



Advisory Council for Youth Affairs  
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#### Summary:

This evaluation report presents the key findings of the 2013 annual evaluation of the Child and Youth Policy Programme. Its special theme is the inclusion of young people. The resource, information and legal guidance measures under the Programme have been implemented in the case of strategic goals 1 and 2. National assistance for the Lanuke projects has helped promote the inclusion of children and young people. Overall, the inclusion of children and young people has gone forward in the first two years of the programme period. Formal channels for participation and influence, such as youth councils and student body activities, are becoming established with changes to the law. If inclusion is to be developed, however, there needs to be more emphasis on opportunities for all children and young people to be included and to participate, regardless of age, gender, place of residence or financial standing,

## **Child and Youth Policy Programme 2012–2015: annual evaluation 2013**

### **Introduction**

Under section 5 of the Youth Act, it is the task of the state's Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (Nuora) each year to review the implementation of the Government Child and Youth Policy Programme. This evaluation report gives the key results and conclusions of the second annual evaluation of the policy programme that took effect from the beginning of 2012.

In September 2012, Nuora approved the Child and Youth Policy Programme for 2012 (Lanuke) evaluation plan 2012-2015. Under the plan, the theme for evaluation year 2013 is inclusion. At the core of the Programme are the first two strategic goals:

- Strategic goal 1: Children and young people will grow to become active citizens with shared sense of responsibility.
- Strategic goal 2: Children and young people have equal opportunities to participate in cultural, leisure and physical activities.

Owing to staff changes, Nuora decided to submit a condensed evaluation for 2013. Jenni Similä, Master of Economics and Business Administration, carried out the analysis of assessment materials used for the annual evaluation. The assessment materials used were the questionnaires and interviews with ministries in 2014, the survey on the projects in receipt of national Lanuke funding from the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2013, youth well-being indicators, and other research data.

The evaluation report is in three parts. Firstly, there is an assessment of the national measures introduced to promote the inclusion of children and young people; secondly, the inclusion of children and young people is examined in the light of monitoring indicators; and finally, there is a summary and there are recommendations for future action. The regional and local measures under the Child and Youth Policy Programme are to be evaluated in a more comprehensive interim assessment produced in 2014. This evaluation report endeavours to use clear language in accordance with the public administration programme.

## 1. Promotion of the inclusion of children and young people

The first strategic goal of the Child and Youth Policy Programme is that children and young people will grow to become active citizens with a shared sense of responsibility. The goal is promoted by means of four ranges of measures: 1) children's and young people's opportunities to be heard, participate and influence to be improved; 2) education for democracy, global responsibility and environmental issues to be developed; 3) student body activities to be supported and established as a permanent structure in all schools; 4) all children and young people to be ensured the basic prerequisites for participation and social inclusion in the information society.

The second goal is that children and young people have equal opportunities to participate in cultural, leisure and physical activities. The goal is to be achieved by 1) developing youth services as local services, 2) improving the accessibility of hobbies, 3) supporting children's and young people's independent activities and 4) strengthening the resources of non-governmental organisations working with children and young people.

### 1.1 Implementation of measures by ministries

The Policy Programme defines the various roles that the ministries have in implementing measures in three areas:

- resource guidance, such as funding and allocation of subsidies,
- information guidance, such as the spread of good practices, and
- legal guidance, such as legislative reforms.

The surveys and interviews conducted with ministries show that, in the case of strategic goals 1 and 2, resource and information guidance have been implemented under the Programme as envisaged. Funding and subsidies have gone to organisations and other youth sector actors in many different contexts. Information guidance has helped develop young people's channels for being heard and having an influence on-line and beyond. Good practices relating to hobbies have been spread by means of separate programmes of measures associated with both culture and sport.

The Programme contains one legal guidance measure for strategic goals 1 and 2: the establishment of student bodies in all comprehensive schools by introducing legal amendments to the Basic Education Act. In 2013, section 47a was added to the Basic Education Act. It provides for the organisers of education to promote the inclusion of all pupils, and to ensure that they can participate in the life of the school and its development and to express their opinion of matters relating to their status. Schools must have a student body made up of its pupils.

### 1.2 National Lanuke projects to support inclusion

Each year the Ministry of Education and Culture grants subsidies for national youth work projects implementing the Child and Youth Policy Programme. In 2013, a total of 47 projects received funding out of a two million euro appropriation for national projects allocated to the implementation of the Policy Programme.

