

## Youth Partnership

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



# COUNTRY SHEET ON YOUTH WORK in ESTONIA

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# 1. Context of youth work

Youth work in Estonia has a long tradition, which can be traced back to the national awakening in the 19th century, when Estonia was part of the Tsarist Russian Empire and the first youth movements and organisations (such as national student organisations and working-class youth movements) started to form.<sup>1</sup>

The very first attempt for systematic youth activity outside the home, school and church was the establishment of the scouting movement in 1911.<sup>2</sup> However, Taru et al.<sup>3</sup> suggest that we can locate the beginning of organised youth work in Estonia in the 1920s because that was the point when a set of activities and environments started to aim to support the development of young individuals and extra-curricular activities were considered an important part of youth education. The legislation of youth work and education evolved rapidly during the first independence (1918-1940) and several acts were adopted to regulate extra-curricular activities and youth organisations.<sup>4</sup> The Youth Organisation Act (passed in 1936) defined youth as all individuals below 20 years of age and considered it important to support youths' adaptation in life and stated the necessity to create favourable conditions for the development of young people's knowledge, skills and talents.<sup>5</sup> Organisations which met the standards set out in the act and the Ministry of

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<sup>1</sup>. Beilmann M. (2016), *Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1*, CATCH-EyoU Project; Martinson K., Bruus K. and Sikk T. (2000), Noorsooliikumise ajalugu Eestis. *Eesti Noorsooraport*, Tallinn: Ministry of Education; Talur P. (2012), Noorsootöö olemus ja kujunemine, in *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies; Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), The history of youth work in Estonia, in Taru M, Coussée F. and Williamson, H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol 4 (pp. 15-33), Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>2</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275; Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33), Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>3</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15–33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>4</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275; Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>5</sup>. Kivimäe A. (2009), Tööturule trügides: väljakutsed noorsootöös, *Mihus*, No. 2: 7-8.

Education were eligible for state financial support.<sup>6</sup> Promotion of physical strength and good health of youth was considered a central aim of the youth work and sports were the most popular activity within the youth organisations.<sup>7</sup>

During the first independence (1918-1940), a lot of hobby activities were organised in schools and supervised by teachers.<sup>8</sup> Taru et al. report that the variety and popularity of such school-based hobby groups increased considerably in the 1930s. A lot of youth organisations were established<sup>9</sup> as well as associations of youth organisations, such as the Countrywide Union of Estonian Youth Societies (founded in 1919).<sup>10</sup> However, the latter was mainly led by young people themselves and, as such, an example of youth activism rather than professional youth work.<sup>11</sup>

The Second World War and the Soviet occupation of Estonia interrupted the smooth development of youth work by suppressing existing youth organisations and replacing these with Soviet mass organisations for youth.<sup>12</sup> The occupying power centralised youth work as it happened with all areas of life.<sup>13</sup> The Soviet era in Estonian youth work can be best characterised by mass organisations for youth: there was the Estonian Leninist-Communist Youth Association for young adults, the pioneer organisation for teenagers, and October children groups for younger school children.<sup>14</sup> The main aim of these organisations was the communist socialisation of children and young people into *homo sovieticus*.<sup>15</sup> Participation in these organisations was voluntary, but not joining was

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<sup>6</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>7</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>. Beilmann M. (2016), Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1, CATCH-EyoU Project.

<sup>10</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>11</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>. Beilmann M. (2016), Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1, CATCH-EyoU Project; Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia, 10.2766/7275

<sup>13</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>14</sup>. Talur P. (2012), Noorsootöö olemus ja kujunemine, in *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>15</sup>. Ibid.

sanctioned by making it practically impossible to acquire higher education, for example.<sup>16</sup> More than 95% of children and youngsters were in those organisations by the end of 1980s.<sup>17</sup>

As socialisation of young people was a priority of Komsomol, a strong emphasis was put on youth work.<sup>18</sup> The hobby activities (e.g. technical and creative groups) were provided both in schools and Pioneer centres, which were set up in the 1940s to organise the leisure time of children and young people productively.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, specialised schools of music and arts were established. In such schools, children learned particular skills or a musical instrument at an advanced level.

For most of the Soviet era youth organisations did not survive the restoration of independence<sup>20</sup> but youth work in contemporary Estonia is in many ways based on the physical infrastructure which was built in 1940-1988 (such as pioneer houses, pioneer camps, hobby schools etc.). However, those old buildings and systems are nowadays filled with much more contemporary and flexible content to support the individual development of children and young people.<sup>21</sup>

The 1990s were characterised by rapid changes, major reforms and democratisation. The reorganisation of old Soviet forms of youth work and youth organisations into a new and more flexible system took some years. Many youth organisations were established or re-established and many new Western-like youth organisations were established at the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>22</sup> The first years of regained independence were also the time when competing political parties entered the Estonian political field and the first youth organisations of the bigger political parties were established. The rise of different political youth organisations can be considered a significant change in Estonian society and the scene of Estonian youth organisations because the diversity in the field of political

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<sup>16</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15–33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>17</sup>. Talur P. (2012), Noorsootöö olemus ja kujunemine, in *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>18</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>19</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>. Beilmann M. (2016), Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1, CATCH-EyoU Project.

<sup>21</sup>. Talur P. (2012), Noorsootöö olemus ja kujunemine, in *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>22</sup>. Beilmann M. (2016), Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1, CATCH-EyoU Project.

ideologies had been something unthinkable for previous 50 years during the Soviet Occupation.<sup>23</sup>

The 1990s was also the time when issues and possibilities of the EU first caught the attention of Estonian youth. Europe, the EU and international youth work were alluring with all the possibilities offered to the young people and the first organisations that mediated these possibilities to the Estonian youth were founded. International Youth Association EstYES – a pioneer organisation in the field of international youth voluntary service in Estonia – was established in 1991 and international youth work and volunteering slowly started gaining popularity in Estonia.<sup>24</sup>

Youth worker training programmes were launched in 1992.<sup>25</sup> The turn of the millennium marks the beginning of open youth work in Estonia: the very first open youth centre was established in 1998 in Narva. The importance of youth work in Estonia has increased considerably and now it can be claimed that modern youth work in Estonia was created as an independent sector (different from social work or education) during the last 15-20 years.<sup>26</sup> Most of the modern infrastructure has been developed during that time. In the 2000s there was a boom in opening open youth centres all over Estonia (one open youth centre in 1998, and about 263 open youth centres in 2016).<sup>27</sup> In recent years, the focus of youth work is increasingly moving away from developing the infrastructure and concrete services towards the pedagogical aims to support the formation of an active and conscious citizen and co-operation between different sub-sectors inside youth work (youth info, open youth work etc.).<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>26</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>27</sup>. [Webpage of Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Youth Affairs Department.](#)

<sup>28</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

## 2. Strategic and legislative framework of youth work

**Youth work is regulated by law at the national level in Estonia.** A number of legislative acts which regulate the youth work field were adopted from the beginning of the 1990s, including the Hobby Schools Act<sup>29</sup> (1995, a new version in 2007), the Juvenile Sanctions Act<sup>30</sup> (1998, no longer in force from 1 January 2018),<sup>31</sup> and the Youth Work Act<sup>32</sup> (1999, amended in 2010 and in 2017). The latter regulates the whole youth work sector and defines the obligations of different authorities in the youth field. Besides the three acts that deal directly with youth work, there are altogether 29 Acts that mention young people and which define the obligations and rights of state institutions towards young people as well as rights and duties of young people.

