

Shadow report for the EU White Paper on Youth policy, priority areas Participation and Youth Information.

Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi organised on November 9th 2005 an open event for member organisations and other experts in the youth field to tell their views on the implementation of the White Paper concerning Youth Information and Participation. In working groups participants were mostly discussing developments that have occurred during past two-three years, but also in longer perspective.

Most of this information has been collected in that event. It has been edited by Allianssi Secretary of International Affairs Karoliina Reijonen and Head of International Relations Jarkko Lehikoinen.

1. The **consultation for the implementation**: how the National Youth Councils/youth organisations were able to be involved in the implementation process; at the national level and also at the local level.

Finnish Youth Co-operation Allianssi is part of national working group following the implementation of the White Paper. We have two members in that working group. Allianssi organises every year events and hearings to member organisations and other actors in the youth field about issues concerning the White Paper.

Allianssi and the national youth information network have been very well involved in the implementation of the White Paper in Finland. We have taken part since the beginning to the drafting of all the national reports for White Paper, and we have had our representatives in the WP working group of the ministry. We have also arranged joint seminars with the network and the ministry about the development of youth information.

2. **Results of the implementation**: did the implementation of the Common Objectives lead to any developments in youth policy? Comparison of the action lines adopted by the Council to the actual actions taken.

Now CO's Information and Participation were evaluated and it seems that there have been many things that have improved. Financial support to youth organisations and projects has increased a lot. White paper is used as reference document to almost all issues concerning youth.

3. The **obstacles** met during the implementation phase.

Information about White Paper has not reached the grass root level still. Progress is rather slow despite all efforts. It would be important to reach all levels of the youth field.

4. **Best practices**: examples of concrete actions taken.
 - financial support to youth organisations has been stabilised and increased
 - participation projects for young people (local youth councils, open future workshops, pupils' and students' unions and councils)
 - EU Youth Programme has been very good example of actions that encourage unorganised youth for participating more.

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- youth workshop activities and social employment programmes are good example of Finnish participation model
- For example, when talking about local youth councils, it would be better option to give a particular amount of money, and power to decide upon that money is up to young people. If local youth councils are just making statements and giving opinions but do not have "real" possibilities for decision making, it discourages active youth.
- more inclusive and culture sensitive youth work has developed
- National coordination of youth information established

5. The **state of affairs** concerning the COs Information and Participation.

Information

Since the publishing of the common objectives in the field of youth information in 2003, there has been a rapid development of youth information services in Finland. This development has mainly happened due to the fact that the Ministry of Education has taken the youth information as one of its priorities in the youth field and due to the recognition of the importance of youth information given in the White Paper. Also in the new youth law (valid since March 1st 2006), the youth information is mentioned as one of the important services for young people.

The youth information services in Finland are mainly offered by the municipalities. In 2003, there were 26 youth information centres or other services, and today the number is about 120. The ministry has issued a recommendation and given funding for municipalities to develop these services. The international coordination (ERYICA membership) is at the national youth council, Allianssi, but there has been a lack of national coordination. In January 2006 however, the ministry decided, on the recommendation of the national youth information network and Allianssi, to establish a national coordination in Oulu. In future, this coordination will help new municipalities to set up youth information services, arranges trainings, produces materials, etc.

Participation

General on participation:

In Finland young people have good opportunities to participate in decision making, structures are really functioning and there are many possibilities. Especially in the local level young people have activated recently and there are many good examples of local youth participation and initiatives.

In general youth is seen as subject, not as object. In Finland there is also high level of membership in organisations, many young people belong to one or several organisations. Finnish people do a lot of voluntary work in NGO's, political parties and sport associations etc.

Though good situation in general there is a gap between young people that participate to many kinds of for a and organisations and then youth who are completely excluded from all participation to decision making and activities.

It is important to encourage young people for participatory activities and here the government and organisations play a crucial role. In general participation has increased but it is harder to measure because forms of participation have changed

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Youth participation in Civil Society:

Youth participation have been supported by government:

- by giving money to different projects, especially networking and co-operation projects
- problem is that big and well- established organisations get support easier than small ones (this is mostly due to lack of information and human resources)
- new thing is that municipalities are more active in supporting youth organisations though this also varies from place to place
- municipalities lack of financial resources
- national youth organisations are better funded now than in years

Participation of young people with special needs:

- EU Youth Programme is good tool for young people with fewer opportunities
- New law on equality gives more emphasis on the issue, also youth policy is based on equality and equal opportunities
- in smaller towns there are more prejudice towards youth with special needs

Evaluation of youth participation:

- There should be open and transparent ranking of countries according how they carry out the white paper priorities and youth policy development, same way than education is ranked in OECD countries by the PISA- study
- co-management should be horizontally practised, it is still mainstream only in issues concerning youth directly
- different levels of participation should be defined
- important is also personal growth and meaning of participation in individual level

Youth participation in democratic structures

Obstacles for young people to participate in democratic structures:

- one biggest obstacle is lack of resources for local youth and pupils' councils
- for immigrants without knowledge in Finnish it is almost impossible to participate in decision making
- voting and activity in elections, why young people do not vote, though they are interested in society? party politics does not attract young people, political activism is seen as too restricting and narrow style of influencing, and it does not appeal to youth.
- is activity in elections inherited? schools should be equalising the development.
- Youth don't see the results of voting, it is not tempting to wait for years if something changes
- Youth want to see the results faster than nowadays
- There is too much bureaucratic policies and less democratic movement and initiative

Un-organised youth and their possibilities to participate decision making:

- Does open youth forums reach the un-organized young people better? We are not convinced but trust on the attraction of youth organisation
- How to reach young people, who have dropped off the circle of activity
- EU Youth Programme works very well for un-organised youth's benefit

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- youth workshop activities and social employment programmes are good example of Finnish participation model
- Slowness of democracy and bureaucracy discourage youth easily, participation has to be made more effective and results need to be seen faster
- Youth councils should have power to decide upon youth sector's money, possibility to give grants for youth initiatives and groups

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