

# **YOUTH POLICY IN FINLAND**

**A report by an international review group  
appointed by the Council of Europe**

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## **GLOSSARY**

AFLA Association of Finnish Local Authorities

ALLIANSI Finnish National Youth Council

CDEJ European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field

CIS Confederation of Independent States

CLRAE Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

CSCE Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe

EU European Union

NUOSTRA New youth work strategy in Finland

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

RAY Finnish Slot Machine Association

SAEs Standard Average Europeans

VEIKKAUS Finnish National Lottery

## PREFACE

In anticipation of the work of the international review group appointed by the Council of Europe, the Ministry of Education in Finland compiled its own review of national youth policy (Ministry of Education 1997). This is an immensely comprehensive document, which considers the many dimensions of youth policy from a range of perspectives, and it is not the intention of the international review group to repeat *the wealth of detail* contained within it. This report will, however, extract selected material from the National Report, alongside other material acquired through visits, discussions and other reading, in order to ensure that the reader can make sense of the comments and observations of the International Report *independently* of this wider material. We would, however, recommend exploration of that wider material, especially the National Report which is itself the product of great endeavour and application, to make full sense of the context of our deliberations.

This review is part of a process of national reviews of youth policy, carried out by the Council of Europe in collaboration and consultation with national governments and those ministries with lead responsibilities for the development and implementation of youth policy. The international review group has been charged with the responsibility of preparing a commentary on youth policy in Finland. It is important to emphasise that this is not an evaluation, nor a critique of the National Report, which was prepared partly in anticipation of our work. Inevitably the National Report has guided our reflections and deliberations, and it has generated a multitude of questions - to which we have not always discovered answers. Our commentary will, however, address what we consider to be central elements within youth policy in Finland, outlining their strengths and weaknesses where possible and reflecting on the issues they present, drawing where appropriate upon broader international evidence and debate. This may be viewed as an evaluation, but evaluation is a specific term relating to a judgement of value through an assessment of a public policy process and impact against specific and explicit objectives. This, for a variety of reasons, we cannot do. There will clearly be some evaluative dimension to our commentary, but we prefer to consider what follows as one contribution to the different 'regimes of truth' which inform the understanding, implementation and development of youth policy in Finland. We may have the disadvantage of a lack of close connection with that policy, but we also have the distinct advantage of having a dispassionate distance. Thus, the 'truth' at which we have arrived may be no more than another version of the many truths about youth policy, but it has the benefit of being a version *against which all* the 'truths' relating to youth policy which exist *within* Finland may be pitched, weighed and, if it is seen fit to do so, re-considered.

The international review group had less than two weeks in Finland to secure a grasp of its wide-ranging youth policies (see Appendix 1). Despite a full programme of visits and discussions, the picture obtained is, inevitably, a partial one and any perspective developed by international visitors make not fully grasp the essential culture and traditions which have shaped those policies. In retrospect, we recognise that there is also some imbalance in the weight we attached to different aspects of youth policy. The youth workshops, for example, consumed a great deal - and probably disproportionate amount - of our attention. Although, for these two reasons, we will have made some errors in our understanding and judgement, we nevertheless believe we have accumulated sufficient knowledge to provide a reasonably solid foundation for making informed comments on youth policy in Finland. We have endeavoured to make these constructive, even when criticisms are raised or implied, and hope that they will be viewed as instructive, in that they will assist in reflection and deliberation on youth policy in Finland in the future.

It is important at the very start to commend the resources and commitment applied to youth policy in Finland and to register the *consistency* between national, regional and local levels in the perspectives they have adopted on youth policy. Whatever critical observations we may make, it is important to remember that it is within this context that they are made.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background to the review and terms of reference of review team

There is a road no one has taken  
before you.  
Maybe it's yours.  
If you find it, it will be.  
It doesn't exist but comes into being when  
you walk it.  
When you turn around, it's gone.  
No one knows how you got here, least of all  
yourself  
(p.141, *What Became Words*, by Finnish Minister of Culture Claes Andersson)

The international review of youth policy by the Council of Europe is indeed a road which has not been taken before. The international review team have therefore been pioneers in the work of the Council of Europe - creating a path which others will, hopefully, walk down. The difference from Minister Andersson's poem is that the review team is clear about how it 'got here' and seeks to leave a path behind it which others will follow. This report therefore, while naturally paying diligent attention to its primary task of considering youth policy in *Finland*, aims to provide some signposts for the conduct of future international reviews of youth policy, in terms of working methods, substantive frameworks and processes of reflection and analysis. These will often be implicit and are certainly not intended to be prescriptive. By and large, they *describe* the approach adopted by the international review team, in order to offer a foundation for the evolution and development of future work.

The international review of youth policy in Finland is part of a wider initiative established by the Council of Europe following the Council of Ministers' conference in Luxembourg in May 1995. At an informal meeting of the Ministers responsible for youth in the countries which have ratified the European Cultural Convention, Claes Andersson, the Finnish Minister responsible for culture, sports and youth, took the initiative for a programme of reviews of national youth policies. The initiative was inspired by Finland's positive experiences of the OECD review of higher education policy and the Council of Europe review of cultural policy. Minister Andersson suggested that a similar programme be initiated to review national youth policies in the Member States, and announced that Finland would be prepared to launch the programme.

The initiative was subsequently discussed at the enlarged CDEJ (Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field) meeting in June 1995. Finland was requested to expound the idea and provide more detail about the process and content of such a review of youth policy for discussion at the CDEJ meeting in October 1995. At the October meeting, many Member States expressed their interest in the country review. The undertaking to review youth policy in Finland was finalised at the CDEJ meeting in March 1996 on the basis of an interim report on the country review prepared by Finland, and the next countries to be reviewed were designated: The Netherlands, Spain, Rumania, Sweden and Estonia. The CDEJ determined to appoint an international expert group for each country review, starting with Finland, whose responsibility would be to "draw up a report on the basis of the national report and visits to the country under review". It was within these broad parameters that the international review team was convened to examine youth policy in Finland and to establish a sharper focus to these responsibilities, in terms of both its working methods and its conceptualisation of 'youth policy' within which it would conduct its deliberations.

Since other countries are to be involved in this process of reviewing their youth policy, it is to be hoped that some of the good practice emerging from this inaugural review of Finland is transferable to future reviews, which may also benefit from learning some of the lessons of our experience. Hence, we will outline broadly our approach and working methods, in order to convey *our* strategy for undertaking this review and to provide a baseline for future initiatives in this field. Precisely because this was the first of a sequence of international reviews of national youth policy, both the Finnish authorities and the international review team were walking an untrodden path and, to pursue the analogies with Minister Andersson's poem, it is instructive to offer the following quotation:

"The whole process - the false starts, frustrations, adaptations, the successive recasting of intentions, the detours and conflicts - needs to be comprehended. Only then can we understand what has been achieved, and learn from that experience. Even though no one ever again will make exactly the same journey, to follow the adventures of the project[s] offers a general guide to the dangers and discoveries of their field of action" (Marris and Rein 1972, p.260)

If we consider this review as the first in a line of innovative 'projects', the above quotation is a most apposite one. Adaptations and detours were certainly part of our experience of conducting the review; frustrations and conflicts were less apparent, though they were by no means non-existent.

This account of our approach is, therefore, necessarily personalised, since no prescribed framework guided our deliberations. We have no doubt that those in Finland who collaborated with the review would have their own story to tell.

### **Approach/Methodology**

The international review group was appointed by the Council of Europe. Few of its members knew (or even knew of) each other prior to its first meeting in Helsinki in March 1997. The group was chaired by a member of the CDEJ. It was composed of the chair, three youth researchers (including the rapporteur, who is also a government appointee and a practising youth worker), a nominee of the Governing Board of the European Youth Centre and of the European Youth Foundation, and an administrator from the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe.

The group therefore brought to its work on the review of Finland a range of backgrounds and representation, and different interest areas and priority concerns. This clearly provided a great strength in the *course* of the review in that different members of the team - through their different expertise and interests - took a 'lead' role in exploring different dimensions of youth policy. Ultimately, however, a *collective* perspective had to be hammered out and agreed, which required hours of debate before sufficient consensus could be established. Beyond any wider benefit of the review, we should note that all members of the review team learned a great deal from their involvement in, and engagement with, this process.

The process started with the receipt of the (draft) National Report prior to arrival in Finland. All members of the group subjected this report to a thorough scrutiny (in their own way, since no guidelines for dealing with it were provided). It was the comments and ideas flowing from this first reading of the National Report which served as the focus for the first formal meeting of the review team. The objective of this meeting was twofold: first, to secure perspectives on the quality and comprehensiveness (and informativeness) of the National Report, and secondly, to highlight the key issues identified by different members of the team arising from the Report. These, in themselves, reflected the different theoretical, practical and policy interests of the team and contributed to establishing a 'division of labour' within the team in preparation for the first meetings with those concerned with youth policy in Finland. Furthermore, the team concurred that it was *not* reviewing the National Report - the National Report was a (admittedly central) building block for the team's review of youth policy in Finland, but it was by no means the exclusive source of data.

The final, published, National Report was made available to the review team during its second visit to Finland in May. While this was welcomed, it also elicited some frustration since, inevitably, page numbering was different and some additional information had been included. There is a lesson to be learned here: we accept the time pressures around the production of the National Report but - for the review team - considerable time was wasted in the technical exercise of re-discovering the same material in the final version of the National Report.

Other data were secured during formal meetings with government officials, youth researchers, national organisations and municipalities. These comprised both information given during formal presentations and ensuing discussion, and written handouts and documents made available during these sessions. Between many of these formal meetings, the review team met to reflect on the previous meeting, plan for the next, and to develop and refine the framework of issues which, in its view, were at the very centre of youth policy in Finland. The formal meetings demonstrated the strong commitment attached to the youth policy review process: we were furnished with a wealth of information and participants were invariably able to answer our queries and questions. However, in the desire to provide a full and informative session, these meetings sometimes left little time for the review team to explore in any depth some of the issues which were emerging, in its view, as key ingredients of Finnish youth policy. This is another procedural issue for the future: formal meetings require a balance which allows sufficient time *both* for presentations *and* response to exploratory questions from the review team.

Beyond the more formal meetings, the review team also engaged in a round of visits to relevant 'sites' of youth policy (concerned with, for example, youth work, intercultural activity and youth workshops). This permitted a more relaxed interaction with participants but, once again, the eagerness to tell *us* about *their* work sometimes left little time for us to pursue matters of concern and interest to us.

In between this structured programme and our own internal team meetings, we sought to inject wider research literature - both from Finland and elsewhere - into our discussions. Furthermore, not only did we attempt to consider youth policy in Finland in terms of its 'integrity' and internal coherence but we endeavoured to attach the elements of youth policy in Finland to wider principles concerning youth policy as formulated by the Council of Europe. In other words, our 'theoretical framework' for considering youth policy in Finland was shaped by local, national *and* supra-national considerations. The latter is not, in some ways, of specific concern to Finnish youth policy (although no doubt the Finnish authorities will be pleased about the 'value added' dimensions to its youth policy where it does resonate with what the Council of Europe sees as core principles of youth policy), but it is important in terms of projecting a framework for the longer-term international review process.

As noted above, there were three youth researchers in the international review team. It is to be expected that youth researchers are skilled in generating critical questions and raising problematics about youth issues. The following review therefore at times highlights areas of concern about youth policy in Finland, but the review team is keen to emphasise that this should not detract from its perception of the commitment of both the national government (the Ministry of Education) and the municipalities in Finland to youth work and youth affairs. The very fact that the National Report included contrary and competing perspectives reflects a confidence in youth policy in Finland, which was largely corroborated during the work of the international review team. While we acknowledge some of the historical and cultural specificities which have forged youth policy in Finland, we would also maintain that it represents a model for the personal development and social integration of young people which is worthy of serious attention, if not emulation, elsewhere. Despite austerity measures in recent years, it has sustained a resource base for youth policy and thereby vitiated the worst excess of social exclusion. Before going into more detail on these fronts, we would wish to note that this makes a compelling case for a distinctive and coherent policy for young people, across social policy areas such as education, training, housing, health and criminal justice.

The international report does not follow the patterns and structure of the National Report. Indeed, some areas covered in the National Report hardly surfaced in the international review process. We can only deliberate and comment on those areas that did. We have therefore adopted a three-part structure to our report. The first is concerned with the contexts and structures of youth policy - historical, cultural, organisational and administrative. The second deals with the policy arenas which are central to youth policy: education, training and employment; health and social welfare; and youth work. (In 'youth policy' in some countries, the latter

would hardly merit a section of its own and would be subsumed within education, and would be only a small component of that; in Finland, however, youth work remains a key element of overall youth policy.) The third part deals somewhat more abstractly with themes and issues in youth policy, first in terms of practical questions concerning our understanding of youth policy in Finland, and secondly through relating aspects of youth policy in Finland to the values and principles deemed by the Council of Europe to be central to effective and relevant youth policy.

Before embarking on these issues, some further attention needs to be given to the National Report on youth policy in Finland, since this represented the springboard for the subsequent review process.

### **The National Report and initial reflections**

"Mere rhetoric does not improve young people's situation" [National Report p.70]

"If I had more time, I could think of my future" (young woman, aged, 16)

"We organise [young people] so well, we don't let them think" (professional worker with young people)

The international review team welcomed the diligence with which the National Report (Review of National Youth Policy) had been prepared. In particular, it commended the willingness to present sometimes competing views from the four different sources which contributed to the National Report: the public administration, youth research, the national youth body Allianssi, and data from the Barometer surveys of young people views and lifestyles. This created in the report what Minister Andersson referred to in his introduction a 'polemic tension'. Following this observation, the international review team noted, for example, the contrast between the pragmatic economic issues addressed by the administration and the more theoretical questions on which the youth research reported were focused.

The review team also admired the extensive resources which are still committed to young people in Finland, particularly in the arena of youth work, despite the clear difficulties which the Finnish economy has faced in recent years.

This was the *context* within which the review team set about its deliberations - a context of relative openness about the living conditions of young people and the inherent dilemmas in shaping and re-shaping youth policy and a context of continuing generosity in resource allocation towards the young. Inevitably, however, the visit of the review team has generated comment, concerns and criticisms which require further exploration. For example, there are questions about the position of the growing number of immigrant youth, the relationship between Finnish youth research and its contribution to policy formulation and development, and the assumptions upon which new strategies in education, training and the labour market have been developed. There are also questions around the processes of change and the structures which both result from and inform that change, not least legislative adaptation (such as the Youth Work Act 1995 and the Labour Market Support Act 1996), cross-departmental collaboration at Ministerial level, and forums for consultation with, and participation by, young people. It is to be hoped that the observations of the review team will serve as a foundation for reflection and debate, drawing as they do both on the evolution of youth policy within Finland and broader international comparisons and analysis.

The National Report, while representing a key foundation for the work of the review team, is not the focus of its attention. The review team is concerned with youth policy in Finland. While it has made extensive use of the material included within the National Report, it has also considered other evidence and documentation, both verbal and written, ranging from legislation on policy concerning immigration (Aliens' Act and Aliens' Decree - unofficial translation 1996) and recent published research findings to verbal presentations and personal observation and comment. It draws therefore on ideas, perception and fact from the level of government to the level of grounded practice with young people.

On occasions we found ourselves 'chasing phantoms', convinced there were bound to be problems of similar magnitude and concern to those in our own countries, when - for reasons that are specific and perhaps unique to Finland - there were none. On other occasions, our terrier-like persistence uncovered some evidence of issues of concern to us which we do not feel were given sufficient prominence or acknowledgement in the National Report (for example, tensions in developing an integrated approach at the local level, or the differential treatment and discriminatory practices - though rarely malicious - of those from minority ethnic groups).

Our deliberations paid attention both to the contemporary *situation* of Finnish young people (in terms of, for example, their educational and employment opportunities or their levels of political participation) **and** to the mechanisms and measures of *intervention* in their lives (through, for example, educational grants, housing subsidies, training provision). It is the latter which is strictly youth policy, but clearly youth policy cannot be divorced from the effects on the young people towards whom it is directed.

Our insight into youth policy in Finland, as we have noted in the Preface, is inevitably partial and may suffer from some distortions of perspective and emphasis, resulting largely from the selective evidence, information and experience we had at our disposal. For example, although we were fortunate to visit two areas beyond Helsinki, which provided some flavour of youth policy and practice in more rural communities, these were still in the general hinterland of the population concentration of the south of the country. We did not experience the rural Finland of highly dispersed populations, severe out-migration of young people, threatened local economies - about which we were told, and where, no doubt, young people's lives are very different.

Nonetheless, we have been fortunate to see key elements of youth policy through the eyes of the administration, through the eyes of researchers, through the eyes of youth work practitioners and through the eyes of young people. We hope we have managed to synthesise these perspectives in such a way that this report offers an independent perspective on youth policy in Finland through the eyes of an international country review committee.

## **Initial responses to the National Report**

Since the National Report was, initially, the sole basis of evidence on youth policy in Finland, it clearly had to serve as the starting point for the deliberations of the international review team. It was also the sole preliminary material furnished to members of the team before the team actually came together and was therefore the mechanism by which the team established its working methods and direction.

There was broad agreement within the team that the National Report is well-composed, accessible and clearly-structured. The various contributors should be commended for their diligence and application in its production. There was, however, a noticeable division between the contribution of the administration and that of the youth researchers. This aside, it was acknowledged that the National Report is essentially an *administrative* report, about which different members of the review team made preliminary but specific, and constructively critical, observations, which can be clustered under the following headings.

### Balance and omission

Notwithstanding the importance attached to youth work in Finland, there was a feeling that the National Report allocated disproportionate weight to youth work and yet paid little and limited attention to more important socialising forces. The review team was also concerned about the omission of questions to do with family life (despite Minister Andersson explanation in the introduction to the National Report as to why this is left out). The review team was surprised at the lack of differentiation between sub-groups of young people in much of the commentary and analysis. We now understand Finland to be a relatively undifferentiated society, but to almost completely overlook differences in gender, ethnicity, disability and region seemed to implicitly overstate the homogeneity of Finnish society. The international review team also noted that there appeared to be little in the National Report specifically on rural youth work and on youth enterprise, though

the former was partially rectified in the published version of the National Report, and we learned that the latter is only now emerging and being developed as a dimension of youth policy.

#### Assumptions and presumptions

There was some concern in the international review group of the rather uncritical assumptions made in the National Report concerning labour market structures, training strategies and economic performance. This appeared to reflect one particular ideology (that higher and higher qualifications enhance labour market activity and global competitiveness) which is certainly subject to some challenge elsewhere in Europe.

Inherent in the National Report is also the presumption that Finland is fundamentally an egalitarian and integrated society. Our subsequent findings broadly confirm this view, certainly in relation to most other European countries. However, this presumption can serve to conceal sustaining or emerging *inequalities*, notably in the experiences of rural and urban youth, and in those of immigrant youth - two issues which are largely conspicuous only by their absence.

Furthermore, the contribution to the National Report made by Finnish youth researchers perhaps rather prematurely asserts that (all) Finnish youth is at the vanguard of post-modernism; if this is so (and we are not wholly persuaded of this argument), then one can no longer speak of social groups, in which case it is difficult to see how any coherent youth policy can be conceived, let alone forged.

#### Historical reflection

The National Report draws attention to the different ages and stages at which young people cross the threshold to adult rights and responsibilities. However, there is no explanation why certain age demarcations have arisen or why the current policy agenda has been established. Youth researchers everywhere will argue that 'youth' is not a natural group, but one which is socially constructed. The different boundaries in Finnish 'youth policy' would have benefited from a somewhat clearer justification and explication.

#### Contemporary rationale for 'youth policy'

Despite the common thread in Finnish youth policy around the 'living conditions' of young people and the goal of 'social integration', and despite the *de facto* coherence of much of Finland's youth policy, at no time does the National Report spell out explicitly the rationale for these intentions and expectations. It is clear that the unprecedented economic experiences of the early 1990s (during which approaching one third of young people were unemployed at any one time) caused some deep-seated political reflection about the objectives of youth policy, the resources which should be made available to it, and how they should be targeted. But, without a firmer rationale, it is difficult to see how the focus on improving living conditions through more effective co-ordination and 'networks' is more than a rhetorical device for curtailing the allocation of scarce economic resources to the youth sector. There is a logic for such developments, but it is not made clear in the National Report.

#### Evaluation evidence

It appeared to the international review team that there is an immense gulf between the policy goals of the administration and the work carried out in recent years by Finnish youth researchers. The administration has established, or revised, large-scale policy in areas such as training and housing, yet youth research activity appears to remain located around questions of youth culture and identity and dependent upon the subjective accounts of small groups of young people. There is nothing inherently 'wrong' with this (indeed, such research can provide a powerful illumination of some effects of youth policy), but the review team was concerned that policy objectives and programmes of research seemed to lack synchronisation. It was noted that little evaluation research seemed to be taking place on the operationalisation, implementation and outcomes of current policy developments. Furthermore, there appeared to be little connection in the attachment of different 'methods of discovery' to specific policy questions; for example, why is there so little known about the embryonic 'drugs culture' (which lends itself to small-scale qualitative research) and what are the attrition rates of the Youth Barometer survey. Indeed, the pressing point for the international review team was the extent to which data has been gathered both on the efficacy of contemporary youth policy for the majority of young people in Finland *and* on its failure in relation to a (probably) small minority of the most marginalised young people. On these questions, the National Report presents few answers.

### Participation by young people

Finally, the review team was concerned with questions about youth participation raised in the National Report. It is noted in the National Report that young people's interest in social and political participation 'began to wane' in the 1980s and this has justified new measures for promoting youth policy, as represented by the Youth Work Act 1995 - which, unlike before it when there was a statutory requirement for youth committees - does not require the participation of young people. The review team, like many others, remains unclear exactly what 'participation' in society by young people actually means, although we are clear that it means something more than just involvement in training or work, or indeed youth organisations. We are also clear that the absence of structures for participation by young people represents one form of 'democratic deficit' and a weakness in any youth policy framework, even in a participative democracy such as Finland. We would therefore have welcomed a more forceful argument as to why a commendable statutory requirement for youth participation has, so recently, been overturned.

The outcome of this dissection of the National Report were two concrete concerns, which established the parameters for the review team's 'agenda' in its formal meetings with and less formal visits to those responsible for the shaping and implementation of youth policy in Finland. First, youth policy is claimed to follow young people's aspirations, yet those aspirations are largely left *assumed*. Moreover, no youth policy is constructed entirely upon the aspirations of young people. We were therefore interested in discovering in more detail both the nature of those aspirations, the wider influences on youth policy (particularly economic and political), and the relative balance of these different forces. Secondly, there is little evidence of any concerted attempt to reach out to those young people who are most excluded, who are unlikely to compete in mainstream activity (in education, training or employment) and who are unlikely to complete survey questionnaires or participate in research. Elsewhere in Europe, the issue of the social exclusion of young people has become a pressing political issue; it is not conceivable that Finland is completely immune from such trends.

The overall conclusion of the international review team was that the National Report provides an excellent *general* outline of youth policy in Finland but, in some areas, lacks sufficient detail and, in more, lacks sufficient critical reflection. More detailed contextual evidence, it was felt, would assist the review team to consider the content and direction of youth policy more rigorously.

The Review of National Youth Policy in Finland (the National Report) does, however, provide an extremely useful foundation for considering the shape of future national reports, in terms of the policy domains which need to be covered (for example, family, education, post-compulsory education and training, employment, housing, health, criminal justice, informal and formal social life, media) and those who should be encouraged to produce a response on these issues (for example, government, research, youth organisations and young people).

Following its in-depth appraisal of the National Report, the review team agreed that the broad framework for its work would be (a) to address omissions, both theoretical and practical, (b) to develop understanding of the content of policy, through requesting more information and material and (c) to pass comment and raise issues, in relation to the rationale behind different areas of policy. This was the approach it adopted during its meetings and visits, with different members of the review team taking a lead on particular questions, according to their expertise, experience and interest in these matters.

After the first visit of the review team to Finland (which was restricted to Helsinki and focused mainly on the national administration), it was clear that a dominant thread in the evolution of youth policy was the emphasis placed on the need to establish effective *networks* for intervention in the lives of young people, a strategy far removed from the early practices of youth *work* in providing summer camps for Finnish youth. Indeed, one of the most significant changes in youth policy in Finland has been the recent steady transition away from conceptions of *youth work* towards a conception of *youth affairs* which, if it is to work effectively in improving the living conditions of young people, requires the involvement and collaboration of a number

of sectors of public policy. Education, both formal and informal, may continue to be the lead policy arena, but it will need to ensure strategic integration with those other arenas which significantly affect the current condition and future prospects of young people: housing, training and labour markets, health, and criminal justice.