**Youth work is defined** in the Estonian Youth Work Act as “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”. Therefore, this definition states that youth work covers a wide range of different activities which should enable young people to be active and develop outside the formal educational system. This definition underlines the non-formal learning process and the voluntary nature of taking part for young people.

As defined by the Youth Work Act, the target group of youth work in Estonia are all young people aged 7-26. The Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020<sup>33</sup> also considers the same age group as young people.

The Youth Work Act provides the legal basis for the organisation and financing of youth work. The Act defines the main terms used in the youth field, main institutions, organisations and forms of youth work, the principles of youth work, financing of youth work, and the responsibilities regarding youth work of the Ministry of Education and Research, and local municipality. The Estonian Youth Work Act distinguishes between a youth work agency, youth work association and youth work institution, where each body represents formal or non-formal aspects of youth work. The Act defines municipal and local youth councils.

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<sup>29</sup>. Government of Estonia (2007), *Riigi Teataja*, I 2007, 4, 19, Tallinn: Government of Estonia.

<sup>30</sup>. Government of Estonia (1998), *Riigi Teataja*, I, 1998, 17, 264, Tallinn: Government of Estonia.

<sup>31</sup>. Juvenile committees were formed of professionals from different fields (e.g. teacher, psychologist, doctor, police officer, youth worker, etc.) and they dealt with young offenders who had committed offences that did not need to go to court. Juvenile committees were allowed to use different sanctions (e.g., obligation to participate in certain youth programmes, community work, sending to closed school, etc.) with the aim of correcting the young person's behaviour.

<sup>32</sup>. Government of Estonia (2010), *Riigi Teataja*, I 2010, 44, 262, Tallinn: Government of Estonia.

<sup>33</sup>. [Web page of Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

One of the peculiarities of Estonian youth work is the distinction between hobby education and hobby activities. Hobby education is based on fixed curricula, whereas hobby activities are not. Hobby education is concentrated in hobby schools, whereas hobby activities can take place in schools, youth centres, youth organisations, and in other nongovernmental organisations. However, hobby education and hobby activities are both an important part of Estonian youth work.

**The Standard of Hobby Education**<sup>34</sup> defines hobby education as the means “to create possibilities for the versatile development of personality and support the formation of every young person into a member of society, who is managing well”. Although sport is the most popular hobby among young people,<sup>35</sup> it falls under the function of the Ministry of Culture and is regulated separately by the Sport Act,<sup>36</sup> where youth sport does not have much attention. However, sport is mentioned among other areas in the Estonian Hobby School Act, but is not organised or regulated by the youth work sector.

There has been discussion among the youth work specialists in Estonia whether some more issues should be regulated by the law (e.g. whether the qualification standard for youth workers should be made compulsory; should a youth centre be defined by the law, etc.) but there is no consensus as to whether more regulations would be beneficial for youth work or not.<sup>37</sup>

**Estonia does have a development plan for youth field.** ‘Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020’ (Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020) is a national-level strategic document which states the main principles of youth policy in Estonia, gives an overview of the current situation and sets the strategic aims in the field of youth until 2020. The main goal introduced in the development plan is to provide young people with opportunities for development and self-realisation which support socially coherent and creative society in general. The Youth Field Development Plan focuses on four sub-goals which are considered most important to achieve positive change in youth affairs: (1) creating better opportunities for young people to develop their creativity, initiative and co-operation; (2) enlargement of youth involvement and improving young people’s readiness to enter the labour market; (3) supporting youth’s active participation in communities and decision making; and (4) ensuring the development of high-quality youth policy and youth work. In the development plan, youth work is seen as a policy measure helping to implement activities aimed to achieve policy goals in the field of youth.

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<sup>34</sup>. *Standard of Hobby Education*. The regulation is established on the basis of § 9 of the *Hobby Schools Act* (2007), . 37-52..mäe,stonia 2007-2009. Tartu: Ministry of Education and Research.

<sup>35</sup>. Pihor K., Taru M. and Batueva V. (2012), *Eesti noorte osalemise noorsootöös. Noorteseire Eestis poliitikaülevaade*, 3/2012, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>36</sup>. Estonian Sport Act (2005), *Riigi Teataja*, I 2005, 22, 148. Tallinn: Government of Estonia.

<sup>37</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.



The development of youth work is one of the main themes in the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020. The responsible authority for the implementation of the development plan and the ministry in charge of youth is the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, the Youth Affairs Department.

**The newest developments in the youth field regulations** concern smart youth work and digitalised services for young people. The Ministry of Education and Research has put together a concept of SMART youth work<sup>38</sup> available as of July 2017.

**There is no separate regional or local level legislation on youth work** as Estonia is a unitary state. However, local municipalities either have a youth field development plan or youth issues are included in the general development plan of the municipality. The Development Plan of Tartu for 2013-2020 (Tartu Linna Arengukava aastateks 2013-2020<sup>39</sup>) – a central strategic document of the second biggest town in Estonia – is a fine example of how youth issues may dissolve between different policy areas so that they become almost invisible. Although the town has a rather strong youth service and many active youth organisations, the strengths of the local youth work sector are hardly present in this document.

The Estonian National Youth Council – an umbrella organisation of 43 Estonian youth organisations – has adopted the **Youth Policy Platform of the Estonian National Youth Council** (Eesti Noorteühenduste Liidu Noortepoliitika Platvorm<sup>40</sup>). The document consists of 12 chapters on different youth policy issues which are considered important by youth organisations (e.g. youth participation, high-quality youth work, development of youth organisations, youth counselling, social guarantees of young people, equal rights, etc.). Each chapter gives an overview of the pros and cons of current situation and states the views and suggestions of the Estonian National Youth Council. Surprisingly, much emphasis is put on the importance of good-quality and easily accessible youth work (including youth information and hobby education).

