

youth  
in Finland



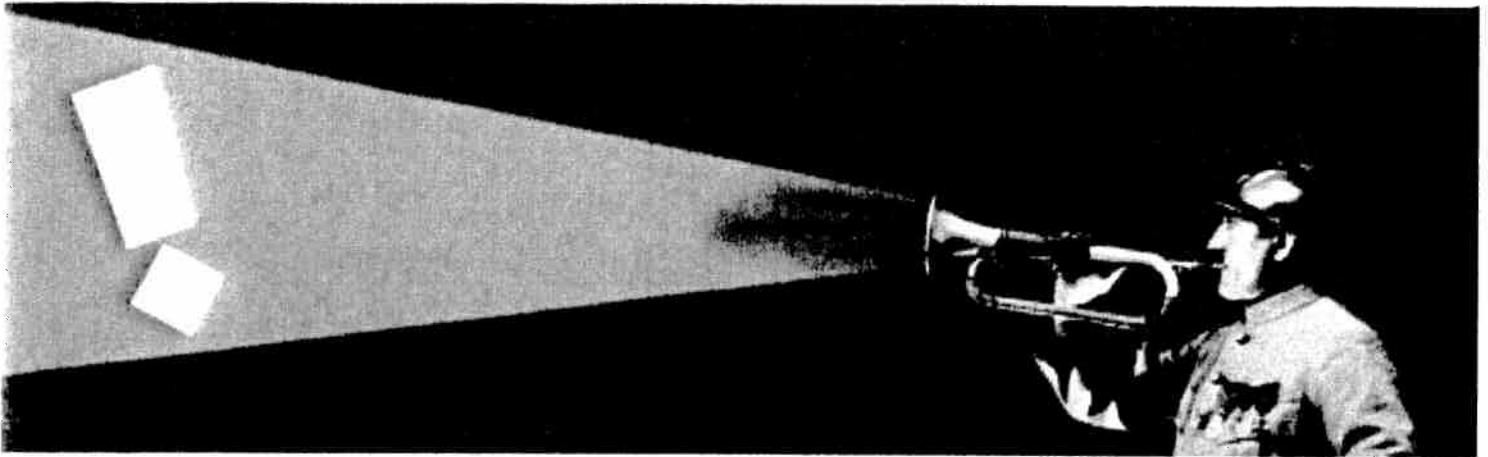
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## Foreword

With current changes and developments in society, the concept of youth has expanded and become more complex. Youth is no longer seen just as puberty but spans from childhood to adulthood. Since many problems encountered in youth have roots early childhood, effective youth policy increasingly requires long-term, cross-sectoral and multi-professional cooperation. To this end, the present Youth Work Act relates to children and young people up to the age of 29.

Finnish society offers a wide range of education, participation and hobby opportunities for young people. At the same time it is assigning ever more responsibility for the future to the dwindling youth age groups. It is often difficult for a young person to find his or her place and identity in a globalising world, where the emphasis is increasingly on economic efficiency and competitiveness. Indeed, a key task for youth work is to support different cultural communities where young people can develop their identity and grow into full-fledged and active members of society. Another key aim is young people's social empowerment.

The Youth in Finland publication takes a keen look at youth work and policy and young people's living conditions in Finland. It begins with a fact sheet and a brief history of Finland and goes on to present different aspects of young people's lives in three sections.

The section on youth policy describes young Finns' living environments and relevant youth policy action, from education and training, the labour market and health to housing and other necessities of life.

The section on youth work structures describes how the Finnish youth service system works at the national, regional and local levels. Important elements in it are the youth workshop scheme, national youth centres, youth research, and education and training in the youth field.

Young people's participation looks at major youth action environments, such as the national youth organisations: Finnish Youth Cooperation Allianssi and the Youth Academy; youth participation and international cooperation; youth culture; the Finnish Award action programme Avartti; and Church youth work, as well as young people's values.

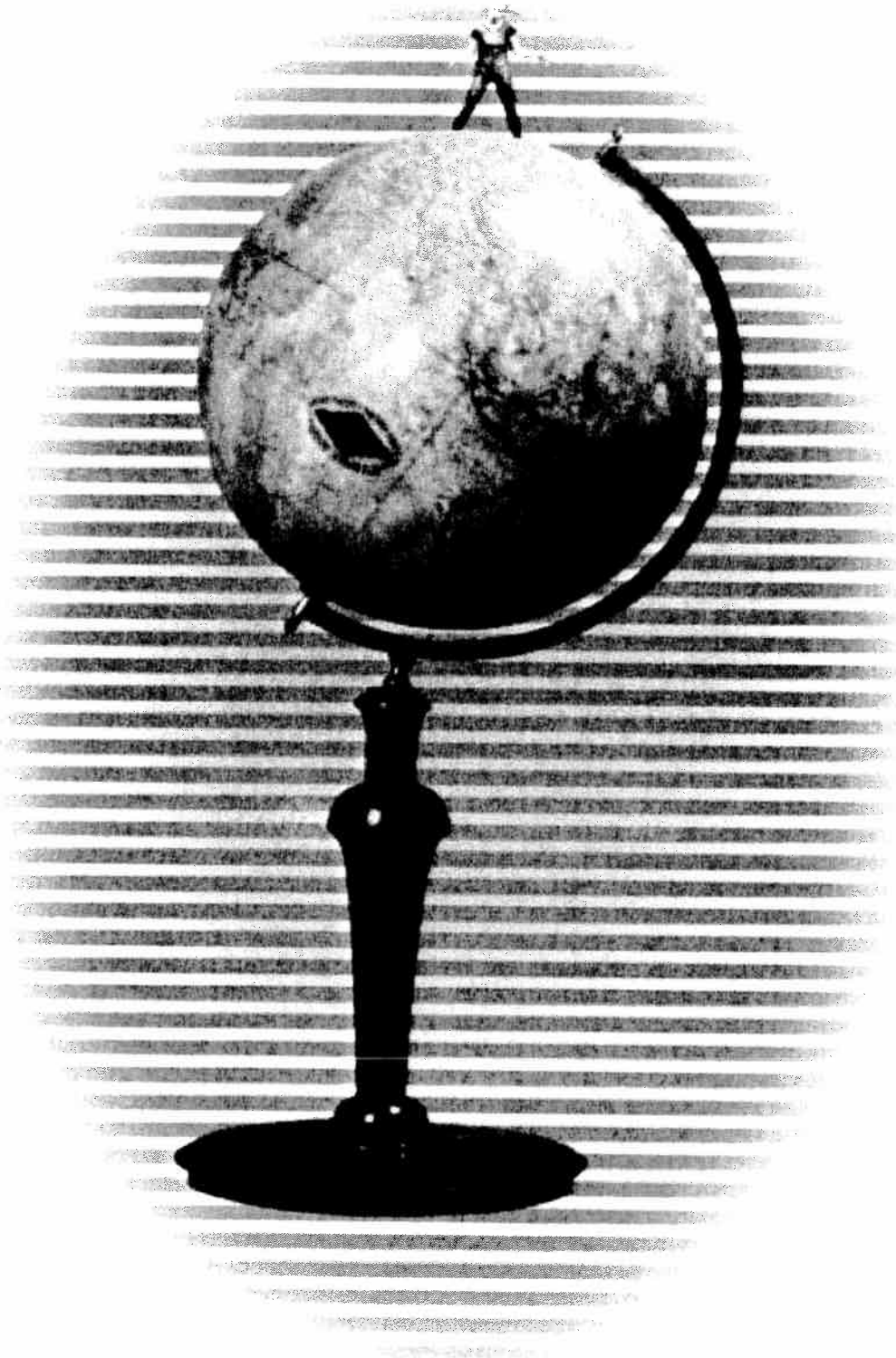
This guidebook has been updated from a brochure published in 1999 and will be next revised in 2006 when Finland assumes the EU Presidency.

**Youth Policy Division, Ministry of Education**



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## Finland in brief

<b>Official name:</b>	Republic of Finland
<b>Form of government:</b>	Republic; unicameral parliament of 200 members, elected for a four-year term. The President of the Republic is elected in direct elections for a six-year term of office.
<b>Regional government:</b>	Five provinces, which form part of the central government, and the self-governing Province of Åland.
<b>Area:</b>	338,145 km <sup>2</sup> , of which 6% arable land, 10% waterways (188,000 lakes) and 68% forest. Finland is the seventh largest country in Europe: length 1,160 km and breadth 540 km.
<b>Population:</b>	5.2 million, of whom 2% are immigrants
<b>Density:</b>	17 inhabitants / km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Monetary unit:</b>	Since 2002 euro (EUR) (from 1856 to 2001 Finnish markka)
<b>Capital:</b>	Helsinki, population 559,716 (2002), Helsinki Metropolitan area c. 1.5 million
<b>Independence:</b>	6 December 1917
<b>EU membership:</b>	1 January 1995
<b>Languages:</b>	Finnish (91.3%), Swedish (5.4%) and Saame (in Lapland c. 1700 people, or 0.03%)
<b>Religion:</b>	Evangelical Lutheran 85.6%, Orthodox 1%
<b>Climate:</b>	Finland is in the cool zone: the average summer temperature is around 21–22 C; in the coldest winter months, the temperature in the north of the country drops to around -25 C.
<b>Exports:</b>	High technology 27.5%, metal and engineering 27.1%, paper and graphical industry 26.5%, chemical industry 6%
<b>Import by use:</b>	Raw and production materials 57%, consumer goods 22%, investment commodities 15% and fuel 4%
<b>Occupational structure:</b>	63% in service industries, 28% in manufacturing and 9% in primary production
<b>Gross domestic product per capita:</b>	26.800 euros (2002)

## A short history

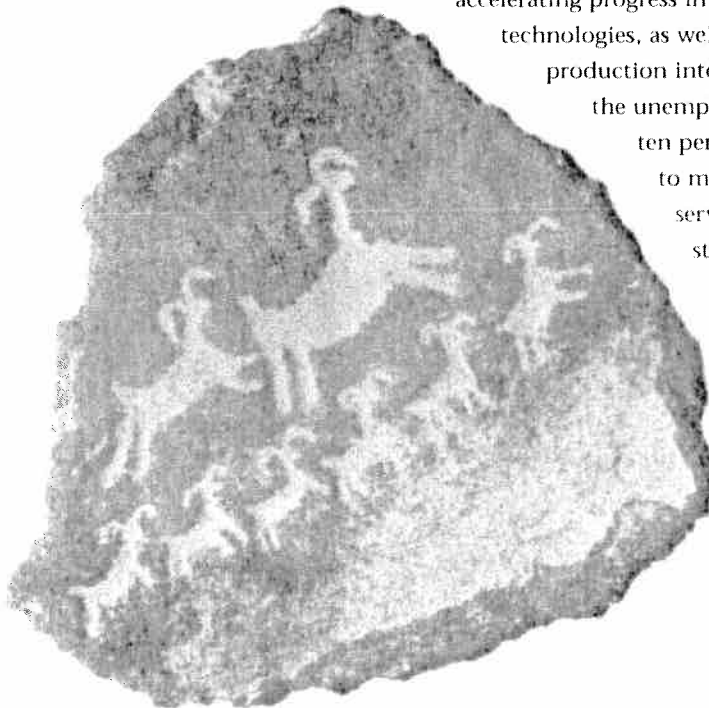
Finland and the Finnish identity have been formed at the interface of Eastern and Western influences and power politics. Finland belonged to the Swedish sphere of interest from the 13th century and to the Realm of Sweden from the 14th century. Numerous wars between Sweden and Russia were fought on Finnish soil. After the 1809 war, Finland was annexed to the Russian Empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy.

In 1906, the Grand Duchy obtained a new Constitution and universal suffrage. Finnish women were the first in Europe to get the vote and be eligible to stand in elections. Finland declared itself independent from Russia after the 1917 October Revolution. The first decades of independence were a time of rapid social and economic development.

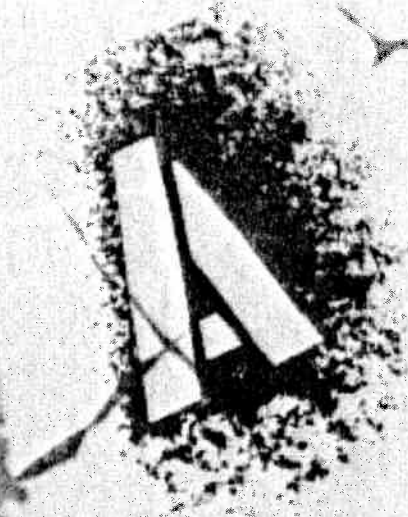
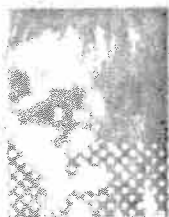
Finland kept her independence in the Second World War and its aftermath although it had to wage two wars against the Soviet Union, which were very taxing for a small country. After the wars, Finland pursued a policy of non-alignment. In the fifties, Finland was still an agrarian country, but rapidly becoming industrialised and urbanised. This structural change mainly took place during the 1960s and 1970s. People were moving from rural areas to towns and cities in search of work, and a network of suburbs appeared around major cities in response to the housing shortage. In rural areas, too, people increasingly moved to population centres. In the sixties and seventies Finland lost a substantial share of its working-age population to industrial centres in Sweden.

After a long economic boom in the 1980s, Finland fell into a serious recession. Apart from mass unemployment, this led to a restructuring of production and ever-accelerating migration from Northern and Eastern Finland to growth centres in the south. The Finnish economy has been recuperating since the mid 1990s. The rise in employment has been slow to materialise, however, owing to growing automatisisation in production and the accelerating progress in information and production technologies, as well as the concentration of production into growth centres. Although the unemployment rate is still around ten per cent, Finland has been able to maintain the structures and services of the welfare state. The standard of living and the quality of life are high in terms of international comparison.

Finland has been a member of the United Nations since 1955 and of the European Union since 1995.