The lasting memory from the second visit to Finland (which provided the opportunity to travel beyond Helsinki, to meet with young people and professionals working with them, and to engage with the local administration of youth policy) is headlined (at the beginning of this section) by the observation of one particular type of 'typical' young Finn: one who is so involved and active that they hardly have time to contemplate their futures, although they are committed to 'living a dream'. This was also the perspective on young people in Finland projected by many of the professional workers we met. At the other end of the spectrum we presume there is another type of (perhaps rather less) 'typical' young Finn: one who is suffering from the consequences of recent economic recession and social austerity measures, who is at risk of exclusion and towards whom changing youth policy has been specifically directed. Unfortunately, we did not encounter, face to face, any of the latter type (except three young men at one of the youth workshops), while we met many young people who fall within the former category. No doubt this is a result of both selection and self-selection; more excluded young people are, by definition, harder to reach and more reluctant to engage with *any* formal processes. Nevertheless, it is the capacity to alleviate the worst excesses of exclusion, and where possible to promote full *inclusion*, which is the acid test of any full and integrated youth policy, as Ms Pia Vitanen, Chair of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, noted astutely in her address to the Finnish Parliament in April 1996:

"We must develop our society to be able to offer young people other options besides exclusion. The development of young people's living conditions is much more than just mere youth policy, it is also social, educational, labour and housing policy, and everything in between" (National Report, p70)

The view of the international review group is that policy initiatives within these other policy arenas which *affect young people* are essential components of *youth policy*; 'mere' youth policy is presumably a reference to policy which is *directed* specifically at young people (such as education, or youth work). 'Youth policy', in our view, must be conceived of as both national and local policies which contribute to young people's prospects and possibilities (or exclusion and disadvantage) - by intent, default or neglect. By this, we mean that youth policy can be intentional, with young people the specific target of policies spelt out and resourced at either national or local levels. But youth policy can also be an outcome of *inaction* and *omission*: a failure by governments or municipalities (local authorities) to recognise the needs of young people and to allocate to those needs a requisite proportion of available resources in order to develop appropriate responses. Any consideration of 'youth policy' demands that both scenarios are accorded consideration; to consider only what is being done, without reflecting upon what is not being done (that could be done) is to paint only half of the picture.

## **Section One: context and structures**

### **THE BROADER CONTEXT**

In the European experts' report on cultural policy in Finland, Finland was depicted as "a marginal land on the borders of Western and Eastern Europe" (Kaplinski 1995, p.173).

Finland may be viewed in this way as a 'marginal land', but it is also a strategically located land, both culturally and politically. Culturally, its distinct traditions and historical legacy are not, Kaplinski also notes, always compatible with those of 'Standard Average Europeans' [SAEs] and he suggests therefore that "any evaluation of things Finnish should, in my opinion, avoid too direct suggestions" (Kaplinski 1995, p.172).

This is but one of the contextual 'domains' within which the international review of youth policy has taken place. The important contextual domains relate to demographic, economic, political, cultural and social contexts and these will be addressed, broadly and generally, in turn.

### **Geographical and Demographic**

Finland is a large country (the seventh largest in Europe) with a small population of just over five million people. Its population is heavily concentrated in the south of the country, with one-fifth living in the Helsinki metropolitan area (Helsinki, Espoo and Vantaa). However, about 60% of the population live in rural areas. Located on the northern periphery of Europe, Finland's neighbours are Sweden to the west, Norway to the north and Russia to the east, with whom it shares a border of no less than 1,300 kilometres.

### **Economic**

Until the 1950s Finland was still primarily an agrarian society, at which point it experience late and very rapid urbanisation and 'modernisation'. In some forty years it has move from an agricultural to an information society, now being at the leading edge of much high technological development. This is attributed to its high educational standards, which have contributed to such rapid economic progress.

It is not only in public education that the Finnish state has historically displayed a commitment to the welfare and development of its people. Finland has a comprehensive welfare state, not only in terms of 'mainstream' welfare state arenas such as education, housing, health and social security, but also in terms of the provision of sports and cultural facilities.

Such commitments have, however, been threatened in recent years by the economic crisis which faced Finland in the early 1990s, a product largely of the collapse of eastern trade following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Nordic societies have always aspired to social integration and coherence; the economic recession in the 1990s not only brought into question the feasibility of the comprehensive welfare state but also made less possible the employment of a significant proportion of the best educated Finns within the public sector. As the European experts' report on Cultural Policy in Finland notes,

"The system is characterised by sustained growth, full employment, a high level of social protection. Erosion set in in the 1980s, when the financial machine ran out of steam and was no longer able to cover all the social costs, the bureaucratic machinery began to seize up and it became increasingly difficult to adjust to a rapidly and constantly changing world" (Renard 1995, p.17)

These economic problems have led to some realignment in political thinking about the future structures and policy in Finnish society.

## Political

Finland became a member of the European Union in 1995. Despite this relatively recent membership of the 'club of the *West* (not only the EU but also the Council of Europe), it is certainly no longer the 'marginal land' portrayed by Kaplinski but centrally positioned, given the dramatic geo-political changes during the 1990s, on the *east-west* bridge. As Finland's President Martii Ahtisaari has observed, Finland intends to be an active partner in the implementation of Jean Monnet's vision for European economic integration whereby a "great East-West Europe will be a force for peace in the world". Finland has, indeed, become a gateway to the development of trade in the expanding markets of Russia, other members of the Confederation of Independent States (CIS) and the Baltic Republics. It has also been a central partner in the delivery of humanitarian aid to eastern European countries and Helsinki has been the site for a sequence of top-level political dialogue, discussions and negotiations, including those involving the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE).

Internally, Finland's own political structures reflect its commitment to democratic politics. Finland is a parliamentary republic, its two hundred national government members elected every four years by universal suffrage. Prior to 1995 the government was a coalition of the Centre (formerly Agrarian) Party, the Conservative Party and the Swedish People's Party. Since 1995 the government has been formed by a coalition of members of parliament from the Social Democratic Party, the National Coalition Party, the Left-Wing Alliance, the Swedish People's Party and the Green League.

Finland already had a highly developed governance when it became independent in 1917. Its democratic parliamentary system remained intact despite the conflicts and (proportionately to population) appalling fatalities between 1939 and 1945, when Finland was first at war with the Soviet Union and then with Germany. Political decision-making appears to have cemented the sense of unity, the strong sense of belonging to the same national community, which is a characteristic of the Finns invariably observed by others. State monopolies of key industries have ensured that their surpluses have been directed towards social and welfare ends.

However, the twin forces of national recession and changing global economics have created the need for political reconsideration of both principles and practice. State-owned companies in all sectors are undergoing controlled privatisation. Centralised state direction ("their leaders had made the decisions in the name of the people, believing they acted in their interests" - Renard 1995, p.169) is giving way to a greater decentralisation of decision-making, both to the private sector and to municipalities. The state can no longer afford the public expenditure levels of previous times, and new approaches are required, despite a sustaining commitment, where possible, to retaining former structures of provision.

## Cultural and Social

Finland remains a fundamentally monocultural society, despite the National Report's contention that "Finland is now progressing towards a multicultural society" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.30). This view is premised upon the more than three-fold increase in the number of immigrants (from some 20,000 in 1990 to some 70,000 in 1996, most of whom are Russians and Estonians). This is certainly a significant *proportionate* increase, but it is still a relatively insignificant proportion of the overall population. Nonetheless, the rapid growth of immigration (albeit from a very low base) is likely to become a stern test of the espoused commitment of the Finnish people to the values of equality, democracy and social justice (particularly in their relationships with *non-white* immigrants, currently most represented by Somalis, which is a completely new daily experience for Finns). There is certainly some evidence of young people becoming *less* tolerant of immigrants. Yet, while 4% of the inhabitants of Helsinki are not of Finnish origin, only 1.4% of the Finnish population overall are immigrants.

Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish; some 93% speak the former and 6% the latter. 1% speak Saami. Since 1992, the native speakers of all three languages have had the right to education in their native language. In terms of religion, approaching 90% of Finns are Lutheran.

Despite the acceptance and (generally) tolerance of ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, therefore, it can be seen that there is a prevailing cultural and social uniformity within Finland, to which the *vast majority* of its population subscribes. This, coupled with relatively economic equality (at least until very recently), has established a relatively level or 'flat' society, one with limited class distinctions, and shared beliefs and values. The point was illustrated crisply by one young person we met:

"Finland does not have a very 'see through' class structure. If there is an elite, it doesn't really show. Income and Tax policies are a great leveller. Whether you earn 8,000 or 18,000 FIM, after social transfers, you have more or less the same disposable income. Although society is based around both parents being breadwinners"

The 'great leveller' of Finnish taxation and welfare policies has, in some regards, fuelled a self-fulfilling prophecy which has sustained the social integration and cohesion of Finnish society into the 1990s.

The National Report (p.14), however, suggests that such coherence may now be fragmenting, precipitated by economic circumstances (particularly far greater unemployment) but 'assisted' by, for example, changes in family structures and accelerating integration. Indeed, the National Report (p.19) highlights three key dimensions to the social change currently being experienced in Finland. It is worth extracting verbatim from the National Report in order to convey the extent to which, *even by the terminology used*, Finnish experts perceive how dramatic the transformation of Finnish society has been:

"Hardly anyone would have believed in the late 1980s what the situation would have been in the mid 1990s. The changes have been so *drastic* both in social structures and in individual fates that it is *no exaggeration* to call this a profound social transition, beginning in the late eighties and early nineties and continuing throughout the nineties. In the national economy, this transition has resulted in a massive government debt and a financial crisis. At the individual level, it is reflected in unemployment, increasing social problems and general insecurity. The safe and reliable paid work has turned into *alarming* unemployment..." (Ministry of Education 1997, p.19; emphasis added).

Contemporary Finnish society, the National Report contends, must be examined in three dimensions: international, national and individual. At the international level, not only Finland but the whole of Europe is in transition, demanding reconsideration of previous political, economic and cultural certainties. At the national level, welfare policies are in crisis since government resources (or the lack of them) can no longer sustain previous provision. At the individual level, "a sense of temporariness has become a permanent condition", threatening social cohesion, establishing new strategies to adjust to the 'risk society', and causing discrimination, marginalisation and cultural 'otherness'.

Yet, from an international perspective, such an analysis is far from wholly persuasive. Within Finland, from a specific Finnish historical perspective, the analysis may ring true. A raft of changes may have taken place very rapidly, thus throwing the breaking from old traditions into sharp relief. Certainly, Finland has experienced very fast 'modernisation', from a remote, 'marginal' and rural society to a strategic, European, technological society. But, unlike some other European countries, it still subscribes firmly to a value-system based on comprehensive welfare provision (even if it cannot deliver as much as before). It is committed to sustaining, wherever possible, interventions designed to promote social integration (rather than releasing untrammelled market forces from the restrictions, and taxations, of the 'nanny state'). It is concerned with ensuring adequate *preventative* strategies of early intervention (in education, youth work and social welfare), rather than having to tackle the consequences of inaction. There is a thread of common orientation towards public sector policies between the national and local administrations, and between the political decision-makers, advisory bodies and the professionals charged with implementation. In short, there is a coherence and commitment to *public policy still* in Finland which is far less transparent, if it exists at all, in many other European countries.

One cameo illustration, before turning to more focused issues around youth policy, relates to military service. This, in itself, highlights the need to be highly sensitive to the highly specific historical and cultural traditions of Finland. Members of the international review team came from countries without military service, where military service is under review or has recently been abolished, and certainly where young people are increasingly reluctant or resistant to fulfilling the requirements of military service. It was (misguidedly) *assumed* that there would be some level of opposition to, and non-participation in military service in Finland. It came as some surprise, therefore, not only to find minimal objection to military service but also to discover the *strong commitment* of young people to the 'nation' and the flag, and the belief that military service is viewed as an important mechanism not just for the defence of the country but also as a significant rite of passage (for young men) to adulthood - indeed, you *become* a man through having done military service. This is, in our view, a far cry from a society characterised by fragmentation, individualism and mistrust of political and social institutions. We are not rejecting the assertions made in the National Report, but we are arguing that representations of change may have been overdramatised at the expense of attention to elements of continuity, conformity and integration.

## **YOUTH POLICY IN FINLAND - SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS**

Youth policy itself is forged on the anvil of both continuity and change. There is a risk, as we have noted already, of overstating the extent of change. We wish to emphasise that any youth policy reflects a 'reading' by those responsible for developing it of the situation of young people, which is necessarily a balancing of tradition and change, stability and risk, conformity and resistance. The danger in the construction of any youth policy is that it draws ideas from the most visible issues which create most public concern - projected by young people who I have depicted as the 'spectacular, the deviant and the bizarre'. It is important to be reminded that more invisible young people are usually highly conformist and aspire to a modest place in the existing order. They are neither deviants nor rebels.

The history of youth policy in Finland reflects this balance appropriately and is largely about tradition and stability - about seeking to create routes for young people to take their place in mainstream society. It is youth research in Finland (as elsewhere) which places more emphasis on change and risk, and on difference and disaffection.

Furthermore, while youth *policy* has broadened its focus away from the socialising and expressive contribution of youth work towards issues of education, training and economy, youth research appears to have remained preoccupied with attitudinal and youth cultural issues, which are often far removed from the central concerns of young people about qualifications, occupations and economic futures - which are essential for the exercising consumer choice and becoming active citizens. It is certainly true, as youth researchers contend, that young people need to develop a greater aptitude for 'life management' (Helve and Bynner 1996) in order to face "not being tossed about by uncontrollable situations and events, and having the capacity to adapt oneself to given realities" (Saarikoski 1996, p.207). But it is equally true that no young people can engage in effective 'life management' in a vacuum: they need a framework, structure and access to a variety of resources and opportunities if they are to realise and maximise their potential. In Finland, youth work has, in the past, offered sufficient 'value added' resources to achieve this end, given the solid family, educational and employment structures accessible to, and experienced by, the vast majority of Finnish youth. Given the (at least partial) breakdown of the latter, the former is no longer sufficient. Hence the shift in 'youth policy' away from youth work *per se* to attention to the living conditions of young people. This is enshrined in the legislation, wherein the Youth Work Act 1995 broadens the definition of youth work to encapsulate 'living conditions' and allows municipalities greater discretion and flexibility in how 'youth work' is to be supported and implemented. The 1995 Act superseded the Youth Work Acts of 1972 and 1974 and 1986, which were focused essentially on the *duty* of national and local administrations to provide grants and subsidies for local youth work, youth organisations and youth facilities.

A more cynical view, of course, would be that the state is less able to deliver sufficient resources for youth work and yet cannot pass on the specific burden of responsibility to municipalities. It can, however, pass on the *general* responsibility, framed within its own more general responsibility for formulating "development measures needed to improve young people's living conditions" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.62). Whether or not such a 'top-down' economic explanation is fully justified is debatable; there are equally strong 'bottom up' explanations for these legislative revisions - not only the relatively newly emergent difficulties facing young people in their transition to adult life but also the apparent decline of youth organisations and local youth committees, which therefore did not warrant the same statutory resource allocation which had seemed necessary twenty-five years ago. In other words, there is a range of reasons (whether justifications, or rationalisations) for the transition from a narrowly-conceived 'youth work' to a more broadly conceived model of 'youth affairs', and from centralised state direction to decentralised and delegated discretion within autonomous municipalities.

Those who have shaped this evolving youth policy are in broad agreement that this is a direction in youth policy which is both necessary (for economic reasons) and appropriate (for the social needs of young people). At government level, while the Ministry of Education is responsible for co-ordinating development measures, all relevant ministries are required to participate. The government, through the Ministry of Education, also draws on the advice of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs and, at arms-length, of Allianssi, the Finnish national youth work agency responsible for Finnish Youth Co-operation. The Association of Finnish Local Authorities (AFLA) represents the interests of the municipalities. Young people themselves are represented through the youth committees of municipalities, through youth organisations and through Allianssi. Inevitably, there has been some friction between different groups and levels but, largely, these shapers of youth policy have worked with a commendable level of harmony to the point of constructing a new youth work strategy (NUOSTRA). Resonating with academic interest in young people's capacity for 'life management', the point of departure for NUOSTRA has been that,

"Young people have the right to construct and the responsibility for constructing their own future" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.64)

The irony of such a statement, despite it remaining a more feasible proposition in Finland than in many other European countries, is that young people are now charged with this responsibility at a time when they are least equipped to discharge it. Job opportunities are scarcer, and even the best qualifications (which are accessible as a result of the expansion of higher education) are no longer a cast-iron passport to secure and well-paid employment. Emergent youth policy in Finland is therefore, as elsewhere, constructed upon not only a relevant response to social change but also upon a series of *contradictions*. The widening of educational opportunity (even in a country such as Finland where the vast majority of young people stay in education beyond the minimum leaving age) comes at a time when the 'teaching paradigm' (through which application to learning is the *key* to a series of other exchanges - Willis 1997) has become more and more precarious: there is no longer any clear or guaranteed link between educational performance and labour market futures. Indeed, many young Finns are likely to experience temporary, if not protracted unemployment - one-third of young Finns were unemployed during the deepest times of the recession in the early 1990s. Youth enterprise development is heralded as a new dimension of youth policy at the very time when market competitiveness makes success highly problematic (see Williamson *et al* 1993). And, when young Finns are experiencing unprecedented difficulties in finding a place in their own society, Finland is witnessing its greatest level ever of immigration - circumstances hardly most conducive to tolerance and multiculturalism. Thus whilst Finnish young people have a reputation for being strongly European (significantly through them being the Interrail generation and, increasingly, the InterNet generation - real and virtual travel assisted by the still relative affluence of Finnish society), their own prospects of sustaining the quality of life experienced by their parents is under threat. A core challenge for youth policy is to deal with these cross-cutting problems, tensions and contradictions.

'Youth policy' as a concept is the *product* of national, regional (provincial) and local political decisions made within a range of policy sectors (such as education, training, housing or health). It is concerned both with the general population of young people and with specific sub-groups within that general population (such as young women, offenders or ethnic minorities). It may even extend to highly-focused initiatives directed towards such sub-categories around specific policy themes (such as young mothers, or ethnic minority

unemployment). All these levels of youth policy are, however, *informed* by many partners and contributors - both within the administration and outside of it. Research data, youth organisations, media profiling, moral panics and pressure from sectoral lobby interests all inject pressure on political thinking about the dimensions of youth policy, which may or may not be 'appropriate for the positive development of young people within a society. What they do, however, is to give shape to the *priorities* in youth policy.

We have already noted in general terms that, in the Finnish context, there is a high level of *consistency* across opinion-shapers and between political levels in core thinking about youth policy. This has manifested itself in the NUOSTRA process, the follow-up 'concern strategy', and the implementation of the Youth Work Act 1995. The NUOSTRA process established that central areas of youth policy should be concerned with:

1. Personal growth and civic activities
2. Young people's living conditions
3. Internationalisation
4. Prevention of young people's exclusion

The 'concern strategy', which related specifically to the second of these areas (living conditions) identified strategic objectives in education, income distribution, housing and health - in terms of promoting employment and minimising unemployment, maintaining an approach to providing income support for young people to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage, creating the possibility of moving to independent living at the right point in young people's development, and enabling young people to adopt responsible and healthy life-styles.

The key issue in youth policy in Finland, which surfaced as the critical policy question in the early 1990s, remains youth unemployment and the risk of social exclusion. The 1994 state auditors' report added to the concerns of those more centrally positioned in informing youth policy and to those expressed by the taskforce of permanent secretaries in the Ministries of Education, Labour, and Social Affairs and Health, which reported in 1994. The auditors' report commented on the wider, longer-term effects and costs of exclusion, while the two taskforce reports focused on the relationship between training and employment.

These reports established training and employment as the most pressing questions for youth policy. Not only did they lead to increases in training provision and the development of a network of youth workshops, but they also focused attention on ideas around outreach work, family support, youth services, youth enterprise and on the need to form effective partnerships in order to ensure cross-sectoral action to promote young people's living conditions.

The framework for implementing what is simultaneously a more directed and more diverse youth policy lies in a changed balance of freedom for municipalities and state direction. Of particular significance is the collaboration of groupings of municipalities to address different aspects of the living conditions of young people.

Whatever the extraneous economic and political imperatives which may restrict the capacity of national and local administrations to allocate an optimum level of resources to youth policy in all its strands, and despite glimpses of more coercive practices (as characterised by the Labour Market Support Act 1996), Finnish youth policy remains constructed on winning the consent of Finland's young people rather than coercing their compliance (see Davies 1986), through preventative strategies, early intervention, care, protection and support. Indeed, the international review team was impressed at how few symptoms of marginalisation there are, given the difficult circumstances facing many young people. The numbers of socially excluded young people are still very small. Only 2% are at risk of falling out of school. Long-term unemployment among young people is not so bad. Psychosocial problems have stayed the same. There is still only a very small number of drug misusers. These facts should not be a recipe for complacency, but they are indicative of the continuing integration of the vast majority of young people in Finland - a testimony, to date, of successful and effective youth policy.

There has, necessarily, been a climate of change in youth policy in Finland. The country has faced an unprecedented *economic* crisis which forced a range of austerity measures. Its *political* role and situation has altered as a result of membership of the European Union, which itself has had a variety of social consequences. And young people themselves are displaying changed attitudes and expectations, a

consequence both of the uncertainties of the present compared to the certainties of the past and of their Europeanisation and internationalism. The recent research by the AFLA in conjunction with Allianssi, as well as the findings of the Youth Barometer 1996, provide clear illustrations of this, although - as we have sought to argue - it offers testimony of adherence to tradition as well as evidence of change. For example, the Barometer shows that young people believe employment is the most important area in which policy-makers should invest. Two-thirds of young people believe, however, that success in life depends on your own actions. And the AFLA/Allianssi survey data conveys a lack of confidence on the part of young people in politics, politicians and political institutions, yet confidence in health care, education, policing and defensive systems - which are clearly a product of political decisions! Low levels of willingness to participate in social and political decision-making runs alongside the fact that about 50% of young people are members (if not *active* members) of some formal organisation. A workable youth policy has to be developed in the context of such paradoxes, tensions and contradictions.

## **ORGANISATION, STRUCTURES, ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE**

### **Organisation and Structures**

At both national and local levels the structures for forging policy concerning young people have been, and continue to be, under review. In essence, there has been a move away from insular and departmental preoccupations towards greater emphasis on networks and cross-sectoral collaboration and strategic planning. There has also been a decline in the representation of young people in favour of the development of more expert networks. Youth work has become more broadly conceived of as 'youth affairs', and young people's living conditions are the primary focus of attention (as set out in the Youth Work Act 1995, though these clearly continue to incorporate concerns with cultural and civic participation.

#### ***National - political***

The co-ordination of youth affairs is assigned to the Ministry of Education, although the responsibility for improving the living conditions of young people is shared by all administrative sectors. This has led to the replacement of the former National Youth Council by an Advisory Council for Youth Affairs and its three-subcommittees concerned with: education and employment; housing and income; and civic activities. The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs

"takes initiatives, issues statements on the budget proposal, and assists ministries responsible for different aspects of young people's living conditions in preparing their action and economic plans. It monitors the progress of its initiatives and sees to it that they are taken into account in budget preparations. Further, it follows the development of income distribution between generations and makes proposals concerning income distribution, when needed" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.63).

[The rationale for such structural changes, as we have noted, emerged from the chronic levels of youth unemployment in 1993/94, which generated an extensive debate on the relationship between employment and training and expressed deep concern about young people's exclusion.]

The 'buzzwords' in the organisation and administration of youth policy are now about 'networks' and 'partnerships' to achieve speedy and effective results in improving the living conditions of young people.

At the national level, organisational reform at the Ministry of Education (to be forthwith the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture) will have an impact on the structures of regional government, itself reformed by the Regional Administration Act 1996. The establishment of five large provinces (plus the autonomous province of Aland) from September 1997 will create more heterogeneous regions than before (when there were previously 11, plus Aland). Youth work will be part of the education and culture department of these new provinces; the former regional youth boards will be abolished and the new provinces will have the discretion to establish regional expert bodies in youth work. Resources from the central administration

(including for youth work) will be agreed in terms of target outcomes, reflecting a changing funding climate within which youth policy is formulated and implemented. This is designed to create 'conditions for new, open-minded solutions' for improving young people's living conditions.

At a meeting with Minister Andersson, he set out the context and rationale for changing youth policy and the reasons for producing the National Report. He noted that by 1995 Finland was experiencing a national crisis, with unprecedented levels of unemployment, especially amongst young people, and a state financial deficit. It was a downward spiral, requiring radical action. The priorities of the rainbow government (a coalition of five parties from across the political spectrum) was (i) to reduce unemployment, with the target of a 50% reduction within four years, (ii) to reduce the national debt and (iii) to preserve the *structures* of the welfare state, even if this meant greater austerity in provision.

