik lähetus ellu – noorte suvepäevad Eesti NSVs, www.erm.ee/UserFiles/enaitus/Suvepaevad, accessed 11 September 2013.

enrolment criteria in 1960, which required each applicant to obtain approval from Komsomol. Before 1950, membership of the Estonian Komsomol was dominated by non-Estonians, but this changed after 1950, with the share of young people of Estonian background at between 60% and 70%. At the beginning of 1989 this figure was 61%, though there were large differences across settlements and regions: in north-eastern towns Estonian membership was 2% while in the southern part of the country and on islands it reached 97%. Towns were industrial centres and heavily populated with non-Estonian immigrants, making the share of Estonians lower (45%) than in the countryside and rural areas where it was twice as high (89%). In 1990, the Estonian Communist Youth League had only 25 198 members. The Youth League was reorganised in March 1991 into an independent Estonian Youth League, but the new organisation decided to cease operating in October 1991. The all-Union organisation was disbanded in September 1991.

➔ Pioneer Organisation

The Pioneer Organisation was responsible for providing pupils with opportunities for extra-curricular activities that also functioned as socialisation activities (Soon 1987:18-19). Socialising events on various themes were held on important dates from modern and folk history and proved popular with children.[8] Pioneer camps were organised for youth aged 7 to 15 during the summer vacation. In 1946, 13 such camps were operational and in 1972 there were 35 permanent Pioneer camps (Aus 2010). The number of pioneers was 63 607 in 1960 and 69 843 in 1962. By the mid-1970s the number of pioneers is estimated to have exceeded 70 000 (Väljas 1975:22-48).

➔ Pioneer centres and hobby rings

To replace the hobby rings that were disbanded along with the youth organisations, a new system of hobby rings was set up. Pupils were offered opportunities to participate in technical, agricultural and creative groups; the last group was the most popular. Pupils could participate in these activities in schools but also in Pioneer centres, which began to appear right after the Soviet occupation started. These organisations were set up to provide children and young people with opportunities to spend their leisure time productively. The first Pioneer centre was established in 1941. Between 1949 and 1959, 11 Pioneer centres were established throughout Estonia; in 1970 there were 16 Pioneer centres and by 1989 there were 27. Hobby ring teachers were school pedagogues and specialists working in enterprises: engineers, scientists, and so on. In addition to Pioneer centres several specialised organisations, such as the House of Young Technicians and the Children's Station of Excursions[9] were operational. Children's and young people's hobby rings were also operated by cultural clubs.

➔ Specialised schools for music and arts

After the Second World War, specialised schools of music and arts were set up. Children could learn particular skills or a musical instrument at a more advanced level: the schools provided in-depth skills in a particular field rather than general education. This appeared to be a continuation of the activities of various hobby rings. Some of the schools were reorganised from private schools

8. See https://sites.google.com/site/pioneerimalevapaevik/8586, accessed 11 September 2013.

9. Authors' translations of Noorte tehnikute maja and ENSV Laste Ekskursiooni ja Turismi Keskmaja.

that functioned before the Second World War, but most were newly founded. The number of schools grew over the decades and by 1970, 26 children's music schools were operating with 4 747 pupils; by 1989, there were 50 such schools with 8 128 pupils. The number of art schools was much lower: in 1970 only two schools were operating and by 1989 there were only eight, with 117 and 982 pupils respectively.

➜ Sports

Sporting activities were to assist in the upbringing of a strong and healthy generation to be exploited in the interest of the state. Economic, social and educational welfare was demonstrated through success in sports. The third function of sports was to keep the young in active practice to prevent the forming of dissident minds. Additionally, sports in Estonia were also seen as a means of making the new generation capable of sustaining the nation.[10]

During the Soviet era, sports enjoyed considerable investment. In 1982 there were a total of 537 000 competitive athletes and physically active people in Estonia. They had access to hundreds of sports facilities and sites. The communist system provided sporting opportunities to all those interested, from "weekend warriors" to elite athletes participating in the Olympic Games and world championships. Mass sporting events were organised where hundreds of thousands of people took part. In parallel to specialised hobby education schools, children's schools of sports were established. In 1945 the first five such schools began to operate;[11] in 1946, 7 were operational. The number of sports schools increased gradually and by 1981 there were 61 with more than 30 000 pupils. In addition, in general education schools, there were classes specialising in sports. In 1988, there were 88 such classes with 1 650 pupils in attendance.[12]

➜ Work education

There were three organisations for work education in Estonia, targeting groups of different ages and educational backgrounds.