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<sup>38</sup>. [Web page of Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>39</sup>. [Web page of Tartu.](#)

<sup>40</sup>. [Web page of Estonian National Youth Council.](#)

### 3. Recognition

There is general awareness among Estonian youth workers that on the whole, youth work is actually a non-formal learning experience.<sup>41</sup> Opportunities for non-formal learning are diverse (e.g., hobby schools, youth centres, youth clubs, youth associations, etc.) and there are different initiatives to validate non-formal education and learning in youth work contexts. The Youth in Action Programme has had an influence in recognising non-formal learning experiences and the introduction of YouthPass and accompanying CV forms was probably the first step towards the wider recognition of non-formal learning experience.<sup>42</sup> In addition, a webpage ([www.stardiplats.ee](http://www.stardiplats.ee))<sup>43</sup> was launched in the frame of the ESF programme “Improving the quality of youth work”.<sup>44</sup> The purpose of this site is to help young people to describe and prove the skills and experiences they have gained through non-formal learning and youth work.

The clear sign of professionalisation of youth work in Estonia is the fact that there is an occupational standard for youth workers. An occupational standard applies for a range of specialists who work with young people (e.g. youth worker, career counsellor, youth information specialist, youth camp manager-teacher). The professional standard for youth workers was approved in 2006. It was developed by the working group of youth work experts from different organisations and administered by the Estonian Qualifications Authority. The standard describes youth work as a profession and states the qualification requirements for the professional qualification of youth workers at Levels III, IV and V.<sup>45</sup> A new professional standard for youth workers was approved in 2012 and amended in November 2017.<sup>46</sup> It defines the qualification requirements for youth workers at Levels IV, VI and VII. However, obtaining the qualification standard is not mandatory and only 106 youth workers were in the lists of the Estonian Qualifications Authority as of June 2017.<sup>47</sup> Many more (nearly 4 000) have obtained partial qualification of youth camp teams, which is mandatory to work in the youth camp.<sup>48</sup>

Some youth work experts argue that almost anyone can be a youth worker in Estonia; a professional qualification is not always required (especially in smaller municipalities on

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<sup>41</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>42</sup>. Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>. *Stardiplats* – Launch pad in Estonian.

<sup>44</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>45</sup>. Professional Council for Education (2006), *Professional Standard. Youth Worker III, IV, V*, Tallinn: Professional Council for Education.

<sup>46</sup>. [Web page of the Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>47</sup>. [Web page of the Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>48</sup>. [Web page of the Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

the periphery).<sup>49</sup> However, it is important to mention that despite the fact that only very few youth workers have applied to obtain the professional qualification standard, many more have graduated from higher education institutions as trained youth workers. The first youth worker training programme was launched in 1992.<sup>50</sup> Today, youth work is taught in different institutions in Estonia. There have been BA-level youth work curricula in the University of Tartu, Narva College (applied higher education, four years) since 2004, BA-level curricula in leisure time manager-teacher (applied higher education) in the Viljandi Culture Academy of the University of Tartu, and BA-level youth work curricula in Tallinn University (applied higher education, three years) since 1994. Furthermore, there have been MA-level youth work management curricula in Tallinn University since 2015, but the programme is not open every year.

There are also non-formal training opportunities available for both novice and experienced youth workers. Nevertheless, many youth workers learn on the job. Non-formal education and acquired work experiences are recognised in the occupational standard as well. The need for training is monitored among the youth workers to find out what kind of training and courses they need the most.<sup>51</sup> A wide range of non-degree training courses are provided by the Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency (Estonian National Agency for Erasmus+), for example, in Estonia<sup>52</sup> and abroad.<sup>53</sup> The Association of Open Youth Centres shares information about different non-formal training courses as well as field-related seminars and conferences.<sup>54</sup> Youth organisations themselves organise trainings for volunteer youth workers and youth leaders.<sup>55</sup>

There are no minimum qualification standards for volunteer youth workers. Usually volunteer youth workers are trained on the spot by youth work organisations.<sup>56</sup> However, they also have an opportunity to participate in non-formal training for youth workers provided by the Estonian Youth Work Centre or other relevant agency.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>. Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>50</sup>. Taru M., Pilve E. and Kaasik P. (2014), "The history of youth work in Estonia", in Taru M., Coussée F. and Williamson H., *The history of youth work in Europe. Relevance for today's youth work policy*, Vol. 4 (pp. 15-33). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishers.

<sup>51</sup>. Visnapuu U. (2010), Noorsootöötajate koolitusvajadus nende endi ja tööandjate vaatenurgast, in: Murakas R. (ed.) (2010), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõte uuringutulemustest*, pp. 86-100, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy.

<sup>52</sup>. [Web page of Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency: local trainings.](#)

<sup>53</sup>. [Web page of Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency: international trainings.](#)

<sup>54</sup>. [Web page of the Association of Open Youth Centres: international trainings.](#)

<sup>55</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Volunteer youth workers make up a considerable share of Estonian youth workers because encouraging voluntary activities has been one of the guiding principles in Estonian youth work.<sup>58</sup> The downside of this principle is that much has been done on a voluntary basis in youth work and this has created a wider expectation in society that it is possible to do everything with just some enthusiasm for youth work.<sup>59</sup> However, as a result of professionalisation things are changing slowly and there are more and more paid employees in the youth work sector.<sup>60</sup>

According to the interviews undertaken with youth work practitioners, youth work is seen as an opportunity to solve many problems in society, mainly targeting children and youth with fewer opportunities, not just providing some rather concrete service or activity (like event- or project-based activities).<sup>61</sup>

Youth issues and youth work are declared a priority in several youth policy documents. However, in interviews with Beilmann and Bogdanova,<sup>62</sup> several Estonian youth work experts doubted whether youth work really is a priority in Estonia. They claimed that on the one hand, there have been major developments and an investment in the youth work infrastructure, on the other hand, much less has been invested in people. Interviewed experts consider the sustainability of youth work as being rather questionable because all the funding for quality improvement in youth work comes from temporary programmes and there is no certainty that such programmes will continue in the future. However, there have been improvements in that regard in recent years. For example, €2 million from the European Social Fund was used for development of youth worker training.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, the quality development of youth work is also supported from the state budget (see Chapter 4).

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>63</sup> [Web page of non-formal learning.](#)

## 4. Funding youth work

Establishing the total sum of youth work activities would be a highly complex task because different youth work measures are funded from different sources and responsible ministries, including national budget, municipal budgets (municipalities are responsible for the provision of youth work, including hobby education), different taxes and funds (e.g. the Council of Gambling Tax), private initiatives, European funds (e.g. European Social Fund), and other foreign funds (e.g. EEA grants and Norway grants).<sup>64</sup> There is no overall overview of all cost items spent on youth work. However, it is possible to provide some figures to give an indication of the amount of spending from the state and EU budgets. In 2017, €9 733 756 was allocated to the youth field from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Research (including the funding from the European Social Fund programmes). The budget of the Estonian Youth Work Centre was €2 456 756 in 2017.<sup>65</sup> Additionally, the Erasmus+ programme provided another €2 865 341 to the Estonian youth field in 2016. The state allocations to youth work will increase in 2018 because the state will provide an additional €15 million to fund hobby education of children and young people.