**Youth  
policy**



## A.1 Childhood

In 2002 the population of Finland was 5.2 million, 21.4 per cent of whom are under 18 years of age. Children live in about 650,000 families, the majority with their fathers and mothers, but the proportion of reconstituted and single-parent families has been growing. About 15 per cent of children live in single-parent families and eight per cent in reconstituted families. One third of Finnish children are born out of wedlock, mostly to cohabiting pairs. It is fairly common nowadays for parents to get married after their first child has been born. A concerted effort has been made to put all children on an equitable footing, whatever their family background.

In 2002 there were 55,396 children born in Finland. The birth rate has remained fairly high (1.74 %) in the European perspective, but still the population is ageing at an increasing rate, just as elsewhere in Europe. There are relatively few immigrants in Finland (c. 2 %), but the proportion of children among them (43 %) is much higher than among the native population (36 %).

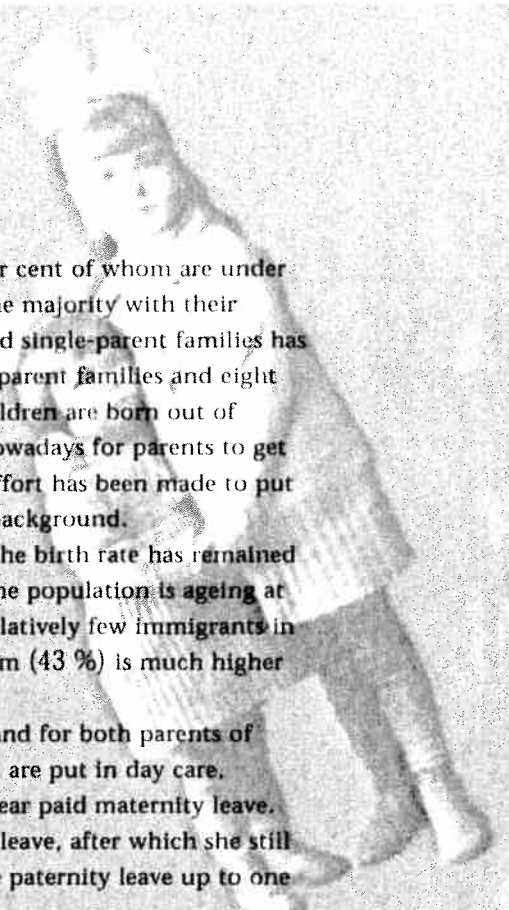
In international comparison, it is very common in Finland for both parents of small children to work full-time. This is why most children are put in day care, generally provided by local authorities, right after the one-year paid maternity leave. It is increasingly common for the mother to take child-care leave, after which she still has the right to return to her old job, and for fathers to take paternity leave up to one month.

This being the case, most children in Finland have a domain of independent living (day care) before they start school. As a result, the time spent by families together is decreasing. Hobby activities pursued by family members, including fairly young children, only intensify this trend.

Finnish children start comprehensive school at the age of seven. In recent years, a pre-primary school has been developed to bridge day care and school. Pre-primary education is provided by the local social or school authorities, depending on the municipality. Preschool is voluntary for children, but at the same time their subjective right. Measures are currently being taken to develop and increase after-school activities for children in the first and second year-classes. These activities are coordinated by local authorities.

The conception of a child and childhood has undergone significant changes in recent years. In Finnish welfare legislation childhood extends to the age of 18. In practical educational work and youth activities, a new concept – 'early teens' – has emerged between childhood and youth: it refers to children aged between 12 and 15. Those over fifteen are customarily considered to be young people.

The relationship between children and parents has also changed. The child is no longer regarded as the parents' 'property' and as an object to be reared. Childhood is now regarded as a phase in life which not only constitutes growth into youth and adulthood, but also has intrinsic value in itself. Legislation stresses parents' and carers' responsibility and their duty to provide for the child according to his or her individual needs. Through family policy, society seeks to support especially young families' growth into responsible parenthood.



## A.2 Finnish education system

The level of education in Finland has been systematically rising during the past decades. It begins to be uncommon for young Finns to leave their education at compulsory schooling. The proportion of higher education graduates is steadily rising among the young generation.

Finnish society pays the cost of initial education, training for vocational qualifications and degree-oriented education at all levels. Basic education is totally free for all, but in further education and training students may have to pay for learning materials, meals and travel.

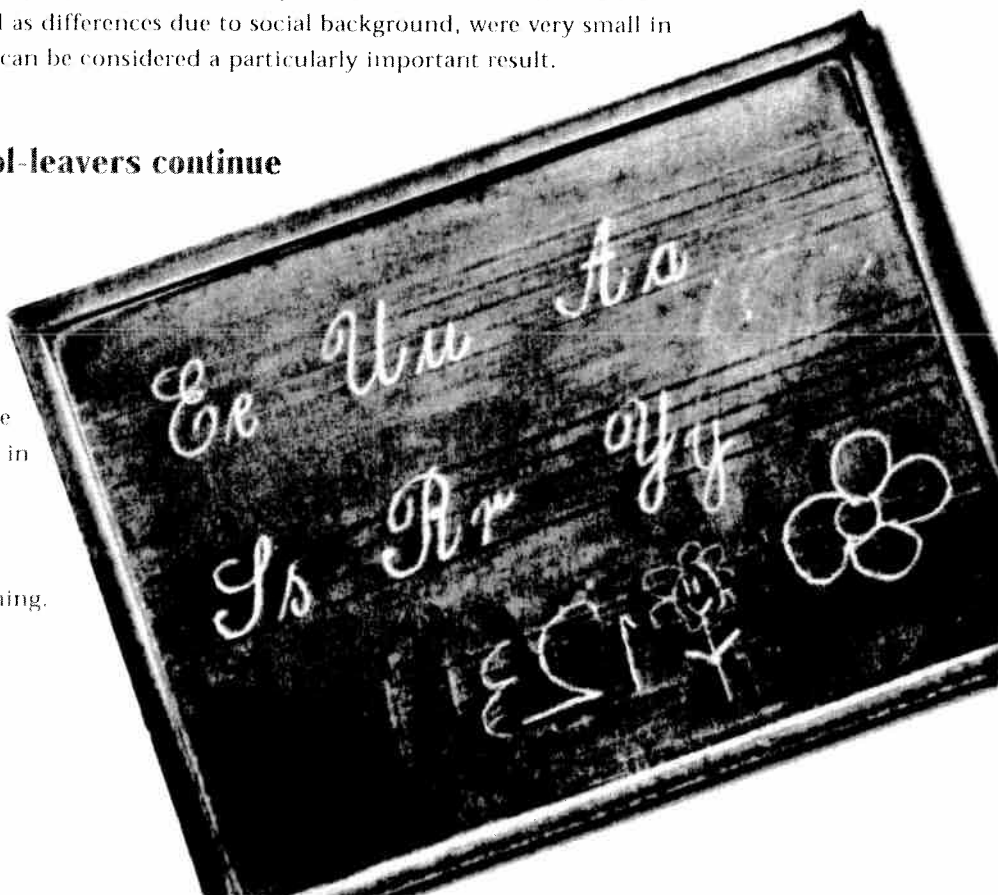
### World-class basic education

Compulsory schooling, or the comprehensive school, is nine years. Before basic education, Finnish children have the option of going to pre-primary school. Schools are mainly maintained by local authorities, but there are also some private schools. For the pupils, teaching and learning materials are free. In addition, the pupils get a free meal every school day. In Finland, 99.7 per cent of young people complete their compulsory schooling.

Young Finns aged 15 fared well in the PISA survey (Programme for International Student Assessment) published by the OECD in 2001: their literacy and mathematics and science knowledge was rated among the best in the OECD. In reading literacy, young Finns came first. The PISA study also showed that differences between schools, as well as differences due to social background, were very small in Finland. This can be considered a particularly important result.

### Most school-leavers continue studying

After the comprehensive school, 93 per cent of school leavers continue studying either in general upper secondary education or vocational training.



More than half of them go on to the upper secondary school, which provides three years of general education and ends in a national matriculation examination. Vocational training has traditionally been given in vocational institutes in Finland, but in recent years periods of work-based learning have been introduced into vocational training. The provision of apprenticeship training has also been expanded.

### **Development of higher education degrees**

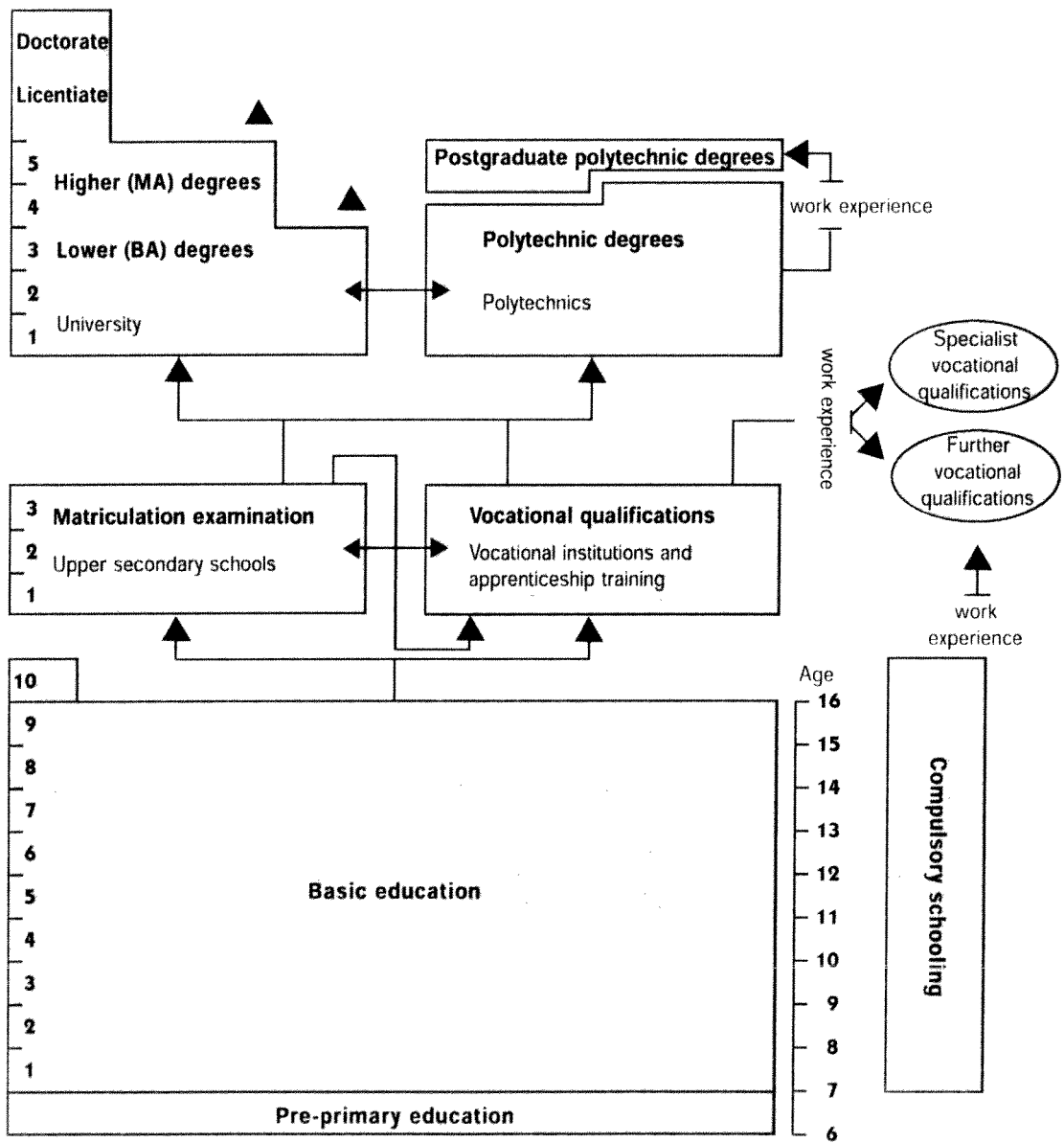
The higher education system in Finland comprises two parallel sectors: universities and polytechnics. Polytechnics are mainly multidisciplinary, regional institutions and emphasise contacts with the world of work. This sector was created in the 1990s and now comprises 29 polytechnics. In 2000, the OECD Education Committee reviewed Finnish polytechnic education and found that the reform had succeeded well.

The basic mission of universities is to conduct scientific research and provide higher education based on it. There are 20 universities in Finland. A restructuring of university degrees is underway. The development of virtual university and polytechnic education is also proceeding rapidly.

### **Student financial aid**

Students can apply for financial aid for post-compulsory studies. The public system of student financial aid consists of a study grant and a state-guaranteed study loan. When needed, students get a housing supplement.