In summer 2014, Nuora conducted a survey on the appropriation for 2013 for national projects in receipt of assistance. Those involved in 43 projects responded to the survey. They were asked to say which Lanuke measure(s) the project mainly implemented. Most of the projects receiving funding in 2013 related to several Lanuke measures. Most were associated with the following measures:

1. children's and young people's opportunities to be heard, participate and influence (29)
2. racism, discrimination and intolerance (21)

3. children's and young people's independent activities (17)
4. the competence of people working with children and young people (17)
5. regional equality (15)

Of the three measures mentioned most, two related to the promotion of inclusion: children's and young people's opportunities to be heard, participate and influence (measure 1.1) and children's and young people's independent activities (measure 2.3). Of the 43 replies, 37 projects related to the promotion of inclusion.

Children and young people had opportunities to pursue hobbies and leisure activities as a concrete result of 16 of the projects that responded to the survey. A development appropriation was also used to support many different educational and training projects: in nine projects children and young people received instruction, in ten it was adults working with children and young people that benefited, and in five it was children, young people and adults. Seven projects were aimed at the general development of the sector, e.g. new operating models and cooperation. Three of the projects were various types of exploratory projects. The aims of the projects under strategic goals 1 and 2 reflect the spread of all the projects, as most of the projects that responded were at least partly to do with the promotion of inclusion.

Project actors were asked to rate the achievement of project aims themselves, on a scale from 1 to 5 (poor - excellent), though respondents could also say that it was not as yet possible to judge. They were also asked to rate the extent to which the project's target group had been reached on a scale from 1 to 5.

Table 1. Achievement of aims and the extent to which the target group was reached in projects receiving national Lanuke funding in 2013

	5.	4.	3.	2.	1.	Not yet assessed
Achievement of aims (n=43)	7.	22.	6.	0.	0.	8.
Reaching the target group (n=41)	9	22	8	2	0	-

Table 1 shows that most of the projects responding to the survey have, in their own judgement, achieved their aims well or very well indeed. A separate table showed that projects under strategic goals 1 and 2 had achieved their aims mainly well (4) or even very well indeed (5). When it came to reaching the target group, however, there was more variation among all projects and those that related only to exclusion. Although most of the project actors felt they had reached their target group satisfactorily, in some cases this had evidently not been as successful as had been hoped.

Altogether, the 2013 survey suggests that subsidies for national youth work projects relating to the implementation of Lanuke helped promote the inclusion of children and young people satisfactorily. At least three-quarters of all 47 projects in receipt of national funding in 2013 related, at least partly, to strategic goals 1 or 2. Projects promoting the inclusion of children and young people have also achieved their aims well, although there were also difficulties associated with reaching the target group.

## 2 The inclusion of children and young people

Nuora approved the Lanuke monitoring indicators at its meeting in January 2013. At the same time, it was decided that differences between the genders would be monitored when the data was available. There follows an examination of the situation with respect to the inclusion of the young in the light of the latest monitoring indicators. The data relates mainly to 2013. The monitoring indicators are based on national statistics and surveys, such as the School Health Study, the Youth Barometer study and the Young People's Leisure Activities study. Moreover, other studies and

surveys published by such organisations as the Union of Youth Councils in Finland and the National Sports Council have been used.

### **Goal 1: Children and young people will grow to become active citizens with shared sense of responsibility**

The implementation of strategic goal 1 is monitored by examining the number of youth councils in existence, the number of those involved in voluntary work, and the experience that pupils have of their opinions being considered at school, and by collecting data from the Youth Barometer on young people's social participation.

In 2013, 75% of local authorities had a youth council. The number of youth councils is slightly up on 2012, when the corresponding figure was 73%. According to a study produced in 2013 by the Union of Youth Councils in Finland, more than 60% of young people belonging to youth councils are between 15 and 17 years old. Two-thirds of the councils said that the majority of their members were girls. According to the study, the biggest challenges faced by youth councils are making people aware of their existence locally, especially among young people, and boosting their impact. Only half of the councils thought that their potential for having an impact was good, and just a tenth of them were of the opinion that they could considerably or very considerably influence decisions taken locally.

The Youth Barometer for 2012 suggests that the proportion of young people doing voluntary work increased in the 2000s from around 33% to 37%. In 2013, the number of those involved in group or community work was slightly greater: 40% of 15 to 29 year-olds were involved in a group or the community during their free time, according to the Youth Barometer. Examples were a student body, a community that focused on a hobby or pastime, an organisation or voluntary work. The figure is slightly less than the number of those belonging to organisations overall. The reason for this may be that people can belong to an organisation without being involved in its work. Voluntary work was also examined in the Young People's Leisure Activities study in 2013. The study revealed that 18% of 10-29 year-olds had been involved in voluntary sports and fitness work in the past year, e.g. coaching or doing voluntary work.