Only activities pursuing a wider national impact in youth work are financed from the state budget. Pursuant to the Youth Work Act,<sup>66</sup> the following shall be supported from the state budget through the budget of the Ministry of Education and Research: youth programmes and youth projects, national programmes for developing youth work, youth studies, youth work agencies, international co-operation in the field of youth work, training youth workers, youth work associations, and activities of youth organisations (annual grant).

Annual grants from the state budget are allocated to youth associations that involve at least 500 members of which at least two thirds are young people, and youth work associations that represent larger sectoral stakeholders. A separate programme has also been created to support youth councils. Small-scale initiatives and projects are financed through the calls for proposals of the Council of Gambling Tax.<sup>67</sup>

In order to support the implementation of the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020, the EU and EEA funds are being used.<sup>68</sup> EU and EEA funds are being used to increase the availability of youth work services and involving young people at risk, increasing the exposure of young people to working life, including youth initiative support, services for NEETs (Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training), and assess the quality

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<sup>64</sup> [Webpage of Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Youth Affairs Department.](#)

<sup>65</sup> [Ministry of Education and Research.](#)

<sup>66</sup> Government of Estonia (2010), *Riigi Teataja*, I 2010, 44, 262, Tallinn: Government of Estonia.

<sup>67</sup> [Webpage of Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, Youth Affairs Department.](#)

<sup>68</sup> Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020, 2013.

and impact of the activities.<sup>69</sup> For example, Children and Youth at Risk, which was the EEA grants support programme, improved the situation of youth of up to 26 years of age. The programme was implemented by the Estonian Youth Work Centre. New development programmes of youth affairs are planned for 2014-2020 under the European Social Fund. European Social Fund means are used for comprehensive trainings targeted at people working in the youth field and new youth work methods are brought into use.

The Estonian National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme of the Archimedes Foundation implements the Erasmus+ programme using the funds of the European Union.

Organisation and provision of youth work is the responsibility of municipalities in Estonia. Therefore, budgets of local governments appear amongst important sources to finance youth work. Local municipalities support hobby education outside formal education system and in schools, youth centres, youth projects, youth associations, youth camps, sporting events, and other forms of youth work. In many municipalities, open youth centres are central institutions for carrying out youth work. Youth centres are managed either by local government directly or by a private organisation that has been contracted by the municipality to provide youth work services. Local government often also maintains hobby schools (music, sports, art, nature, technology etc.), funding the management costs of buildings and personnel costs as well as the participation of youth in the activities. The majority of private organisations in the field of youth and youth work get most of their finances from local governments. However, there is no detailed overview of municipal spending on youth work.<sup>70</sup> Allocated funds, of course, vary depending on total turnover of the local municipality.<sup>71</sup>

However, much youth work is project-based on temporary funding from other sources.<sup>72</sup>

There is no separate budget for youth policy at regional level.

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<sup>69</sup> Noortevaldkonna arengukava 2014-2020, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Taru M. (2016), Country Sheet of Youth Policy in Estonia.

<sup>71</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>72</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

## 5. Structures, actors and levels in youth work provision

### 5.1 State structures/public authorities deciding on or providing youth work

The ministry responsible for youth work is **the Ministry of Education and Research**.<sup>73</sup> The Department of Youth Affairs was formed in 1990 in the Ministry of Education and Research. Its main functions in the field of youth work are the preparation of the national programmes of youth work, performing functions provided by legislation, state supervision within the authority provided for in legislation and monitoring the purposeful use of funds allocated from the state budget, supporting the activities of youth organisations and allocation of annual grants. In addition, the ministry supervises the actions by local municipalities and youth councils, regulates youth camp management rules, issues licences, etc.

Although, youth work is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research, actually most of the ministries have something to do with the programmes targeted at young people, and co-operation between different ministries is needed, especially the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Many activities and programmes in the field of youth are implemented in collaboration between two or more ministries.<sup>74</sup>

**The Estonian Youth Work Centre** (Eesti Noorsootöö Keskus – ENTK) – a national centre for youth work under the administrative authority of the Ministry of Education and Research – was founded in 1999 and is responsible for both planning and implementation of youth work. Its main objective is to develop and organise youth work in the framework of the national youth policy. Among other tasks, the agency implements the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020, manages the cross-sectoral programme for education, youth work, child protection and justice, develops international co-operation, co-ordinates networking activities, awards and recognises the professional qualifications of youth workers, recognises the knowledge and skills acquired through youth work, assesses the quality of youth work, manages the national youth monitor, finances and manages projects and programmes supported by national and EU structural funds, and advises youth work providers and local municipalities.<sup>75</sup>

The Youth Work Act<sup>76</sup> makes **local municipalities** the most important players in the youth field as the organisation and provision of youth work is the responsibility of municipalities in Estonia and youth work is funded from the local government budget.

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<sup>73</sup> [Web page of Ministry of Education and Research, Youth Affairs Department.](#)

<sup>74</sup> [Web page of Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>75</sup> [Web page of Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>76</sup> Government of Estonia (2010), *Riigi Teataja*, I 2010, 44, 262, Tallinn: Government of Estonia.



Estonia is territorially divided into counties, rural municipalities and cities. Estonia went through administrative-territorial reform in 2017, which means that the number of municipalities decreased since smaller units were either merged voluntarily or involuntarily into large ones and there is not yet data available as to what kind of effect these mergers have on youth work provision. However, local government remains responsible for organisation in its administrative territory. The Estonian Youth Work Centre has led the initiative to foster the collaboration between different municipalities. To decrease the chance that the individual municipalities do not reach the young people who could profit from youth work, since 2015 there has been a state initiative to increase the co-operation between the different municipalities regarding the planning and implementation of youth work.<sup>77</sup> The ESF allocations have been used to support the co-operation teams, which plan and design the youth work services in bordering municipalities. The main purpose of this initiative is to make youth work services available to more young people who have so far not benefited from youth work.

According to the Youth Work Act, rural municipalities and city councils determine the priorities of youth work in their administrative territories and set out the tasks necessary for the achievement thereof in the rural municipality or city development plans, work out the order for granting financial support to youth organisations, in the presence of financial means, offer financial support to youth organisations, consult local youth council in youth work matters, prepare the order of project camps at the territory of the municipality, and perform other functions connected with the organisation of youth work in their administrative territories.