### The education system

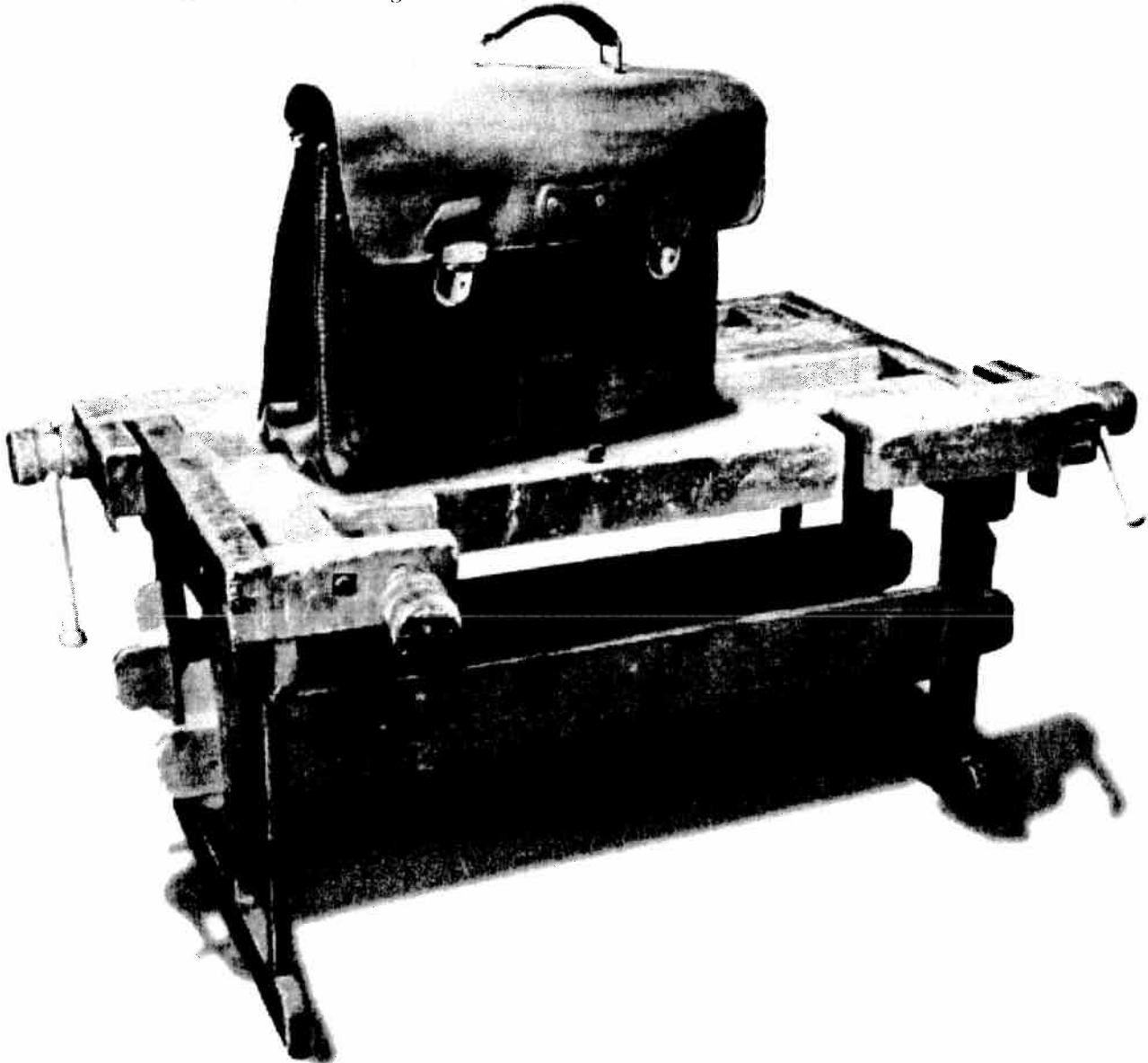




### A.3 Employment

Young Finns enter the world of work almost exclusively via further education and training. After leaving the comprehensive school, 60 per cent of the age group go on to the upper secondary school, 33 per cent to secondary vocational training and only 7 per cent leave their education at that. Before the 1990s recession and the ensuing change of social and occupational structures, the untrained could find jobs and gain skills through practical work.

Today, those without any post-compulsory education or training find it difficult to get jobs. In 2002 the number of young unemployed was 35,759, whereas in 1991 the corresponding figure was 21,600. Youth unemployment has gone down to nearly one third from the top rate of 1993-1994 when 97,000 young people were out of work. The recession seems to have left its mark, however: in 2002 the youth unemployment rate was still 13,000 higher than before the recession.



The structural change in society and working life is seen in that young people become unemployed even during a strong boom. Further, young people's employment relations are more and more often fixed-term. Today's labour market favours up-to-date education and versatility.

The more education a young person has, the more certain he or she can be of finding a job. A mere qualification or degree does not, however, safeguard a job. What is also needed is work experience. This is why measures have been taken to lengthen on-the-job periods, especially in secondary training.

Work-based training, notably vigorous development of apprenticeship training, is an important means of motivating untrained young people to gain qualifications and seek work.

In 2000, over 7,000 young people attended youth workshops. The workshops clearly motivated young people to seek education and jobs. After a six-month workshop period, 50–70 per cent of participants started training or found jobs. About 15 per cent of students drop out of vocational training. One way to tackle this problem has been to develop workshop schools attached to vocational institutes.

Recorded in the Government Programme 2003–2007 is a social guarantee for young people, which ensures that every young person under 25 years of age is offered a place in training, a traineeship or a place in a youth workshop after three months of unemployment. An unemployed young person is paid either work practice subsidy or an unemployment benefit.

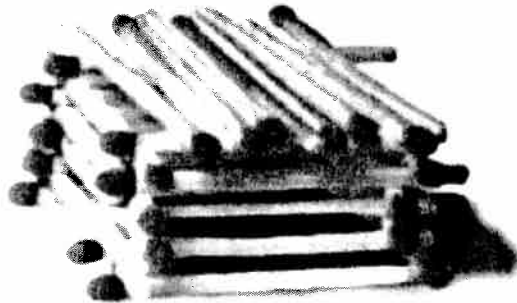
The labour market will undergo a marked change in the next ten years, when the baby boom generation, those born between 1945 and 1949, retire. This will mean a substantial increase in labour demand. It is crucial for society and the economy that all young people participate actively in the world of work.

## A.4 Housing

Young Finns move from their childhood homes fairly early, at the age of 21 on average. Generally, they move to a place of their own when they start studying. Over half of young people between 20 and 24 already live independently, most of them in rented accommodation.

The following table describes the situation of independently living young people in Finland in 2000 by age groups:

	15–19	20–24	25–29	15–29
Living independently	11%	64%	87%	53%
Owner-occupancy	19%	22%	40%	31%
Rented accommodation	78%	75%	56%	65%
Cramped accommodation	22%	19%	25%	23%



The availability of rented housing varies. In major cities, where the population is increasingly concentrated, there is a shortage of modestly priced rented housing. This applies to both market-financed and subsidised flats and houses. Similarly, there are differences in the level of rent in different parts of the country. In state-subsidised housing, the average rent is lower.

In growth centres, especially in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, most young people live in market-financed rented housing because subsidised accommodation is in short supply.

Two different schemes have been devised to remedy young people's poor situation in the housing market: student housing and youth housing. These are provided by not-for-profit organisations. Student housing is available for nearly 80,000 students. Youth housing is intended for employed young people who want to move from their parental homes, but it is available only for 2,000. The youth housing scheme is intended only as half-way or transitional measure, and the leases are signed for a fixed term. In order to lower the threshold to owner-occupancy, authorities have created a home-saving award scheme (ASP), which is not, however, very appropriate for the present situation of low market interests and long loan periods.

Finns live in fairly small, but very well equipped houses and flats. Broken down by age, statistics show that children live in the most confined circumstances: over half of the ten-year-olds live in cramped accommodation, about 40 per cent of those between 10 and 19 and only one fifth of the 20-24 age bracket. Thus young people are fairly well off in this respect, because many of them live alone. Once they start a family, they again have less living space.



## A.5 Health

The focus of health policy targeted at young people is on life styles and attitudes. Efforts are made to influence these in health education given in the comprehensive school (7–16-year-olds), in the upper secondary school and in secondary vocational training. Since 2002 health education has been a curricular subject in basic education. The promotion of young people's health is also stressed in the work of social and health care authorities, youth services and other agencies working with youth. Young people's healthy growth is supported in many ways, and efforts are made to intervene in risk factors at the earliest possible stage.

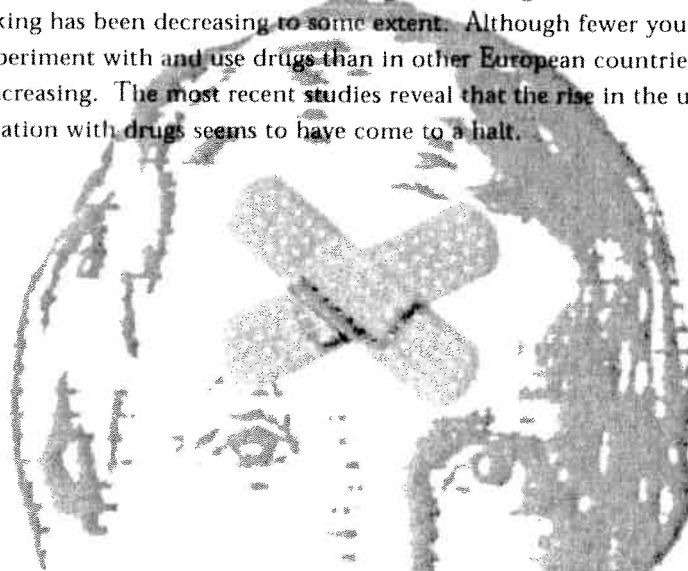
In Finland, local authorities have a statutory duty to promote schoolchildren's and students' health and to provide health care services. All young Finns have access to the services of school nurses, school psychologists and school welfare officers. Higher education students have their own scheme, provided by the Students' Health Care Foundation, in which the annual member fee is only 31.62 euros.

Overall, young Finns are healthy and most of them also feel healthy. However, symptoms relating to mental health kept increasing all through the 1990s. The most common symptoms are irritableness, fatigue and sleep problems, which occur in one in ten young people. In 2001 every seventh young Finn aged between 12 and 18 had some long-term illness.

There is a mental health service geared for young people. Apart from these psychiatric services, efforts have been made to arrange institutional care specifically geared to young people. The development of child and youth psychiatric services has led to an increase in patient numbers.

There are clear differences between children's and young people's sportive activity. Some are very active in sports, while others (8 %) are totally passive. Participation in sportive hobbies is very common up to the age of 13, after which activity plummets. According to one study, about one third of young Finns exercise sufficiently in terms of their health. One fifth of the 15–18-year-olds are entirely passive.

Almost one third of girls and boys aged 16 smoke daily. Boys' smoking rate has stayed the same for several years, whereas smoking among girls has been increasing. Young Finns do not use very much more alcohol than other young Europeans, but they are exceptionally prone to binge drinking. According to some recent studies, binge drinking has been decreasing to some extent. Although fewer young people in Finland experiment with and use drugs than in other European countries, the figure has been increasing. The most recent studies reveal that the rise in the use of and experimentation with drugs seems to have come to a halt.



## A.6 Sexuality and marriage

There have been no major changes in young Finns' sexual behaviour in the past ten years. On average, young Finns have their first sexual intercourse at the age of 17, and 29 per cent of boys and 35 per cent of girls in the ninth year-class of the comprehensive school have had at least one intercourse.

In international comparison, the number of abortions is very low in Finland: nine abortions per one thousand women in fertile age, that is, between 15 and 49. Similarly, the abortion rate among teenage girls is low (14.8 abortions per 1000), but it has been showing some increase in recent years. In the Nordic countries it has been possible to abort a pregnancy fairly easily since the mid 1970s. In Finland abortion requires a cause determined in law. Most abortions are made on social grounds. It is sufficient that the woman was under 17 years of age when she became pregnant. The traditionally low number of teenage mothers in Finland has been slightly increasing during the past few years. In 2000 there were 3.7 teenage births per one thousand girls aged between 15 and 17.

At the time of their first marriage, Finnish women are aged 28 and men 30 on average. It is increasingly common for young Finns to start their life together by cohabiting and to have children without getting married. However, most children are born in pair relationships. Finnish women tend to have their first child at an ever older age, currently at the average age of 27.6. The fertility rate, i.e. the average number of children, is fairly high (1.74) in the European comparison. In 2001 the average fertility rate in the EU was 1.53. Although current economic uncertainties seem to push the first childbirth ever later, the birth rates stay high, because it is fairly common for women to have a second and a third child. About one in five families with children have three children or more.

In 2002 health education was reintroduced as a compulsory subject in basic education. According to schoolchildren, they get information about sex matters at school, from friends and from the media. It is hoped that the reintroduction of health education as a curricular subject will help lower the teenage pregnancy rate, which has been showing a slight upward trend. With the financing of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, every young person who turns 16 is sent a leaflet on sexuality and venereal diseases, plus a condom. Enclosed is also a letter to their parents, which is intended to encourage discussion about these matters within the family.

Instead of insisting on continence before marriage, Finnish sex education stresses everybody's responsibility for themselves and for their partners. The aim is to minimise the adverse physical, psychological and social effects of early sexual activity.





## A.7 Risk of exclusion

Exclusion is often analysed in terms of participation in society and the community. On the one hand, exclusion is associated with objective disadvantage, such as poverty and long-term unemployment. On the other, it is seen to involve the deprivation of social ties and networks conducive to communality. Exclusion also involves the "wrong kind" of social contacts: the social network may draw a young person to a sub-culture which may entail aberrant behaviour, such as crime or drug abuse. However, exclusion often evolves over a longer period of time. The risk of exclusion should, in fact, be studied without automatically labelling anyone an excluded person.

During the 1990s, Finnish society underwent a profound structural change, which left an enduring mark on society and is still felt in young Finns' lives. There is growing uncertainty about the future, young people encounter problems with finding jobs and their income level has fallen. The youth labour market has become polarised and there are no longer enough permanent jobs to go round. The better education and training a young person has, the more likely it is that he or she can find a permanent job. Yet, not even a good education fully guards a young person against unemployment. By the year 2000 youth unemployment had fallen to 20 per cent but it is still far from the pre-recession situation. At present the overall jobless rate is under 10 per cent. About three per cent of young Finns under 25 years of age are long-term clients in the income support system.

The recession in the early nineties also forced the public sector to make cutbacks. Teachers' lay-offs, larger teaching groups and cutbacks in special-needs education, combined with problems encountered by the families and cutbacks in resources for edifying youth activities, are still reflected as difficulties in young people's life management. Services promoting young people's socialisation have been cut at the same time as the demands made on young people and their parents in society and the world of work are growing. Finland is currently experiencing strong migration, which tends to chip away at families' traditional safety nets. It is increasingly difficult for parents to get support in rearing their children.