Minister Andersson felt that the government had been quite successful in achieving these goals, except in relation to unemployment: there had been economic growth, but without new jobs. [This is a point which generated lengthy deliberations by the international review team: economic growth in new technological sectors particularly has a tendency to *reduce* employment levels, rather than create jobs.] As a result, it had therefore become imperative to design new special measures to help young people - through new education and training provision. In order to shape such provision, it was necessary to explore the social and economic condition of young people from different social groups and from different geographical areas. The Cultural Report (Arts Council of Finland 1995) and the international evaluation of Finland's cultural policy (Renard 1995) indicated a value in producing a corresponding youth policy and a similar evaluation (N.B. the Minister used the term 'evaluation', although we have adopted the term 'review').

This was, then, the background to the production of the National Report on Youth Policy. Minister Andersson noted that youth problems invariably raise anxiety in society. He was, by profession, a psychiatrist himself, with direct knowledge of issues such as drug misuse. He was aware how difficult it was to discuss youth problems rationally, because it generated such emotion, including guilt, in adult society. It created tensions between those who advocated liberal and consensual responses and those who were in favour of more coercive and punitive ones.

There was also the fact that many political decisions, across a number of Ministries, affected young people, but that there was very little co-ordination. Co-ordination, for which the Ministry of Education took the lead role, could be very difficult. The National Report has provided an opportunity to present a range of views. The Minister did not want to avoid or suppress criticisms and wanted to hear the voices of young people, although as a representative of the government this was not an easy position to take.

The 1996 state budget has paid special attention to improving the status of young people at risk of exclusion. As the National Report records:

"Preventing young people's exclusion and promoting their living conditions requires cross-sectoral partnerships, co-ordination of youth policy measures and dynamic civic activities. Youth workshop activities will be expanded, and other measures be taken to prevent young people's exclusion and alleviate the negative effects of youth unemployment. Young people's civic activities will be supported on the basis of equality, multiculturalism, tolerance and sustainable development"  
(Ministry of Education 1997, p.78)

While the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs recommends the priorities for the most pressing issues (such as housing, health, and unemployment), not all ministries within the government are represented on the Council, confirming Minister Andersson's point about the difficulties in developing and co-ordinating a consensual and coherent approach. In a later meeting between the international review team and representatives from other ministries, it was acknowledged that other ministries had been invited to participate in the Advisory Council but had declined either because youth questions were not a high priority on their policy agenda or because they thought it was not appropriate to get their hands tied. This did not, however, preclude more informal dialogue and, indeed, there were on-going debates with non-participating ministries around particular *issues*, but not around the role of these ministries in youth affairs.

The youth Barometer (a bi-annual survey of young people's attitudes and experiences) has been used to deal with, and counter-balance, pressure from other more influential age groups and to ensure that young people's needs and concerns are firmly positioned on the political agenda. Youth issues are often not considered too important by politicians and there needs to be considerable effort promoting the interests and needs of young people.

### ***National - professional***

Allianssi - the agency for Finnish Youth Co-operation - is a national service organisation formed in 1992 from the National Youth Council, municipal youth work and educational organisations. It has 100 members organisations. 16 people sit on the Board, including 4 from municipalities (local authorities). There are 30 staff. Its budget is ten million FIM, from the Ministry of Education, Veikkaus (the Finnish Money Game Company which runs the national Lottery) and from selling its services, and sponsorship. The Board sets out its guidelines on the functions of Allianssi, which are overseen by sub-committees, such as youth information, international work, and policy. The broader representation on sub-committees ensures that there is widespread involvement in the work of Allianssi.

Allianssi provides information services for both young people and youth workers, publications, and engages in or facilitates campaigns around issues such as unemployment and racism. Allianssi works closely with the youth work field, research, government and the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs. They all, it was maintained at the international review team's meeting with Allianssi, have 'similar goals'. There is general concern about developing new methods for reaching individuals and issues which are causing problems in Finnish society. There is a need to consider new methods of making things work and this requires more professional thinking and direction. For example, young people are leaving their (rural) communities to pursue their education and they are not coming back, because there is nothing for them. How can they be helped to stay, if they wish to? The goals must be considered, and then the means to achieve them. Perhaps through special housing for young people or community work, or voluntary work. Sometimes the problems are not major ones and small shifts in policy and practice can help to solve them. And small gains can be made through youth work, in supporting young people and providing them with relevant and accurate information. Allianssi is seeking to build up elements of new approaches: in schools, through information, and by means of networks and different working methods. It is providing support to municipalities to enable them to carry out their own research.

Allianssi, the agency itself argued, is the mechanism for message transmission between the municipalities and the national level. It has a responsibility to transmit and disseminate 'good practice'. While the law requires the provision of youth work, it does not specify what this should be and there is no efficient monitoring system of youth work - nonetheless, Allianssi can provide support and information and convey ideas concerning more effective practice.

### ***Regional - political***

According to the National Report, regional youth work administration is currently under review, partly awaiting regional government reform and partly vulnerable to initiatives promoting networking at a sub-regional level (through partnerships involving a number of municipalities - see below) (Ministry of Education 1997, pp.57-59). At present, regional youth work administration is constructed upon regional youth boards, which develop regional measures for youth work, issue statements to the Ministry of Education, and answer to the Ministry in relation to tasks assigned to them by the Ministry of Education. They are also responsible, independently or in partnership with other agencies, for the management of projects supported by European Structural Funds. However, proposals for the reform of regional government have suggested the abolition of regional youth boards and their tasks transferred to the regional government, with a strong emphasis on encouraging delegation of responsibilities for youth work (in its broadest sense) to sub-regional networks and initiatives. The planned five counties (provinces), together with the self-governing province of Åland, will be "like independent states", for which the central administration will provide guidance, but not direction, for the administration of youth work and youth policy.

Currently, the eleven counties (plus the province of Aland) deal with a range from 16 (in Aland) to almost 100 municipalities (Turku and Pori) and populations as small as 25,000 (Aland) and 200,000 (Lapland) to populations as great as 1.3 million (Uusimaa). Most counties currently cover populations between a quarter and half a million inhabitants and 25 to 50 municipalities. [As we have noted already, regional organisation will have been re-shaped by the time this report is completed, in September 1997.]

### ***Local - political***

According to the Association of Finnish Local Authorities, Finland has 460 self-governing municipalities (local authorities). [The National Report says there are 455 and other material seen by the international review team cites figures of 452 and 484; we have used the figures provided by the AFLA.] Their autonomy is guaranteed by the Constitution. The state can only assign duties to municipalities (or revoke them) only through legislation. Each municipality has the power to levy taxes.

Only six municipalities have populations of over 100,000 and a further seven have populations in excess of 50,000. In contrast, some 350 municipalities have populations of less than 10,000. There is a recurrent political debate about the number of municipalities. In favour of large numbers and despite many being very small in terms of population, is the possibility of *very* local democracy and participation, whereby 'the municipal delegate elected in a general election holds the highest power of decision in a municipality' (AFLA evidence). Against is the question whether municipalities, particularly the smallest ones, have the capacity and effectiveness to deliver a range of services at a very local level. Hence the further debate about the need for strategic partnerships between groups of municipalities.

The Association of Finnish Local Authorities (AFLA) is a private, autonomous service and interest organisation representing the municipalities. It has an Advisory Board for Education and Culture, within which youth work issues are considered. The main focus, however, is on schools; there is only one staff member responsible for sport and youth. His role is to try to improve possibilities for and at the local level in sport and youth work. The AFLA indicated to the international review group that the National Report provides some good examples of youth work at the local level (see Ministry of Education 1997, pp.47-57).

Every municipality is meant to provide *all* services, but some are delivered through joint municipal boards. There are different joint municipal boards for the delivery of different services. There are *rarely* (yet) joint municipal boards in the case of sport or youth work. The Loimaa district, which was visited by the international review team, is an exception. Composed of 12 small municipalities with a total population of 38,000, it is a sub-regional networking project with a task force concerned with young people's living conditions. This is clearly a relatively recent innovation, consistent with the thinking behind and the requirements of the Youth Work Act 1995. However, in terms of more traditional youth work practice, the AFLA indicated that every municipality (however small) probably does have some kind of youth centre.

The 1972 Youth Work Act provided state grants for municipalities and required them to establish *youth boards* (described in the National Report as youth committees)\*, which were responsible for employing youth workers and developing local youth work practice. There used to be 460 such youth boards; since 1995, however, such structures are no longer mandatory and, according to the AFLA, there are now only 11 youth boards throughout Finland. Youth work is now usually part of the responsibility of education or cultural and leisure-time boards.

The main tasks of the boards which carry, amongst their other responsibilities, the remit for youth work and youth activities are as follows:

- \* the building and running of youth facilities
- \* supporting youth organisations (some 6,000 in Finland)
- \* making youth policy
- \* networking with other municipalities/authorities/youth organisations
- \* providing information (on education and training, health, housing, and employment) in relation to improving the living conditions of young people.

The prevailing view is that it is now impossible to be successful in addressing the living conditions of young people without networking with other agencies. Youth work policy and practice can no longer stand alone. It is critical to work together (at local and state levels) to get results.

Recent public policy has been about decentralisation and devolving *power down* to the municipalities: to delegate responsibility to them to do things in the way that they want. Municipalities (or networks of municipalities) can now choose whichever way they believe is best to implement the objectives of the Youth Work Act 1995.

The dramatic 'abolition' of youth boards from 460 to virtually none in a very short space of time was depicted as reflecting the tendency in Finland to go from one extreme to the other. In some respects, young people probably do not care. For them, the bureaucracy is irrelevant - they are interested in the service they receive or can access. And the personnel are generally still there to do the job; it is just that the names and structures of the committees responsible have changed. However, there is a symbolic issue that at the very time when youth policy is deemed sufficiently important to require collaboration across a number of policy arenas, the organ for a discrete youth policy at the local level has been subordinated and incorporated within political sub-committees with wider terms of reference and possible other priorities.

The AFLA supports the development of youth *committees* to ensure that the profile of youth work and youth policy is not lost within these wider agendas. It encourages municipalities to promote youth participation, in the hope that "it will create *trust* and a realisation by young people that the issues are complex and not always easy to resolve". It is also possible for representatives of youth councils or youth committees to sit on a youth board or an education or cultural board responsible for youth affairs.

The AFLA is positioned between the local and national administration. As the representative of the municipalities, it is at times "almost against the state". It certainly sits in a cross-roads position, advocating for local youth work to the state while at the same time enabling municipalities to respond to national policy. While there is a broad consensus about the priority issues for youth policy, the emphasis in national and local thinking is somewhat different. The AFLA noted that leisure time activities, for all sectors of the population, are an important dimension of public policy in Finland: there are high levels of participation for theatre performances and concerts, in exercise and organised sport, in reading books (there are 17 library loans per person per year), in arts and music and in hobbies and adult education. Thus, notwithstanding national concerns with labour market and training issues, it remains important for the municipalities to deliver youth work on a wider platform, in response to the leisure-time and developmental needs of young people. The AFLA supports such youth work in the municipalities through the provision of books, materials and videos on good practice.

### *Networks*

Nevertheless, the AFLA recognises the importance of establishing more strategic networks to address a range of issues affecting young people. This, in its view, is as much a 'bottom up' initiative from the municipalities as a 'top down' initiative from government. It is the municipalities which have recognised the need for greater integration of municipal services, stronger links between the home and the school (and between social and educational services), and firmer connections between sports and youth clubs and the wider environments of those who participate in them. This is highly compatible with the government's assertion of the importance of networks in the context of training and the labour market.

Research undertaken by the AFLA in conjunction with Allianssi on questions of networking and co-operation suggests that, although there may still be relatively little co-operation at a political level (between, for example, social services and health boards; education boards; and cultural, sport and youth work boards), there is an increasing volume of networking and co-operation at an operational level - both within municipalities and, more and more, across a number of municipalities.

\* The international review group struggled with the interchangeable terminology which was often used; we have taken *youth boards* to mean sub-committees of the municipal council, controlled by politicians, although not precluding the participation of non-politicians. Youth councils or youth committees are used in this report to describe bodies composed of young people and/or professionals working with young people, working in an advisory or representative capacity, but ultimately subject to higher political decision-making and direction.

Traditional youth work, the AFLA is willing to concede, was 'very narrow'. The economic recession of the early 1990s forced a wider perspective on what were relevant aspects of youth policy - from the provision of leisure-time activities, which had historically characterised youth work and had been the central element of 'youth policy', to a much broader consideration of 'living conditions' - and this has impelled networking and co-operation. And while there are concerns around questions of youth participation arising from the rapid disappearance of youth boards, there is now increasing acknowledgement that the youth boards adopted too narrow a focus on what counted as youth work but had too limited resources to do anything else. The Youth Work Act 1995 has set in motion a much more broad-based discussion of youth policy and cemented a recognition of the issues around the *living conditions* of young people. In short, the youth work system is reacting to the range of problems young people have faced in recent years. Networks are being formed, for example between social and health services, education, and youth work, although many are not yet formalised and "much depends on the quality and commitment of the people involved, including the youth worker".

Indeed, there are no rules or legal basis for networks. They tend to exist *across* municipalities on the same theme, or *within* municipalities across themes. The AFLA felt that there was a sufficient basis for such development without legislative direction to this end from the centre; there was an inherent logic to the establishment of networks (sharing ideas, maximising resources and ensuring complementary provision) which provided enough guidance on this front.

#### ***Local administration - networks: a case study***

The Loimaa *district*, in the Province of Turku and Pori, is composed of 12 municipalities, with a total of 38,000 inhabitants. There have been joint administrative working arrangements since the early 1990s, because many of the participating municipalities are so small - some with no more than 1000-1500 inhabitants. The Loimaa *municipality* has 7,000 inhabitants; only two of the other municipalities in the district have more than 1,000 inhabitants. Four of the municipalities have youth workshops (the National Report talks of one youth workshop, with subsidiaries in other municipalities) - but all municipalities, through a quota system, can send young people to them.

Young people aged 15-24 represent about 12% of the overall population.

In the district, the distribution of employment spreads across the private sector, business, administration and construction but 30% of employment is in agriculture. There are attempts at regional level to attract and develop industry. However, in the City (municipality) of Loimaa itself, agriculture is only 3% of employment, while services are 65% and industry is 29%.

The City of Loimaa is the commercial and administrative centre of the district. Through administrative structures, there are efforts to promote partnership and co-operation between the municipalities in the district, including in the health and social sector. There are, for example, five municipalities working together on issues concerning the elderly. In education, the most co-operation is in the vocational sector, and there is specific concentration on special needs and the most disadvantaged. There is also co-operation in the provision of services such as water supply and waste disposal.

The international review team had the opportunity to meet with a number of political and professional representatives from the Loimaa district and to discuss further the celebration of the Loimaa networking 'experiment' as outlined in the National Report:

"The idea underlying this network is that working together, small municipalities can provide better education, training and employment services for young people. In order to work well, such a network must include a secondary and upper secondary school, a vocational institution, employment services, a public health district, a police district and so on. A small municipality cannot offer all this" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.59)

Loimaa Professional Institute (a vocational institution) is responsible for all vocational training in the district. It offers training towards a range of vocational and professional qualifications (such as vehicle mechanics, catering, closecare nursing, or clothing and soft furnishing). It also provides a business incubator (a supportive environment for new enterprise) and is responsible for the youth workshops. It works closely with the labour authorities to find employment for young people. The Institute has 'productive co-operation' with the workshops, which was described in a rather mercenary way as 'trading in students'. What this means is that the youth workshops have not only become one possible destination for the institute's students, but that trainees from the workshops may also return to learning and the acquisition of formal qualifications at the institute.

A number of those making presentations to the international review group repeated the fact that, in the Loimaa district, there had been a long tradition of co-operation between municipalities (since 1972) because of the small size of many municipalities and because of the greater effectiveness of 'wider fields of operation'. However, such co-operation *in relation to young people* has become more important during the 1990s as a result of (a) the austerity measures taken at national level, (b) growing mobility of young people and out-migration, (c) youth unemployment and (d) increasing levels of social exclusion. The Youth Work Act 1995 and the need for a certain scale of operations to access EU Structural Funds has accelerated co-operation across the district.

Examples of such co-operation projects in the youth field were provided and included:

- \* International youth Camp (young people from seven municipalities and from Estonia, Norway and Sweden - young people were consulted on the structure and process of the camp)
- \* Youth for Europe programme: training sessions on how to apply for grants
- \* Networking project with Allianssi: youth workers and young people/youth information
- \* Employment and Training/Vocational Guidance
- \* Business Incubator (for those starting up new enterprises)
- \* Youth workshops
- \* Living Conditions project
- \* international youth work seminar (involving Estonia, Sweden, Norway and Scotland, to discuss the drug prevention project, as well as Estonian research on aggression in young people)
- \* Drug and Alcohol Abuse project
- \* new project 'Gate to the Future' with the Mannerheim Foundation and the Finnish Mental Health Society (also around peer education and including a visit to Northern Ireland)

The involvement of municipal officials in such projects and working groups appeared to depend upon their particular interests and the relevance of issues and initiatives to their areas of responsibility. Furthermore, the decision as to who took a *lead* responsibility for these projects was mainly the outcome of who expressed most interest, once the dominant responsibilities are defined (for example, schools and education, or international subsidies).

However, on further dissection of the nature of the 'networks' which had developed these initiatives, it transpired that, with the exception of the Living Conditions project, *only youth secretaries and youth workers from different municipalities were involved*, raising questions for the international review team as to the extent to which *cross-departmental* as well as cross-municipality collaboration was being cultivated, even in a 'model' networking approach such as that proclaimed for Loimaa.

The 'Living Conditions of Youth' Project clearly does engage a range of agencies and convey a strong sense of networking and partnership. It is financed jointly by the provincial regional youth board and the

municipalities. It involves two 'teams', one consisting of youth and leisure workers from all twelve municipalities, the other consisting of representatives of different agencies and structures: the regional youth board and the municipalities, employment authorities, schools, the church, the police and youth organisations. The project has conducted extensive research into the status and living conditions of young people under the age of 25, in order to "give an overall view of young people and their lives in this area". It has trawled previous statistical data, gathered new statistical material and conducted extensive interviews both with those who work with young people and with young people themselves. It has looked in particular at whether or not 14-year olds are having difficulties progressing through their schooling, young people's view about participation in and influence on social issues which affected them, and an in-depth inquiry into the living conditions of 15-24 year olds. The latter concluded that,

"the biggest problems.... seemed to be unemployment, the lack of educational possibilities and poor public transport. Some more specific problems seemed to be the fact that the young unemployed people weren't too keen to get more education (and try to help their own situation with that), the urge to leave the area and find work, education and place to live from somewhere else [*sic*] and the lack of co-operation between secondary and professional schools.

The good sides and strengths were housing, quality and quantity of sports grounds, nature, and the fact that this is a peaceful and safe place to live" (Project "The Living Conditions of The Youth" report)

The intention of this project is to publish and disseminate its findings, locally to the leisure activities boards of the municipalities in the Loimaa district, nationally and internationally through an international youth seminar. This is designed to raise the profile of youth issues and thereby to promote new initiatives compatible with the ideas underpinning the Youth Work Act 1995.

Despite the general commitment to partnerships and networking in Loimaa there was an implicit critique and thread of doubt about them. Certainly, there were many positives arising from collaboration: 'more resources, more staff, more projects, more participation, more contacts and better mental health', as one person put it, though it was not clear how even this commendation delivered tangible *outcome* benefits to the living conditions of young people.

On a more negative front (despite the benefits accruing from a less formal process of developing partnerships), there were concerns about no-one (politically or administratively) taking overall responsibility, the limited representation of young people, and a differential allocation of resources and attitudes towards the importance of this work between municipalities. The consequence of the different importance attached by municipalities to collaboration in the youth field is that some of the projects outlined above involve all twelve municipalities within the Loimaa district, and others have engaged the interest and commitment of just a few. However, for good and for bad, basic (traditional) youth work in the municipalities and the activities of youth organisations continue, irrespective of co-operation. This was, paradoxically, viewed as important, particular when co-operation is viewed in some quarters simply as valuable for itself rather than as a tool for the achievement of particular objectives.

It was of some concern to the international review group that networking initiatives appeared to be essentially the result of *professional* determination, with little or limited representation of young people ('although we can always hear their wishes and desires') and little strategic direction at a political level. Decisions about appropriate projects, their goals and the resources required for achieving these ends demand more than professional judgement, however important the latter may be. They should not, in our view, be left to professional decisions, which may be balanced but which may, equally, be ad hoc and opportunistic. While we were impressed by some levels of professional co-operation, we were not aware of any equivalent *political* co-operation at municipal or sub-regional level. Clearly, some such co-operation does exist and we acknowledge that, since municipal boards (responsible for youth issues) are differently formed, it may at times be hard to establish a common agenda. Yet there remains the concern that the links between political commitment and professional activity remain tenuous. Certainly the information from the Living Conditions project is available to the provincial youth board and the participating municipalities - but it is not clear how they propose to act upon it.

Notwithstanding such concerns, it is not contested that following the Youth Work Act 1995, networking has come to be seen as essential for the delivery of services to young people. Information services are deemed to be especially important and attention is becoming firmly focused on the potential of new technologies to achieve this end. (At the national level, Allianssi are - with *sponsorship* support from Veikkaus, which runs the national lottery - in the process of developing a youth information system for both national and international use.) In the Loimaa district, schools are already connected to the Internet and Loimaa Professional Institute is working towards establishing a youth information service on the Internet. This will include:

- \* a discussion arena for youth workers
- \* Home Pages
- \* youth organisations
- \* a register of teachers and instructors
- \* information about the youth workshops
- \* international issues
- \* alcohol and drugs
- \* calendar of events (discos, projects, etc.)
- \* a forum for young people to talk

As is the case everywhere, there is the problem of resources to set up this system, and to maintain it, and concerns about the technology going out of date. There are no information services for young people in Loimaa district at present. But our respondents in Loimaa district emphasised that they were constantly aiming for better co-ordination of services, the avoidance of duplication, and the improvement of provision for young people. This is, no doubt, the basis upon which the National Report concluded that,

"The Loimaa experiment is an example of a smoothly running partnership between municipalities which have found the right level and extent of co-operation"  
(Ministry of Education 1977, p.59)

#### ***Local administration - one municipality: a case study***

Vihti is a municipality lying to the north-west of Helsinki with a population of 23,000. Historically, it was a very affluent agricultural area which, following the peace settlement after the 1939-45 war which ceded some eastern lands to Russia, attracted significant in-migration from the east of Finland. 70% of these in-migrants came from Karelia.

The first Municipal Youth Board was established in 1946, with a focus on education and civilisation. The Office for Municipal Youth Work was established in 1949. For many years the municipality was dominated by the Centre Party and the Conservatives. Later the Social Democrats gained power, but now the right wing political parties are ascendant once again.

Vihti continues to have a distinct and separate Youth Board - only one of 11 municipalities in the whole of Finland to do so. Youth work, as we have noted already, is usually part of the responsibility of a wider Board, such as Youth, Sports and Culture, and perhaps also Adult Education. There are only 3,000/3,500 inhabitants in the *town* of Vihti. The area is fortunate to be strategically positioned on important trade and communication routes. A growth in population is anticipated, although currently there is still net out-migration because currently employment prospects are still uncertain for young people. Although the international review team remains unclear about official definitions of 'unemployment', it was told that unemployment in Vihti peaked in 1994 at around 18%. By 1996 it was down to 11%, excluding 'temporary' unemployment (14.1% amongst under 25s; 3.7% under 20s). Projections for unemployment suggest it will soon drop below 10%. 38.2% of working people travel to the Helsinki conurbation to work. The Vihti Community (including Nummala with some 12,000 people, and Otalampa) is able to provide employment for about two-thirds of its working people - hence the relatively low unemployment. Its main employment sectors, apart from (declining) agriculture, are the production of office furniture, electronics, cellular phones and construction materials.

Administratively, Vihti has four sections: administrative, social, cultural and educational, and technical. Within culture and education, it has Boards for schools, for sport and for youth. The administration employs 1,100 people (out of 23,000 total population). Elections are every four years: the elected councillors nominate the members of the Boards, in proportions reflecting the overall council. There are nine officials working in the youth section. There are 7,500 young people under 25. Around 4,000 are in education and training (and some of the older young people from Vihti may have moved away to study, and so would not be counted within these figures).

The Youth Board is chaired by a young politician, from the Swedish Party, aged 22. Young people have a voice on the Board, through open elections in schools (it is the only municipality in Finland to adopt this approach) and also through nominations by youth organisations. These 'youth representatives' are mainly concerned with youth work and the work of youth organisations, but the Youth Board is concerned with all aspects of young people's living conditions (for example, seven years ago, there was some housing research which highlighted the housing needs of young people; as a result the Youth House Foundation built a house in Numalla). Some meetings of the Youth Board are open to all.