Estonian Student Building Brigades

Eesti Üliõpilaste Ehitusmalev (The Estonian Student Building Brigades (ESBB)) was formed after the example of the all-Union Student Brigades, which used students to alleviate labour shortages in the Soviet Union. ESBB had its beginnings in 1964, when 125 students travelled to Kazakhstan to work on a construction project. From 1966 on the brigades worked mainly in Estonia, where they were employed in construction work in rural areas. In later years some of the brigades worked abroad, in other socialist countries. The heyday of ESBB was in the 1970s, when about 2 000 students, or 10% of all Estonian students, worked in ESBB each year. Up to the dissolution of the brigades in 1993, over 30 000 students had taken part.

10. See Museum of Occupations, www.okupatsioon.ee/en/overviews-1940-1991/15-sport, accessed 11 September 2013.

11. See Estonian Olympic Committee, http://vana.eok.ee/eesti_spordiliikumise_arengu_kronoloogia?sess_admin=c197b51049a69b9028ff9432e8d117c3, accessed 11 September 2013.

12. See Museum of Occupations, www.okupatsioon.ee/en/overviews-1940-1991/15-sport, accessed 11 September 2013.

ESBB worked as a springboard to a successful career along both professional and party tracks. Interestingly, ESBB participants were also very successful after the restoration of independence. Some brigade commanders became legendary figures in certain circles and the network of ESBB acquaintances remained crucial for success in business, party and public administration careers in independent Estonia.

ESBB participation was voluntary, although controlled by Komsomol, like all other youth activities. Commissars were installed in every brigade whose task was to carry out political instruction. Aside from instruction in communist ideology, ESBB gave young people the welcome opportunity to spend time together in the summer, have fun and earn some money as well. Therefore the brigades became hugely popular, and were characterised by a relatively liberal atmosphere. At the annual student brigades' get-togethers, young people repeatedly expressed their critical attitude towards the situation in the Soviet Union through artistic amateur performances, to which the authorities turned somewhat of a blind eye (Rennu 2007:116-46).

Estonian Pupils' Work Brigades

The tradition of Eesti Õpilasmalev (Estonian Pupils' Work Brigades (EPWB)), work brigades for secondary school students aged 15 to 18 years began in 1967 when the first seven brigades were set up (Toome 1986:381). The activity period of pupils' work brigades lasted six weeks. This time was divided into work and leisure. Work meant mainly elementary jobs in agriculture and forestry. At the end of the working period, summer days were also organised annually. As was the case with ESBB, Komsomol attempted to control life in the brigades but this was only partly successful (Adamson and Titma 2009). Pupils' work brigades became very popular among pupils since it meant they could spend time with peers and also earn some money during the summer vacation. The brigades were most popular at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, when the number of participating schoolchildren reached over 20 000. The brigades remained to a notable extent free of ideology; they were environments where youth worked and networked, had a good time and enjoyed their summer vacations (Kesküla 2006).

In the 1970s the Work and Vacation Camp was begun. It was intended to provide time for socialising and leisure activities as well as a working environment for children in elementary school between 12 and 15 years of age. As a "younger brother" of the pupils' work brigades, it put more emphasis on leisure and less on working.

Pupils' work brigades ceased to function at the end of the 1980s as a result of the economic hardships in the Soviet Union and the widening spectrum of opportunities to spend free time.

Contemporary youth work: 1990 to 2012

Estonian independence was restored on 20 August 1991, with a proclamation by the Estonian Supreme Soviet. The beginning of a new era in the statehood of Estonia brought about significant changes in the field of youth work. The centralised youth work system from the Soviet period ceased to exist, though not entirely, and not instantly. The building of a new system started in the 1990s, but

as much as possible youth work structures from the Soviet period were used. In the process of restructuring the youth work field, a variety of contemporary youth work institutions and organisations were established.

The Department of Youth Affairs was formed in 1990 in the Ministry of Education and Research. The department initiated and carried out a number of significant changes in the process of restructuring the field of youth work and youth work policy.

A number of legislative acts were adopted, including acts framing the functioning of different school types (of these, the Primary School and Gymnasium Act was adopted in 1993 and amended in 2010), the Hobby Schools Act of 1995 (a new version was adopted in 2007), and the Juvenile Sanctions Act of 1998. The Youth Work Act was first adopted in 1999, and was significantly amended in 2010. This last act defines a young person as "a natural person between 7 and 26 years of age" and states:

Youth work is the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of young persons which enable them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system, and work on the basis of their free will.[13]

The adoption of the Youth Work Act turned local municipalities into major players in the youth field as they were responsible for implementing a significant part of youth work.