With a view to preventing exclusion, measures are taken to support at-risk youth in their growth to normal adulthood. The key to minimising risks is to ensure sufficient resources for efficient and effective basic services and social support systems. These problems were addressed in an action programme devised on the initiative of the Prime Minister in the spring of 2002, which put forward measures for promoting young people's social engagement. The programme focused on the critical transitions in young people's lives, for example from school to further studies and from education to the labour market. The service system should work more efficiently at these points of transition to prevent young people from falling through safety nets.

## A.8 Growing pains

### *Smoking and substance abuse*

There was an upward trend in young Finns' smoking, alcohol and drug abuse and associated problems in the 1990s. Since the turn of the millennium, smoking and binge drinking have been decreasing in the 14-to-18 age bracket, with the exception of 18-year-old girls. One worrying aspect in terms of health is that young Finns start smoking at a very early age and indulge in binge drinking. One in five young Finns aged between 14 and 18 drinks to get drunk once a month. Positive development is in evidence, however, especially in younger age groups.

It appears that the sharp increase in experimentation with and the use of drugs is slowing down, especially among young adults, who traditionally are the most prone to such experimenting. The findings are not clear, however, particularly as regards the very youngest age group. Risk users, those on detoxification and drug criminals become easily marginalised from education and work and fall homeless. Exclusion often involves permanent drug abuse.

On the whole, well-organised youth work and activities can also be considered preventive drug work. Especially risk groups are offered applications of experiential and adventure pedagogy, and new forms of work are being developed. Adventure pedagogy applications have been found to provide a good method for working with young people who have problems with controlling their lives. The Avartti Programme (International Award Programme for Young People) has also been developed towards drug prevention in 2002 and 2003.



The Ministry of Education supports the development and use of different forms of education and activity geared to prevent drug abuse. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health have jointly upgraded the preparedness of youth workshops to encounter drug issues. Since 2002, support has been available for local authorities and organisations to improve their capacity for drug prevention. Similarly, support has been available for educating people working in the local youth service, organisations or corresponding bodies to identify and address drug problems and to support young people in the best possible way. In 2002 this kind of aid was granted to 71 and in 2003 to 57 projects. The Ministry of Education collaborates closely with other ministries and administrative sectors, notably with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Labour. Internationally, Finland cooperates in preventive work with the EU countries, and with the adjacent areas: Russia, Estonia and the Nordic countries.

## **A.9 Income security**

A child is entitled to maintenance from his or her parents up to the age of 18. Parents pay the cost of their child's education even after the age of 18, if the cost deemed reasonable in terms of the child's aptitude, the duration and cost of education and the possibilities of their child to pay for education after graduation.

The student financial aid scheme in Finland consisting of a study grant and a state-guaranteed study loan. An unemployed young person is entitled to labour market support or unemployment benefit. The last resort is social welfare, which is granted to those who cannot earn their living in a paid job or in self-employment or have no other personal income or anyone to provide for them.

In the early nineties, the number of social welfare clients under 25 year of age kept growing rapidly, but the trend has been levelling out since 1996. In 1999, one in five 18-to-24-year-olds received social aid and 42 per cent of them were new clients. Some three per cent of young people were long-term clients, that is, had received income support for 10 to 12 months during the year.

Social welfare can support young people in becoming independent of their families and founding families of their own, but it should not lead to long-term reliance on benefits and social services.

## A.10 Young people's legal status

### Definitions in legislation:

#### A young person aged 18

- is legally an adult and has the right to **vote and stand** in national and local elections (Constitution)
- can dispose of his or her property and **sign contracts and** other legal instruments (Guardianship Services Act)
- can get married (Marriage Act)
- can get a driving licence (**Traffic Act**)
- who is an immigrant residing **permanently in Finland has the right** to vote in local elections and local referendums (**Constitution**).

#### A person under 18 years of age

- is not legally competent (**Guardianship Services Act**)
- is a child (**Child Welfare Act**)
- is a young employee (**Young Employees Act**)
- is not allowed to buy **tobacco or alcohol products** (**Tobacco Act, Alcohol Act**).

### Other age limits

#### A person

- aged 18 - 20 is a **young person** (**Child Welfare Act**)
- aged 0 - 29 is a **young person** (**Youth Work Act**)
- aged 7 - 16 is in the compulsory school **age** (**Comprehensive School Act**)
- aged 15 may establish an organisation **and have a vote in it** (**Associations Act**)
- aged 16 can get a licence to drive a **light motor cycle** (**Traffic Act**)
- aged under 15 is not punished for crimes **but is liable to restitution** (**Penal Code and Damages Act**)
- aged 18 or 19 may purchase only mild **alcohol** (**Alcohol Act**).

## A.11 Conscription

Finland has general conscription, which means that every Finnish man between 17 and 60 is liable to military service.

Each male Finnish citizen who turns 18 must take part in a call-up. The service consists of regulars (conscripts), the reserve, and the auxiliary reserve.

The duration of armed service is 180, 270 or 362 days. Young men usually sign up at the age of 19 or 20. A 17-year-old may volunteer for military service. Deferral is granted for three years at a time up to the age of 28. There are separate Acts governing non-military service and conscription for Jehovah's Witnesses.

In Finland women have no mandatory military service but have had the option of voluntary service since 1995. Women's service is equivalent to men's, except that a woman may discontinue her service during the first 45 days. After their military service, women (and men) are liable to armed service up to the age of 60.

The armed service consists of the conscription service and refresher courses. People may opt for non-military service for reasons of conscience, based on a self-declared religious or ethical conviction. The non-military service, i.e. 'civilian service', is 13 months and is done in social institutions or certain voluntary organisations. In 1996, about seven per cent of conscripts opted for non-military service.

Men who have the right of domicile in the self-governing Province of Åland, with some exceptions, are exempted from military service.

## A.12 Monitoring young people's living conditions

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, which is attached to the Ministry of Education, monitors developments in young people's living conditions in Finland. To this end, there is a database "Youth living standard indicators" on the internet. It is intended for youth policy makers, researchers, those working in the local youth service and those engaged in local youth policy. The database offers a wide range of numerical data about matters relating to young people's well- and ill-being and provides resources for users to draw their own conclusions.

There is also an English version of the database at <http://www.nuoret.org/>

The database contains data in the following areas:

- employment and unemployment
- education and training
- housing
- migration
- marriage and family
- income and indebtedness
- health
- causes of death and mortality
- crime
- exclusion.

These categories also include numerical data jointly compiled by the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, Statistics Finland and National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health. The data are updated annually.

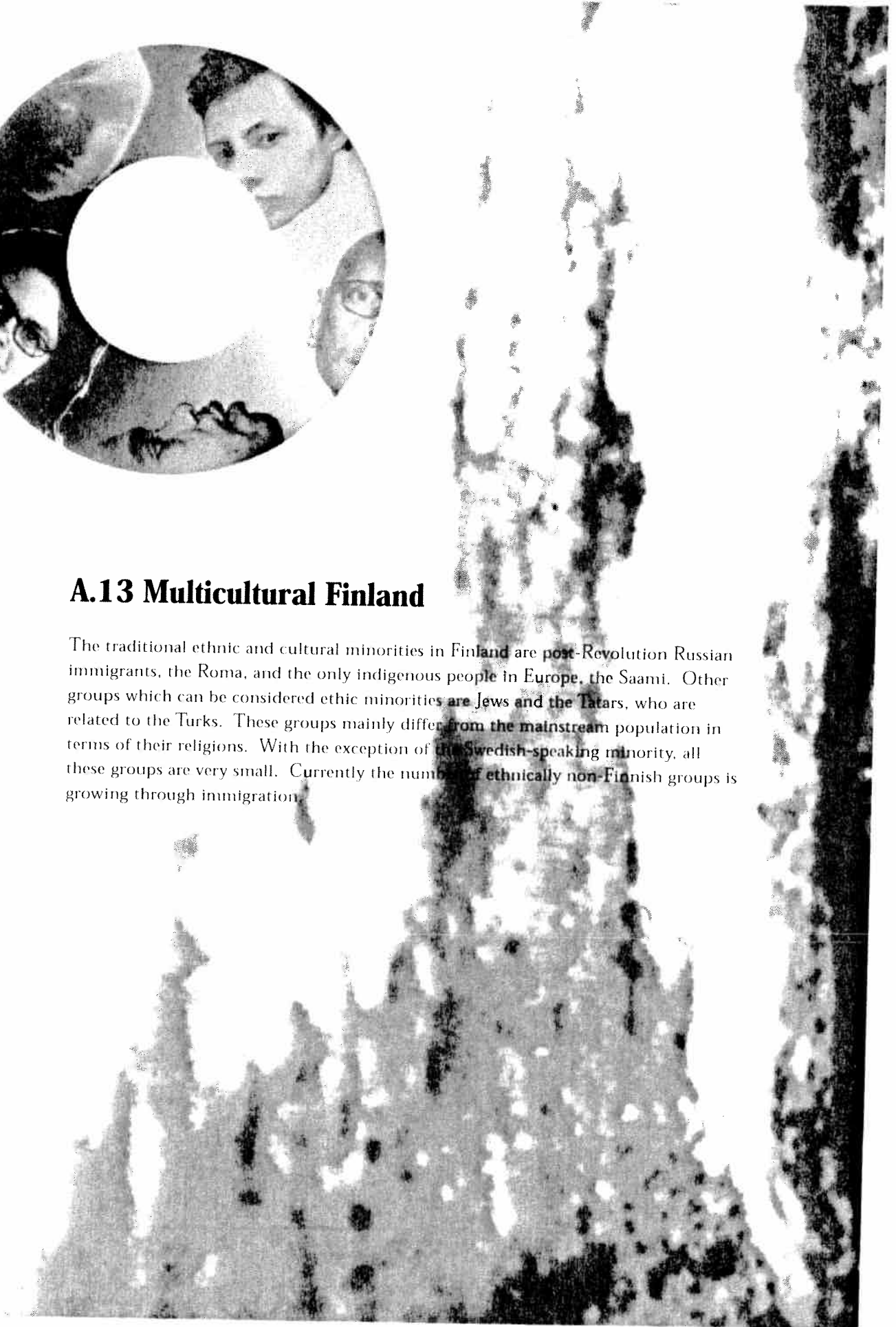
The data retrieval facility enables the user to make time series and regional comparisons, as well as to compare situations between different age groups and between genders. The data are available from 1990 onwards. The 1990-1997 data are only national but from 1998 onwards also broken down regionally. The age groups in the database are 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 15-29 and 15-64, which enables the situation in different youth age groups to be compared with the situation of the working-age population as a whole.





## A.13 Multicultural Finland

The traditional ethnic and cultural minorities in Finland are post-Revolution Russian immigrants, the Roma, and the only indigenous people in Europe, the Saami. Other groups which can be considered ethnic minorities are Jews and the Tatars, who are related to the Turks. These groups mainly differ from the mainstream population in terms of their religions. With the exception of the Swedish-speaking minority, all these groups are very small. Currently the number of ethnically non-Finnish groups is growing through immigration.



During most of the 20th century, Finland remained outside the major immigration flows in Europe. Throughout its history, Finland has largely been a country of emigration: people have left Finland especially in search of work. Immigration did not start to increase until the 1990s, when the number of immigrants grew four-fold. From the 1990 figure of 20,000, the total number of immigrants had grown to over 100,000 by 2003, which is about two per cent of the population. Even so, the relative number of immigrants in Finland is the lowest in the EU.

The largest number of immigrants have come to Finland from the adjacent countries: Russia, Estonia and Sweden. Some of them are ethnically Finns, or their descendants, and are therefore called return migrants. Somalis are the largest non-European immigrant group.

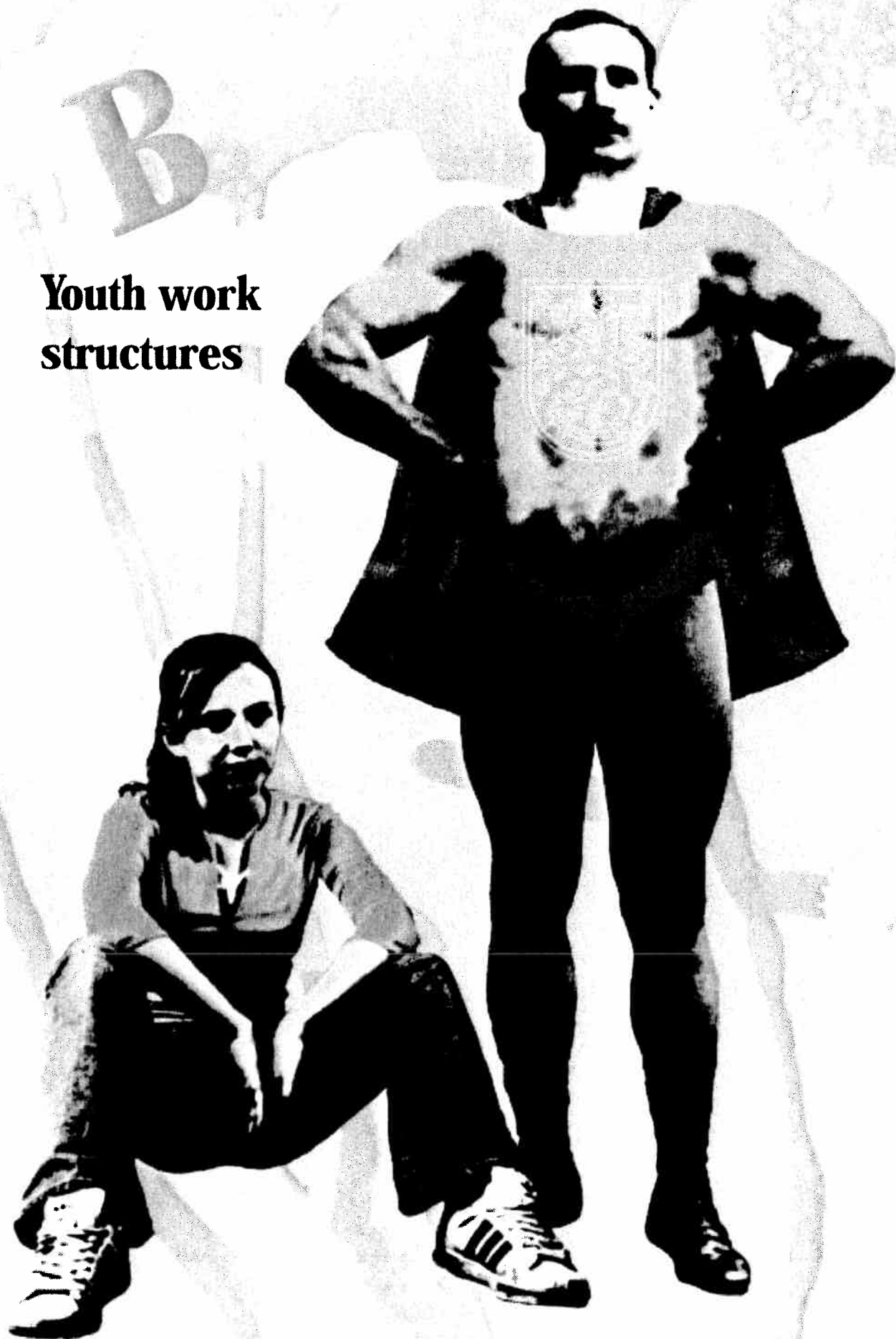
Immigrants living in Finland differ from Finns with regard to their age structure. Most immigrants are in working age. In 2000, 75 per cent of immigrants and only 67 per cent of Finns were in working age. More than 15 per cent of Finns are over 65, whereas the corresponding figure for immigrants was six per cent.

