

Youth information and counselling work in Finland

The Finnish youth information and counselling work has been strongly influenced by the Finnish Youth Act of 2006, by the European Union's White Paper on youth policy, by the Council of Europe Recommendation No: R (90)7 concerning information and counselling for young people in Europe, by the Resolution CM/Res (2008)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe and by the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency ERYICA's Charter, which all emphasises the right of young people to receive information, their right to be heard and the importance of young people's active participation. These documents also underline the idea of peer-to-peer information and the importance of reliable and understandable information.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for coordinating public youth work in general and youth policy measures. The Youth Act reinforces youth information as one of the basic elements of municipal youth work services.

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

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

According to the National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services annual report from year 2008 there were 240 municipalities offering for young people youth information and counselling services in Finland. The network includes 110 youth information points, 34 local or regional level web services and 24 different kinds of youth information and counselling projects.

Some distinctive features of Finnish youth information and counselling work have to do with the rural character of much of our country: a relatively small number of inhabitants in towns, and many young people living in scattered and isolated settlements with no youth services. This is one of the reasons why the service producers of information and counselling services are interested in developing interactive web services.

Year 2008 80% (629 934) of young people in age of 13-24 had possibility to use youth information services in their own municipality.

Online democracy for young people

From beginning of year 2008 Aloitekanava.fi - service (Initiative Channel) has been part of the National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services. Initiative Channel is an online e-democracy service where young people can voice their ideas about bettering their surroundings. Local youth workers moderate the service and forward initiatives to local decision-makers. The service also enables local authorities to hear out young people in matters that concern them. In Finland the service is part of the governmental Youth Policy Development Programme, and mainly financed by the Ministry of Education.

For further information, contact:

Jaana Fedotoff, Coordinator
Mobile +358 44 7038215
jaana.fedotoff@ouka.fi

Mika Pietilä, Planning Officer
Mobile +358 44 7038215
mika.pietila@ouka.fi

Merja-Maaria Oinas, Planning Officer
Mobile +358 44 703 8303
merja-maaria.oinas@ouka.fi

National Coordination and Development Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Services
Department of Youth Affairs
P.O. Box 16, FI-90015 Oulun kaupunki, Finland