As youth work is funded from the local government budget, local municipalities support hobby education outside the formal education system and in schools, youth centres, youth projects, youth associations and other forms of youth work. There is at least one youth work agency administered by city and rural municipality, which means that youth work agencies are spread around the country.<sup>78</sup> In many municipalities, open youth centres are central institutions for carrying out youth work. Youth centres are managed either by local government directly or by a private organisation that has been contracted by the municipality to provide youth work services. Local governments often delegate their youth work duties to the third sector by outsourcing certain services, if possible. The majority of private organisations in the field of youth and youth work get most of their finances from local government.<sup>79</sup> There is especially complex symbiosis of formal and non-formal youth work at the local level and it is difficult to distinguish between the municipal bodies and third sector youth work bodies because it is common in many municipalities that the third sector youth work associations use the rooms of the youth centre, which are actually owned by the municipality, and the municipality has delegated

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<sup>77</sup> [Web page of the Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>78</sup> Kirss L. and Batueva V. (2012), Eesti noorte osalemine noorsootöös. *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>79</sup> Taru M. (2016), Country Sheet of Youth Policy in Estonia.



the provision of actual youth work to the third sector.<sup>80</sup> Although youth associations are exclusively non-governmental organisations, they can be supported by the state.<sup>81</sup>

## 5.2 National or local youth councils

The National Youth Council (Eesti Noorteühenduste Liit) – the umbrella organisation of youth associations – was founded in 2002.<sup>82</sup> The council promotes co-operation between youth associations and active participation of young people in society.

Municipal youth councils are defined in the Youth Work Act.<sup>83</sup> Municipal youth councils are youth organisations for young people aged 13-26 years, which work together with local municipalities at local level. Youth councils are involved mainly in the areas that are relevant for children and youth, such as leisure time, youth work, and non-formal learning. They are also involved in related areas like public transport, community associations and organisations, and in other similar areas, which border youth work. The number of municipal youth councils has increased gradually and the young people's opportunities to participate in decision making have been growing rapidly in the last 20 years: there were about five youth councils in 1998 and at the beginning of 2016, municipal youth councils were active in 74 municipalities.<sup>84</sup> A national programme supports youth participation through municipal youth councils. Many youth councils and parliaments are member organisations of the Estonian National Youth Council, which deals with youth participation councils as from 2008.<sup>85</sup> The National Youth Council has done a lot to support the youth participation in municipalities through counselling youth assemblies at the local level.

## 5.3 Youth and youth work NGOs

The scene of Estonian youth organisations is more varied and extensive than might be expected from a rather small (post)transition country. According to Veski (2010) there

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<sup>80</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> [Web page of the Estonian National Youth Council.](#)

<sup>83</sup> Government of Estonia (2010), *Riigi Teataja*, I 2010, 44, 262, Tallinn: Government of Estonia.

<sup>84</sup> [Web page of Ministry of Education and Research, Youth Affairs Department.](#)

<sup>85</sup> [Web page of the Estonian National Youth Council.](#)

were about 1 250 different youth work and youth organisations in Estonia in 2010.<sup>86</sup> In a country with 1.3 million people and only 285 155<sup>87</sup> young people aged 7-26<sup>88</sup> it cannot be taken for granted that there are enough young people for that many varied civic organisations, especially when considering that many young people do not belong to any youth organisation. There are many different types of organisations, networks, groups and initiatives, some of them initiated by young people themselves and some for young people to encourage their creativity and initiative and enrich their opportunities by offering different possibilities for participation, self-expression, learning, representation, or bonding and having fun with other young people.<sup>89</sup>

Non-governmental organisation (NGO) is a common juridical status of Estonian youth organisations. However, the strict distinction between governmental and third sector youth work bodies is very difficult to make in Estonian context – youth associations, for example, are exclusively non-governmental organisations but many of them are supported by the (local) government.<sup>90</sup> Some youth organisations are particularly tightly bound to governmental structures. The scouts organisations (Estonian Defence League Girls Organisation and Estonian Defence League Boys Organisation), for example, are officially under the commission of the Estonian Defence League.<sup>91</sup>

Open youth centres and youth clubs (open youth work organisations) make up an extensive part of the Estonian youth organisations.<sup>92</sup> Although it is, of course, somewhat debatable whether these organisations are youth organisations by their nature or are rather organisations that serve young people. There are most probably both types of approach present among the Estonian open youth work organisations – some open youth work organisations concentrate more on providing services to young people, whereas others resemble more of the youth organisation where young people play an active role in leading and managing the organisation. Most of the open youth centres are member organisations of the Estonian Association of the Open Youth Centres.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Veski L. (2010), Uuringu probleemipüstitus, metoodika ja vastanute iseloomustus, in: Murakas R. (ed.), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõtte uuringutulemustest*, pp. 15-23, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy.

<sup>87</sup> [Web page of Youth Monitoring.](#)

<sup>88</sup> Estonian youth policy is aiming at youth from 7 to 26 years of age.

<sup>89</sup> Beilmann M. (2016), Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1, CATCH-EyoU Project.

<sup>90</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>91</sup> Beilmann M. (2016), Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1, CATCH-EyoU Project.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> [Web page of the Estonian Association of the Open Youth Centres.](#)

There are many youth organisations which focus on hobby activities and culture. According to Kalmus et al.,<sup>94</sup> Estonian young people aged 15-27 participate foremost in sports clubs or other sport-related organisations, and in choirs, dance clubs, or other art and culture organisations. Sport and culture activities include both youth organisations and clubs which engage themselves with more traditional or classical manifestations of culture (e.g. youth choirs and orchestras or folk dance groups) as well as youth clubs which unite young people interested in street culture and active lifestyle (e.g. NGO Urban Style, Halley Youth Club). Some of these groups cooperate with open youth centres and use the rooms of open youth centres for their activities (which is also a good strategy to attract new members from the young people who visit open youth centre).<sup>95</sup>

In addition, there are many different youth organisations which are only indirectly involved in youth work, including different student organisations, the national branches of the international youth and student organisations (e.g. AEGEE, AIESEC, Erasmus Student Network, girl guides, JCI, Junior Achievement, scouts, UNESCO Youth Association, YFU etc.), youth development programmes, and political youth organisations, which are typical to every largish party on the Estonian political scene.<sup>96</sup>

Youth organisations which represent special groups (e.g., young people with disabilities) may not constitute a very large share of youth organisations but they are an important part of the field of youth organisations because they represent young people who are often unnoticed by other organisations, and they help to draw attention to the fact that young people are actually a very diverse group, which consists of people with different and sometimes contradicting needs.<sup>97</sup> The Estonian Special Youth Work Organisation noOR,<sup>98</sup> for example, focuses on young people with disabilities in general and those with fewer economic opportunities.<sup>99</sup>

## 5.4 Other relevant actors

The Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency – a national agency of the European Commission's former civic education programme Youth in Europe, which is now part of

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<sup>94</sup> Kalmus V., Kõuts-Klemm R., Beilmann M., Rämmer A. and Opermann, S. (2017), Long-lasting shadows of (post)communism? Generational and ethnic divides in political and civic participation in Estonia, in Wallner C., Wimmer J., Winter R. and Oelsner K. (eds), *(Mis-)Understanding Political Participation*, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Ltd.