The experience that pupils have of their opinions being considered at school has improved somewhat over the past few years. According to the School Health Study in 2013, 58% of eighth and ninth graders at comprehensive school and around 70% of year one and two students in upper secondary school and vocational college felt that the opinions of learners were taken into account in the development of school work. In all forms of schooling, experience of one's opinions being considered had improved since 2011, by approximately 5%. There were no major differences between the genders. In comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools, a rather larger number of girls felt that the opinions of learners were taken into account, while the situation was the reverse in vocational colleges.

According to the Youth Barometer for 2012, more than three-quarters of young Finns feel they closely belong in society. This number has risen substantially since 2008. In an international comparison (ICSS 2009), the knowledge that young Finns had of society was at the top end in the European context, though where it concerned an interest in social issues, young Finns lagged behind (Suoninen et al 2010). Furthermore, the Youth Barometers have highlighted trends that would appear paradoxical: young people's trust in political institutions and interest in politics has grown, but there have been no signs of any increase in actual political engagement.

However, according to the Youth Barometer, voting in 2013 was felt by 15-29 year-olds to be the best way to exert an influence. The next best way to have an influence was thought to be active

participation in a youth council or organisation, or giving feedback on a service. Counter-democratic ways to exert an influence did not arouse great enthusiasm. The Youth Barometer suggests that young people are motivated to influence in particular the potential for promoting something that is important to them or the general good. The main reasons not to be influential are a shortage of time and the inability to discover how to have an influence that is meaningful.

**Goal 2: Children and young people have equal opportunities to participate in cultural, leisure and physical activities.**

Goal 2 is monitored on the basis of five indicators: the number of young people with a hobby, the number of young people active in an organisation and the share of the population of a similar age, leisure time study data on where young people spend their free time, the independent pursuit of hobbies and pastimes, and financial barriers to the pursuit of pastimes.

According to the Young People's Leisure Activities study, in 2013, approximately 85% of 7-29 year-olds has at least one hobby. Hobby was not separately defined in the study, but was elicited by means of a general question: 'Have you got a hobby of any kind whatsoever?'. There was no general difference between the genders in the pursuit of hobbies, but an examination by age reveals how boys in their teens are less driven by hobbies than girls. More than 90% of 10-14 year-old boys said they had a hobby, while just 74% said the same among those between 15 and 19. There were regional differences as far as hobbies were concerned. A total of 87% of young people living in southern Finland had at least one hobby, but just 81% of those in northern Finland had one.

There were no changes to membership of youth organisations from 1998 to 2013. According to the Young People's Leisure Activities study, just over half of 10-29 year-olds were members of an organisation, club, society or something similar. An equal number of girls and boys participate. The most active age group is the 10-14 year-olds, 61% of whom belonged to an organisation or similar group. However, when examining the extent to which young people are actively involved in organisations, it needs to be realised that young people in sports or fitness clubs, for example, do not necessarily think that they belong to an organisation.

The Young People's Leisure Activities study examined where people spent their free time by asking where they met their pals. In 2013, young people met their pals mainly at their home or at that of their friends. However, the internet was even more common as a way to meet. There were differences between age groups as regards where people spent their free time. It is also often the case that not only do 7-14 year-olds spend their free time at home or at the home of their pals, but also in the garden or close to home, in playgrounds and recreation grounds, and in the pursuit of shared pastimes. It was the 10-14 year-olds who spent most time at youth clubs, although only just over a tenth of them on a weekly basis or more frequently. The 15-19 year-olds also met their pals at youth clubs, but with them, the home and surrounding area, hobbies and the homes of friends started to mean less as meeting points. They tended to meet friends more in the streets and the cities, coffee bars and restaurants, shopping centres and malls and service stations. Of all the age groups, it was the 15-19 year-olds who met their pals mainly on-line. Among the 20-29 year olds, people met their friends less frequently compared with the younger age groups.

Independent pastimes among the young have been examined, at least in the Young People's Leisure Activities study. In 2013, sports and fitness was enjoyed most, in terms of the frequency of the occasions, independently alone or with friends. Around three in four went around alone every week or day. The number of those going around independently with friends was clearly greatest among the 7-14 year-olds.

According to the Nuora leisure time study, almost half of 10-29 year-olds felt that a lack of money restricted their opportunities for pastimes. The same study also highlighted the fact that 93% of young people in households in the highest income quintile has at least one hobby. With children and young people in the lowest income bracket, it was just 83%. Furthermore, the National Sports Council study 'Drop-out or Throw out?' stated that sports and fitness clubs had become more expensive, and so not all families can afford to pay.

### 3 Summary and recommendations for action

Overall, the inclusion of children and young people has made progress with the influence of the policy programme. Formal channels for participation and influence especially, such as youth councils and student body activities, are becoming established with changes to the law. Furthermore, support for children's and young people's independent activities in public places, at youth clubs and on-line have been an important way to involve young people in youth work.