Three places on the Municipal Youth Board are nominations from youth organisations, of which there are 25 in the municipality. There is also a relatively new Youth Council (or youth committee), made up of 25 elected young people (and 13 deputy members, who can attend in their place). Young people on the Youth Council have been encouraged to 'shadow' the elected politicians in the municipality in order to become more familiar with the workings of the administration.

The Vihti municipality not only has two 'standard' youth centres, but also supports a camp centre, two club premises for 7-14 year olds, a club room for youth organisations, a bandstand, and band and theatrehouse, and a youth workshop, as well as special initiatives. It also rents three 'social houses' for youth activities. Within the youth centre, there is a youth club on most evenings (and weekend provision every other week). The club premises offer kindergarten provision, afternoon clubs and a meeting place for youth organisations. Summer camps take place at the camp centre and there is also a summer employment scheme for young people subsidised by the municipality, through which young people can gain work experience with real employers. The youth workshop, providing training in construction and textiles, has places for 25 young people (50 each year). Special projects include the recently established 'Nightfoot' initiatives, using adult volunteers to do outreach and 'harm reduction' work on the weekends, a project against drugs and alcohol misuse, involving a number of agencies, and training in international affairs.

This is a flavour, then, of how the administration 'reaches the ground' at the local level. Vihti may or may not be a typical municipality. We suspect not, not simply because it is one of the few remaining municipalities with a discrete youth board, but also because it has a dynamic and energetic youth secretary who, through experience and commitment, no doubt has the confidence of the political administration and the self-confidence to have pioneered innovations in the structures of decision-making, not least the formation of a youth committee and the participation of those elected young people in the political dialogue within the Youth Board. Nevertheless, it represents a model both of separate and more integrated youth initiatives which one would hope could and would be emulated elsewhere.

### **Financial appropriations for youth work and youth policy**

The profits of the state-controlled Finnish National Lottery (VEIKKAUS) goes to the Ministry of Education to support arts, culture, sports and youth work. Some 100 million FIM from this source supports youth work (about 97% of its overall funding). VEIKKAUS also *sponsors* the Finnish youth agency Allianssi to develop its new youth information system on the InterNet.

The Ministry of Education allocates youth work resources to the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, to Allianssi and other national youth organisations, to the provincial (regional) youth boards, to youth research,

to training and other development projects, to the development of youth workshops and, through a funding formula of a unit cost per inhabitant (25 FIM for youth work in 1995 and 1996, compared to 50 FIM for sport and 23 FIM for culture), to the municipalities (for a detailed analysis of the Ministry of Education's youth work appropriations, see the National Report, pp 33-44). In total, the Ministry of Education allocated, in 1996, some 120 million FIM to youth work and youth activities. By 1996, however, its support for municipal youth work had dropped to 43.5 million FIM, from a peak of 76 million FIM in 1992, reflecting the difficulties being experienced by the national economy. Municipalities, nonetheless, spend some 600 million FIM annually on youth work.

Prior to the Youth Work Act 1995, the state grant to municipalities was earmarked for specific purposes and was based on the real costs incurred by municipalities for these purposes. Since 1995, the state grant - based on the new per capita formula - is no longer allocated for any specific purpose, although municipalities are responsible for youth work in accordance with the provisions of the Youth Work Act.

This new financial autonomy of the municipalities (see Renaud 1995, pp.113-115; and p.119) is a double-edged sword. As the European experts' report on Cultural Policy in Finland has argued,

"The new system is an attempt to break completely with the strong tradition of central government control in Finland and give the municipalities full financial independence...

The idea is obviously to ... reduce the responsibilities of the state while leaving more responsibility in the hands of the municipalities: the latter decide how much to spend on the services they provide, and if they agree to pay more than the average price for those services, they have to finance the extra cost themselves, the state subsidy remaining unchanged" (Renaud 1995 p.113 and p.114)

As the AFLA conveyed to the international review team, distributional questions are more important now. There is less space for small municipalities now and there is a greater need for maximising resources through establishing partnerships with other municipalities - if they are to deliver the level of provision to which they aspire within the resources at their disposal.

There are conflicting issues here. The poorest municipalities are in the east and the north of Finland. Young people from these areas tend to move towards the 'big' cities (and thus 'investment' in their futures does not pay off for the municipalities concerned). In contrast, old people may go back to their roots or retire there. This has significant implications for tax income, which is necessary to bolster the diminishing income from the centre for youth policy. Such issues are thrown into sharp relief should such municipalities wish to commit significant resources to developing local opportunities for its young people in an effort to keep them there or attract them back. Moreover, in terms of much broader conceptions of youth policy, there are issues to do with the coherence of family life and the separations of the generations. The essential point is that municipalities requiring the most imaginative and most broad-based youth policy are unlikely to command the local resource base to implement it and yet state allocations, based as they are on a uniform per capita formula, are not likely to make a sufficient contribution.

Municipal tax rates range, at the discretion of the municipality, between 15% and 21%. Individual per capita state support **plus** local tax revenues generate between 15,000 FIM and 30,000 FIM per inhabitant for municipal expenditure. Municipalities spend some 0.5% of their budgets on youth work and 2% on sport. This is fairly standard and there are no great variations from this norm.

According to the AFLA, state aid for youth work represents 37% of 69 FIM per person under the age of 29, which provides for about 5% of municipal expenditure (given that the AFLA asserts that municipalities' operating costs for youth work will exceed 800 million FIM in 1997). The state also (in 1992) paid the salaries of 528 youth work staff out of a total of 3,385 (*all* staff, including managers and clerical, involved in the delivery of youth work). (It is not clear whether the state continues to bear these costs.)

Of about 1,500 youth centres, 750 are owned by the 460 municipalities and 750 are rented.

The AFLA suggested that, despite national economic problems and reductions in central state allocations to municipalities, there had been *increasing* resources for youth work in recent years, according to its analysis of youth work operating costs. It argued that 'old history and new structures' have created relative equality between municipalities in provision and the allocation of resources for youth work.

Municipalities are now, under the Youth Work Act 1995, expected to address questions concerning the living conditions of young people, which have been defined by the municipalities as incorporating leisure activities, internationalism, health, income, education, housing and employment. The key issue, however, is **work**; this is the reason for the establishment and expansion of youth workshops, in which the municipalities are central partners, alongside employment services and the Ministry of Education. The network of youth workshops are funded 50% by the municipalities, 40% through employment services (largely with grants from European Structural Funds), and 10% from the Ministry of Education.

As the state has delegated responsibility to the municipalities, it has simultaneously cut their funding by millions of marks, making things very difficult. This point was crystallised for the international review team in its visit to Vihti where municipal finances were described as being 'in dire straits'. Although tax revenues are increasing (which is not the case for many municipalities), state subsidies are decreasing. In 1993, Vihti received 160 million FIM from the state; in 1996, this had reduced to 66 million FIM in state subsidies. The municipality has increased local tax rates from 17% (1996) to 18% (1997) in order to generate an additional 15 million FIM, but it has still had to make cuts and reduce municipal staff by 25. These redundancies came mainly from the technical section. There was, however, never any consideration of cutting youth work staff: young people are viewed, politically, as very important for local development. While it is common for young people to move away to study, many of them return to the area in their mid 20s.

The total municipal budget for Vihti is 500 million FIM. The total allocation for education and culture is 110 million FIM. Youth work receives 2,750,000 FIM (it used to be 3.3 million FIM; the current amount represents 0.55% of overall budget, a tenth more than the average youth work allocation within municipalities). There has, therefore, been a decrease in resources due to declining state allocations, not because of municipal cuts. Moreover, there is more concentration on the youth workshops, but the municipality has nevertheless tried to maintain the base of traditional open youth work (through finding some of the money for workshops from elsewhere, in budgets beyond youth work).

Although, within Finland, there may be concerns about the shifting resource base for youth work, the international review team could not be anything other than impressed at the extent of financial allocations to youth work. Despite the recent austerity measures at national level and the pressures on the budgets of municipalities, a strong financial commitment to youth work - albeit on the now broader platform of the living conditions of young people - has been sustained. It is within this resource base that the various dimensions of a broader youth policy, following the Youth Work Act 1995, has been constructed.

### **Challenges for the future**

The international review team recognises the rationale under which the strategic framework for youth policy has moved away from youth work to a broader conceptualisation of youth affairs, as promulgated under the umbrella of the 'living conditions' of young people. Central to this new strategy has been the emphasis on forming networks and partnerships to make most effective use of more limited resources and to develop cross-sectoral initiatives targeted at the achievement of specific aims. A different research and information base is necessary to inform the broader 'living conditions' agenda and it is clear that many initiatives being developed to respond to the expectations of the Youth Work Act 1995 are still at the stage of formulation. Nor has there yet been the temptation to abandon old practices before new ones have been put in place.

There are, however, a number of questions raised by the international review team which represent challenges for the future.

1. There is a risk that 'networks' and 'partnerships' become little more than rhetorical devices, and attention still needs to be paid to the most effective way of turning rhetoric into reality. Despite the encouragement to forge cross-sectoral partnerships and networks, we encountered limited evidence of this happening in practice. There is an important distinction to be made between formal and informal networks. Certainly, we found evidence of the latter, but there was little indication of more formal partnerships being forged at political or institutional levels. For example, we received no information on the formation of municipal 'sub-Boards', drawing representatives from different municipal Boards to consider specific questions affecting the lives of young people, to which a number of departments might make a contribution. The question arises whether there might need to be more directive legislation, or funding contingent upon evidence of the establishment of such partnerships, in order to 'encourage' them. The AFLA was clearly opposed to any further legislation from the centre, arguing that the base and infrastructure for municipal youth work was now sufficiently established to 'permit a loosening up of legislation'. It conceded that there was a risk that some municipalities might do nothing, at least not engage in partnerships, but it was confident that it was clearly in the interests of the vast majority of municipalities to become involved in more cross-sectoral strategic planning around the issues affecting the living conditions of young people. Yet even in Loimaa, the indication was that the 'grid' of partnerships is restricted either to collaboration within one sector across a number of municipalities or to collaboration across sectors within only one municipality. There was only one exception to this pattern, yet effective partnerships demand collaboration both between sectors and departments *and* across municipalities. That is the challenge for the future.

2. A related point is that current partnerships appear to be largely the product of *professional* judgement and determination. They are not an outcome of reflective political thinking nor of any contribution by young people. If civic participation is one of the central goals of the Youth Work Act 1995, to promote young people's personal growth and citizenship skills, then clearer processes for engaging with young people in order to determine local priorities for action on youth issues would seem to be important. Furthermore, to leave the development of networks and partnerships to a professional constituency is not only a risk strategy but is also an abdication of political responsibility. If new initiatives in the youth field are sufficiently important, they need to be properly resourced in a formal way which demands political approval. An ideal model might be a youth affairs panel - involving a majority of municipal politicians, but also including relevant professionals and elected or nominated youth representatives - which might evaluate ideas concerning youth initiatives and present them, with detailed recommendations, to the most suitable municipal Board.

3. Prior to the Youth Work Act 1995, there was a clear conception of the composition of 'youth work' and clear requirements upon municipalities as to their responsibilities for 'youth work'. Since the Youth Work Act 1995, ideas underpinning what exactly 'youth work' is are open to more flexible interpretation. Flexible interpretation, in turn, allows for high levels of discretion about provision and implementation of new measures. It also allows for highly variable resource allocation. Greater flexibility does, of course, also carry greater opportunity, particularly for more creative and imaginative intervention at the local level. And we would want to stress that there is no evidence yet in Finland of youth work providers using the 'liberation' of the Youth Work Act 1995 to diminish resources or to curtail existing provision. Nevertheless, without a clear statutory specification of the parameters and priorities for youth work, and a resource base sufficient to make that provision, there is this risk. Finland is fortunate to have secured a strong consensus across agencies responsible for youth work and between national and local administrations about contemporary priorities for youth work (notably, training, and perhaps alcohol and drugs issues), but this must not be left to chance. The challenge for the future is to offer strong guidance on the definition of, and priorities for, effective youth work, while permitting scope for youth work at the local level which is responsive to specific local needs and the needs of specific groups of young people.

4. This raises a further challenge, which also relates back to the connections between politics and practice. There appears to be a great deal of work going on *exploring* the living conditions of young people in Finland. What then? The international review team raised numerous questions about how the findings of such investigations would be followed up and connected to the development of routine and sustained policy and practice. We are aware that the research activity in Loimaa has already yielded practical dividends, in the

shape of, for example, a working group, including parents, to consider the 'troubles' experienced by some young people in their schooling, and in the shape of closer co-operation between vocational courses and the workshops as a result of the information gathered about the relationship between unemployment and motivation to study. Yet, in other respects, we remain concerned that the Youth Work Act 1995 implicitly provides a recipe for the recurrent exploration of young people's living conditions, without subsequent action. Establishing clear links between local investigation, strategic frameworks for action, and provision and practice is a further challenge for the future.

5. There is clearly a desire within the national administration (if not so much within the local administration) to develop youth work practices based upon planned interventions with particular target groups on specific issues, in order to produce measurable outcomes. This is a model of youth work which is finding favour elsewhere in Europe, notably in the United Kingdom. However, while there has been some demonstrable success with targeted youth work, it is less well known that such success is most likely to be achieved where there is a foundation of more traditional 'open' youth work (see France and Wiles 1996).

6. It is, indeed, the maintenance of generously resourced 'open' youth work provision which has secured and sustained the social integration of young people in Finland, despite the enormous transition problems they have faced in recent years. Finnish youth policy, despite the adjustments made under the Youth Work Act 1995, remains centrally concerned with promoting social integration and combating social exclusion. The temptation for all governments faced with severe resource constraint is to develop 'negative' coercive strategies (which are, at least initially, cheaper) rather than sustain constructive consensual strategies. Finland has hardly succumbed to that temptation, with the exception of the passing of the amendment to the Labour Market Support Act 1996, which cut back entitlement to unemployment benefits for untrained young people and instead required them to participate in training programmes in return for income. A similar strategy was attempted in the United Kingdom in 1988. The consequence, which it has taken the British government almost a decade to acknowledge, was a steadily increasing population of young people who were still not participating in training, and whose 'underground' activities (to live and to survive financially) were imposing enormous public costs elsewhere in public policy (notably criminal justice and health). Although it remained implicit, it was this that the national auditors' report on social exclusion sought to avoid. It is therefore surprising that the Ministry of Education elected to ignore the comprehensive and measured criticism levelled at this legislative amendment by the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs. As we have noted earlier, effective youth policy is constructed upon the winning of young people's consent, not the coercing of their compliance (see also Davies 1986). This was essentially the core message of the critique presented by the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs. The challenge for the future is to ensure that further youth policy measures in Finland are based upon the winning of consent amongst young people (which has been the broad thread of traditional Finnish youth policy) rather than endeavouring to coerce their compliance - which experience in other youth policy contexts has been shown to foment further resistance and compound the marginalisation of those at whom such measures are primarily directed.

7. 'Social exclusion' has become something of a buzz-word in national and international circles. It was a term used frequently in meetings with the international review team, yet at no time was it clearly defined. We are still unclear as to what exactly it means *in Finland*. Yet some more clear conceptualisation is essential if appropriate strategic responses are to be developed within the orbit of youth policy. In Loimaa, 'social exclusion' was tentatively outlined as those outside school, dropouts, young people who don't want to continue their studies, who have no job, and those with other problems. Yet this broad classification could be dissected and any dissection would point to a variety of policy imperatives. In Loimaa, it was indicated that there is cross-sectoral co-operation on social, educational and vocational matters concerning social exclusion but there are *no particular programmes*. There are clearly different levels and forms of social exclusion, and exclusion from society is relational rather than distributional: exclusion may be *experienced* differently in an integrated society such as Finland compared with more fragmented and differentiated societies. The challenge for the future is to establish a more precise understanding and meaning of 'social exclusion' and to develop strategic and practical measures to address it.

8. Finally, the international review team raised issues about the 'typicality' of the municipal youth work it encountered. Following our first visit to Finland, we had asked the Finnish authorities to arrange visits to more rural areas beyond the Helsinki hinterland. We appreciate the efforts made on our behalf to respond to this request but we feel that neither Loimaa nor Vihti are necessarily representative of the delivery of youth policy away from the 'modern' and 'European' southern coastal area. Certainly both Loimaa and Vihti had characteristics which we recognise as approximate indicators of 'another' Finland but we are also aware that Loimaa is selected in the National Report as an experimental setting for the new youth policy and that, as its mayor told us, Vihti is fortunate to be strategically positioned on important trade and communication routes. This begs questions about the development and implementation of youth policy in less affluent, more remote and less 'experimental' areas - matters about which we still know very little. The challenge for the future is to ensure that 'new' youth policy in Finland extends to areas which cannot anticipate an economic upturn, which suffer from the out-migration of young people, and which face budgetary constraint far more draconian than that which has had to be applied in Vihti.

## **Section Two: Policy arenas**

### **Introduction**

Throughout the two visits to Finland by the international review team, and as a result of its reflection and deliberations, there was an evolving distillation of six core *themes* (or issues) which 'frame' the youth policy debate in Finland. These represented, in part, the particular interests of different members of the international review team but they nonetheless encapsulate a useful framework for the consideration of youth policy. Within the key youth policy arenas (education, training and the labour market; health and social welfare; and youth work), therefore, the international review team gave special attention to the following themes: finance and resources; mobility and migration (and 'difference' and immigration); transitions (families and housing); transitions (education, training and employment); youth work and participation; networks and the integration of youth policy. While these *themes* are not accorded separate consideration, it is important, indeed essential, to bear them closely in mind during the following discussion of the key *arenas* of youth policy.

We would also want to reiterate that the *balance* of discussion of youth policy contained in this section of the report does not necessarily reflect the balance of youth policy in Finland, in terms of factors such as resource allocation, political concern or professional activity. What the balance of discussion does reflect is the weight given to different youth policy arenas both in presentations to the international review team and in subsequent discussion and questions posed by the international review team. We recognise that this may have created some 'distortions' in our depictions, analysis and commentary of youth policy in Finland (the youth workshops are undoubtedly given disproportionate attention). However, although these distortions may not do full justice to the 'objective' framework of youth policy in Finland, we are confident that they do symbolise the more subjective preoccupations with particular elements of contemporary Finnish youth policy, which merit priority attention and reflection.

## **EDUCATION, TRAINING AND THE LABOUR MARKET**

### **Education**

The National Report made some interesting and challenging observations about education, training and employment and the relationship between them:

"Education, self-enhancement, always pays" (p.71)

"..young people should not be tempted to enter the labour market prematurely"  
(p.96)

"There is no demand for untrained young people on the labour market; therefore they are not on an equal footing with others and are in danger of being marginalised" (p.95)

There is a strong policy commitment to a public education system in Finland, which was forcefully commended in a recent OECD report, which noted that Finland is among the top industrial countries with regard to equal opportunity in education (OECD 1995). Education is accessible and available; most young people are highly motivated to pursuing their education beyond the minimum school leaving age. Indeed, some 90% of school leavers continue in upper secondary schools, vocational training or higher education. However, university places are highly competitive, with only between one in four and one in three young people seeking a place succeeding in gaining one (see NYRIS4 1994; and International Handbook of

Adolescence 1994, p.133). This has led to the expansion of other forms of higher education, notably the more practically oriented polytechnics.

The overall level of education has risen rapidly in Finland and over half of the population over the age of 15 now have post-compulsory diplomas. Youth policy is strongly focused on encouraging young people to remain in education or training.

Yet the international review team was concerned about the lack of critical debate about three issues: the incessant drive towards higher and higher qualifications (despite the increasing pressure on labour market openings commensurate with those qualifications); the relationship between academic education and vocational training and who should be served by such different provision; and the nature of connections between education, training and employment. On the last point, it is acknowledged that there is still the belief in Finland that education should remain (at least partly) *independent* of the labour market: that higher levels of education are necessary in complex societies to achieve a 'citizen level' which permits individuals to play a full part in their societies. [This is consistent with the EC white paper on promoting a 'learning society' -see European Commission 1995.] The aim in Finland is to have some 50-60% of young people qualified at higher education levels - and this *may* be too much.

However, the National Report does not grapple with the possibility that current education policy may be contributing to *overeducation* and overqualification or that education and training policy is more of a holding or 'warehousing' device to forestall unemployment rather than a mechanism for improving chances of employment. These are, of course, the more sceptical end of interpretations of education and training policy. Yet, as the international review team argued, there *are* important questions to be asked and answered if highly (academically) qualified young people find themselves having to take lower level employment, for which a vocational course would have been sufficient, yet a vocational option was not taken up because of its low esteem. Contrasts were drawn with the French system, in which all those eligible for higher education (through the acquisition of the baccalaureat) may access it, but the majority fail to progress beyond the first year, due to the application of rigorous standards at that stage - standards which, in effect, filter access to the higher echelons of society and more prestigious employment. Many young people have had a chance, and lost just one year before settling for more modest horizons; and they are perhaps considerably wiser for the experience. We are certainly not advocating for the French model as an ideal, simply as an alternative way of thinking about the role and structure of educational policy; we do not think it is helpful to adopt an unequivocal approach to the pursuit of higher and higher qualification, since educational policy needs to be contextualised within wider social and economic realities.

Nonetheless, the *prima facie* structure of education and training provision for young people in Finland suggests a comprehensive framework of opportunity for young people to secure a position in the labour market, despite recent economic recession and austerity measures. The government has increased and will increase openings in education and training by 10,000-20,000 annually and levels of unemployment amongst young people under 25 have fallen to around 65,000 (in 1996) from a peak of over 97,000 in 1993. However, despite the powerful evidence of young people's motivation to education and training, this has not precluded the passing of the Labour Market Support Act 1996 and its subsequent amendment, whereby young people under the age of 20 (now 25) are ineligible for unemployment benefit unless they opt to participate in training programmes. This has proved contentious, eliciting criticism by the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs that policy should be constructed on motivation, not coercion (see Ministry of Education 1997, p.74). The amendment proposals to expand this provision to include all young people under 25 was attacked by the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs as undermining "no more or less than citizens' fundamental rights and equality" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.77).

Despite this alleged threat to equal opportunities arising from this and other recent measures, Finland continues to provide free education and extensive educational opportunities to its young people, supplemented by youth workshops and other measures in the field of vocational training for those who do not pursue educational routes. All universities are financed through the national budget. The regional distribution of secondary and vocational schools and institutes of higher education, which was one of the priorities of the educational policies in 1960s, seems now fairly well balanced: a system was also created for monitoring the regional distribution of university openings (see Lahteenmaa and Siurala 1992a, p.14). The majority of schools have welfare offices and psychologists. In short, education and training provision contribute

significantly to the 'social net' which has alleviated the worst potential excesses of unemployment which have been a strong prospect for young people ever since the economic recession of the early 1990s.

Although Finland prides itself and indeed has a reputation for the equality of opportunity which underpins its education system, there is still differentiation, arising from implicit discrimination, in the experiences of young people according to their gender, social class background and geographical origins (and, presumably, by ethnic origin, though we have no information on this).

In terms of gender differences, rising educational attainment levels of women in Finland has positive effects on gender equality, though it does not seem to be the result of specific policy, as much as of general cultural change. In senior secondary schools women have formed the majority for several decades, in the universities since the mid-1970s, and in the vocational schools since the early 1980s. But the pressure of traditional sex/gender roles still creates a tendency for young men and young women to choose careers traditional to their gender, and the courses traditionally chosen by young men guarantee easier access into the better job markets. The labour market seems to be highly resistant to the endeavours of increasingly qualified women to achieve full equality there, and vocations remain rather segregated by gender (Lahteenmaa and Siurala 1992a, pp.15-17). The invisible 'glass ceiling' still prevents them from achieving certain positions in the labour market, especially in the private sector. Furthermore, there are still income differentials between men and women although these no doubt are in part due to the different sector in which men and women predominate. Even in the age group 15-18 years, boys already earn more than girls, although *part-time* employment is more readily available for girls in the Helsinki area (Siurala 1992a, p.38) and the pay gap between males and females grows throughout their working careers (Lahteenmaa and Siurala 1992b, p.34).

Labour market outcomes in relation to educational attainment are never precisely linked. However, the partially *inverted* links, according to gender, have caused some reflection on educational policy and ensuring that young women with high educational aptitude can realise their potential in the labour market. OECD reports have commended Finland for equality between the sexes in both employment and education. Certainly, in relation to other industrialised nations, this is undoubtedly true, but it should not conceal the fact that while girls in Finland perform better in education than boys, they do worse in the labour market. More boys leave education with minimal qualifications and a greater proportion of girls participate in higher levels of higher education, until doctoral research levels, when young men 'take over' (because they are less likely to have taken on family commitments and responsibilities). The key issue, however, is that although Finland, like the other Nordic countries, looks to have established an open and equitable system of education, traditional sectoral divisions, resulting from young people's own choices which themselves are influenced by cultural traditions, have persisted. Boys pursue more technical study; girls are more likely to elect to follow studies in social and health care. This accounts to a large extent for labour market and income differentiation.