<sup>95</sup> Beilmann M. (2016), Youth Active Citizenship Initiatives in Estonia. National Report to Deliverable 8.1, CATCH-EyoU Project.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> NOOR means young in Estonian.

<sup>99</sup> [Web page of the Estonian Special Youth Work Organisation.](#)

Erasmus+ – was established in 1997.<sup>100</sup> The name of the organisation changed from Youth in Action National Agency to Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency at the beginning of 2015. The agency manages the ESF programme “Development of youth workers’ training” (“Noorsootöötajate koolituste arendamine”),<sup>101</sup> co-ordinates co-operation regarding the financial support to youth projects from the Erasmus+ programme and provides the possibility of international co-operation and training for youth workers (and youth leaders). The Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency also implements the national website of the European youth information portal Eurodesk. Topics covered include information on trainings and educational events, travel, financial support and grants to participate in various events. The Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus) – an umbrella organisation of youth centres in Estonia – was established in 2001 and has around 150 member organisations.<sup>102</sup> The association manages the co-operation in support of open youth work centres on local level and services for NEET-youth; co-operation regarding the creation of opportunities for youth workers to get consulting and support; co-operation regarding support for the development of the youth information system, etc. There are several associations of youth workers, including the Estonian Association of Youth Workers (Eesti Noorsootöötajate Kogu),<sup>103</sup> and the Society of Estonian Career Counsellors (Eesti Karjäärinõustajate Ühing).<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> [Web page of the Archimedes Foundation Youth Agency.](#)

<sup>101</sup> [Web page on the non-formal education.](#)

<sup>102</sup> [Web page of the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres.](#)

<sup>103</sup> [Web page of the Estonian Association of Youth Workers.](#)

<sup>104</sup> [Web page of the Society of Estonian Career Counsellors.](#)

## 6. Forms and examples of youth work in your country

The Estonian definition of youth work is broad enough to include almost everything from open youth work to highly specialised youth work with certain groups of young people with special needs.

When describing Estonian youth work, one cannot overlook the widespread availability and popularity of hobby education. There is a long and strong tradition of hobby schools and hobby education in Estonia.<sup>105</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is a distinction between hobby education and hobby activities. Hobby education is based on fixed curricula and is provided primarily in hobby schools, which are located all over the country. The main purpose of hobby education is “to create possibilities for the versatile development of personality”.<sup>106</sup>

A total of 85 520 young people participated in hobby education in 2016/2017 and there were about 475 young people per each hobby school in 2016 (the target for 2016 was 480 young people per hobby school; the target for 2020 is 400 young people per hobby school).<sup>107</sup> The number of young people per hobby school has decreased over the years, which means that the service is now better accessible for more young people. Up to 60% of young people aged 7-18 in Estonia participate at least once a week in some organised hobby activity and the number of hobby schools grows steadily.<sup>108</sup> However, it is at least equally important that young people are generally rather pleased with what hobby schools have to offer: 89% of the participating youth are either satisfied or very satisfied with the hobby education.<sup>109</sup> The main areas of hobby schools/clubs with the largest proportion of participants are sports, arts and handicraft, singing, and dancing.<sup>110</sup>

The turn of the millennium marked the beginning of open youth work in Estonia. In many municipalities, open youth centres are central institutions for carrying out youth work. Youth centres are managed either by local government directly or by a private organisation that has been contracted by the municipality to provide youth work services.<sup>111</sup> The widespread distribution of open youth centres all over the country means that youth work services are also available in small municipalities. There were about

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<sup>105</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>106</sup> *Standard of Hobby Education*. The regulation is established on the basis of § 9 of the *Hobby Schools Act* (2007). Tartu: Ministry of Education and Research.

<sup>107</sup> [Ministry of Education and Research](#).

<sup>108</sup> Pihor K., Taru M. and Batueva V. (2012), *Eesti noorte osalemise noorsootöös. Noorteseire Eestis poliitikaülevaade, 3/2012*, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>109</sup> [Youth work satisfaction among young people participating in youth work. Final report](#).

<sup>110</sup> Pihor K., Taru M. and Batueva V. (2012), *Eesti noorte osalemise noorsootöös. Noorteseire Eestis poliitikaülevaade, 3/2012*, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>111</sup> Taru M. (2016), *Country Sheet of Youth Policy in Estonia*.

1 080 young people per each youth centre in 2016 (the target for 2016 was 1 160 young people per youth centre; the target for 2020 is 1 000 young people per youth centre).<sup>112</sup>

Youth participation has been the fundamental principle of Estonian youth work since the very beginning. Participation of young people is the aim and the means at the same time in the Estonian youth work.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, the allocations are made from the budget of the Ministry of Education and Research, Department of Youth Affairs to support youth participation and youth initiative through youth associations.<sup>114</sup> There were 90 youth councils, youth parliaments and other kinds of youth participation assemblies in 2016 all over the country;<sup>115</sup> in addition, there are student councils in schools. The number of youth councils, youth parliaments, etc. has grown steadily and the target for 2020 is 200 of this kind of organisation all over the country.<sup>116</sup>

Young people at risk of being socially excluded are the priority in state-funded youth programmes since 2010: young people at risk because of their poverty, unemployment, poor language skills (youth with immigrant background), etc. are differentiated to reach the target groups better.<sup>117</sup> For example, the programme “Noorte Tugila” for NEET young people has provided services for 2014 young people not in employment, education or training.<sup>118</sup>

Age is an important predictor of the availability of youth work services. Although, according to the legislation, the target group of youth work is all young people aged 7-26, in reality there are only very few services for young people aged 18-26.<sup>119</sup> Youth workers have admitted that they do not feel qualified to work with adult youth.<sup>120</sup>

Digital youth work is one of the priorities in Estonian youth work. The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research has put together the concept and action plan for smart youth work.

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<sup>112</sup> [Ministry of Education and Research.](#)

<sup>113</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>114</sup> [Web page of Ministry of Education and Research, Department of Youth Affairs.](#)

<sup>115</sup> [Ministry of Education and Research.](#)

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>118</sup> [Ministry of Education and Research.](#)

<sup>119</sup> Kirss L. and Batueva V. (2012), Eesti noorte osalemine noorsootöös. *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, pp. 37-52, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>120</sup> Beilmann M. (2010), Noorsootöötajate tegevuse üldülevaade, in Murakas R. (ed.), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõtte uuringutulemustest*, pp. 24-34, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy.