Despite the progress made, however, there is still work to be done to improve the opportunities for children and young people to participate and have an influence in the current and future programme period. There needs in particular to be more emphasis on opportunities for all children and young people to be included and to participate, regardless of age, gender, place of residence or financial standing. With reference to the evaluation, Nuora would like to make the following proposals for action on inclusion for the current and future programme period.

- **Improved effectiveness of channels of inclusion and influence**

The opportunities that children and young people have had to participate and have an influence have improved in recent years, if the number of local authorities that have a youth council is anything to go by. According to a survey by the Union of Youth Councils in Finland, however, only a half of youth councils thought that they had good opportunities to exert an influence, with a tenth saying they were very good. The result shows that, in the future, the development of the inclusion of children and young people must give attention, not just to creating opportunities, but to listening to them genuinely and increasing the influence they have. There should be efforts to improve not just quantity, but quality also. Impact can be improved by establishing youth council activity, as is being considered, in the Local Government Act.

Similarly, there should be attention focused on the impact that student bodies have, especially in comprehensive schools. Although the experience that learners have of their opinions being considered at school has improved over the past few years, just 58% of eighth and ninth graders at comprehensive school feel that the opinions of learners are taken into account in the development of school work. The figure is around 70% for upper secondary schools and vocational colleges. Under the policy programme, a student body has now been established in all schools with the amendment to the Basic Education Act. At the same time, organisers of education are under an obligation to promote pupil inclusion and opportunities to have a role in the development of the school. Hopefully, more and more schoolchildren will feel that their voice is being heard in the future.

- **A wide range of opportunities to have an influence**

The knowledge that young Finns have of society is at the top end in the international context, though interest in social issues is minimal. In spite of the fact that interest in politics has grown,

there has been no increase in actual political engagement. The main reasons mentioned in the Youth Barometer not to be influential were a shortage of time and the inability to discover how to have an influence that was meaningful, which is reason enough to consider in future how to find still more diverse channels for young people to have an influence. The creation of opportunities to participate and have an influence that would attract a wider group is a challenge that is bound to call for multi-professional cooperation and the involvement of young people themselves. At the same time, attention should be paid to groups on the periphery of formal influential channels as well as the needs of children and young people of different ages.

- **Equal opportunities in hobbies and pastimes**

Most young people have at least one hobby. Nevertheless, the findings of studies suggest there are still differences in the pursuit of hobbies, depending on gender, place of residence, and the family's financial standing. For example, boys tend to show a worrying disinclination for hobbies in their teens. The number of those with at least one hobby is smaller in northern and eastern Finland. This may be due to there being fewer opportunities or the fact that long distances make it difficult. Likewise, the number of those with at least one hobby goes up with the household income bracket, which suggests that economic factors continue to be a principle barrier to the pursuit of hobbies and pastimes. For example, sports and fitness clubs have become more expensive, and not all families can afford to pay. As many as half of young people have felt that a lack of money places a restriction on their opportunities for leisure. Because of the economic recession, families might now find it harder to pay for their children's hobbies and free time activities, and this should be taken into account when decisions are being taken in the context of policy on children and youth. All children and young people should be able to enjoy hobbies independently or supervised, if they so wish.

- **Prevention of loneliness**

Loneliness is one of the most significant factors preventing young people from being included in society. One child or young person in five experiences loneliness at some stage of their life, and with 10% a feeling of loneliness continues from one year and one situation to the next (Junttila 2010). According to the School Health Study, 8% of eighth and ninth graders at comprehensive school and 7% of upper secondary students feel that they have no close friends. The number is greater among boys than girls.

There may be a variety of causes of loneliness among young people, and a diverse number of solutions. A future Child and Youth Policy Programme could include the prevention of loneliness as one of the measures taken to promote inclusion. The Child and Youth Policy Programme is a way to reduce feelings of loneliness in young people, for example, by increasing opportunities for social contact by means of hobbies and organised activities, by influencing common attitudes so that others are not ignored, and by running various projects to help lonely young people to function in society. Young people should be included and involved when measures are being planned.

## **Conclusion**

The theme for the 2013 evaluation was inclusion. The evaluation of the accomplishment of goals and measures relied on national data. This evaluation is based on data collected and available in 2014. It needs to be remembered that the programme is still under way and that measures continue to be implemented.

The next interim evaluation of the 2014 programme will be Nuora's most comprehensive evaluation in its term of office. There will be closer examination of the measures implemented at local level under the programme from the perspective of the local authorities and regional administration. Special attention will also be paid to the inclusion of young people and their views of the programme. Efforts will be made to have the views of young people heard through the creation of diverse and easily achievable opportunities to participate, with the involvement of young people themselves.

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