The year 1999, in fact, turned out to be a significant year for youth work and policy in Estonia, with the founding of the Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC), juvenile committees, the National Youth Policy Council, youth counselling, and the organisation of the First Youth Work Forum.

EYWC was founded as a national centre for youth work under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education and Research. Its main objective is to develop and organise youth work in the framework of national youth policy, and it grew out of the National Youth Tourism House (1955 to 1994) and the National Youth Work Initiative Centre (1994 to 1999).

The system of juvenile committees that was launched sought to prevent young people from violating the law and reduce recidivism among youth. The number of juvenile committees increased from 34 in 1999 to 68 in 2009 (Kereme 2010). The National Youth Policy Council brings together representatives of major youth organisations, relevant ministries and other stakeholders. Its main role is to give advice to the Minister of Education and Research on youth matters. Youth counselling services, launched after the adoption of the Youth Work Act, are held in the counselling centres that exist in all county centres and other locations. Counselling is offered on a range of topics, including health, relationships with peers, studying and training, work and career planning, leisure time, and travelling abroad. The First Youth Work Forum is a major biannual event to discuss, evaluate and plan youth work and youth work policy. Meanwhile, the national agency of the European Commission civic education programme Youth in Europe was founded in 1997 and its first projects received support in 1998/99.

13. Youth Work Act, par. 4, http://www.legaltext.ee/et/andmebaas/tekst.asp?loc=text&dok=XXXXXX07&keel=en, accessed 27 October 2013.

Even before the restoration of independence, youth associations had emerged that were based on (youth) civic activism. Some organisations were the legal heirs of pre-war organisations (such as Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, Defence League Boys and Girls Corps), while others were set up from scratch (such as political youth organisations, civic youth organisations). The umbrella organisation of youth associations, the National Youth Council, was established in 2002. The Federation of Estonian Students Unions was established in 1991, and the Estonian School Council Union in 2000. County and municipal youth councils were set up as well.

Open youth centres began to develop at the turn of the millennium when the first two centres were opened in different towns. By late 2012, approximately 250 open youth centres were operating.[14] Today, opportunities to engage in hobbies are offered by a range of organisations. According to the National Education Information System, the number of organisations where one can follow an art- or music-related programme had reached 137 and the number of organisations offering sports training programmes was 239 in 2012.[15] Many of the schools developed from Soviet-era specialised schools.

Finally, youth work in general has benefited from training programmes. Youth worker training was initiated in 1992, and by 2013, youth workers were being trained in three institutions of higher education: Tallinn University Pedagogical Seminar (since 1992), University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy (since 1995), and University of Tartu Narva College (since 2004).

Conclusion

Youth work in Estonia has followed a winding road. Until the 1920s, youth had to be satisfied with participation in adult organisations; their main motivation was education and self-improvement, framed by the endeavour to establish an independent state. During the first period of independence, youth associations and youth organisations became the means of spending leisure time meaningfully. Self-improvement, self-fulfilment, integration into society, opportunities to spend time with like-minded peers and be involved in one's favourite activities were the main motivations to participate in youth organisations. During the Soviet period, independent, youth activism-based activities were banned and replaced by centralised structures: specialised schools, Pioneer centres, clubs and other institutions. Virtually all youth work was converted into a tool for socialising young people into Soviet realities. Nevertheless, many children and young people did enjoy the opportunities offered by hobby rings, summer camps, and other youth work structures. During the Soviet period, significant resources were allocated to improve leisure time opportunities. After the restoration of independence, the youth work system was entirely restructured and modernised to meet the needs of an independent state. Formerly centralised structures ceased to exist and were replaced by structures based on civic initiative and perceived needs.

When searching for explanations of these developments, both internal and external factors need to be taken into account. These factors had varying influences in different

14. See Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus, www.ank.ee/?p=p_307&sName=kokkuv%F5te, accessed 11 September 2013.

15. See the Estonian Education Information System, www.ehis.ee, accessed 11 September 2013.

time periods. Between 1920 and 1940, decisions in the field of youth work were shaped by national leaders and ideas as well as by innovative practices "imported" from other countries. During the Soviet period, youth work was moulded after decisions taken outside Estonia by the central structures of the Communist Party and Communist Youth League. Republican structures too had a say, but Estonia was part of a large authoritarian system and needed to adapt to its rules. After the restoration of independence, youth work developments became influenced by national actors and also by international organisations such as the Council of Europe and EU, as well as by other friendly entities. At the beginning of the 21st century, young people in Estonia are viewed as a developmental resource and efforts are being made to provide them with additional developmental opportunities.

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