A similarly large difference is found in the proportion of children and young people: 43 per cent of immigrants are 29 or younger, while the 0-29 age bracket represents only 36 per cent of the native population. The overall number of children in Finland took an upward turn when Finland started receiving immigrants with families in the 1990s and has further grown through family unification. The demand for youth work services is large among immigrant families. For instance, in some Helsinki City youth facilities the majority of users are young immigrants.

The status of immigrant children and youngsters in Finland is governed especially by the Assimilation Act, the Basic Education Act (628/1998), the Child Welfare Act (683/1983), the Child Custody and Right of Access Act (361/1983), and international treaties. An immigrant of compulsory school age residing in Finland has both the right to basic education and the duty to complete compulsory schooling, whatever his or her nationality. The number of immigrant pupils kept growing in all forms of education throughout the 1990s.

Especially major cities have recently been developing specific methods for working with young immigrants. Similarly, some traditional youth organisations have devised programmes for encouraging immigrant participation. Young immigrants have started establishing organisations and clubs of their own, often intended to bring together a given ethnic group. In the north of the country, young Saami people have set up an organisation of their own.

# **Youth work structures**



## **B.1 Youth work: legislation and concepts**

Finland has 1.9 million young people (aged 0-29), which makes 36.5 per cent of the population.

The purpose of the present Youth Work Act (235/1995) is to improve young people's living conditions and create favourable conditions for young people's own action.

The Youth Work Act defines the values and principles underpinning youth work as follows:

"The purpose is to promote equality between generations, genders and different regions, to enhance tolerance and cultural diversity, and to promote sustainable exploitation of nature."

The Act defines the central concepts:

'For the purposes of this act,

- 1) youth work means measures for improving young people's living conditions and creating conditions for young people's civic activities; and
- 2) youth activities means young people's civic activities which promote their personal growth and citizenship skills.'

The responsibility for the youth service and youth work and relevant coordination at the central government level lies with the Ministry of Education, at the regional level with the provincial state offices, and at the local level with the local authorities. In addition, each administrative sector has responsibility for young people's living conditions and their improvement in its own sector.

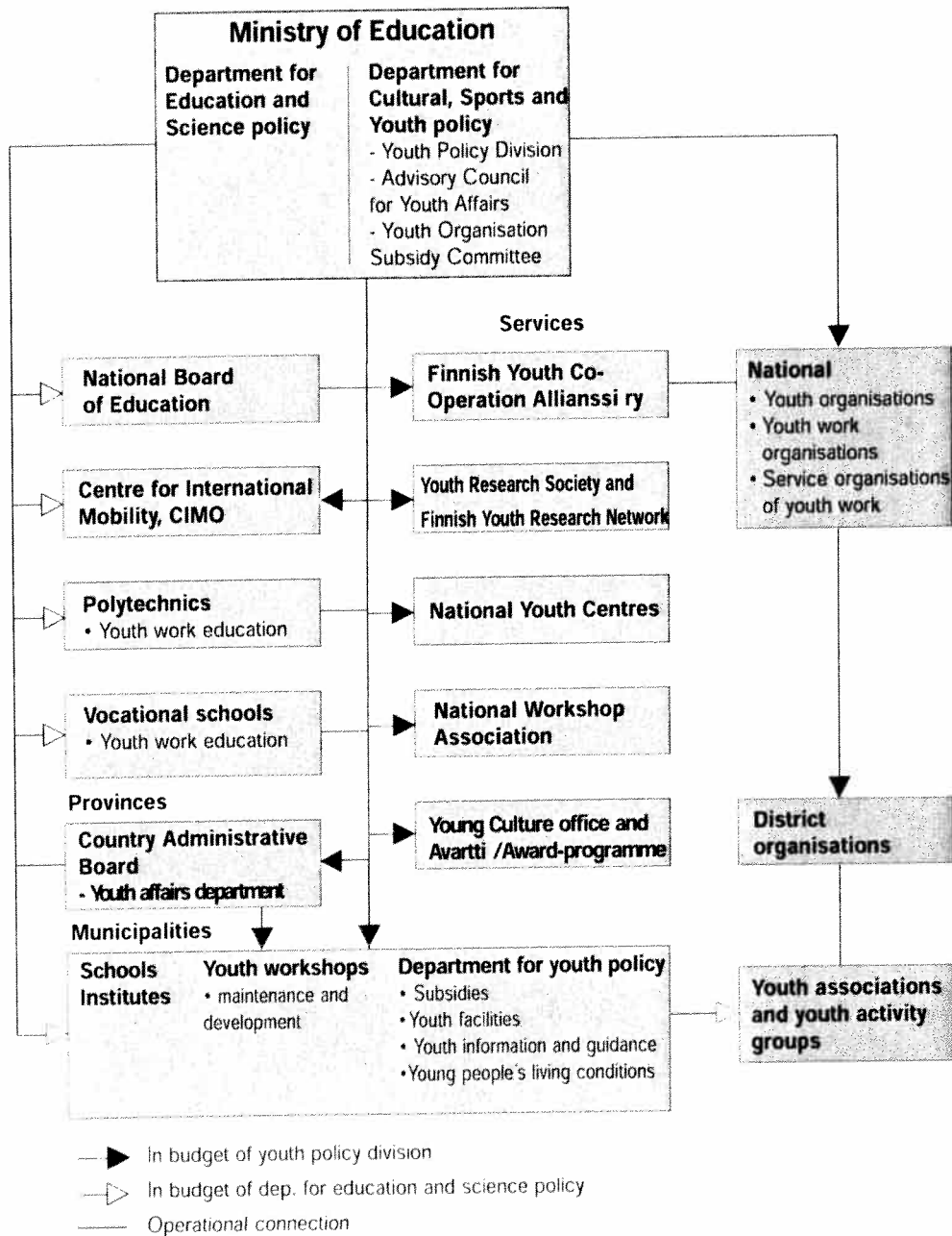
Under the Act, youth work is in the local remit, and the Ministry of Education allocates statutory state aid for the purpose annually. The local authority has independent discretion in implementation.

The Ministry of Education provides resources and steers youth work at the regional level by means of results-based management, setting target outcomes and monitoring their attainment.

# Youth work in Finland

## ADMINISTRATION

## CIVIL SOCIETY



## **B.2 Ministry of Education: support and coordination**

Under the Youth Work Act, the overall direction and development of youth service and youth work is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and its Youth Policy Division, which is subordinate to the Department for Cultural, Sport and Youth Policy.

The aims of the Youth Policy Division are

- to support young people's active citizenship,
- to enhance young people's social empowerment,
- to improve young people's living conditions.

To this end, the Division

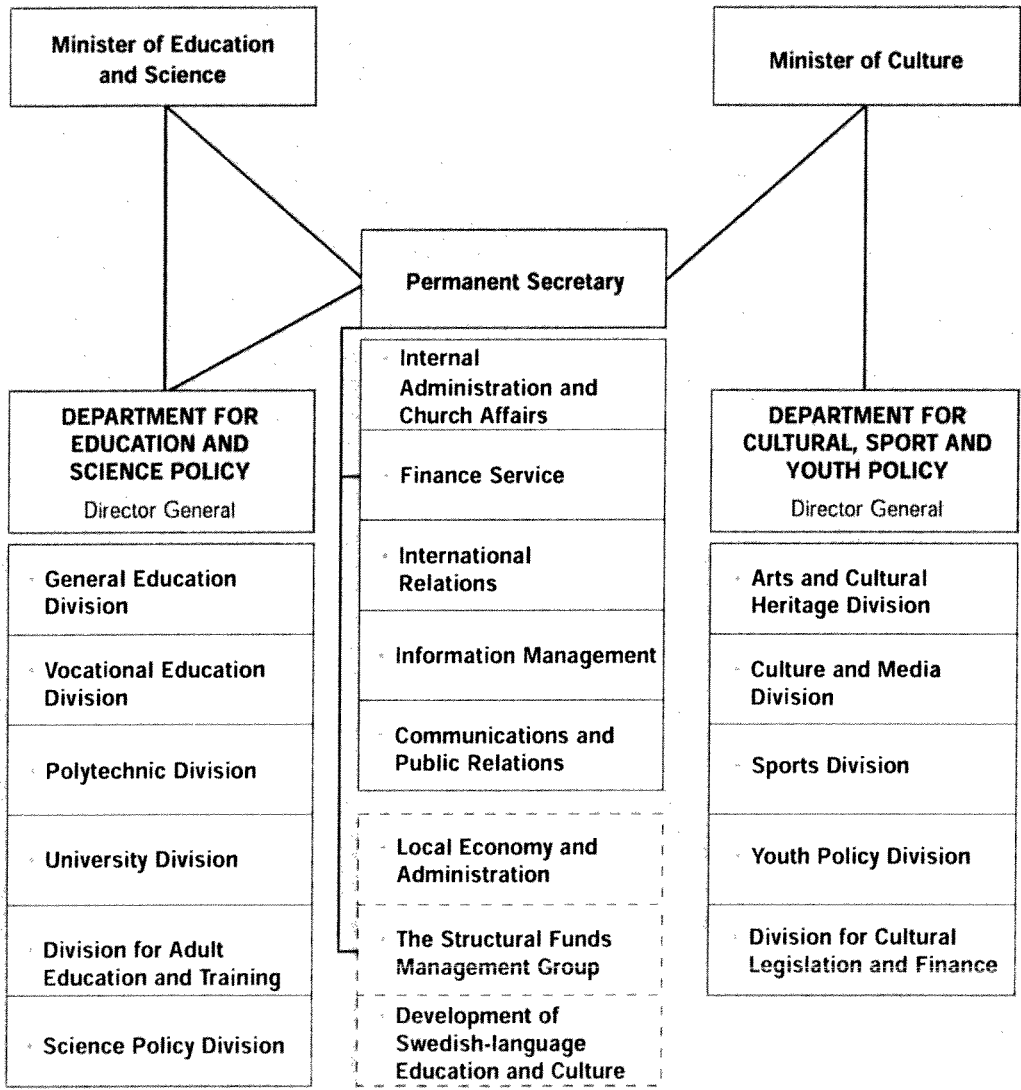
- devises national youth work development plans
- coordinates youth policy in central government
- subsidises national youth organisations, their district organisations and youth work organisations
- supports local youth work by allocating statutory state aid
- supports the development of new forms of action for young people
- subsidises the operation and construction of national youth centres (10)
- supports and carries out international youth work cooperation
- supports applied youth research
- supports after-school activities
- subsidises regional youth service and steers it by target outcome
- supports the development of youth workshops
- subsidises young people's cultural activities and Young Culture events
- subsidises and develops young people's web media
- subsidises and develops projects relating to young people's social empowerment and to drug and alcohol prevention, and
- participates in the development of education and training relating to youth work.

The expert bodies assisting the Ministry of Education in youth affairs are the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, which is appointed by the Government, and the Youth Organisation Support Committee.

The Council has representation of youth organisations, youth research and training, local youth services, church youth work, and ministries of relevance to young people's living standard and quality of life. The Council monitors and assesses young people's living conditions and takes initiative for their improvement.

The Youth Organisation Support Committee in turn includes representatives of national youth work organisations which have no vested interest in this resource allocation. It draws up a proposal for the allocation of support and develops the support scheme.

### Ministry of Education



## B.3 Regional government

In the Finnish regional administration, provincial state offices (5) form part of state administration under the various ministries. Regional councils (19), which are cooperation and development bodies formed by local authorities, have been assigned certain regional development tasks by the government. The regional administration does not levy taxes, nor are there any elected regional authorities.

Finland has five provinces: Southern Finland, Western Finland, Eastern Finland, Oulu, and Lapland, plus the autonomous Province of Åland. According to legislation on regional administration, the provincial state offices are responsible for youth work at the regional level, under the Ministry of Education.