The current debate on this front is concerned with the relative attraction of new technologies as a study option for young men and young women; the view is that boys are more engaged and committed in this direction. The latest specific state initiative to address these persisting 'inequalities' has therefore been concentrated on young women who are rather quaintly referred to as 'technological flower children' - those who are bright students but not especially proficient in numeracy. Attention to the improvement of their numeracy skills has proved successful in encouraging a greater proportion of such young women to enter technological education and training.

It is this kind of 'fine tuning' of educational policy which impressed the international review team. One further example - which has not yet been addressed through practical policy - relates to the very small numbers of men who are teachers in primary education. Given the increasing number of single mothers in Finland, there is an interest in whether male primary school teachers may represent important male role models for children, when it is absent in the home. Clearly, such an issue reflects the interlinking in youth policy between educational initiatives and family policy concerns - a point which demonstrates the need for a debate across (different) departments on (different) specific questions of youth policy.

The relatively 'flat' class structure of Finnish society does not mean that any differentiation in social strata and status is meaningless in terms of influencing educational participation and subsequent social and

occupational mobility. Although the social status of parents is gradually becoming a less relevant factor with regard to the nature of educational careers and eventual position in the social structure, the level of education and the socio-economic status of parents still generally correlate closely with the educational careers of children. In the case of children from unskilled backgrounds, the probability of their 'opting' for vocational education is almost 100%, whereas the probability of a young person from a professional background going on to university education is around 65% (Lahtenmaa and Siurala 1992a, p.16).

In Helsinki the socio-economic status of a district influences levels of participation in the upper secondary school education almost as strongly as the education and status of parents (Helsinki Quarterly 1997, p. 32).

This suggests that 'special measures' in education policy to assist young people from less advantaged backgrounds in continuing their studies, particularly when the financing of studies is becoming increasingly hard (because of the lack of temporary jobs and the declining value of the student grant) even though all education in Finland is in principle free, may need to be given more focused consideration. The *Helsinki Quarterly* (1997, p.34) has, indeed, called for more "positive discrimination in educational planning" through paying greater attention, in the form of educational guidance, to young people in low status areas, arguing that by doing so it may be possible to improve their motivation towards achieving higher levels of education.

In Finland, as elsewhere, there are also regional (geographical) variations in access to, take-up of, and attainment in education. This comes as no surprise. In eastern and northern Finland, for example, young people tend to have lower education levels than young people in southern and western regions. There is likely to be a multitude of historical, economic, cultural and social reasons for such differences. But perhaps the most crucial issue, in view of the demographic and economic profile of Finland, is the fact that the vast majority of young people with good educational credentials tend to remain in southern Finland, since there are more opportunities of all kinds in comparison with their home regions. This not only creates pressure on the labour market in the south but has potentially dire implications for the smaller communities in the north and east which, as a result of out-migration by young people, are facing demographic imbalance and a possible threat to their sustainability. A different form of positive discrimination in youth and employment policy might need to be considered here: perhaps a 'growth centre' economic strategy to re-establish the relative attractiveness to young people of returning to their home communities. There is little point in assisting regionally disadvantaged young people to acquire higher levels of educational qualification if all this does is to compound the population decline of their areas; any such educational policy would need to be secured in harness with a wider social and economic strategy to ensure that there was a possibility for improved skills to be applied to local and regional economic regeneration and social revitalisation.

### **Training - and the youth workshops**

Unemployment amongst young people under 25 in Finland reached a peak of almost 100,000 in 1993. Since then, it has fallen by around 10,000 a year, although as the National Report concedes, the figures on unemployment rates "do not reveal to what extent the change is due to growing training provision and to what extent to growing demand" (Ministry of Education, p.94). More detailed analysis by the Ministry of Labour would suggest that the fall in youth unemployment rates is largely a product of increased training provision. Before considering in more depth aspects of youth training policy, the international review team would wish to note certain paradoxes and contradictions which are inherent in the presentation by the National Report. For example, it is observed that youth unemployment in the early 1990s rose "*more steeply* among trained than untrained young people" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.93; emphasis added). Yet soon afterwards, the National Report argues that there is little demand for untrained young people, those who have no vocational or professional skills. This may be so, but if trained young people are equally, if not more at risk of unemployment, then what is the rationale behind increasing the training of those who are unqualified? This has been the response to high levels of unemployment. Following the Parliamentary Labour Committee's recommendation in 1993 that the most urgent measure to respond to youth unemployment was to improve young people's living conditions, a taskforce of the permanent secretaries of three ministries (Education, Labour, and Social Affairs and Health) was established to devise a programme for *promoting youth employment* (our emphasis). It concluded that there should be substantial increases in the provision of initial and continuing vocational *training*. This took the form primarily of apprenticeship training and youth workshop activities. While the taskforce view was that economic competitiveness through innovation and

technological development demands a high level of vocational training (which is absolutely correct) and government

resources were allocated to training development on this basis, additional resources from European Structural Funds were premised upon the promotion of young people's integration into the labour market and the prevention of social exclusion - *a very different starting point for training interventions*. Either way, the aim, according to the National Report, is,

"to provide 2,100 six-month trainee places in youth workshops and 650 apprenticeships for initial training and 5,200 for further vocational training between 1995 and 1999" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.96)

There are now around 400 (though the National Report says 300) youth workshops in Finland, providing some 3,500 places (7,000 workshop place opportunities per annum) and purportedly offering vocational education and skills training relevant to young people's labour market futures. From the opening of the first workshop, questions were asked about measuring 'output'. There is now a summary report on the workshops available, which suggests that some 25% of young people get jobs, a modest but not untypical percentage success rate for similar programmes of training elsewhere. Other trainees go on to further vocational training and, according to the National Report, "even establish enterprises of their own" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.96). [We consider the issue of youth enterprise as part of youth policy later in this section.] These concrete labour market oriented outcomes of youth workshop training were, however, often described at meetings with the international review team as "not the main point". It was argued that the youth workshops are important politically in that they provide a mechanism for securing *something* for young people and the resources to do *something*. The youth workshops experience, which is available for six months to job-seekers who have been unemployed for more than six months, enables many more young people to 'know where they are going' through increased confidence and orientation. Indeed, it is instructive to note the comments in the National Report that,

"Experience shows that the youth workshops promote an active lifestyle. They could be called 'intensive-care units in careers counselling" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.96)

In other words, the youth workshops are often perceived as a tool for the personal development and vocational orientation of young people - a far cry from a skills development strategy to foment economic competitiveness, but no less important. But the two represent two very different ideologies of 'training', which are difficult to position on the same continuum, although it may be convenient to do so.

Even the Ministry of Labour adopted this strange conflation of argument. The opening point was that employers was trained recruits with skills. The Finnish economy is undergoing dynamic change, with employment growing in high technologies, forestry and metal engineering. Employers in these areas are encountering skill shortages and there is therefore a demand for skills, and so the state is expanding education and training in these sectors. The youth workshops are one element within this initiative. Participants in youth workshop provision are unemployed job seekers supported by the labour administration or by the municipalities. It is good training and a short term alternative to unemployment. What the workshops offer is not subject to any overall planning - it is the decision and responsibility of the municipalities. There are, as a result, workshops concerned with the media and the arts (what used to be considered to be 'hobbies') and we must also remember the *educational* aspect of workshops even if they do not deliver particularly relevant skills - they are about instilling working habits and they can be "the first step to more proper training for young people who don't fit in". Once again, this is a far cry from the *economic* analysis which has apparently propelled the establishment of the youth workshops.

The international review team had the benefit of seeing a number of youth workshops at first hand and of discussing their provision with those closely associated with their development and the allocation of trainees to them, and with some trainees themselves. This added an important human dimension to the evidence

about training and employment issues which had hitherto been gathered solely through reading and more formal meetings.

The Loimaa district has four youth workshops (though the National Report refers to one youth workshop plus subsidiaries, which probably accounts for its different assessment of total numbers).

The workshops in Loimaa provide training in metalwork, carpentry, textiles, and catering, agriculture and horticulture. The metalwork workshop, which also does some 'construction' work, was the first, established in 1993. At the time of the visit of the international review team, there were seven young people at the workshop (although it had places for ten), from four different municipalities. However, twelve municipalities work in co-operation in relation to overall youth workshop provision in Loimaa.

The workshop does 'all kinds of work': for both public and local business but mainly in response to private orders. Their prices are 'moderate and highly competitive', though this does raise questions about the quality of its products, 'unfair' competition which may undercut the local 'real' market, and the displacement of existing business. These questions were asked in Loimaa but remained unanswered, although at another meeting, the Ministry of Labour somewhat unpersuasively argued that the workshops were not a threat because the trainees were 'students', not workers. This may be more a convenient device to satisfy the strong trade unions, rather than an assertion based on fact. Nevertheless, there are other advantages to developing trainee places within publicly funded workshops. As the Ministry of Labour observed, workshop participants are very clearly *not* workers; there are very strict conditions attached to working contracts, agreed in tripartite agreements between government, employers and trade unions. Workshops represent, in some ways, a safety net for the young unemployed. Employers can always choose who they take (and reject) - it is easier to get a place at a workshop. The criteria for selection and the role expected of trainees can be very different.

Young people at the workshop work 85% of adult hours. There is 'plenty of work'. In response to a question about wages or training allowances, we were surprised to discover that young people may receive one of *two* rates. If they are paid by the municipalities they receive the minimum wage of 5,000 FIM a month; if they are paid from the Labour administration, they get 2,500 FIM a month, which is the social security rate and is the 'work practice money' allocated to training placements anywhere in the labour market.

Young people learn a range of skills at the workshops (although it was conceded that vocational schools have better equipment, often borrowed from local employers). They make different types of product (such as grills and shelving, beds, metal coat hooks and rugs). After six months at a workshop, young people usually move on to a study place or a job (or job placement). Rarely do they go into self-employment, although Loimaa has formed (or is thinking of forming) a co-operative to assist business start-up, and there is already a business incubator at the local professional and vocational institute, which offers support to enterprises during the early days of their formation and development.

Young people choose to attend particular workshops, subject to the broad eligibility conditions - that they have been unemployed for six months and are under 25. Three young men at the metalwork workshop were aged 22, 25 and 25. For one, it was not his first choice; he would have preferred something more directly in the construction sector. For the others, this was what they wanted, at least *in the context of the fact that "there's not a lot of work about"*. They had no idea what they would be doing afterwards ("I wish I knew"). They said the manager was doing his best for them (in terms of support and forging networks which might assist them getting work), "but there is little work here", so they anticipated being unemployed again.

The manager of the metal workshop said half of the current trainees lived independently and one co-habited with his girlfriend. He said the workshop does try to deal with the most excluded and some of the trainees certainly had 'problem' backgrounds. The manager commented that he experienced "big changes" in young people's confidence and inter-personal skills during their time at the workshop. He adopted a 'holistic' approach with them, giving personal support and social experience as well as showing them technical skills: "to make an effective contribution to their lives, they have to be given a rounded experience". He displayed a strong commitment to his work, which was fortunate since he is the only adult working at the workshop, so it is *all* his responsibility. It was not a requirement of the job to know anything about youth work *per se* but at Loimaa Institute there are (optional) special studies in youth work for workshop instructors. The workshop manager also informed us that when young people sign up for a workshop, they must also agree to some

theoretical study at a vocational institute. The most popular choice amongst his lads is computers, and they are connected to the Internet at the workshop.

The manager was asked what *he* would do if he had the workshops budget... that was a 'tough one', he said. He didn't think just one approach was sufficient. Young people had many different needs and interests. He has seen good results from the workshops - but really only at an individual level. Money is always a problem and equipment is not always up to date. He does some evening activities with 'his lads', such as fixing up their motorbikes. [We might wish to note that the most significant resource at this particular workshop appeared to be the manager himself.]

For comparison and contrast, the international review team also visited the catering and horticulture workshop in Loimaa district, located in an old school and its grounds. The workshop is a camp and training centre, where young people provide the services (such as dinners, meals, and sauna).

The purpose of the workshop experience is "supporting young people in their direction and equipping them with particular skills.. helping young people to find their 'line'" (a view not dissimilar from that suggested by the National Report and, ultimately, by the Ministry of Labour).

There are 15 young people at the workshop. 13 are young men, which given the catering and domestic science focus of the workshop, surprised members of the international review team (and embarrassed them for their stereotypical assumptions, until one colleague pointed out that young women were probably already skilled in these tasks and therefore did not need the benefit of further training!).

Young people come to the workshop from schools and from the employment services. The youth workshops in Loimaa have close contact with local schools and some young people still of school age come to the workshop for tasters and just return to school to do exams. [The manager at the metalwork workshop noted, however, that schools used to send pupils for work experience at his workshop but no longer did so because it was too expensive for them, at 2,000 FIM per semester.]

A youth worker from one municipality explained the process of identification of (eligible and suitable) individuals, discussion about possibilities, and allocation, interview and selection for a workshop place. She said that when a young person with some difficulties comes to her attention she liaises with other agencies and eventually makes a decision whether to recommend and support a young person for a workshop place. (Finding and making links with such young people can be difficult - if they are not entitled to state benefits, they tend not to register or be contacted by the authorities and so are in effect invisible.) She has a budget from her municipality for six workshop places. "The money is not a problem - it is what young people need that is the important thing". She felt that young people *needing* a workshop place were small in number, probably in her estimation no more than ten in her municipality. The problem for workshops can be the blending of young people from school and older young people referred by the employment services and through the municipalities.

According to those we spoke to in Loimaa, little strategic or reflective planning takes place around workshop provision. Now that they are in existence, there are certainly efforts to connect them to networks in education, vocational training and employment. But they were not established on the basis of any scrutiny of local labour market needs. Nor are they designed to engage in any form of 'social engineering' (for example, by challenging gender stereotyping), except insofar as they are targeted at more disadvantaged young people. Rather, they simply reflect the interests of young people in the locality: carpentry and metalwork for boys, textiles for girls, and the old school determined its own purpose. In this way, they are attractive alternatives for young people who have limited other choices. The workshops in Loimaa seek to offer young people who participate in them a *framework to organise their lives and establish a personal sense of direction*; trainees can engage in work-related activity, but they are unlikely to find real work in the specific sectors around which the different workshops develop their 'training'. While there is always the hope that young people will get a job or a study place after their workshop experience, many do become unemployed afterwards. There are simply not enough local jobs to go around.

Vihti also has a youth workshop, which is subsidised by the municipality to the tune of some 450,000 FIM per annum, having increased the places available from 15-25. The municipality receives 500,000 FIM over three

years from European Structural Funds. Each place costs 18,000 FIM; each individual placement 9,000 FIM (six months). It was claimed that the workshop has had very positive results in young people getting work on leaving, which presumably is more a consequence of a reasonably buoyant and improving local economy, rather than the intrinsic performance of the workshop - there was no striking difference about the quality of training compared with Loimaa.

The overarching impression of the youth workshops initiative gained by the international review team is that they have proved to be very popular, as well as effective in contributing to the decline in levels of youth unemployment. They provide purposeful activity which is attractive to many of the young people who are eligible for them - and others besides; one young person commented that "the problem is that you have to be unemployed for six months before you can go to one"!

### **Wider training and labour market policy directed at young people**

One of the questions of considerable interest to the international review team was, given the policy orientation to more and more training, what about the low-level jobs: who does them? There appeared to be some reluctance to discuss issues at this end of the labour market. The main contention was that there were very few low-level jobs which could be done without qualifications, though it was conceded by some that the service economy was an expanding sector. There are three issues here. First, it is true that the 'low level' jobs sector may be relatively small. Secondly, it is true that the acquisition of qualifications does permit more choice in the labour market. Thirdly, perhaps most crucially, there is increasing training provided and certification required to do work in low-level sectors, meaning that now there is a need for vocational qualifications where before there was not. In Finland, it is now possible to do a Diploma in Cleaning (just as in Germany there is a three-year vocational training course for window-cleaning). One young person we spoke to commented that "Finland is constructing education and training programmes for everything, however irrelevant they are to capacities to do the job". This is the reason proffered as to why young people *must* get skills (and there was no consideration of the other side of the coin: whether increased certification for everything is necessary or not).

However, vocationalism has not completely cornered the market, even in Finland. There is still unskilled work to be done which does not demand qualifications; our observations were that this work is largely done by immigrants and those from ethnic minorities, which is a de facto - if less intentional - parallel with the approach being adopted by Korea: that all indigenous people should acquire high level qualifications for employment in the core labour market, while immigrants can be important to perform more peripheral and temporary employment. We would wish to note here that, in Finland, immigrants are not consigned or restricted to such positions; indeed, the Ministry of Social Affairs provides special services, designed to promote social integration, for immigrants and refugees. These include courses in the Finnish language and basic skills, both of which are aimed at assisting the employment prospects of immigrants and ethnic minorities.

Beyond these points, there are other factors at play which make young people's possible entry into the labour market problematic. The labour market may be more differentiated than some are willing to acknowledge even though there is 'maybe not so much unskilled economy', but there remains in Finland (unlike many other parts of Europe) a strong trade union policy which maintains good wage levels; this certainly makes it difficult for individuals who are both *young and unskilled* to secure dependent employment.

As a result, the latest emphasis in youth employment policy has been directed towards enterprise and entrepreneurship. There is now a belief within sections of government and elsewhere that it is important that young people become competent in 'finding their own activities'. There is a need to develop in young people the attitudes to be active and self-motivating.

According to surveys, however, only some 3% of young Finns want to be young businessmen (*sic*). Other research, however, apparently indicates a greater interest in self-employment because of its potential for freedom and independence. But self-employment is a relatively new idea in Finland; young people who have done best at it, to date, are those who have had parents in self-employment and thereby have acquired

entrepreneurial values (a point which is consistent with most research on youth enterprise). Now there is enterprise education in schools to address the deficit of enterprise and lack of entrepreneurial spirit amongst young Finns. Teaching methods are being adapted to support young people to become more in control of their lives (but the problem here is that this is not in the mind-set of most Finnish teachers, so they follow the guidelines but do not enter into the spirit: 'cultures change slowly'). There are courses offered by both the private and the public sector on entrepreneurial training. All universities now have their own enterprise schemes for students and graduates. There is now a national enterprise programme supported by business, industry, different government ministries and trade unions designated as 'The Entrepreneurship Decade 1995-2005' (see Paallysaho 1996). Young people are given support during training through transmitting ideas and knowledge about enterprise. There are even youth workshops for self-employment (10 in all), the one in the City of Helsinki having been particularly successful, although it was admittedly concentrated on a very selective group of young people. There are some support measures through the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. For example, there is a state subsidy for unemployed job seekers with a good business idea which will employ at least one other person: this is a precondition for the subsidy. Business plans are scrutinised with some care before the financial subsidy becomes available, but there is no other support, such as long-term business advice. However, there are also measures such as the business incubator in Loimaa, designed to provide a supportive environment for the development of new business. The administrative division of responsibility for enterprise support is that the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, through its district offices, provides advice and support, while the Ministry of Labour provides training and finance.

Entrepreneurship is, of course, a tough proposition at any time in an individual's life. The average age for starting a business is 35. Only a very small number of young Finns are even *interested* in starting their own business. The Ministry of Labour would like to have more young people moving in this direction; hence the range of initiatives on this front.

Yet currently only 1% of people in Finland (*not* young people) are in self-employment. There are additional problems facing young people intending to follow this path, both economic and psychological. Raising capital and sustaining resilience in the face of difficulties are two examples. Yet there is, in Finland, a detectable increase in petit bourgeois values amongst young people, probably as a result of *their* attempt to deal with the problems and possibilities of unemployment. The start-up financial support (of 5,000 FIM per month for six months) provides both an incentive and a cushion and has so far yielded just under a 50% success rate for enterprises supported under the scheme, which is as good as if not somewhat better than similar initiatives elsewhere.

There is a general groundswell of enterprising activity in Finland which may facilitate a cultural shift in this direction. And we should be mindful of the fact that while Finland may have few traditions of *individual* enterprise, co-operative traditions in agricultural and working-class life were once very strong. There *is* a tradition of *collective*, if not individual enterprise, within which some youth researchers made the point that there was an individual strand concerned with pride in achieving the position of a 'self-made man' (*sic*). Furthermore, organisations including youth organisations are themselves becoming more entrepreneurial (undertaking contracts, selling services) rather than depending wholly on public sector support. There is, however, no indication yet that youth organisations are supporting young people in enterprise. Nevertheless, these various strands of enterprise are establishing new entrepreneurial foundations in Finnish society which, coupled with difficulties faced by young people in accessing traditional forms of employment, may encourage more young people to consider setting up businesses of their own, particularly in new arts, media, technology and cultural industries.

## **Conclusion**

A central dimension to youth policy in Finland in recent years has been the dramatic restructuring of education and training. There is now much greater diversity and cross-over in provision, offering more flexible possibilities - perhaps to prepare young people for more flexible labour markets. The formation of polytechnics has increased the possibility of higher education. Both in further and higher education, and in vocational training, Finland has drawn ideas from Germany, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The

prevailing view is that young people need both more advanced educational qualifications and more practical skills. Training has had to be expanded to offer these possibilities.

But there is another rationale for expanding education and training, less related to future employment prospects and more related to contemporary problems of unemployment. There is no doubt that the introduction of new measures have caused the rate of youth unemployment to go down, much faster than adult unemployment. Not only has there been the establishment of the youth workshops (to which we have given somewhat disproportionate attention), but there has also been the provision of 20,000 additional places in education, and there have been the social security measures, effectively compelling young people under 20 (and then under 25) to take up training in order to continue receiving benefit. Ineligibility for unemployment benefits have, in effect, 'forced' young people to make *active* choices. The legislation which introduced this element of compulsion (the Labour Market Support Act 1996) has been subject to criticism but, for Minister Andersson, while acknowledging the basis of the criticisms, it was still 'the right thing'. From direct experience, he had seen what being unemployed and doing nothing can do to young people, after the initial 'holiday' period.

There are, inevitably, both critical and complimentary positions which may be adopted about such developments. We shall address some of the former in our consideration of challenges for the future. However, the prevailing view in Finland, with which we can express considerable solidarity, is that both vocational training, and further and higher education, is important - for promoting both prospects for economic participation in society and prospects for social participation ('citizen level' education). A proper foundation of education and training is considered to be a necessary condition for the stabilisation of careers later in life, even if early transitions to the labour market are precarious and first jobs are often temporary. Young people increasingly have to exploit their imagination, engage with and make use of wide networks and, as Finnish youth researchers have asserted, become more responsible for their own 'life management'.

The 10% of unqualified young people, those who do not pursue qualifications beyond the minimum school leaving age, remains a problem. Although there are more study places at one level or another than people to fill them, there are still 10% outside of the system. In the past, they got *jobs*. Now they are at risk of marginalisation - from education, training and the labour market. Sustaining their social and economic integration represents possibly the greatest challenge for youth policy in the future.

### **Education, training and employment - other challenges for the future**

1. Despite the generosity and universality of educational opportunity in Finland, we are aware of at least some differentiation in opportunity as a result of gender, social class and geographical location. Such differences may not always be sufficiently significant to merit specific policy initiatives but they may be. Education policy has at times sought to address continuing gender differences in educational choices and destinations in the labour market. Other forms of 'positive action' are likely to be required to respond to social and economic questions which call for educational answers (such as our example of the shortage of male primary school teachers, or encouraging the return of better qualified young people to small, declining communities), and to the needs of specific groups of young people whose educational needs cannot be supported by mainstream educational policy.

2. There remains in Finland a 'critical distance' between the education system and the demands of the economy. This is, in many respects, to be welcomed and the international review team would advise against seeking to strike very close connections between education and economy (a mistaken road taken, in our view, by some other European countries). Education fulfils personal and societal needs as well as economic ones. Nevertheless, there is a case to be made for ensuring some connections, at some levels and particularly in terms of regional economic development. The new polytechnics in Finland may fulfil much of this function, in that they have a more vocational orientation, but no modern economy can fully detach higher academic study from some level of vocational relevance, particularly when it is significantly supported through public

funding. The challenge for the future is striking the balance between responding to individual aspiration and ensuring that educational qualifications have an appropriate 'currency' within the labour market. There may be a case for all taxi drivers possessing degree, but then again, there may not.

3. The new arrangements for education, training and income support have been subjected to considerable academic criticism. Helve and Bynner's (1996) edited collection contains much of this critique, which rests largely on the fact that, instead of having access to work, the young unemployed are to be educated more and more. The withdrawal of unconditional income support for those under 20 has compelled reluctant young people to participate in education or training. The right of choice has been taken away (Paivarinta 1996). There is clear a trend through which the entire 16-19 age group will be remaining within the education system, thereby removing them completely from labour market participation. This may or may not be an important development. There is no doubt that declining levels of youth unemployment are significantly a product of higher levels of participation in education and training, rather than a product of an increase in jobs for young people. The challenge for the future is to ensure that the maintenance of such an expanded system continues to be premised on its *positive* value to young people and wider social and economic needs rather than sustained on the 'negative' need simply to warehouse young people in a 'holding operation' which keeps them out of the labour market.