## 7. Quality standards

Quality management of youth work service and assurance of quality of the service are important aspects of Estonian youth work policy. Quality management in the field of youth work is implemented in four levels: national, local, organisational and individual.

The Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Youth Work Centre monitor and co-ordinate the youth work field at the national level. The Ministry and other respective authorities commission independent evaluation research of youth work activities and use the results to improve them. At the local level, local municipalities use youth work quality evaluation systems to assess and improve provision of youth work service. Youth organisations and organisations working with young people (e.g., youth centres, youth organisations, youth information and counselling and juvenile committees) use quality management guidelines to plan, carry out and evaluate their activities. Last but not least, professionals working with young people are required to meet professional standards.

To ensure that the professionals working with young people meet professional standards, the support of the European Social Fund is used to develop the quality of the training system for people working in the youth field: the training needs are assessed, and the impact and results of the trainings are analysed.<sup>121</sup>

One way to ensure the quality of the youth work activities is to implement the evidence-based programmes which have proved successful in other countries. Several evidence-based programmes are currently implemented in Estonia, including “Children and Youth at Risk” (Norway),<sup>122</sup> SPIN (UK),<sup>123</sup> EXPECT-RESPECT (US),<sup>124</sup> and others.

Activities of the former Youth in Action programme, current Erasmus+ programme in Estonia have been subjected to evaluation studies since the start of the previous programme period in 2006.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> [Web page of the Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>122</sup> [Web page of the Estonian Youth Work Centre.](#)

<sup>123</sup> [Web page of the SPIN programme.](#)

<sup>124</sup> [Home page of the EXPECT-RESPECT programme.](#)

<sup>125</sup> Murakas R., Beilmann M., Ilves K., Veltmann V., Soo K., Rämmer A., Nestor A., Siirak K. and Kukk K. (2010). *Interim evaluation of the “Youth in Action” programme in Estonia 2007-2009*, Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli sotsioloogia ja sotsiaalpoliitika instituut; Murakas R., Linnasmäe H.-L., Veski L., Rämmer A., Alvela A., Beilmann M., Lepik A. and Maasalu, A. (2007), *Impact assessment of the YOUTH programme in Estonia*, Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli sotsioloogia ja sotsiaalpoliitika instituut.



## 8. Knowledge and data on youth work

The Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Youth Work Centre manage the youth monitoring system Noorteseire.<sup>126</sup> The website provides an overview of some basic data on young people's demographics, health, education and labour market situation, criminal behaviour, youth work participation, **social activism, and leisure time spending preferences. Most of the data presented comes from Statistics Estonia. The Estonian Youth Work Centre** also collects and makes available different academic and applied research reports on young people and youth work on its website.

As a part of the youth monitoring system Noorteseire, a yearbook "Noorteseire Aastaraamat" has been published annually since 2009. The yearbook contains a statistical overview of youth population in the country, and an in-depth analysis or research of a specific theme (e.g. Youth and labour market – 2010, Youth and youth work – 2011, Youth and social inclusion – 2012, Evaluation of the impact of youth work – 2013, Young people with special needs and youth work – 2014/2015, Non- and informal learning – 2016, Youth participation – 2017).<sup>127</sup>

There is a wide range of registers and databases which contain information on young people, including the Estonian Education Information System (Eesti Hariduse Infosüsteem EHIS), which also covers information about hobby education, and youth camps.<sup>128,129</sup>

### Information on Youth Workers

The two bigger surveys of the last years on youth workers date back to 2005<sup>130</sup> and 2010<sup>131</sup> and are a bit outdated. A new study on youth workers (including their educational pathways) started in 2017 and the results will be published in 2018.

The number of youth workers in Estonia has been growing steadily together with the development of the infrastructure of youth work,<sup>132</sup> reaching over 5 000 by 2016.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> [Web page of Youth Monitor.](#)

<sup>127</sup> [Web page of Youth Monitor.](#)

<sup>128</sup> Youth camp meets the following requirements: 1) the duration of a shift is at least 10 days; 2) the camp functions more than 60 days in every year. (Source: the Youth Work Act.)

<sup>129</sup> [Web page of the Estonian Education Information System EEIS.](#)

<sup>130</sup> Ümarik M. and Loogma K. (2005), Competence and the development of competencies in the field of youth work: The professional background of Estonian youth workers. Report on the survey in the field of youth work training, Tallinn: University of Tallinn, Institute of Educational Research.

<sup>131</sup> Murakas R. (ed.) (2010), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõte uuringutulemustest*, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy.



However, it is important to note that not all of them work as full-time youth workers: many of them do something else as their main activity.<sup>134</sup> Youth work is the main job of about half of the youth workers in Estonia and around one fifth of youth workers are unpaid volunteers (mostly students).<sup>135</sup> Slightly more than 30% of youth workers are employed by youth centres and a bit less than 30% by schools; many youth workers work at different youth organisations, hobby schools, and for local government.<sup>136</sup> Estonian youth workers are highly educated: nearly 70% of Estonian youth workers have higher education, including 12% with an MA degree.<sup>137</sup> Around one fifth of the youth workers are with the professional training in youth work, every tenth youth worker is a qualified social worker, but most of the youth workers are trained teachers, which can be best explained by the popularity, high quality, and long tradition of hobby education in Estonia.<sup>138</sup> Youth workers in Estonia are predominantly female and are themselves rather young.<sup>139</sup>

#### Information on Young People

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<sup>132</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>133</sup> Villenthal A., Kaunismaa I., Veemaa J., Talur P., Žuravljova and Varblane, U. (2016). *Huvihariduse ja huvitegevuse pakkujad ning noorsootöötajad kohalikes omavalitsustes. Lõpparuanne*, Tartu Ülikool, RAKE.

<sup>134</sup> Beilmann M. (2010), Noorsootöötajate tegevuse üldlevaade, in Murakas R. (ed.) (2010), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõte uuringutulemustest*, pp. 24-34, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Veski L. (2010), Uuringu probleemipüstitus, meetoodika ja vastanute iseloomustus, in Murakas R. (ed.) (2010), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõte uuringutulemustest*, pp. 15-23, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy.

<sup>138</sup> Veltmann V. (2010), Kas noorsootöö on professionaliseerumas – eriharidusega ja erihariduseta noorsootöötajate võrdlus, in Murakas R. (ed.) (2010), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõte uuringutulemustest*, pp. 108-122, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy.