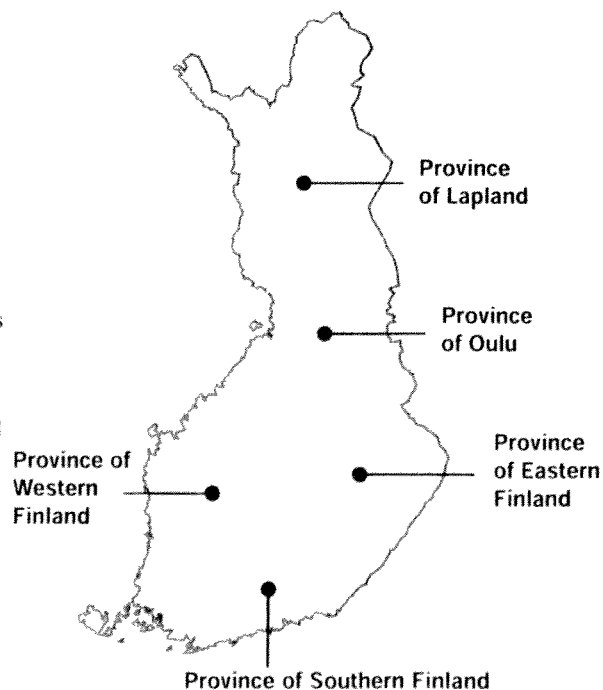
The regional youth service is assigned to the education and culture department of the provincial state office, which also handles school, sport and library affairs. In the Province of Lapland, youth affairs are directly subordinate to the Governor. The Ministry of Education and the provincial offices conclude three-year performance agreements, which are reviewed annually.

The Ministry of the Interior allocates personnel resources to regional youth services: the Provinces of Lapland and Oulu have one and other provinces two or three youth workers. The Ministry of Education allocates annual appropriations for operations, totalling 363,000 euros in 2003.

In the performance agreements (2003–2005), the provincial youth services have been assigned the following tasks:

- the allocation of the funds earmarked for the development of youth workshops
- the allocation of the funds earmarked for children's after-school activities
- the evaluation of local youth work services
- the regional monitoring of young people's living conditions and initiatives for their development
- training in topical youth work issues
- preventive drug and other intoxicant work
- the organisation of regional youth work colloquiums
- the promotion of multiculturalism and tolerance and work against racism
- regional cooperation at the international level.

The partners in youth workshop activities at the regional level include the regional social and health departments of the state provincial offices and fifteen employment and economic development centres under the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Trade and Industry. In questions relating to young people's housing, the partners are regional environmental centres, which are subordinate to the Ministry of the Environment.





## B.4 Local youth work

There are 444 municipalities in Finland, including 113 towns and cities. Forty-four municipalities are bilingual (Finnish and Swedish) and in 19 the first language is Swedish. About 69 per cent of the population of 5.2 million live in urban areas. In 2002 the capital city, Helsinki, had a population of 560,000 and the smallest municipality, Sottunga in the archipelago, only 132 inhabitants. The average population of municipalities was 11,670.

Municipalities are self-governing and have the right to levy taxes. In 2003 the municipal tax rate varied from 15.5 per cent to 20 per cent. In 2002 the total municipal expenditures amounted to 27.6 billion euros, of which 140 million euros (0.54 %) were youth funds. The state budget was 38.5 billion euros, of which 22.4 million euros (0.06 per cent) was allocated to youth activities and youth work. However, 15 per cent of expenditures in the state budget relate to children and young people, including education and health care. Statutory state aid to youth services covers some four per cent of the overall local youth expenditure. According to the Youth Work Act, youth work belongs to the local authorities, each of them choosing the forms and methods itself.

The local elections are held every four years. The elected municipal council makes decisions on local matters and appoints the municipal board and sectoral boards. At present only 11 municipalities have a separate youth board, in others youth work is assigned to boards responsible for other sectors as well, such as sports, culture and education. In the smallest municipalities, youth affairs are handled by the local board.



In 2002 the total number of employees working with youth in Finland was 3,400, and there were some 1,100 youth facilities. About 30 municipalities have youth information and counselling points. Local authorities grant subsidies to altogether 6,500 local youth organisations. In 2002 there were 236 youth workshops intended for unemployed young people, which provided six months of work and training for some 7,000 young people. The workshops are funded by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the local authorities and the EU Social Fund.

Besides supporting youth organisations and young people's leisure activities, one important aim in local youth work is to improve young people's living conditions. A great deal of attention has been paid to the status of immigrant youth and to drug prevention in growth centres, especially in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The local youth service is one of the partners in the provision of after-school activities.

In 2003 the Government launched a five-year project to prevent young people's exclusion and to strengthen young people's participation and inclusion. The 39 actions in it have 63 local authorities as partners. They develop cross-sectoral youth policy coordination and "youth ombudsman" activities. The foremost local partners in the projects are local youth and school administrations and the target group is young people about to finish their compulsory schooling.

With a view to further empowering youth, some 100 local authorities have established youth councils, youth parliaments with internet-based youth voting, and other democracy schemes. However, these youth bodies have only limited powers within the scope determined by the municipal councils. One of the foremost short-term aims is to develop democracy education and to empower young people to influence matters in their immediate community.

## B.5 Youth workshops

Youth workshops are the Ministry of Education's response to the high youth unemployment rate. The local authorities own most of the workshops (90%), which offer work and activities to young people in six-month periods. The aim is to improve young people's life management, empower them socially and to motivate and encourage them to seek education and jobs.

In 1993-94 there were 97,000 unemployed young people and some 350 youth workshops. In 2002 the corresponding figures were 35,000 and 240. In 2002 the workshops and their 777 instructors catered for over 7,000 young people.

### Youth workshops by province in 2002

Province	Number	Young people	Instructors
Southern Finland	72	1 600	182
Western Finland	69	2 679	410
Eastern Finland	37	1 530	85
Oulu	34	782	70
Lapland	24	502	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>236</b>	<b>7 093</b>	<b>777</b>

The workshops are co-financed by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. The labour administration guides young people to work practice and to workshops with labour market support. The Ministry of Education's role is to develop youth workshops and provide the basic funding, which comes from national sources and from the EU Social Funds. Local authorities also contribute to the funding of the workshops.

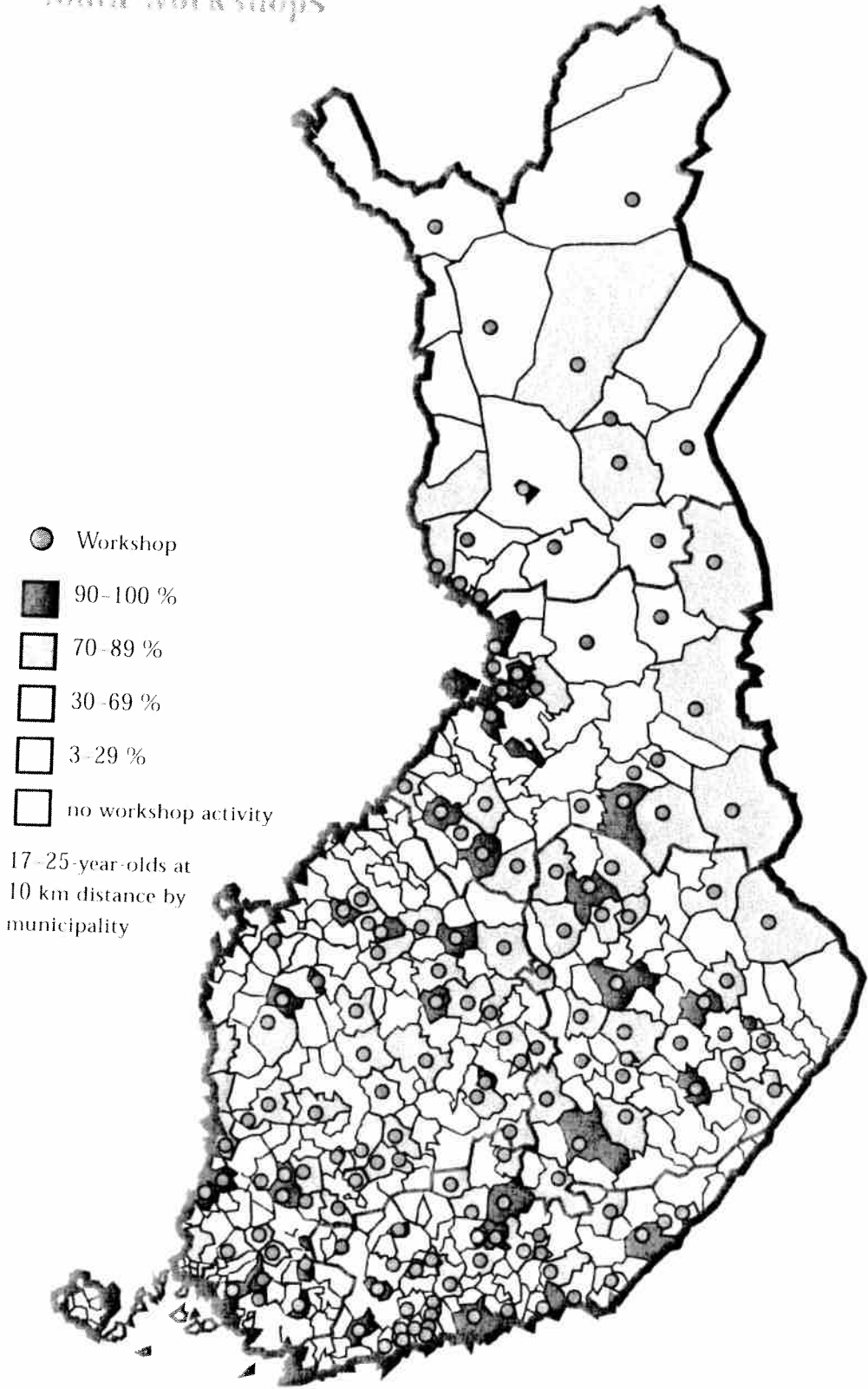
The focus in workshop activities is on:

- Supporting apprenticeship training
- Helping young people complete their compulsory schooling and raise grades in the workshop schools
- Preventing dropout by means of workshop schools attached to vocational institutions
- Promoting master-apprentice activities
- Encouraging young entrepreneurship
- Providing youth workshops as part of youth activity centres, and
- Improving young people's media and internet skills.

The results obtained in youth workshops are encouraging. Studies show that 50-70% of the participants seek training or find jobs after their workshop period, and as many as 75% of the participants say that the workshop have helped them.

The main problem in development is that workshop instructors and directors work on fixed-term employment contracts. One aim in the 2004-2007 Government Programme is to effect more permanent workshop activities by establishing permanent posts for instructors.

Youth workshops



## B.6 Youth research

Youth research is interdisciplinary research on one age group, young people, namely those between 12 and 25. In research, the concept of youth thus covers young people from teenagers to young adults. The Ministry of Education's Youth Policy Division supports applied research which serves youth work, youth activities and youth policy. Basic research on youth is conducted in universities, polytechnics and research institutes and comes under other forms of support.

Youth research focuses on youth cultures, consumer behaviour, exclusion, ethnic relations, education and training, and the quality of youth work. Most youth research is conducted and organised within the Finnish Youth Research Network, which is an important element in the work of the Finnish Youth Research Society. The Youth Research Society is an independent organisation for promoting interdisciplinary youth research in Finland.

The Finnish Youth Research Society develops national and international cooperation between youth researchers, research institutes, higher education institutions and professions working with youth. One of its foremost tasks is to coordinate and disseminate research findings. It publishes a journal called *Nuorisotutkimus* and other literature and maintains a Nordic and national youth researcher register. The Society arranges national and international research seminars and activities for postgraduate students. One important form of international action is Nordic cooperation. The Finnish Youth Research Network takes part in an EU project from 2003 to 2005, which is led by the Institute of Social Research and Analysis, Vienna, Austria. The eight participants include non-EU countries, and material is also collected from countries which do not participate. The basic material relates to young Europeans aged between 15 and 24. The Ministry of Education supports the activities of the Finnish Youth Research Society and Network.

Polytechnics providing education in fields relating to youth are developing research and reviews. The polytechnics and the Youth Research Network have had several joint projects.

The Youth Research Society and youth researchers take actively part in youth schemes and youth research projects organised by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Council of Europe, the European Union, the United Nations and other international bodies. Recent projects include the preparation of the EU White Paper on Youth Policy and the UN meeting of youth experts and researchers in Helsinki in 2002.

## B.7 National youth centres

Finland has nine national youth centres, which have been established and work with the financial support of the Ministry of Education. The centres serve national and international youth work and offer moderately priced accommodation, meals and programme services to young people.

The centres provide youth activities, camp schools, eco-schools and youth tourism services. Their activities geared to young people have been growing substantially in recent years:

Year	Youth activities and services	Subsidies for operation	FIM /day	EUR/day
1998	116 500	7 500 000 FIM	64.38	(10.83)
1999	135 500	7 900 000 FIM	58.30	(9.81)
2000	129 000	8 050 000 FIM	62.40	(10.49)
2001	138 500	8 800 000 FIM	63.54	(10.69)
2002	136 000	1 504 712 EUR	(65.78)	11.06

In 2003 the Ministry of Education allocated 1,598,000 euros for operations and 780,000 euros for construction, totalling 2,378,000 euros.

- An international safety audit has been conducted in the youth centres, so that they are safe environments.
- The centres charge two kinds of fees. The fees paid by young clients are subsidised by the government but adult customers pay market prices.
- Information about the youth centres is available at:

1. Ahtela [www.turku.fi/nuoriso/ahtela.html](http://www.turku.fi/nuoriso/ahtela.html)
2. Anjala [www.nuorisokeskusanjala.fi](http://www.nuorisokeskusanjala.fi)
3. Hyvärilä [www.hyvarila.com](http://www.hyvarila.com)
4. Inari [www.luokkis.com/inari](http://www.luokkis.com/inari)
5. Marttinen [www.virrat.fi/marttinen](http://www.virrat.fi/marttinen)
6. Metsäkartano [www.metsakartano.com](http://www.metsakartano.com)
7. Oivanki [www.kuusamo.fi/oivanki](http://www.kuusamo.fi/oivanki)
8. Piispala [www.piispala.fi](http://www.piispala.fi)
9. Syöte [www.syotekeskus.fi](http://www.syotekeskus.fi)
10. Villa Elba [www.kokkola.fi/elba](http://www.kokkola.fi/elba)

- Finnish Youth Centres is a registered national organisation developing and marketing youth centres ([www.suomennuorisokeskukset.fi](http://www.suomennuorisokeskukset.fi))

## **B.8 Education and training in the youth field**

Youth workers have been trained in Finland since the 1940s. Youth instructor training has evolved from a one-year course into a three-year polytechnic degree programme. At present training is available in secondary vocational institutions and in polytechnics. Universities also provide education relating to youth, but do not offer specific youth-field degrees.