4. In order to ensure that young people still have some degree of choice in whether they pursue vocational or academic routes, careful attention will need to be paid to the different levels of 'wages', allowances and grants available for different decisions. There is already the matter of the different allowances paid to young people who have made the *same* decision: to participate in youth workshop training. Some receive the rate of unemployment benefit (2,500 FIM) while others receive the minimum wage (5,000 FIM), for doing the same 'work'. We understand the reasons for these differences and the different routes by which young people come to participate in workshop training, but we wonder how it affects the motivation of those 'paid' at the lower rate, when some of their peers doing the same 'work' are in receipt of twice as much.

On a related point, instead of 'forcing' such young people into training through the measures of the Labour Market Support Act, perhaps there should have been a stronger *supported study* system to encourage young people into education and training. This would have been more consistent with Finland's strong principles of equal opportunity, as well as with assertions that the vast majority of young people in Finland *want* to improve their education. However, the intentions of the Labour Market Support Act seem to be working, since there is not yet 'cultural knowledge' acting as a counter-force to young people's structural awareness of the importance of obtaining qualifications. It is too early for such cultural possibilities (whereby subjective perceptions lead to sustained rejection of formal training systems in favour of informal alternatives, whatever the objective realities) to have emerged in Finland, although there is evidence of them having done so in the UK. The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs is now doing a study of the effects of the Labour Market Support Act, although its criticism was not just about its 'coercive' dimension but it was also concerned with the implicit *age discrimination* enshrined within it: if training was so critical for labour market prospects, why was it not applied to all unqualified and unemployed people? The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs is, however, keen to see the development of greater flexibility *between* training, work and education and we would support such an approach.

5. There is an almost convenient lack of clarity about the role and purpose of youth workshop provision. On the one hand, it is tied into a broader training strategy which is claimed to be responding to labour market training imperatives. On the other hand, it is viewed as meeting individual needs through providing personal support and orientation. Both are important policy questions, but their conflation raises a number of problematics. The workshops have provided us with some mixed messages and given us a picture of mixed and varied provision. Some are clearly viewed very positively by young people. It was, however, noted that - where jobs were anyway hard to get - they often had limited success in providing direct pathways into the labour market, not least because provision was not in sectors where real jobs were available in the *local* labour market. We are aware of the important contribution made by the workshops in, at minimum, *alleviating* youth unemployment: as a central component in the training provision developed in recent years,

the workshops have assisted in the steady reduction of youth unemployment by some 20,000 young people a year.

There are, nevertheless, two outstanding questions which the review team would wish to pose. First, the lack of clarity as to whether workshops are preparing young people in specific skills or in an appropriate orientation to work (through 'job practice') makes any specific evaluation process - beyond the 'holding tank' argument presented by researchers in the National Report - somewhat problematic. There is clearly a place both for workshops which support young people in acquiring skills relevant to the labour market *and* for those more concerned with engendering the 'disciplines' of work (irrespective of their skills focus), but such objectives - as they attach to different workshops - should perhaps be more sharply differentiated. High technology workshops training clearly has a bearing on the demand for new skills, but workshops which offer training and experience in more traditional skills (such as metalwork or textiles) for which there is diminishing demand must not delude young people that they offer limited possibilities of transferring such skills directly into the 'real' labour market, even if the *general* experience may enable young people to be more 'work ready'.

Training provision such as that provided by the workshops can always be subjected to both uncritical praise and entrenched criticism. What is important is to recognise both their strengths and limitations: they are often neither training grounds for specific skills nor simply 'holding tanks'. In different local labour markets, different workshops will perform different functions. Moreover, any connections and routes for progression between more socially oriented workshops and more labour market oriented workshops needs to be made explicit. It is important for youth policy in this field to ensure that young people are clear about what is being provided and what they can expect from such provision.

6. In relation to the point above, there appears to be an overly uncritical view about the need for, and value of, youth training initiatives. One challenge for the future is to subject different aspects of training programmes for young people to more critical investigation, considering matters such as quality, the 'currency' value in the labour market attached to any certification, destinations, and any distortion of, or displacement within the local labour market.

7. Some would argue that Finland is in the throes of a certification epidemic, which can only lead to 'qualification inflation' (higher and higher qualifications required by employers for lower and lower level jobs, see for example Huotelin and Kauppila 1995). There is an international preoccupation with accreditation and certification to the point where it has become a such a rush that there is no time for reflection. Many vocational certificates, in some countries, have become quite meaningless in the labour markets for which they were apparently 'designed'. A challenge for the future is to ensure the continuing relevance of vocational qualifications to labour market conditions - otherwise the whole concept of 'vocational' itself becomes meaningless.

8. The importance of promoting 'enterprise' in young people in Finland is clear. But enterprise can mean anything from personal initiative to market entrepreneurship. For young people, entrepreneurship also requires a framework of public sector support. Without it, young people will be (reluctantly) attracted into self-employment more through the push of unemployment than through the pull of enterprise. Furthermore, they are likely to try to move into the most saturated and undercapitalised sectors of the economy. The paradox in contemporary calls to enterprise is that young people are being encouraged to 'stand on their feet' in economic circumstances which are most likely to drag them down. Careful thought needs to be given to constructing a balance between supporting only realistic market ventures and providing personal financial assistance and suitable and properly-timed business advice and support. In the wider literature on youth enterprise, serious questions have been raised as to whether or not young people have the personal resilience and maturity to cope with the ups and downs of self-employment. There is a real risk, in encouraging young people to take this route, of setting some of the more disadvantaged young people to fail further. Thus the challenge for the future is to establish a process for supporting youth enterprise which not only avoids encouraging unrealistic ventures (through the careful assessment of business plans) but also provides an

adequate financial and advisory framework to maximise the chances of survival of those enterprises which appear most likely to succeed.

9. Finally, we would want to reflect some ideas gleaned from our wider reading on youth issues in Finland. Laaksonen *et al* (1994) have argued that, in labour politics, the young jobless are crudely classified as either unemployed at the labour market's disposal and thus entitled to a subsidy, or as people unwilling to work and thus not entitled to a subsidy. But a Helsinki city survey showed that those who turned down the offer represent a heterogeneous category which suggests the need for more flexible measures from the authorities. More accurate knowledge of the young people in question and more individually profiled measures are needed. The automatic procedures [of the City's Labour Commission] should be softened up to be able to take each one's particular situation into account (Laaksonen *et al* 1994, p.53). Such ideas are consistent with new approaches to dealing with more excluded young people in the United Kingdom where, instead of fixed generic structures and processes, individualised contracts and 'learning accounts' are being developed, in order to improve the participation rates in training of those who have hitherto refused to take part (despite no entitlement to state income support).

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL WELFARE**

### **Health**

Young people, almost by definition, tend to be relatively healthy in comparison with other cohorts of a population. In many parts of Europe, however, this cannot be taken for granted and there are growing concerns around issues such as obesity and suicide trends, as well as more 'headline' issues such as smoking and alcohol use by the young, and the insidious spread of illegal drug misuse. Psychosocial disorders in the young appear - from evidence collected world-wide - to be closely linked to *social dislocation* experienced by young people rather than their social disadvantage. Thus, in times of rapid social change, where old certainties and transition pathways become fractured, a range of problems in young people's physical and mental health tend to show an increase (Rutter and Smith 1995).

In Finland, as the National Report conveys, the promotion of healthy life-styles in young people is an active strategy within youth policy, using diverse instruments from the ubiquitous provision and take-up of sports, health education in schools, to specialist medical and mental health services:

"The goal of youth health policy is to influence lifestyles and attitudes through health education given from compulsory schooling to general and vocational secondary education" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.99)

Young Finns engage in a variety of sporting activities, which confer high levels of fitness but not necessarily long-term health. Nevertheless, involvement in sports is an important basis for developing healthy lifestyles, yet physical education classes have become optional in some educational institutions, thereby undermining efforts "to teach sporting habits to the whole age group" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.106). Furthermore, the general growth in the popularity of sports has been attributed to the diversification of sporting possibilities in *urban* areas, and conceals a declining involvement in sports by young people in rural areas (Lahteenmaa and Siurala 1992d, p.50). The general health of the young should also not distract us from some significant health *risk* behaviours by young people in Finland (as elsewhere).

Like many other Nordic (and eastern European) countries, however, the prevalence of suicide amongst young people is alarming and there have been specific efforts to address this problem, including a national project for the prevention of suicides between 1992 and 1996, and participation in a wider European project concerned with examining methods of preventing children and young people's suicide.

Attention is also being focused on smoking, alcohol consumption and drug misuse amongst young people. While the National Report notes that "there have been no major changes in young people's smoking and alcohol consumption in recent years" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.100), it also points out that smoking is much more commonplace by young people in Finland than in many other European countries and that patterns of alcohol use suggest that Finnish young people invariably drink in order to become intoxicated. Data on drug misuse are flimsy, but the National Report makes mention of girls mixing alcohol and drugs, and of the increasingly use of hashish, especially in the Helsinki metropolitan area.

Finland has, to date, had hard, restrictive policies on legal, as well as illegal drugs. Alcohol is a state monopoly. Under the Alcohol Act 1994, no alcoholic beverages may not be sold to young people under the age of 18; spirits may not be sold to anyone under 20. Possession of alcohol by young people under 18 is also prohibited. Since joining the European Union, it has had to agree to change its policy on alcohol to comply with EU regulations and adopt a more liberal approach (although alcohol will remain a state monopoly and liberalisation will not come into effect until 2002). Under the Tobacco Act 1976 (amended in 1994), tobacco products must not be sold to young people under the age of 18, nor is smoking permitted in facilities used by children and young people under 18. Other public health and anti-drugs legislation makes general provision for health promotion and education, and combating health risks, but do not make reference specifically to young people.

Contrary to the measured assessment in the National Report of alcohol and drug misuse by young people in Finland, the international review team gained the impression from other sources of an increasingly concern with the scale of alcohol and drug problems. We understand that the latter is a highly contentious issue in Finland, where there is often little reception to considering approaches other than rigid enforcement strategies. Yet there appears to be growing evidence, admittedly often anecdotal, not only of increasing cannabis use by young people, but also the use of amphetamines, heroin and, in particular, the use of prescribed medicines (pills) and alcohol at the same time. There have been calls by non-governmental organisations working in this field (which are financed from the proceeds of the Finnish Slot Machine Association RAY) for new public health strategies to address these issues. Indeed, a committee was established early in 1997 to review drugs policy and to consider appropriate developments.

The evidence of the scale and patterns of drug misuse is, as we have noted already, sparse. Since the 1980s, surveys of adolescent health and lifestyles have asked respondents if they know anyone who has tried illegal drugs, which drugs their acquaintances had used, and what sort of drugs - if any - had been offered to them (see Karvonen *et al* 1992). The National Report records data from the surveys of 1993 and 1995 on young people who know somebody who has tried or used drugs. This indicate an increase; by the age of 18, between two-fifths and a half of young people *know someone* who has used illegal drugs (a useful contrast, to place this finding in some kind of context, is that in the UK, by the age of 16, two-fifths of young people admit to having tried illegal drugs, usually cannabis).

At the beginning of the 1990s the available research data indicated a relatively low proportion of young people who had used illegal drugs at least once. In southern Finland, the proportions were between 5% and 15%, and in northern Finland 1%-5%. Half of these young people had experimented with drugs only once or twice. It has also been reported that cannabis is the main drug used by Finnish youth who have become involved in drug misuse, in addition to legal substances (inappropriately used) such as prescribed medicines, solvents, glues and thinners. Hard drug use, such as heroin and cocaine, is rare (see Nurmi and Siurala 1994, pp.138-139). The use of drugs is certainly not part of the everyday behaviour of young people (Rantanen 1996) and there was no indication whatsoever that there are yet trends towards the 'normalisation' of drug use within any aspects of youth culture, which have been detected elsewhere (see Measham *et al* 1994).

It has been argued that a number of factors have contributed to forestalling the growth of a drugs 'culture' on the scale now being witnessed in some other European countries. No doubt the Finnish authorities would wish to attribute this to its effective enforcement methods. Others might argue that the continuing integration of the majority of Finnish young people makes illegal drugs relatively unattractive (and unnecessary) for all but a minority. The geographical remoteness of Finland from main sources of supply might be another factor. And the relative resistance of Finnish culture to wider international cultural trends may also have functioned as a buffer against the proliferation of drug misuse. However, this should not be cause for complacency. Helsinki is a modern European capital and should not believe it can remain immune from the 'downside'

which characterises life in any modern European capital. Indeed, in the Helsinki region the proportion of those who knew someone who had tried cannabis was six times higher than in rural areas (Karvonen *et al* 1992, p.94). When the conditions of people's lives deteriorate, their interest in intoxicants and drugs increases (*Helsinki Quarterly* 1997, p.26). There should, nonetheless, be some caution exercised in attributing any developments in the prevalence of drug misuse exclusively to changes in *young people's* lifestyles: in the early 1990s it was generally assumed in Finland that most drug-related crimes had been committed by young people, whereas statistics indicated that 83% of such crimes were in fact committed by adults (Siurala 1992b, p.112).

Concerns about the prevalence of alcohol and drugs misuse should not, however, be restricted to the urban contexts of Finland. There is often an assumption in Finland that small towns do not have such problems. But there appear to be quite widespread problems to do with drink, and the use of drink with medicines, and to a lesser extent drugs.

In the Loimaa district, a drug and alcohol project has been undertaken which surveyed 488 school students aged 11-14 and has also developed a peer-led prevention programme. In Sweden, Norway and Estonia similar initiatives have been established. The reticence in Finland to broach the issue of young people and substance (legal and illegal) misuse surfaced early in the Loimaa project, with difficulties in attracting money for staffing, attitude problems amongst some professionals, tensions and suspicions between agencies (both health and social and educational). This project has, however, worked closely with the living conditions project (see above) and it is hoped it will continue beyond its current finish date at the end of 1998.

The project is covering *all* young people within the age group (not the more problematic or excluded). It has found that children as young as 10-12 abuse alcohol. Alcohol is used by younger and younger children on the weekends; alcohol use with medicines is a particular issue with girls. There is some evidence of cannabis misuse, and occasionally even LSD. The peer-led work (which is a popular prevention strategy for addressing drug misuse by young people elsewhere in Europe; Professor Sven Morch at the University of Copenhagen is currently reviewing existing practice across Europe) is being developed with the Mannerheim Educational Foundation to train secondary school age children to educate primary age schoolchildren of the risks and dangers of alcohol and drug abuse.

In Vihti, there has also been some exploration of the prevalence of drug and alcohol misuse by young people in order to develop strategies for intervention. Vihti is close to Helsinki (some 40 km away), and apparently mirrors patterns of misuse which prevail in Helsinki, except on a smaller scale. A first wave of drug misuse took place in the mid 1970s. Hashish is the most commonly used illegal drug, but the biggest problem is beer (which is very easy to get hold of), especially when consumed with medicines. A lot of schools education around drug misuse was developed in the mid 1970s but there has been another peak of drug misuse in the 1990s. In Vihti there was little evidence of *addiction*, but some evidence of experimental and recreational use. It was argued that if people do become addicted, they tend to move to Helsinki or Espoo.

Vihti has set up a drugs project 'Being Strong Enough to Say No', as a result of collaboration between the youth worker, church worker, social worker, and a police officer. They go into primary schools (for 7-13 year olds) each week and respond to questions to which the kids want answers and information - usually about alcohol, drugs and sex. They organise discussions and have practical exercises to learn how to say No to *anything* they don't want to do, in other words how to resist peer pressure. Next year, they are planning a project with secondary schools (13-16 year olds), in which the pupils will have to make more active choices.

Every five years Vihti municipality has done a study of the use of intoxicants by young people. The trends are that use has started at a lower age (12/13 for alcohol; 14-16 for drugs) and more girls are now involved. The (mis)use of *alcohol*, however, remains by far the biggest problem, a point which was confirmed to the international review team time and time again, but drug misuse is becoming more commonplace, admittedly from a very low base of limited usage in the early 1990s.

The international review team was curious as to whether there was any debate on issues such as decriminalisation, harm reduction or controlled drinking. The question itself was often received with

incredulity. In Finland, such matters were described as 'a big taboo'. No municipality would dare to even contemplate such an approach. On more than one occasion, it was argued that there is a lot of denial of the scale of problems concerning both young people and alcohol and young people and drugs. Yet, despite the clear legislation and the legislative threshold of 18 for both alcohol and tobacco, young people well under the age of 18 appeared to have few problems getting hold of either drink or cigarettes. There was, indeed, a thriving market of 'bootleg' alcoholic drink, often produced by young people themselves. Older teenagers said that some types of illegal drugs were 'relatively normal', particularly at dances and raves.

The international review team was told of a 15 year old girl who was caught selling alcohol at school, which her mother had supplied. The girl defended and justified her actions by claiming that she was providing a service by selling 'proper' alcoholic drink, not bootleg hooch, which schoolchildren would otherwise make and drink (at potentially greater risk to themselves). The issues was dealt with 'gently', we were told: the girl was made to promise that she would stop behaving in this way - a response which, to us, reflected a mature, sensitive and sensible of dealing with a situation which otherwise would risk being driven 'underground'.

## **Housing**

A core objective within the NUOSTRA youth work strategy relates to housing: "to make it possible for young people to become independent of their families at the right point in their development" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.65). The National Report provides some evidence of changing housing transitions and housing policies designed to assist young people in moving to independent living. For example, many more young adults continue to live with their parents than in 1986. While there is a considerable number of rented flats specially built for young people (largely for students), tighter loan policies by banks, the deregulation of rents and prospects of unemployment have reduced the access to resources and confidence for young people to venture into independent living.

There are a number of financial measures taken by government to assist young people (and others) to purchase and occupy homes (usually flats) of their own. Housing allowances are paid to different population groups under different schemes. For young people, there are schemes for students (and those in labour market training), and schemes in the welfare system and as a benefit for conscripts.

The international review team endeavoured to move beyond such technical (albeit important) provisions and explore questions of housing and young people relating to need and experience, especially around issues concerning geographical mobility - moving *away* to study, and perhaps returning home. The information we received invariably focused solely on the provision of accommodation for school or college students from remote rural areas. We were also told a little about special housing provision for young mothers, much of which is run by the church and financed from the proceeds of the Finnish Slot Machine Association.

Beyond this, we were told very little, except that there are several studies currently being conducted on youth housing which, according to the National Report, "may influence future youth policy" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.114). The international review team is unsure of the nature, status or progress of these studies, nor of the critical questions which need to inform youth housing policy.

## **Family policy**

Family policy is not addressed in the National Report, except in very superficial detail. Minister Andersson explains why in his introduction, but the international review team remains convinced that it is pertinent to a full understanding of youth policy. While the family is in many respects a private sphere, there are aspects of family life which clearly have a bearing on public life and experience and therefore become a legitimate focus for public policy. The family provides perhaps the most important site for the socialisation of young people, together with school and (later) work.

The reasons for the importance of including family policy in any discussion of youth policy are, essentially, twofold. One relates to 'ordinary' family life which, depending on wider social and economic circumstances, may assist or restrict the development of young people. The other relates to dysfunctional family life and the

points at which public services may intervene for the purpose of prevention, support and - in the last resort - removal of children and young people into the care of the state.

Transitions from dependent to independent living, and from family of origin to family of destination are integral components in young people's transition to adult life (along with transitions to economic independence). There is considerable evidence in Finland that economic circumstances and changes in state income support provision for young people have made young people more dependent on their parents. Indeed, the number of young people continuing to live in the parental home *doubled* in four years during the early 1990s (Sauli 1992), yet many young people do not want to keep living with their parents. Contentment with living in the parental home has decreased amongst young people of all ages, but dissatisfaction is more pronounced amongst those aged 20 years and older (*Helsinki Quarterly* 1977, p.44). Not only is this a recipe for greater family friction, but it confers on young people a curious status of 'quasi-citizenship' (see Jones and Wallace 1992) whereby, whilst technically adults, they remain in a state of (semi)childhood dependency upon their parents. This can serve to compound experiences and feelings of social exclusion, particularly if it is reinforced by limited access to the labour market, despite *appearing* to be a satisfactory method of catering for young adults who do not yet have the independent resources to live on their own.

Youth policy also impinges on family policy in terms of questions around child protection. Finnish law is clear. Under the Child Welfare Act 1983, children are defined as persons under the age of 18 and a young person who has not yet turned 21. It is the duty of the local social welfare committee to take appropriate preventative action if a child's or young person's living conditions or their own behaviour endanger his or her health or development. Preventative and supportive action may be taken but the local social welfare committee may also take a child into 'custody' or remove them to foster care. This is a measure of last resort, to be taken if everything else has failed.

Where children are removed from home, about half go to another family and about half to an institution. There is also institutional provision for children aged 12-15 who are non-school attenders and offenders. About 300 children are now institutionalised for these reasons, half the number who used to be. This is largely because the nature of intervention has changed, not because of any real reduction in the prevalence of these problems.

Although 'endangered' and 'threat' are defined in law, they ultimately rest on social work interpretation and such judgments often depend on the resources available. Some small municipalities have no money and no specialists to support such interventions. It is, however, estimated that preventative work of this nature can ultimately save around 360,000 FIM if it prevents later marginalisation.

However, child welfare is usually the focus of concerted cross-sectoral activity. Networks - between schools, youth work and social work - are increasingly important to deal with social problems through early intervention. The National Report (p.109) draws attention to 'development trends' which point to more flexible and 'holistic' strategies for considering the overall needs of young people and blurring the boundaries between open and institutional care. This may point to an increased role for youth workers, who are likely to have rather different knowledge and relationships with the young people concerned. Indeed, a number of different professional groups, including youth workers, all have a part to play but ultimate responsibility for decisions taken rest with social workers, who have the statutory duties on this front. Nevertheless, the aim is to secure a level of co-ordination in order to achieve the ultimate objective, wherever possible, of re-integrating such young people into their families and communities.

## **Criminal justice**

Given the central profile accorded in youth policy to issues of young people and crime in many other European countries, it was something of a surprise to the international review team to find little more than a page allotted to this subject in the National Report (compared to over five pages on conscription). From this, we are led to conclude that Finland is a relatively crime-free society and that offending behaviour by young people is concentrated amongst a small number of 'persistent young offenders'. The intervention strategy, as with other dimensions of youth policy, appears to be constructed upon philosophies of prevention and rehabilitation, rather than punishment or retribution. To this end, there is, according to the National Report

(p.118) 'wide-scale co-operation' (involving partnerships between the police, schools, social welfare authorities, parents, businesses and voluntary workers) to ensure early intervention and support for young people and their families. The police appear to be primarily concerned with information, prevention and moral education campaigns directed at young people in schools, an approach which has been subjected to some criticism for being unlikely to have much influence on those young people who are most at risk of becoming involved in crime, on the grounds that "investments in campaign and control measures easily divert the focus from the general *social problems* producing the criminal career" (Lahteenmaa and Siurala 1992c, p.81; emphasis added).

The relationship between social problems experienced by young people and offending behaviour is, of course, one which continues to challenge criminologists. There is no clear correlation between the two, although for nearly 40 years it has been argued that patterns of delinquency are linked to structures of opportunity (Cloward and Ohlin 1961). Nevertheless, in Finland, very few young people are engaged in patterns of offending behaviour sufficiently severe to merit custodial measures (young prisoners throughout Finland constitute only a few hundred).

## **Military service**

It is useful here to turn the coin immediately and look briefly at conscription and military service, since this perhaps illuminates the commitment of young men (who always represent the *potential* for deviancy and criminality, not young women) to Finnish society. Military service is clearly not an explicit component of health or social welfare policy, although it *is* a dimension of youth policy. It might be more appropriately 'positioned' within youth policy under 'training' but it is positioned here because the international review team pondered at some length on a possible link between the sustaining commitment of young men to undertaking military service and the relatively absence of any major youthful criminality, which in turn is perhaps a reflection of the social cohesion of Finnish society and the social integration of its young people.

Every male in Finland between the age of 17 and 60 is liable to military service, and each male Finnish citizen who turns 18 must take part in a call-up arranged by military provinces in each municipality in September or October each year. The duration of military service is between eight months and just under one year.

The positive attitudes of young Finns towards national defence was quite a revelation to the international review team, some of whom come from countries which no longer have military service and where patriotism and militarism are simply not part of the vocabulary of most young people. In contrast, in Finland, the Defence Forces are the most highly valued social institution, a view held by 80% of the population overall, *and held by a similar proportion of young people*. And the National Report notes that "Draft-dodging is almost non-existent in Finland" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.122). How non-existent was of considerable interest to the international review team, despite its growing awareness of young people's patriotism (one young woman of 17 said that she would "defend the flag and the Marka with my life"). We were aware that those who refuse military service are sent to a youth prison for general young offenders. Nonetheless, it came as no less than a shock to discover that there are only about *five* young people to whom this happens each year.