<sup>139</sup> Veski L. (2010), Uuringu probleemipüstitus, meetoodika ja vastanute iseloomustus, in Murakas R. (ed.) (2010), *Eesti noorsootöötaja, tema pädevused ja koolitusvajadused. Kokkuvõte uuringutulemustest*, pp. 15-23, Tartu: University of Tartu, Institute of Sociology and Social Policy; Villenthal A., Kaunismaa I., Veemaa J., Talur P., Žuravljova and Varblane, U. (2016), *Huvihariduse ja huvitegevuse pakkujad ning noorsootöötajad kohalikes omavalitsustes. Lõpparuanne*, Tartu Ülikool, RAKE; Ümarik M. and Loogma K. (2005), *Competence and the development of competencies in the field of youth work: The professional background of Estonian youth workers. Report on the survey in the field of youth work training*, Tallinn: University of Tallinn, Institute of Educational Research.

As of 1 January 2016, there were a total of 283 350 young people aged 7-26 in Estonia and they made up 21.5% of the population.<sup>140</sup>

Kirss and Batueva<sup>141</sup> report a very high participation rate in youth work among young people aged 7-26: almost three quarters of young people responded in their survey that they have participated in two or more youth work activities during the last three years. Only one young person out of ten has had no connection to youth work activities during the last three years. There is a tendency that 7-18 year olds are much more active in youth work activities than older youth. There are more services provided for school-aged youth, because the hobby schools and clubs are mainly oriented to 7-18 year olds. However, the Estonian Youth Work Centre reports<sup>142</sup> a somewhat lower share of the young people reached: their estimate is 50%. Differences in estimates are probably due to the different data collection methods: Kirss and Batueva used survey data and the Estonian Youth Work Centre operates with a number of officially registered participants. Estimates of Kirss and Batueva are strongly exaggerated because they considered involved in youth work every young person who has visited at least one youth work event in the last three years.<sup>143</sup>

There are also some regional differences. Kirss and Batueva<sup>144</sup> report that participation rates are highest in Central Estonia and Southern Estonia, whereas most of the youth who have not participated in youth work activities live in Northern Estonia.

Hobby education is the most popular youth work domain among Estonian youth. It involves about 29% of young people aged 7-26 and 71% of the 7-11 year olds.<sup>145</sup> Youth camps, youth centres and voluntary activities are also popular among up to 15 year olds in Estonia.<sup>146</sup> 16-26 year olds prefer voluntary activities and they are also somewhat more active in youth organisations.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> [Web page of the Statistics Estonia.](#)

<sup>141</sup> Kirss L. and Batueva V. (2012), Eesti noorte osalemine noorsootöös. *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, pp. 37-52, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>142</sup> Ministry of Education and Research (2017), *Haridus- ja Teadusministeeriumi valdkonna arengukavade 2016. aasta tulemusaruanded*, Tartu: Ministry of Education and Research.

<sup>143</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), *Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia*, 10.2766/7275.

<sup>144</sup> Kirss L. and Batueva V. (2012), Eesti noorte osalemine noorsootöös. *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, pp. 37-52, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>145</sup> [Web page of Youth Monitor.](#)

<sup>146</sup> Kirss L. and Batueva V. (2012), Eesti noorte osalemine noorsootöös. *Noorteseire aastaraamat 2011*, pp. 37-52, Tallinn: PRAXIS Centre for Policy Studies.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

## 9. European and international dimension of youth work in the country

The former Youth in Action Programme had a huge impact on the Estonian youth work field by making the whole issue more visible and giving financial support to the youth projects. European Voluntary Service and the chance to live abroad was maybe the first impulse to make young people participate in voluntary activities.<sup>148</sup> Estonian youth work experts consider the function of the Estonian National Agency for the EU-level former programme Youth in Action an extremely important body for supporting Estonian youth work especially in terms of co-operation with local organisations, consulting and creating the possibilities for the mobility and initiative of young people.<sup>149</sup>

Besides the Youth in Action Programme/Erasmus+, several internationally recognised organisations, such as Youth for Understanding (YFU), AIESEC, Global Education Network of Young Europeans (GLEN) and NGO El Mondo World Education Centre have been initiating international co-operation.<sup>150</sup>

Estonia is a member of different networks, for example the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency – ERYICA.<sup>151</sup>

Estonia takes part in several youth field activities of the Council of Europe. Estonia is participating in the “No Hate Speech” campaign, and the youth centres’ quality management and quality label programme. Estonia also participates in other Council of Europe activities which the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) foresees to be carried out. Estonia annually contributes its share to the European Youth Foundation.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Beilmann M. and Bogdanova O. (2014), Working with young people: the value of youth work in the European Union. Country Report Estonia,

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> [Web page of Ministry of Education and Research, Department of Youth Affairs.](#)

<sup>152</sup> [Web page of Ministry of Education and Research, Department of Youth Affairs.](#)

## 10. Current debates and open questions/policies on youth work

One of the priorities of Estonian youth work is providing support to the vulnerable young people suffering from their disadvantageous social background.<sup>153</sup> This involves an emphasis on prevention.

Another priority is increasing the opportunities of access to youth work services for all children and young people.<sup>154</sup>

Smart youth work constitutes both a priority and an open debate question. The Estonian Ministry of Education and Research has put together the concept and action plan for smart youth work. Smart youth work has been one of the priorities throughout the Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the conclusions of this smart youth work document were also discussed in Brussels with the representatives of member states. However, it remains an open question as to what forms smart youth work and digitalised youth work services can take in the near future to ensure better quality and better coverage of young people.

Supporting youth participation and social activism, their involvement in decision making and getting their opinion taken into account in the legislation and budgeting, but also in daily operation routines of institutions,<sup>155</sup> has been a priority in Estonian youth work from the very beginning. Therefore, lowering the voting age of the local elections was an achievement in that regard, but it also creates new challenges for youth work to prepare young people for such decision making. There were local elections in Estonia in 2017 and for the very first time young people who are at least 16 years old were allowed to vote as well. Related to that, the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, together with the Estonian National Youth Council and the Chancellor of Justice, compiled (a guiding document) “Principles: Politicians’ visits to schools and the political communication in schools before the elections”. Furthermore, the Estonian National Youth Council ran a project called “Young Election Watchers” throughout the local elections in 2017.

Administrative reform and the related reorganisation of all public services most certainly affects the organisation of youth work. The number of local governments and the borders of municipalities are changing in Estonia and this also means that the organisation of youth work must be revised in this new situation, because local governments have the main responsibility for organisation of youth work. In addition, county governments – that is the regional level – will disappear completely. At the same time, local governments will receive more support and consulting from the state level – that is the Estonian Youth Work Centre and the Ministry of Education and Research.

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<sup>153</sup> [Youth Wiki - Estonia.](#)

<sup>154</sup> [Youth Wiki - Estonia.](#)

<sup>155</sup> [Youth Wiki - Estonia.](#)