### **Secondary training, vocational qualification**

In 2001 secondary training in the youth field was extended to 120 credits. In practice this means three years of training. The vocational qualifications are Vocational Qualification in Youth and Leisure Instruction and Vocational Qualification in Child Care and Education and Family Welfare. They can be taken either in institutional training or as a competence-based qualification, which is mainly intended for people already active in working life and does not require compulsory formal training. The secondary qualifications prepare for operational tasks in the field. Those with a three-year qualification are eligible for higher education.

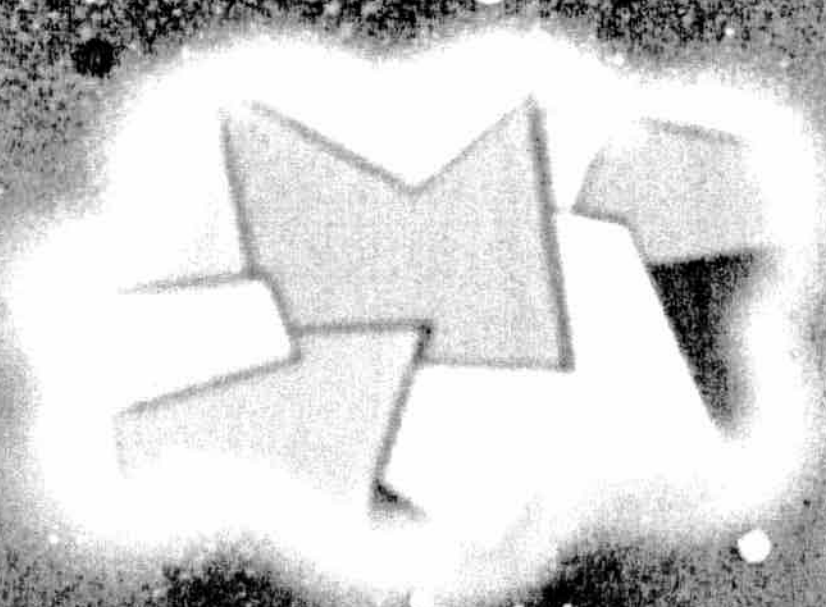
### **Polytechnic education relating to young people**

The upper secondary training in the youth field was upgraded to polytechnic education between 1997 and 2000. There are two polytechnic degree programmes of 140 credits in the field: Civic Activities and Youth Work, and Cultural Management and Production. Youth-field education is available in four polytechnics.

Polytechnic graduates are placed in local youth service, in organisations, in church youth work, and businesses. The education qualifies for expert posts in instruction, education, and planning, for managerial posts and for international work.

**C**

**Youth  
participation**





## C.1 Young people's values and attitudes

Young people's values in the 21st century Finland are still fairly traditional. The things they cherish are family, health, good income, and a stable job.

The ongoing change is, however, gradually reflected in prevailing values, and in this young people are often forerunners. With growing material prosperity, financial security no longer figures as high in people's values. Young people increasingly stress self-expression and the quality of life. Dr. **Helena Helve**, who has been conducting a follow-up study of young Finns' values and attitudes has noted that materialist values are giving way to post-materialist values. According to Helve, today's young are not as centred on work and career as their parents' generation. Many young people take a critical view of continuously growing welfare, because in their opinion it increases people's ill-being in the long run.

The recession in the 1990 redirected attention, at least for a while, towards materialistic values. Helve has found that young people's attitude towards the unemployed, the sick and the disadvantaged became more indifferent in the aftermath of the recession; young people were not as disposed to forgo their own standard of living in order to reduce environmental problems.

According to Helve, young people's value world is not very coherent or consistent. They choose their values from different value systems according to the situation: the same young person may be an individualist in some matters, a humanist in others, and even a racist in some. Major ideologies have lost some of their significance for young people. Party politics and religion do not interest young people, who focus on different kinds of minor projects, such as defending animal rights or the natural state of a given eco-system.

## C.2 Youth Barometer – Young people's opinions

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, an expert body attached to the Ministry of Education, publishes a Youth Barometer at regular intervals. Gauging young people's attitudes and values, the Barometers also provide policy-makers and the administration with current information about young people's expectations and changes in them.

The Barometers have been published since 1994. The idea for a national youth barometer was conceived during high youth unemployment. In public discussions, some aired their misgivings that unemployment would influence young people's values and undermine motivation for further education or active job seeking.

The first Barometer, in 1994, gauged young people's attitudes to work, unemployment and education. After this the topics have diversified. The annual Barometers survey attitudes to social influence and political decision-making. Other theme areas have been consumer behaviour, attitudes to information society, the European Union, racism and intoxicant use. Every year the Barometers also survey young people's views on current social issues.

At first, the Youth Barometer was published twice a year, but since 2000, there has been only one extensive survey each year. The samples range from 900 to 2000 Finnish-speaking young people between 15 and 29. The method is telephone interviews. In the 1999 Barometer young people's attitudes were compared with those of 40–45-year-olds, who were put the same questions as the young target group. In 2001 a parallel Barometer was conducted among conscripted service men.

The Barometers paint a systematic picture of youth who value education and training and the opportunities it offers. For young Finns, education is the first-choice path to the labour market. In fact, nearly all those interviewed for the 2002 Barometer (95%) believed that education and training will substantially improve their job prospects.

Young people are of the opinion that the most important things in their future will be reliable and good friends, a stable job, and a family and children. These are things that half of young Finns hope to achieve in future, whereas a good and respected social status, work in a business of one's own and political engagement are important for few of them.

The 1997–2002 Youth Barometers can be accessed (in Finnish) on the site of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs at [www.minedu.fi/nuora](http://www.minedu.fi/nuora).

## Some Barometer findings

### "How important is it for you that at the age of 35 you have achieved following things?" (percentages)

	Very important	Fairly important	Not very important	Not at all important
Trustworthy and good friends	87	12	0	0
A stable relationship	66	28	4	2
A family and children	50	37	10	3
A flat/house you own	31	39	21	9
Your own car	31	34	20	15
Opportunities to travel	32	40	19	9
A possibility to make nature-friendly choices as a consumer	28	48	17	6
Above average salary	17	48	22	12
A high standard of living	20	54	22	4
A good and respected social status	11	38	34	16
Work in a business of your own	7	19	31	42
Active engagement in politics	1	11	31	55

### "What is most important in work?" (percentages)

The content of work	54	Advancement prospects	9
Stable employment relation	20	Human relations at work	4
Salary	10	Perceived status of the job	2

### "If you think the issue important enough, would you be ready to do the following?" (percentages)

	Certainly	Perhaps	Hardly	No
Take part in a public demonstration	21	31	27	21
Take part in a strike at school or at work	41	36	12	10
Take part in a payment or purchase boycott	25	35	20	20
Use violence against policy-makers	1	2	10	87
Write a letter to the editor	32	35	14	19
Stand in elections	5	11	22	61
Take part in a demonstration at an international meeting	8	18	24	50
Sign a petition or an address	52	33	7	8
Collect signatures for a petition	21	33	21	24
Take part in the occupation of a building	3	7	20	70
Do campaign work for you candidate	10	26	22	41

Source: Youth Barometer 2002

### C.3 Support for youth organisations

The population of Finland is 5.2 million, of whom 1.9 million are young people under 29 years of age. More than half of young Finns between the ages of 7 and 29 are members of youth, sports or other organisations.

State subsidies are given to about hundred national organisations, which could be grouped as

- Political youth and student organisations.
- Young people's interest organisations.
- Young people's cultural and hobby organisations.
- Religious youth organisations.
- Teenager organisations, and
- Other organisations working with youth.

The government promotes the work of youth organisations, but does not interfere with the content of their activities. The Ministry of Education grants annual subsidies to national youth organisations and their district associations. The annual grants are based on performance, that is, the quality, extent and effectiveness of activities. The subsidies come from national lottery and pools proceeds earmarked for youth information and education. The support for political youth and student organisations is mainly channelled through the youth work system.

Eligible for state aid are organisations which have over 3,000 person members under 29 years of age and two thirds of whose members are young people. Exceptions to these criteria may be made if an organisation works among a linguistic or other minority or provides activities which can be considered to have national relevance.

At the local level, young people work through youth organisations, sports clubs, the parish and school hobby groups and use local youth facilities. Local youth associations are subsidised by the local authorities, who help by making facilities and equipment available to them and with training support.

The Ministry of Education has various funds at its disposal for subsidising topical projects. In recent years, they have been allocated for projects geared to prevent exclusion and develop adventure pedagogy, and for some international projects. Project funding is an important youth policy tool. It is also granted to organisations which do not receive regular subsidies.



## C.4 Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi

Finnish Youth Cooperation – Allianssi is an interest organisation, which provides services for young people, youth organisations and those who work with young people. Its aim is to support young people's growth with a view to realising civil society, enhancing civic responsibility and improving young people's living conditions.

Allianssi has some 100 member organisations, including nearly all national youth, interest, hobby and political organisations, as well as other youth work partners and professionals.

Allianssi is an active member in the European Youth Forum and contributes to national decision-making on the EC Youth for Europe programme and the European Voluntary Service for Young People. It is also a member of the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency ERYICA. At the regional level, it takes part in Nordic and Baltic Sea cooperation. Allianssi arranges training and exchanges geared to upgrade the knowledge and skills of those involved in international cooperation.

One of the foremost tasks for Allianssi is to influence national decision-making and policies. The aim is to raise the awareness of policy-makers about youth issues, improve youth work resources and highlight topical youth issues in public discussion. Youth elections are one tool for encouraging young people's participation and empowerment. Allianssi's multicultural activities are geared to build up participation and a member network.

The services provided by Allianssi relate to the development of the youth field, training and information. It undertakes projects for promoting participation and employment, arranges different courses, and organises youth exchanges, such as hotel, au pair and volunteer work abroad. With the EURO<26 card, young people under 26 get concessions and other benefits in Finland and abroad.

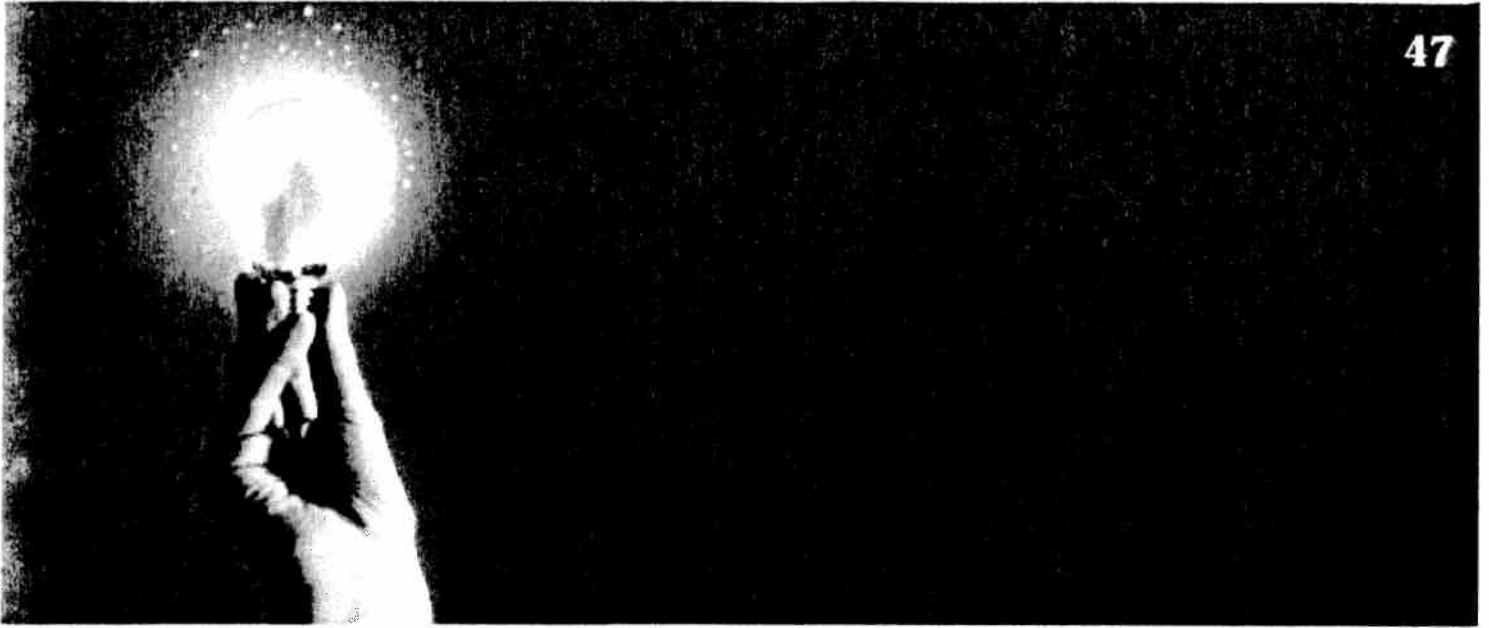
The Youth Policy Library is the only specialist youth library in the Nordic countries. It has a collection of 14,000 volumes and over 150 periodicals. The library has a youth information site called Allison (more information at [www.alli.fi](http://www.alli.fi)). Allianssi publishes Finland's only professional youth work journal Nuorisotyö, as well as a civic activity yearbook.

## **C.5 Recreational activity study book – Youth Academy**

The Youth Academy is a cooperation organisation which builds bridges between learning in leisure-time activities, between education/training and working life. The idea underlying this activity is that a young person learns independently and in working with others. Young people's own projects are a good way to learn and achieve set aims.