However, this evidence - the downside of youthful offending behaviour and the upside of conformity to the requirements of military service - cements our view that young people in Finland remain, despite the social and economic changes of recent years, strongly integrated within the norms and values of Finnish society which, to a significant extent, may be attributed to the direct and related interventions flowing from Finnish youth policy.

## **Challenges for the future**

1. The most significant way to reduce the prevalence of alcohol misuse by the young is to reduce the prevalence of alcohol misuse in society (Wilkinson 1996) and the most effective measures for achieving this is to raise prices and reduce accessibility (Edwards *et al* 1994). Beyond this, the significant policy challenge is to support a process by which an abstinent 7-year old becomes a responsible and discerning young adult drinker. The general wisdom is that young people often learn their first drinking behaviour in the home, either through observation (sometimes of irresponsibly drinking adults) or through participation. Indeed, there is some suggestion that repressive domestic attitudes towards alcohol contribute to the worst binge drinking in adolescence. In Finland, as in some other Nordic countries, the drinking to intoxication is an endemic cultural trait; it is therefore difficult to consider ways by which young people should establish alternative perspectives on, and approaches to drinking. Nonetheless, this represents an important challenge. To push the issue under the carpet will not make it go away and there may be an important *educational* role for youth work here, in debating and negotiating with young people about socially acceptable levels of alcohol use and physiologically safe levels of consumption (using World Health Organisation guidelines). This will, however, be difficult while Finnish legislation precludes young people under the age of 18 from *possessing* alcohol. Clearly, many young people transgress this law on almost a daily basis, and put themselves at a dual risk - both from excessive consumption of (sometimes bootleg) drink and from the law. Some consideration may need to be given to the fact that stringent legislation and regulation of alcohol may be counter-productive

and, in order to achieve more effective results, policy may need to adopt a more calculated approach based on some level of realism, rather than idealism.

2. Policy regarding illegal drugs generates a very complex set of issues. Finland continues to adopt an unequivocal position and rigid enforcement policies. Yet, beyond the almost arbitrary (simply historically embedded) boundary drawn between legal and illegal drugs, there are wider questions concerning the relationships between drugs and crime, the capacity of enforcement measures to work *alone*, the compounding of drug users' problems because they cannot admit to their drug-related activities (because they are illegal), and the extent to which (non-using) young people should be exposed to knowledge and information about illegal drugs. Furthermore, there is the policy question about the balance to be struck between education and prevention programmes, and those concerned with treatment and rehabilitation. The problem with drugs policy is the incapacity to have a dispassionate and informed debate, since myth and personal moralities become confused with realities. Finland is fortunate that it still has only a minor problem with drug use by the young, and that is largely the use of cannabis, a natural rather than manufactured mind-altering product. This contrasts with the UK, for example, where cannabis (and to a lesser extent, ecstasy) have become 'normalised' in youth culture, where there is a risk of prisons filling up with otherwise law-abiding people convicted of minor drug possession, and where free and anonymous needle exchange schemes (for injecting drug users) were reluctantly accepted largely in order to halt the risk of the spread of HIV. Yet there are still deep tensions between those who argue for greater liberalisation (in that drug misuse is a victimless crime, and in order to sever the link between the drugs and crime cultures) and those who wish to pursue a firmer law enforcement policy. The risk is that simplistic stances will be taken on what will always be a complex issue. Beyond the issues already mentioned is the distinction between experimental and recreational users (for whom drug use does not significantly threaten otherwise 'ordinary' lifestyles) and those who are drug dependent and addicted. Different approaches are required to deal with these different phenomena. There is little evidence that 'Just Say No' campaigns can counteract wider youth cultural peer pressure, nor is there much evidence that peer education is effective: it may raise awareness, but it does not change behaviour. The challenge for Finland is to explore this grid of issues concerning drug use and drugs cultures in order to identify different points of intervention for different types of usage. It is also important to recognise that drug-using *behaviour* follows similar patterns - whether this relates to illegal drugs, alcohol, solvents, prescribed or over-the-counter medicines. A similar menu of strategies is required to address usage or potential usage of all these substances; illegal drugs presents additional questions simply because they are illegal. Finally, it is also important to recognise that young people (like other people) use many drugs, legal and illegal, *purposefully* - for example, to socialise within a group or to 'deal' with personal troubles. There is increasing evidence that young people use different drugs for different types of occasion. Failure to acknowledge this invariably means that drugs policy starts at a point which is irrelevant to young people, and is therefore doomed to ineffectiveness.

3. Finland clearly has a generous system of grants, loans, subsidies and allowances to enable young people to move towards independent living. These, however, have been curtailed in recent years, causing a greater number of young people to remain, reluctantly, in the parental home. There is always a risk that over-generous state subsidies for *rents*, in deregulated markets, are simply soaked up by exploitative landlords. Therefore it is sometimes difficult to conceive of policy which supports the desire of young people for independent living but which does not drain the public purse. New ideas are emerging on this front which tie the possibility of independence to wider issues of training and labour market activity. One is the Foyer movement, established in France, which provides accommodation linked to training and employment. Another is a self-build programme, in which young people contribute to the building of 'their own' homes (usually managed by a housing association), acquiring trade skills in the process. A third is the adaptation of property to suit the different housing needs of young people, again enabling young people to undergo training in building skills in the process. The challenge for housing policy in Finland - as the state seeks to reduce direct expenditure through subsidies and allowances - is to experiment with different models by which the housing aspirations of the young can be linked to wider policy issues around training and the economy.

4. Family policy and child welfare in Finland appears to be working highly effectively, sustaining the integration of all but the most alienated and marginalised. Cross-sectoral partnerships are proving valuable

in ensuring a co-ordinated response to young people's needs. The challenge for the future may be to advocate a more explicitly tailored package to which the young people concerned and the agencies involved subscribe and make a commitment. This construction of individual 'care plans' (which may deal with public behaviour, education, participation in youth provision and anything else, and to which the targeted young people may make a contribution) is consistent with the *general* desire to enable young people to take greater responsibility for the 'life management' and their own futures. They represent, in effect, a 'contract' between the young person and the local state.

5. Juvenile justice policy in Finland, based as it is, wherever possible, on preventive and educative intervention, also appears to be highly effective, with very few young people ending up in custodial institutions. Youth crime is most closely linked with inconsistent parenting and non-attendance in schooling, according to many recent studies (see, for example, Graham and Bowling 1996), and the Finnish approach to dealing with youthful offending would seem to resonate with this. Yet no doubt there are, at least from time to time, calls for more punitive interventions, particularly in response to the behaviour of more 'persistent young offenders' (Hagell and Newburn 1994). There is little evidence that punitive responses do anything other than compound young people's marginality, at considerable public expense. The challenge for the future, therefore, is to endeavour to sustain the current constructive and integrative approach to tackling youth crime and not to succumb to pressures to adopt punitive measures which, superficially, are sometimes attractive but which ultimately are invariably ineffective.

6. Military service not only meets Finland's defence agenda but it also contributes to the maturation and responsibility of its young men and takes a proportion of young people out of a competitive labour market for a while. Currently, with very few exceptions, there are no alternatives to military service and, from the level of support displayed by young people and the rest of the population, there do not need to be. There may, however, be some value in considering issues to do with *voluntary service* which serve similar social and transition functions to military service without the military dimension. It also conveniently removes cohorts of young people from the labour market. At national and European levels, different forms of voluntary community service are being considered. In Finland, there may be a number of reasons for also giving such a policy some attention, not necessarily as a substitute or alternative to military service but as a supplement to it.

## **YOUTH WORK**

### **Introduction**

Youth work in Finland appears to be the critical central strand in youth policy. It might be argued that youth work, experienced as it is during young people's leisure time (even if it not necessarily a 'leisure' option) is less important in shaping young people's experiences and futures than their home life, education and place within the labour market. It has, for example, been argued that leisure is the 'weak link in the chain of socialisation', providing a space for youthful experimentation and cultural development which is not available in the family, school or work (Cohen 1986). This is not to decry the value of youth work and there is no doubt that, where youth work is properly resourced and professionally organised, it can have play a significant part in supporting young people's transitions to adult life.

Youth work in Finland is generously resourced, largely through the proceeds and profits of the state-controlled national lottery VEIKKAUS, which provide the Ministry of Education with a resource base for the financing of youth work, sports and culture. (Finns who buy lottery tickets without personal success know that their money will still 'come round' again through youth work, sports and cultural provision.) Minister Andersson observed that it is difficult to preserve the structures of the welfare state in times of international competition and pressures on public expenditure but, despite reductions, central government support for youth work continues to be in excess of 100 million FIM per year.

Historically youth work has been concerned with the provision of leisure-time activity, ranging from summer camps to theatre and arts projects. Youth organisations have been an important mechanism for youth participation. Recently, however, not only have avenues for youth participation been eroded, but it is argued that young people have lost interest in the participation routes through youth organisations. Hence the development of new measures for participation such as the Internet information system being developed by Finland's national agency for youth co-operation, Allianssi.

There are also growing expectations that youth work should address specific social questions and the funding of youth work is likely to be tied increasingly to effective performance in the context of specific outcome measures.

Concepts of youth work have become very ambiguous in recent years. Its original purpose was educational - making citizens. Now there has been a move towards a more 'social problem' orientation. And there is a 'youth policy' orientation, where youth work is more broadly concerned with improving the living conditions of young people (but, according to those with experience of working in the youth work sector, this has not yet been sufficiently professionalised). So there are now many 'varieties' of institutionalised youth work.

The role of youth work in relation to living conditions of young people has not yet been subjected to serious research. It is difficult to attribute 'success' to youth work, and assertions of its value appear to draw more on conviction than evidence. The National Report, for example, observes that young people "seem to have kept themselves within the network of social relations and activities, largely thanks to local youth work" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.54). The international review team can, despite the lack of hard evidence, concur with this assertion, but it should not conceal the fact that there is still a gap between the expressed *aims* of youth policy and formal evaluation of its impact.

### **The Helsinki Youth Department**

The largest provider of youth work in Finland is the Helsinki Youth Department, to which the international review team paid an extended visit. The view of the Helsinki Youth Department is that youth work in Finland is about the promotion of *citizenship* (political, social, cultural and economic) and the development of skills in young people. Youth centres (which are referred to as youth 'halls' in the National Report) support *social participation*. There are special programmes to work with 'youth at risk'. One particular group in focus here are those who have problems completing their compulsory schooling: this is a key issue, since this can be the time when marginalisation starts.

*Cultural participation* is supported through music (there are apparently 200 young bands in Helsinki), theatre, arts and video studios, and through cultural events such as 'Dance Action'.

*Political participation* is fomented, at ground level, through encouraging young people to express their views and aspirations and to ensure that appropriate consultation processes have taken place before new initiatives are established.

In terms of *economic participation*, there used to be a special department for employment located within the Helsinki Youth Office but this has been moved elsewhere (the international review team was not clear about why this had taken place). But the Youth Office still employs some 150 young people a year, for specific purposes on specific projects. Unemployment is a key issue for young people (and therefore for youth work), for there is now emerging evidence of segregation and polarisation in employment opportunities, which is a new phenomenon for Finland. Helsinki has 12 youth workshops, for vocational orientation and qualification.

Young people in Finland are experiencing considerable problems in making the transition to adult life, certainly in comparison with young people from previous generations. They are having to make sense of a changing world and adapt their ways of living accordingly. Yet the public view of young people is often unsympathetic and concentrates not on their difficulties but on the problems they cause. It is very easy for young people's behaviour to give rise to 'moral panics'. Yet the issues which create these 'moral panics' arise

and subside. They are often quickly forgotten but when they are in the glare of publicity there is often overdramatisation and hostility which is not always merited. There seems to be something of 'war' against young people - their culture, drug misuse, drinking, graffiti, tech ravers, animal liberation....and *it is important that youth work and youth workers should try to take a more measured view of such issues* and encourage a more balanced debate.

The Helsinki Youth Department is developing its attention to ethnic minorities and the provision of multi-cultural youth work. In one youth centre (for 7-17 year olds, which attracts over 70 young people a day between 11am-9pm, and is staffed by four youth workers, and there are also always two counsellors present) there is a project about multicultural youth work. Youth workers have formed a multicultural group, holding regular meetings to exchange ideas and produce materials and information on immigration and the position of immigrants. The group is developing projects and has held an awareness day, to talk and discuss with immigrants. Members of the youth centre interviewed young people over the age of 13 in six schools about their use of spare time and informed them of youth work provision. There are major language barriers for some immigrant groups, which need to be overcome for education and integration. A multi-cultural network has been formed, to try to encourage immigrant young people to get into the 'middle of things' and to make friends with Finnish young people.

The Helsinki Youth Department is exclusively concerned with providing support for youth work and youth organisations. (Most other municipalities combine sport and youth.) It works with 22 district organisations. They have 30,000 members. They also have their own umbrella organisation to lobby within the City (the 'City team'). There are five youth centres in Helsinki which are run by youth organisations themselves (which is unusual).

Unlike other municipalities, the Helsinki Youth Department also provides project money for youth groups and organisations which do *not* have to be registered, although they have to be accepted by the Helsinki Youth Department as a youth organisation (of some kind). Project money is provided both in response to direct requests by groups of young people (for example, for a disco dance group, or cartoons group) and for initiatives which may benefit a wider constituency of young people (for example, for a skating park).

Like other municipalities, the Helsinki Youth Department provides financial subsidies to youth organisations with members under 16, for camps, for the salaries of those who work in district organisations and for projects. It is primarily concerned with supporting provision for young people in their *leisure* time, although it has established networks with schools and co-operates with other agencies on specific issues. However, there needs to be some measure of caution in engaging with such wider networks, for youth work is centrally about providing autonomous space and support for young people, reacting to emergency situations which face young people, and seizing opportunities to assist young people with information, guidance and support. It is important that such independence, which is what commands the respect and trust of young people, should not be compromised through participation in cross-sectoral activity.

The Helsinki Youth Department is mainly involved in youth work which takes place in formal and institutional settings. Street work, or detached work, is a new development in youth work, and is done by volunteers. It has been developed because there are now sometimes problems with young people 'hanging around' on the street (particularly in the centre, by the railway station) but, on the whole, "Helsinki is a cool and peaceful city - there are not too many hot issues".

### **The youth centre**

The international review team spent an evening in a youth centre in Helsinki. This was considered by the national administration to be a 'typical' youth centre, but it did not appear to be anything of the sort. It appeared to be extraordinarily well equipped, with a strikingly impressive range of human and technical resources. The young people were articulate, motivated, and deeply involved. They entertained the visitors with drama, art and dance - and appeared to revel in the opportunity to perform. It costs them 100 FIM a year to be a member of the youth centre and everything is free after that. The young people who performed

said that very few local young people use the centre - only a handful who sit in the 'hang out' room. 'Ordinary' kids don't go.

There are summer camps, which cost members of the youth centre 600 FIM to go, but the members we spoke to said that, in general, parents are happy to pay because they approve of their children's involvement and are enthusiastic about it. And one young man observed that if their parents didn't pay, you could earn 500 FIM in a week if you worked hard at fruit picking in the summer.

The international review team felt that this was a 'flagship' youth centre, involving 'special' young people. It was extremely impressive, with a wide range of activities available for members. The members we met were articulate, gregarious, and extremely pleasant company. It would have been interesting to have had the opportunity to contrast their sociability with the five young men in baseball caps who made a sharp exit from 'hang out' room the moment we went in on our way to the video editing suite, because they were not supposed to be there. The young people who hosted our visit had been specially selected and other young people had been told not to be there after 5pm.

### **Youth work in Loimaa**

Loimaa district is the location for the 'living conditions' cross-sectoral project which has already been described. This is a special project designed to break down professional boundaries and to build up networks to address a range of youth issues. There are three other such projects 'on this side of Finland'.

The international review team was also interested in more 'ordinary' youth work. The youth house (youth centre) in Loimaa offers pool, games and music. There is only one youth worker. Some 30-40 young people routinely attend each session. They are mainly aged between 14 and 17, but there are no age limits. The centre is open 3 or 5 nights a week and alternate weekends. When asked to define her role, the youth worker said it was to listen to young people, provide them with support and ensure their safety - and see that they don't break the rules (which are made by the politicians on the Recreational Board and its officers). Youth work, she argued, is about confidential engagement with young people's world, through establishing mutual trust. It is open door provision: any young people can attend.

And there are problems. On Friday evenings and weekends, a lot of young people are drunk and they are not allowed in (young people agree with this rule). The youth worker has been there for seven years and there were bad problems at first. Alcohol is the big issue - consumption has gone up, use by age has gone down. On weekends 14-16 year olds often drink 15 bottles of medium strength beer (on the street, not in the house!). They get it from friends or make it themselves. The municipalities and the Church are considering setting up a Walkers' Cafe run by volunteers (these are safe places for intoxicated kids). There are ten such cafes in Finland - young people need this kind of intervention and provision. Walkers' Cafes are just a space: there are no facilities, but it contributes to harm reduction and allows contact with adults. Loimaa still has relatively few such problems; Forssa (a nearby town) is much worse, with bigger problems of drugs and violence.

### **Youth work in Vihti**

Youth work was described by the Youth Secretary in Vihti as "essentially preventative work". Until recently, she said, the objective of youth work was to make happy young people. Now (as the money declines) the focus is on healthy and satisfied young people.

Yet there were ironies about these 'new' developments in youth work. A student report from last year had looked at old magazines about youth work in the 1950s and 1960s. It was interesting that although the language was very different, the issues were much the same as today:

\* sexual behaviour (in 1950s there was a course on 'if ever you should get married some day'; today the focus is on information, condoms, discussion)

- \* alcohol (in 1950s, the concern was public consumption of alcohol before the dance; today the focus on drug misuse as well)
- \* camps and trips (same aspirations, but then you had 50 young people and two instructors and a cook, whereas now you have 40 young people and 10 instructors)
- \* cultural competitions - singing, dancing, handicrafts, arts events (now it is more technological and located within a wider national, even European context, though while boys are now associated with rock bands, girls are still linked to folk music and folk traditions).

In the early days of youth work in Finland the maintenance of a focus on the individual young person was considered to be important, in relation to their development and achievement, and that is still the case today.

The Youth Secretary asserted that it is important for youth work to establish contact and build links with young people before the age of 12: "to try to establish first contact on the streets at 15 would be too late and too difficult... if they have positive experiences at 9, this is a building block for the future".

There are seven youth houses in Vihti, owned by the department for youth affairs; the voluntary Yojalka/NightFoot project is located at one. There are no other special projects. There are, however, support measures for projects *within* the youth houses. This is a relatively new development (last three years only) - to support targeted and specially planned initiatives around, for example, camps, training or national representation. Monies are set aside to respond to specific proposals put to the Youth Board. Proposals are normally accepted. (There were plans to cut the general grants for youth work in order to have more resources for support measures, but protests against this were effective.) [As an aside, the Youth Secretary noted that "accidents never ring a bell before they come; preventative work is so important".]

The Vihti youth office did carry out a study of young people and their leisure time. 78% were quite satisfied with their leisure possibilities (the study was of all young people, with no particular attention to more marginal young people). Young people did, however, want more information. And younger young people (predictably) wanted more activity: skating, ski-ing and ball games. For older young people, there is now the prospect for activity through the recently established youth council (committee).

The Yojalka/NightFoot project involves streetwork and detached work done by volunteers (local parents, but not those of the target age concerned) on weekends and holidays. This is concerned with young people at an acute stage of intoxication - through drugs, alcohol, and combinations of alcohol and medicines. The scheme helps them, takes them home and tries to maintain follow-up by staying in contact with them. There is also a mediation scheme with young offenders. Youth leaders and youth workers provide support for these initiatives, but they are additional to and separate from mainstream youth work provision. They were described as "like an 'appendix' to municipal youth work; it is special youth work". Training is provided for volunteers on these projects.

The international review team were interested to hear that youth workers in Vihti are, despite the 'problems' they are addressing through these special measures, reluctant to speak of 'problem' youth; instead they speak of 'conflict-bound' youth - young people who are bound to have conflicts. In order to respond to their 'needs', the youth department has worked closely with the social sector, the police, welfare services and schools in order to develop initiatives such as Yojalka/NightFoot.

NightFoot has 50 volunteers - 10 are involved in the mediation scheme, 10 do the administration and 30 are either streetworkers or run the Walkers' Cafe. On the weekends, from about 8pm to perhaps 3am, they go out in pairs or groups of three, making contact with young people under the age of 18. They wear special clothing, carry First Aid, and intervene in 'problematic' situations. Volunteers are recruited through schools (parents' nights), and through publicity in papers and at public events.

The issue they encounter most frequently is intoxication with alcohol. There is not widespread drug misuse, although there is a range of drugs used by some young people in Vihti: hash, speed, solvents and some hard drugs. The users are mainly young experimenters and there are new drugs around - some national flowers have been discovered to contain mescaline and these are mixed with alcohol (*see also previous section on Health and Social Welfare*).

## **The Vihti Youth Council**

The Vihti Youth Council (or youth committee) has 25 members aged 13-18; most are aged 15 or 16. Elections were held in schools and youth centres and the process received considerable publicity and attention. Since its formation in the autumn of 1996, members of the Council said they had been 'very busy', although it was not clear to what effect. The young people claimed that they are currently trying to build a good basis for the Youth Council; they will do more practical work later. They want to influence the decision-makers. But they have had to 'build our own model'. So far, they have had contact and discussion with the police and with the municipal council (each of whom has 'adopted' a member of the Youth Council).

The international review team was interested to find out what they wanted to change, or influence. They said they wanted to influence political decision-making by representing young people's voice. They had formed some working groups: such as a party group (for discos and non-alcoholic evenings - getting together but staying sober), and another groups was exploring the possibility of getting funding for a skateboarding ramp through direct contact with business.

There were no real problems in Vihti, simply opportunities to make things better for young people. Vihti is a small place. There are no gangs. Everyone knows each other. There had been only one dangerous situation in the last ten years, when two gypsy boys refused to leave the youth centre and threatened to rape the one worker on duty. Following that incident, there were now always two staff working at the centre.

Transport, the young people said, is the big issue. There is nothing at weekends. Young people are very dependent on their parents to transport them to discos and collect them afterwards (which they do and, apparently, do so very promptly!).

Some members of the Youth Council also observed that when young people leave the area to study, it is sometimes difficult to come back to Vihti because of the difficulty in getting building permits.

The young people were asked whether being on the Youth Council had altered their opinion of decision-makers (which the international review team felt was an important question, in the light of the recent Barometer findings that young people are mistrustful of politicians and political institutions). They replied that they thought that decision-making was 'reasonable' anyway. It had, however, made them more aware of the difficulties attached to decision-making processes, and they had seen the negative sides of tough budgetary decisions (the example they gave was the closing down of a playground which they indicated, perhaps incorrectly, only cost the municipality 70 FIM a month).

The Youth Council has been allocated a budget of 50,000 FIM by the municipal authorities, which was flattering to its members, but which they remained unsure what to do with. Only two of its members whom we spoke to (out of ten) had previously been involved in youth work provision and were familiar with the processes of 'participative practice'; most had put themselves forward for election through their schools because it seemed like something interesting to do - 'something different', 'a challenge' - and it might help their job prospects (although that was not, they claimed, the main reason for getting involved). There was an equal gender balance in the Youth Council but it was acknowledged that the girls were more active. That, they said, " was fairly typical in Finland". The youth house in which we met the members of the Youth Council attracts between 20 and 30 young people a night. It is open 2 or 3 nights a week. Despite the general air of confidence on the part of the members of the Youth Council who participated in the discussion reported above, a number of them admitted privately that they had deep anxieties about the future and were generally 'living for the day'; when asked what the future held for them, they said "who knows?".

## **Youth work training**

In Finland, youth workers have been trained since the 1940s. There are different levels of training, available at both secondary and tertiary levels, the former offering a two-year vocational qualification in youth and leisure instruction, the latter offering a three year diploma in youth and leisure instruction. In addition, the

University of Tampere offers a three year B.A. programme in youth work and there is also a four year M.A. degree programme within which youth education is an optional subject.

Vocational institutions award some 300 youth work qualifications each year and the University of Tampere awards some 20 B.A. degrees relating to youth work each year. The labour market for youth work is not, however, particularly buoyant. Of the total number of youth work professionals (3,600), about 600 of them are unemployed.

Views about youth work training and the status of youth workers were mixed. One youth worker (in Helsinki, which may be significant) argued that competition for places on more advanced youth work courses was intense, that recruitment procedures were rigorous, and that the training programme was thorough and professional. Youth workers trained in this way could expect full-time employment as managers of their own centres and were accorded reasonably high professional status.