The Youth Academy has developed a Recreational Activity Study Book, in which young people can record all their learning experiences from hobby and volunteer work. Over 40,000 young Finns use it. It is above all a tool for making learning, growth and development visible to the young persons themselves. It is also useful for young people when they apply for a new job or a study place. The study book scheme comprises 250 post-secondary institution or training units, which take young people's non-formal learning into account, case by case, in admission to education or training and/or in credit transfer. The study book is a good tool for recognising informal learning.

The recognition of knowledge and skills gained in different contexts has emerged as an important issue both in Finland and in Europe as a whole. The European Commission memorandum on lifelong learning (2001) and the White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth" (2001) note that it is important to recognise skills acquired outside formal education and training settings. The Recreational Activity Study Book is one of the few concrete tools for documenting non-formal and informal learning in the whole of Europe.



## C.6 Young people's social participation

Universal suffrage and the freedom of speech and assembly guarantee young Finns' influence on society. Young people's own organisations and financial support for them create conditions for young people's social engagement. At the local level there are over 100 consultative youth councils which give young people a voice in local decision-making. The decline in young people's activity at the polls and the risk of exclusion are great concerns in Finland.

Many studies have shown that young people are more alienated from politics than the older generations. The youth turnout in elections is 10-15 percentage units lower than the national average. Most young Finns think that democracy works well in Finland and guarantees adequate opportunities for citizens to influence society. On the other hand, some are of the opinion that matters run well even without their vote. If the issue is important enough, young Finns are ready to use many means of influence, such as petitions, their right to strike, letters to the editor and different boycotts. Nevertheless, they do not take a very positive view of violence as a means of influence. Young Finns believe that turnout rates would rise if it were possible to vote through the internet.

According to a survey made by the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (2001), 51 per cent of young Finns between 10 and 29 take part in the activities of some voluntary organisation. The most active are the 10-14-year-olds, two thirds of whom take part in organised activities. The most popular organisations are sports clubs, pupil and student organisations, various hobby organisations and church youth activities. Two per cent of young Finns belong to political organisations.

## C.7 International cooperation

In international activities in the youth field, Finland stresses the importance of strengthening cross-sectoral youth policy within the UN system and promoting youth participation at the local, national, regional and international levels. The aim is to support young people's contribution to decision-making between member states, within the UN system and in youth organisations.

Bilateral cooperation in youth matters is governed by bilateral cultural agreements and youth-field exchange programmes based on them. Cooperation is implemented by both authorities and other partners, such as youth organisations, youth workshops, youth researchers, and youth workers. The Ministry of Education supports and promotes international cooperation between different stakeholders, who have independent discretion in determining the content of activities.

Youth policy in the Council of Europe is steered by regular ministerial conferences. Finland has stressed that the conferences should be arranged around themes which yield concrete results. Similarly, Finland underscores the role of the final acts as tools for development at both the national and international levels. For Finland, priorities in the youth sector are intercultural dialogues and the promotion of peace, human rights education and social cohesion, participation and democratic citizenship, and support for and the development of national youth policies. In the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), Finland has sought to promote international cooperation in youth research and the utilisation of research findings.

EU cooperation is guided by the White Paper "A New Impetus for European Youth" (2001). The aim is to develop and intensify pan-European youth cooperation. The competence in youth matters rests with the member states, which is why the objectives proposed in the White Paper are mainly the responsibility of national authorities. The White Paper suggests a twofold framework for European cooperation: applying the open method of coordination in the specific field of youth and taking the youth dimension more into account in other policy initiatives. The Ministry of Education is responsible for follow-up to the White Paper in Finland and, together with an ad hoc coordination group, for discussion of the White Paper themes and the application of the White Paper principles to national youth work and service.

The Finnish Centre for International Mobility CIMO is an expert and service organisation subordinate to the Ministry of Education. It coordinates and manages scholarship and exchange programmes. CIMO is also responsible for implementing nearly all EU education, cultural and youth programmes in Finland.

The main aims of the European Union's YOUTH Programme are to promote an understanding of common European values, to support young people's participation in building a young people's Europe and to strengthen solidarity. The programme comprises five actions: Youth for Europe, European Voluntary Service (EVS), Youth Initiatives, Joint Actions, and Support Measures. During the year 2004 the Commission will submit a proposal for new education and youth programmes which are currently being prepared and will come into force in 2007.

Nordic child and youth policy seeks to strengthen Nordic identity, stress the role of learning and to promote equality and tolerance. One special target group is



children and young people at risk of exclusion. Ensuring a good growth environment, favourable living conditions and equal rights to children and young people entails cooperation between different administrative sectors. Nordic cooperation is conducted within the Nordic Youth Committee and annual officials meetings. One priority for Finland is cooperation between Nordic youth researchers. Another focus alongside Nordic cooperation is cooperation with other adjacent areas: Russia, Estonia and the Baltic Sea countries.

The Ministry of Education contributes actively to the development of youth cooperation within the Baltic Sea and Barents regions as part of the EU Northern Dimension. The aim is to promote knowledge-based decision-making in youth matters, develop cross-sectoral cooperation with a view to taking youth aspects into account in other policies, develop dialogues with young people, and look upon young people as an asset in the promotion of regional competitiveness and sustainable development.

Youth cooperation within the Barents region is implemented by the youth policy working group of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, which was set up on Finland's initiative in 1999. The working group carries out an action plan geared to promote youth participation, youth exchanges, youth information and research on young people's living conditions and to develop young people's project activities. The focus is additionally on closer cooperation between governments, regional and European structures and cross-sectoral cooperation.

## C.8 Young Culture

In addition to art education given at school, the government and local authorities support children's and young people's cultural pursuits and cultural services. The objective is to allocate support equitably to all forms of art, catering for the diverse, albeit changing interests of young people

Young Culture is an annual event open to all young people, rallying tens of thousands each year. It comprises dozens of regional events and two national festivals. The focus is on different art forms each year.

- 2004 Dance + circus and entertainment, a multi-art forum
- 2005 National Festival for Schools
- 2006 Theatre + literature, pictorial art, photography, oral expression, a multi-art forum
- 2007 Music + digital art, video and design, a multi-art forum
- 2008 Dance + circus and entertainment, a multi-art forum
- 2009 Theatre + literature, pictorial art, photography, oral expression, a multi-art forum
- 2010 National Festival for Schools

Young Culture is a series of cultural and educational events which give young amateur artists an opportunity to show their skills and match them against those of other performers. The young artists receive feedback on their performance. Alongside traditional arts, Young Culture offers a forum for new forms of culture.

Local and regional Young Culture events are organised by local authorities and joint municipal boards and the national event by a local authority jointly with the Young Culture committee appointed by the Ministry of Education.

Young Culture forms part of the series of annual European and Nordic art events. There are Young Culture travel grants available for young people's participation in international events.

## C.9 After-school activities

In Finland, the school day begins at eight or nine in the morning and ends between one and three in the afternoon. There is need for after-school activities for younger schoolchildren because in most families both parents work outside the home, demands made on them in the labour market are growing, families have fewer members and the number of single-parent families is growing. One aim is to organise hobby activities for schoolchildren in the afternoon to give families more time together in the evenings.

After-school activities have been developed under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. The aim is to offer first- and second-year pupils opportunities for afternoon activities or a club at least once a week. Pupils in the third to ninth year-classes are also offered club activities at least once a week. Local authorities are responsible for arranging and coordinating after-school activities locally. The activities are provided by local authorities, associations, the church and other organisations. The Ministry of Education is responsible for developing, coordinating and monitoring the activities at the national level in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, other public authorities and civic organisations. The aim is to develop an administratively and financially clear and coherent system of activities which are object-oriented and safe.

In terms of youth work, these afternoon activities have many functions, from encouraging young people to take up hobbies to preventing exclusion. After-school activities have links with several other actions, such as democracy education, youth empowerment projects, the development of civic action, the development of youth culture and the prevention of drug and alcohol use.

The Youth Division of the Ministry of Education is developing hobby activities for teenagers between 12 and 15. Apart from more traditional club activities, this is geared to support new and innovative action, such as adventure pedagogy and the Avartti Programme. Other priorities are youth culture and preparation for the national Young Culture events. The practical implementation has been assigned to the state provincial offices, which are also responsible for developing youth activities in their regions. They grant resources to local after-school activities. Some 500 clubs have been subsidised annually.

## C.10 Young people and sports

Sport is young Finns' most popular leisure-time pursuit. In 2001 and 2002, some 92 per cent of the 3-18 went in for sports. There were 972 000 children and young people in Finland who had sports as a hobby. (Finnish Gallup 2002).

In 2001-2002 young Finns pursued sports	%
- in sports clubs	40
- in school clubs	18
- on their own	40
- with mates	58
- in other ways	13

(The percentages add up to over 100 per cent because many young people practise sports in several contexts.)

About 40 per cent of young Finns who go in for sports belong to sports clubs. It appears that some 25 per cent of amateur sports take place in sports clubs. Nearly half of young Finns between 3 and 18 years of age practice sports at least four times a week. About eight per cent of children do not practise sports.

A comparison of the 2001-2002 survey with the previous one (1997-1998) shows that the differences between boys and girls are getting smaller. Nor does the season seem to determine sporting activities to the extent it used to. Now 91-93 per cent of children and young people who have a sport as a hobby pursue it throughout the year, and there are no great differences between boys and girls in this respect. The survey findings also reveal inconsistencies: while sport activity among the 3-18-olds has increased, young people's physical condition seems to have deteriorated. One reason may be that the current definition of sportive pursuits includes lighter physical activity, which earlier was not counted as actual sports hobby. This new emphasis on the social aspects of sport in turn indicates that sports have become 'respectable'.

The forms of sport vary from one season to another, but an extensive network of sports facilities makes it possible to pursue sports like swimming and ice hockey all year round. There are 29,000 sports facilities in Finland, 70 per cent of which are owned and maintained by the local authorities. There are 5,400 sports halls, over 100 indoor ice rinks and tennis and badminton halls, and over 200 swimming halls.

**The most popular sports:**

1. Soccer	261,000
2. Cycling	261,000
3. Swimming	202,000
4. Skiing	195,000
5. Floorball (indoor bandy)	160,000
6. Walking	132,000
7. Ice skating	125,000
8. Ice hockey	116,000
9. Jogging	113,500
10. Athletics	75,000

**The largest increases (1998–2002):**

1. Skateboarding	+ 25,000	+ 500%
2. Roller-skating	+ 43,500	+ 218%
3. Cycling	+ 82,000	+ 46%
4. Dance	+ 25,000	+ 45%
5. Soccer	+ 79,000	+ 43%
6. Ice skating	+ 33,000	+ 36%
7. Jogging	+ 29,500	+ 35%
8. Swimming	+ 42,000	+ 26%
9. Floorball	+ 33,000	+ 26%
10. Skiing	+ 32,000	+ 20%

Ice hockey is the most 'male' sport (110,000 boys /6,000 girls), while aerobics (29,500 girls/500 boys), riding (50 000/3 000) and figure skating (12 000/1 000) are ögirlö sports. Only girls play ringette (4 000).

The Ministry of Education supports sports bodies, local sport provision, sports facilities construction, sport research, international cooperation, development programmes relating to health-promoting and youth sports, sportive after-school activities, and the construction and operations of sports institutes. Government subsidies to sports bodies are weighted so that 50 per cent of the resources are targeted to children's and young people's sports.

## C.11 Avartti

In Finland, the International Award for Young People was launched in 1999 as Avartti - Youth in Action. Avartti is based on the experiential pedagogy developed by Kurt Hahn and provides a good tool for all those who work with young people: organisations, local authorities, parishes and schools.

Avartti is a target-oriented long-term programme for preventive youth work, which offers opportunities for all young people aged between 14 and 25 to make their own choices and to work both independently and in groups. Promoting the learning of both physical and intellectual skills, Avartti supports young people's growth into members of society. In the programme, the young person chooses one of four sections (service, skills, physical recreation and expeditions), in which he or she works without competing with others.

In Avartti, youth workers, teachers, parents and masters and amateurs of different sports and crafts can act as leaders.

Avartti is one of the development projects of the Ministry of Education in 2003-2007.

## C.12 Church youth work

The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has eight dioceses, 76 deaneries, and 586 congregations catering for its nearly 4.4 million members (84.6% of the population). The Lutheran Church is a folk church which works openly, encountering both young people and their families in its work. The purpose is to offer children and young people the chance of growing in association with the Church and finding security, meaning and strength from the Christian faith. For the Church, the foremost cooperation partners are families.

The regular activities offered by the Church rally a large number of children and young people and their families. In 2001 the daytime clubs reached 42 per cent of all children between 4 and 6; Sunday schools 14.5 per cent of the 5-11 age group; church youth clubs 15.5 per cent of the 7-14 age group; the Church Scouts and Guides 10 per cent of the 7-14 age group; the confirmation classes 90 per cent of the 15-year-old age group; and the church youth groups eight per cent of the 15-18 age bracket. Parishes also arrange after-school activities and have a large number of family clubs.

Parishes have some 3,800 employees and 30,000 trained volunteers to work with children and young people. Many of these young adults have later grown to be socially engaged public personages and reformers of parochial life and gained positions of trust in international activities. The church trains some 500 young people annually as "big sisters and brothers" to work with high-risk youth in the street and at youth events. The Church works with children, young people and their families through various networks. Parishes cooperate extensively with local authorities, schools and civic organisations.

"The challenge for those working with children and young people is to meet and hear them and engage in genuine dialogue with them. The Christian value basis, which underpins all our action and education, also provides a solid basis for cooperation of different kinds. One of today's major challenges is to support families in parenting. An educator is not a technical assistant but a personality who represents certain values. Educators also carry with them a sense of the value and purpose of human life, hope for the future even in difficult situations. They carry on a demanding but rewarding discussion on what is right, what is wrong, good or bad. Children and young persons do not have the wherewithal to build their identity alone – they need educators, other people, the community – most importantly the family. In its work with children and young people, the Church wants to build a good community spirit in the parishes. It is in communality that we also find a fertile soil for solidarity."

**Marja-Leena Toivanen**

Director

Church Council Office/ Church Education and Youth Work

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