Another youth worker noted, however, that at least until the Youth Work Act 1995, training had focused very heavily on young people's leisure-time activities. While more emphasis may recently have been placed on social policy, social pedagogy or social youth work, the status of youth work has declined as a result of political decisions to get rid of specific Youth Boards, the diminution of youth work departments and the fact that it was no longer compulsory to have youth secretaries. Amalgamating youth work with culture and recreation had almost certainly had the effect of draining specific youth work resources.

The lower status of youth workers (except in Helsinki, it was conceded) made pilot projects in co-operation difficult, if such social projects directed towards young people failed to pay a great deal of attention to the experience of youth workers. Social workers tended to carry greater influence in these initiatives, because of their statutory responsibilities.

## **Challenges for the future**

1. The international review team was disappointed not to see a more ordinary youth centre in operation, such as the one described to us in Loimaa. The youth centre in Helsinki gave the impression of being more like a school for the performing arts, in terms of its activities and the resources at its disposal. Different youth centres clearly cater for different kinds of young people. Some rightly offer structured programmes, others 'simply' provide social space. One is not necessarily better than another; they are different. There will, however, always be a temptation, at least politically, to favour those youth centres which deliver 'neat and tidy' programmes to motivated young people and secure clear and tangible outcomes. Such provision is not, however, likely to attract more excluded young people whose 'living conditions' are more precarious. Yet the latter are a major target for Finland's public policy. Youth centres which provide a supportive environment and informal guidance to young people may be essential in maintaining the social integration of this latter group. Of course, both services *can* be provided within the same centre; the challenge for the future is to maintain an appropriate balance between the two, either in terms of overall local provision or in the context of the same youth work setting.

2. A similar argument prevails in relation to the age range covered by youth work. The international review group was attentive to the fact that most discussions of youth work implicitly or explicitly referred to the 14-17 age group, either as the target group for youth work or as the de facto user group. At a time when youth policy is under pressure to establish priorities and targets, it is probably unhelpful to suggest that youth work should be ensuring that it works with a broader age range, both older and younger. Given all the arguments about youth transitions and the 'prolongation' of youth as a result of extended education and training and difficulties in finding work, there is obviously a case for engaging with older young people. Fourteen to seventeen year olds may be experiencing the 'acute anxieties of adolescence' but it is 17-25 year olds who are facing a 'chronic crisis of young adulthood' (Williamson 1985). Such a chronic crisis in their living conditions (at least for some of them) threatens to create social exclusion, which youth work is in some position to forestall. It is only likely to be forestalled by youth work, however, if there is a deep foundation of

trust and confidence in youth workers on the part of young people at risk of marginalisation. Youth workers have no special magic wand. The youth secretary in Vihti was therefore right in arguing that youth work needs to forge contact with a younger age group in order to build the foundations for future practice. The challenge for the future is to maintain a recognition that a pre-condition for youth work's capacity to act as a safety net for older young people experiencing difficulties in their living conditions lies in the positive relationships it has established with the same young people (or their contemporaries) at an earlier age.

3. It seems likely, in a context of resource constraint or decline, that special youth work projects are going to require the involvement of significant numbers of volunteers. The Yojalka/Nightfoot project in Vihti and the streetwork in Helsinki are good examples. This begs the question of the recruitment and selection, registration, training and support of volunteers. The international review team was furnished with very little information about such processes. The challenge for the future, if effective youth work is to be extended through the use of volunteers, is what these processes are to be and how they will be resourced.

4. There is a fundamental tension surrounding the direction of youth work in Finland. While there is general support for the contention that 'youth work makes sense' on the grounds of its preventative potential (the AFLA suggested that it costs five million FIM to deal with lifelong marginalisation, so youth work saves money in the long run), there is little clarity about exactly what this 'youth work' is. The international review team gained the impression that 'youth work' currently has three distinct profiles: ordinary, traditional youth work focused on leisure-time activities and interests (which may range from pool to drama); special, additional projects concerned with, for example, youth information, alcohol use, or detached work; and cross-sectoral initiative around living conditions in compliance with the new legislation. All, at one level or another, *might* be viewed as contributing to young people's personal development and assisting them in focusing and managing their lives. Or they may not. However, to tie youth work exclusively into wider networks of intervention is to risk losing the unique contribution that youth work can make to young people's lives (the point made in our discussions with the Helsinki Youth Department). But for youth work to remain on the margin of networks concerned with more central aspects of young people's lives (family, school, work or unemployment) is a waste of its potential contribution to those initiatives (as well as a failure to meet the expectations of the Youth Work Act 1995). Youth work should be able to provide valuable information to these networks about the realities of young people's experiences and expectations, without compromising questions of confidentiality and independence. There are two challenges for the future here. First, to maintain a 'menu' of youth work practice in any particular area (through 'ordinary' provision, special projects and cross-sectoral activity), which may meet both the leisure time and living conditions needs of the diversity of local young people. Secondly, for other agencies to recognise the privileged knowledge of youth workers: if young people's living conditions are to be addressed effectively, then the realities of some young people's attitudes and lifestyles (however unpalatable) have to be the starting point for any constructive intervention.

5. For young people to shape and manage their futures, they require access to comprehensive and reliable information. Allianssi is pioneering computer-based youth information, not just for Finland but for the whole of (English-understanding) Europe. Any information database, however, needs underpinning in four ways. First, young people have to know how to access it, something that needs to be taught in schools. Secondly, it needs a multiplicity of outlets, so that young people can access it in a variety of ways and a variety of settings (there has been talk elsewhere in Europe of datapoints in shops used by young people, post offices, and even 'holes in the wall' in the street). Thirdly, it needs the resources to keep it updated on a *very* regular basis. Fourthly, information is not objective or absolute; it may often need clarification, development and discussion. Finland is at the forefront of progress in the new information and communication technologies. A key challenge for the future is how these can be harnessed to support youth policy objectives. Youth work would appear to have a pivotal place within any such initiative.

6. Meeting with members of the Vihti Youth Council was an instructive (and enjoyable) experience for the international review team. However, it generated more questions than answers. It was unclear to us, and appeared to be unclear to the young people involved, quite what their role and purpose was, beyond the symbolic pride on the part of the youth secretary that Vihti had formed a youth council. Youth participation

is an important element in any democratic society and provide important experiential learning for citizenship, but only if it has support, direction and purpose. One youth worker saw the new enthusiasm for youth councils as little more than tokenistic - because young people in Finland are no longer committed to, or even involved in youth organisations. She doubted whether the 'glory days' of participation through youth organisations would return, and pointed out that these days young people are more into single issue commitment, such as animal rights or the environment. There are many ways of facilitating youth participation, however, and youth work has a critical role to play on this front, if only in very modest ways through consulting with young people and responding to their aspirations. The challenge for the future is not necessarily to establish what may often be little more than symbolic youth councils but, in the vacuum created by the disappearance of statutory and formally constituted municipal youth committees, but for youth work to support young people's participation not only within its own domain but also within the wider networks in which youth work is expected to play its part.

7. If youth work is expected to play a wider role in addressing the living conditions of young people, then there are likely to be implications for the curriculum of youth work training. While it remains important that youth work training should incorporate learning about adolescence and the development of young people, and understanding about methods of working with individuals and groups, there is clearly also a need for youth workers in training to develop a more comprehensive theoretical and policy grasp of the wider social condition of young people's lives, the legislation which affects their futures, and the range of agencies (educational, social welfare, and training and employment) which affect their prospects for the future. It was put to the international review team that courses needed to be developed in 'social youth work'. Whatever it might be called, the challenge for the future is to review the existing content of youth work training courses and ensure the inclusion of theories and practices which are more central to the new expectations of youth work following the Youth Work Act 1995.

## **Section Three: Themes and issues in youth policy**

### **Introduction**

The benefit of an international review for the country under consideration is that it can help to render 'the familiar strange'. National youth policy in Finland - as set out in the National Report - no doubt 'makes sense' to those who have shaped it and contributed to its development. In contrast, the international review team had to make sense of it. Much of youth policy in Finland is, without doubt, impressive and displays a continuing commitment to its young people, even in difficult economic times which *demand* a re-evaluation of public policy and more stringent resource management. The international review team, in a very short space of time, had both to gel as a working team *and* familiarise itself with what is a highly comprehensive range of provision for young people. Inevitably, gaps in the team's knowledge of youth policy in Finland remain. Questions remain unanswered. Theoretical assertions have not always been supported by empirical evidence, which may or may not exist. Below, in the first part of this section of the international report, we offer a commentary on a range of issues which generated many *questions* for the international review team. It is not intended to be a critique of Finland's youth policy but to contribute to further reflective thinking on specific elements of that youth policy and relationships between them - a youth policy which, in many respects, the international review team strongly commends. These raise broader and more cross-cutting questions than those which informed the 'challenges for the future' highlighted in earlier sections of the international report. The second part of this section moves away from these grounded concerns to explore the relationship between youth policy in Finland and the values and principles which the Council of Europe has suggested should inform the construction and development of *any* national youth policy.

### **PRACTICAL QUESTIONS**

#### **Research and the administration - the shaping of youth policy**

The international review team continued to be confused by the relationship between much of the body of youth research which is being carried out in Finland and the formulation of youth policy. The former appears to be preoccupied with analyses based upon post-modernist, *cultural* relativism whereas the latter is concentrated upon pragmatic attention to *structural* problematics facing young people in Finland in the 1990s.

Young Finns are depicted by youth researchers, both in the National Report and elsewhere (see Helve and Bynner 1996) as at the vanguard of 'post-modern' youth, yet most of the young people encountered by the international review team were very traditional, deeply patriotic and firmly integrated with the structures of Finnish society. It is extremely difficult to reconcile these two images, except by drawing on the National Report's contention that "the attitudes and values of the majority of young Finns are... contradictory and unanalytical" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.141) - possibly unanalysable! Contradictions abounded, although they appeared to derive as much from competing perspectives between the administration and research as they did from young people themselves. The researchers suggested that demoralisation and despondency about the future is becoming reflected in growing drug misuse and living for the moment, because of young people's lack of control over their lives (National Report, p.179); we wondered how this view could be related to arguments elsewhere that, whatever their difficulties, young Finns continued to strive for their 'dream' (a view certainly reinforced in our encounters with young Finns). Researchers drew attention to the globalism and internationalisation of young Finns; other evidence points to their persisting nationalism.

The relationship between research and government was described (by researchers) as one of critical distance but warm and practical connections, particularly on themes such as marginalisation. Warm relationships did not, however, mean that they are uncritical and the debate sometimes gets 'hot'; however, researchers hold

seminars with Ministries, in order to promote debate and understanding. And researchers are represented on the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs.

Research suggests that old links between young citizens, civil society and the state have been fractured. Participation in civil society by young people has diminished, and others (professionals and researchers) speak on their behalf. It was argued that the marketisation of the state has established new characteristics of public administration, which drives youth policy forward in the context of economic and political imperatives, rather than from a grounded understanding of the social and cultural condition of young people. So while there is now more youth research, its influence on youth policy has declined. This was the 'defence' presented by youth researchers. This does not mean, however, that there is *no* synchronicity between the findings of youth research and the formulation of youth policy. Indeed, more academic youth research is meant to complement the survey work of the youth Barometer, which is conducted not done by youth researchers but by the public administration. Youth research seeks to get 'behind' the survey in order to uncover the attitudes and experiences of young people. But much of this youth research is qualitative and therefore presents problems of small numbers and different findings, making generalisation difficult and coherent policy formulation problematic.

There is, nevertheless, consensus in both quantitative and qualitative research that young people have a very high appreciation of education in Finland. Their belief in education stems from the fact that it is *the* ladder for social advancement in Finland - even though this may be less certain or achievable than before. Links between educational achievement and labour market position are now more unpredictable, but this is a relatively new phenomenon in Finland (whereas in Germany or the United Kingdom this 'fracturing' took place over 15 years ago).

Finland is, according to researchers, a post-modernist society, based on individualism and independent values. That is a common conclusion of Finnish youth cultural analysis, which seeks to understand young people's way of life and orientations towards the world. Youth policy, some youth researchers would argue, is often developed from a technical and naive 'reading' of young people's life-styles, which are highly complex. This can prove frustrating for researchers, who see policy being constructed on 'superficial' survey findings rather than a more in-depth understanding of young people. But researchers are not lobbyists. They have no strategy for influencing the political process. And anyway there would be ambivalence in doing so. Research, they would maintain, is not about what is right or wrong, correct or incorrect. Research can question (for example, the legitimacy of professionalisation and marketisation) and perhaps suggest alternatives. But research does not (and, some argued, probably should not) directly influence the direction of youth policy. The evolution of government policy towards young people nonetheless provides new opportunities for research: for example, new training schemes may have limited value for the labour market, but research has indicated that they may provide an important place/space for social learning and identity work.

Both research and policy have made a great deal of the risk of social exclusion, yet conceptualisations of what counts as 'social exclusion' were rather vague and appeared to be very different from the nature of social exclusion amongst young people in other European countries; the international review team came to the conclusion that it is in fact not possible to fall out of the system in Finland - as one member of the team put it, "nobody has to live in boxes".

Finnish youth research observed that the production of the National Report had proved to be an 'interesting process' and had generated new research ideas, particularly around concepts such as citizenship and participation. The international review team sought to establish what they meant and the implications they had for youth policy. The response was that there are no clear definitions because these are open questions shaped by the political and cultural contexts in which they take place.

The international review team concluded that Finnish youth research remained largely theoretical and academic, *following* the evolution of youth policy rather than contributing to its formulation. More localised research, such as that conducted within the Helsinki youth department (for example, Taponen 1994, Kahkonen *et al* 1996) or within the living conditions project in Loimaa, appeared to be more grounded and

applied, informing directly the nature of local youth policy initiatives. No such relationship was evident at the national level.

## **Integrated youth policy?**

The view of the international review team is that the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs is *pivotal to the* construction of a coherent and integrated youth policy. It should be as broad based as possible if a genuinely holistic perspective and approach is to be developed. Its deliberations would clearly remain at a strategic level and it is recognised that discrete resources for different strands of service delivery must remain within the decision-making structures of different departments. It seems to us, however, that the evolution of an integrated youth policy is contingent upon the involvement in the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, in one capacity or another, of all government departments whose focus impinges *in any way* on the lives of young people. The recent involvement of the Ministry of Finance in an observer capacity is therefore to be welcomed. This is the means of cemented an integrated youth policy at national level.

The international review team remains unclear about the contribution being made to integrated youth policy at the regional/provincial level, particular in view of the proposed demise of provincial Youth Boards in the context of imminent regional government reorganisation (as of 1st September, 1997). It may be that, given the scale of the five new provinces (plus the self-governing province of Åland), the sub-regional networking currently being trialed in Loimaa and Salo provide a more effective model for the future.

At the local/municipal level, our evidence is that the 'integration' of youth policy may be facilitated by the 84 co-operation areas and exemplified by current experimental sub-regional initiatives in municipal co-operation, but *achieved* more through personal commitment than through formal agreements. There are pros and cons in formal and non-formal arrangements, so we are reluctant to suggest that integrated approaches *require* formal ratification. In the experimental Loimaa district, however, there was limited evidence - beyond the living conditions project - of broad-based and 'holistic' collaboration in youth policy. Municipalities appeared to opt in and out of partnerships, largely on the basis of operational professional judgements rather than on strategic political decisions. Moreover, where partnerships existed, they appeared to be *either* cross-sectoral within a municipality *or* based across municipalities within one sector. An integrated youth policy is more than that, and there is a worry that new approaches to youth policy will abandon old (youth work) practices before *effective cross-sectoral strategies based on genuine municipal partnerships* have been tried and tested.

There is one further question concerning the integration of youth policy. To what extent is horizontal policy integration compatible with vertical youth participation? This is a provocative question, but it derives from the implicit view in Finland that, following the new legislation, it is not possible to have a combination of youth committees/councils which involve young people, and youth boards and advisory bodies which involve politicians and professionals. The international review team has discovered that it is possible to have non-politicians on youth boards (for example, in Vihti) and Vihti is also endeavouring to forge a working relationship between its youth board and a (still very new) youth council. Integrated youth policy requires structures which both incorporate political and professional decision-making across sectors affecting young people *and* engages with representatives of young people who are likely to be affected by those decisions.

## **Racism, immigrants and minorities**

The international review team recognises that immigration and the position of minorities is still a relatively minor, *though not necessarily insignificant*, issue in Finland. It welcomes the establishment at the end of 1996 of an anti-racism action programme, with a group at ministerial level (led by Minister Andersson) to co-ordinate initiatives combat racism, address the housing and employment disadvantages of immigrants, and enhance tolerance and good ethnic relations in Finland.

This may be a timely development. While the international review team saw no evidence of a deep-seated racism, it became aware of some of the negative attitudes held by Finnish young people towards foreigners and immigrants, to which the National Report also refers (Ministry of Education 1997, pp.30-31). This is rarely malicious but there is what might be called a gentle hostility and more sensitivities and programmes designed to promote understanding and tolerance amongst young people may be needed. Only the big cities have specific and explicit policies concerning services and general anti-racist work. Finns need to learn to

cope with difference. It is easy to be an easy-going tolerant society in theory; the challenge is now a practical one as Finland undergoes a transition from a strongly mono-ethnic society to multi-ethnic one (along with a number of other transitions it is currently having to make). It is all too easy for minority groups, which often suffer the greatest disadvantages in their host countries, to become the scapegoats for those countries' difficulties. When indigenous young people in particular face problems, young people from ethnic minorities often become their targets. The fact that the current Miss Finland is of mixed race has been laudably highlighted by the AFLA to promote its anti-racist campaign (as part of the Council of Europe's 'All Different All Equal' campaign against racism, intolerance and xenophobia).

Yet, despite such positive strategies, the international review team was told that not a lot was still being done to counteract racist trends (Minister Andersson's group and the Ministry of Education's anti-racism committee may be changing that). It is an opportune time for Finland to nip threads of racism in the bud. The international review team was concerned, for example, that in an otherwise very positive visit to Vihti, the account of the *only* significant problem caused by young people in the last *ten* years ensured that reference was made to the fact that the perpetrators were two *gypsy* boys - emphasising the fact, and the perspective, that troublesome young people were likely to be those who were different. If this was not the case, the ethnicity of the two boys was irrelevant to the account.

Immigration is currently, to a very large extent, a south of Finland question. There are, however, 11 refugee reception centres all around the country. This put pressure and responsibility on cultural and youth work, and sport in these areas - there is obviously great potential for integration if youth workers are active in promoting multicultural activity.

In Helsinki itself, the Caisa International Cultural Centre demonstrates what can be achieved through a proactive stance on multiculturalism. The idea behind the Centre is to provide a multicultural meeting point - for both Finns and foreigners. The Centre fulfils several functions:

- \* social (meeting of languages and cultures, breaking down prejudice and racism)
- \* pedagogical and cultural (seminars on awareness of other cultures and on social integration)
- \* employment and enterprise (individual integration, information, knowledge of employers who are happy to hire foreigners)
- \* recreational (be yourself)

No one has to join a group; they can just turn up. The big hall always has art exhibitions and is used for concerts, by schools and young people, and for dancing. Voluntary organisations, immigrant groups and friendly societies are all involved. Schools with large numbers of immigrants tend to make regular use of its facilities. Evening activities are usually concerned with music, sports and dancing - activities that do not need language.

The work of the Centre extends beyond activities within its building. Schools, for example, have an eight week stage of multi-cultural education, to which the staff at Caisa contribute. The staff also work with the 'Station Children' - mainly, but not exclusively, immigrant young people (the group does include young Finns) who hang around the station. This is basically a form of detached youth work. The young people want to come to Caisa every night, but this is not possible because of limited resources and space at the Centre.

One of the staff (on job placement) at the Centre has worked intensively with this group, at the Centre, on the street, and in extra-mural activities. His approach was to reach out to young people wherever they were and to 'weave them in' to an international campaign. He had organised a summer camp, with staff drawn from a variety of racial backgrounds. The basic 'philosophy' of his work was concerned with the cross-fertilisation of knowledge and experience - through doing different things *together*. He tried to build activities on young people's interests, willingness and motivation - often using older teenagers as volunteers. The Sports Ministry had provided the funding for the summer camp. The diversity of national origins of participants (or their parents) was striking (for example, he cited India, Vietnam, Somalia, Iran, Estonia, Turkey, and Ghana).

Despite its internal range of provision, the international review team was surprised to find that the Caisa International Cultural Centre is not strongly connected to wider networks of provision for young people (or, indeed, other groups). The international review team felt that its knowledge, understanding, and experience would be invaluable in contributing to multicultural initiatives in other settings.

There are similar multicultural Centres in Turku, Tampere and Oulu and one is soon to be established in Espoo. For the international review team, the visit to the Centre in Helsinki was the one opportunity it had to distil some understanding of the position of immigrants (and particularly young people from ethnic minorities) in Finland.

The largest concentration of immigrants, we were told, is in the east of Helsinki. There are high levels of unemployment, a point emphasised in the National Report: "The average unemployment rate among immigrants is about 50 per cent and that of Somalis is over 90 per cent" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.31). They are mainly families with young children and there are not that many young people - yet. But, Caisa argued, it is never too early to start promoting understanding and integration. Caisa provides some support, but it can do little to address the fundamental need for employment (though we are aware of a number of special measures being taken by the Ministry of Labour on this front). Young people from immigrant communities are often very despondent about their futures, and there are high levels of alcohol use amongst immigrant youth (although the international review team noted that there appears to be amongst Finnish youth in general). If they do not become involved in constructive activities, it is very possible that they 'slip in' to negative behaviour in terms of drug misuse and crime. But, Caisa maintained, activities were not enough: "youth workers need to give them a lot of time and develop more creative interventions, to help these young people make their own decisions". Immigrant young people were rarely isolated or 'ghetto-ised', often 'hanging around with young Finns, and they tended to share common difficulties with other Finnish young people, except that their problems were often accentuated. Despite the insidious levels of unemployment in immigrant communities, problems amongst immigrant youth had not yet reached 'difficult' levels: they were often much the same, though more concentrated, as those affecting young people in Finland in general.

With these observations in mind, the international review team would reiterate that levels of racial intolerance in Finland appear to derive more from a lack of experience, understanding and sensitivity than any more direct racism. More direct intervention strategies on 'tolerant Finland' (which is promoted by the Ministry of Labour) might nonetheless be developed.

### **Performance and evaluation**

The promotion of young people's living conditions has, to date, tended to take the form of special projects, which have not yet become part of mainstream practice. Nonetheless, these special projects are often subject to more rigorous performance targets and monitoring procedures, paving the way no doubt for more general performance-based allocations of resources. The international review team has noted the observation made in the National Report that:

"The impact of the services [described above] is difficult to measure objectively and unambiguously. One thing is clear, partly thanks to them young Finns manifest surprisingly few symptoms of social exclusion, despite the worst youth unemployment in Europe" (Ministry of Education 1977, pp.53-54)

How do we really *know* that it is even 'partly thanks to them'? But the issue is a broader one that just the difficulty of evaluating performance and attributing detectable 'success' to particular interventions. While performance targets are usually designed to encourage more effective practice, they can also, unintentionally, be a recipe for reducing the efficacy of practice because *there are always other ways of reaching targets* which are not necessarily related to an improvement in performance. Certain targets may be reached, for example, by abandoning concentration on the *most* alienated and marginal groups of young people (who may be, at the conception stage, the focus of the targets) and working with more motivated and co-operative,

though still *relatively* marginalised, groups of young people. Thus targets must be *realistic* in the context of the different groups of young people who are the focus of intervention. The international review team believes that there is a strong case for the more rigorous evaluation of youth work initiatives, in order to discover the ways in which they may be contributing to the improvement of young people's living conditions, but the criteria applied in such evaluations need to be constructed sensitively and appropriately, using qualitative as well as quantitative indicators.

Furthermore, the international review team would wish to inject a note of caution around the apparent success of some of the new networking and cross-sectoral projects, such as the 'Truancy project' in Hanko, one of the initiatives developed by the Varjopuoli taskforce and described in the National Report (p.55). Innovative measures often elicit greater effort from those involved (because they are more interesting and challenging than routine work). They are often better resourced than similar initiatives would be if they were part of mainstream practice. They attract greater interest and publicity, which the target group are often aware of (and, sometimes, even become involved in). In short, there can be what is often known as a Hawthorne effect: it is not the professional strategy and methodology which leads to 'success' so much as the special attention. Replication of such apparently successful measures often creates disappointing results, because outcomes do not live up to the expectations generated by the 'pilot' projects. This is hardly surprising, since the momentum of early days has slowed down and the resource base is often more limited. The international review team therefore advises some caution if it is anticipated that some of the 'flagship' initiatives following the Youth Work Act 1995 and outlined in the National Report can be extended into mainstream practice with the same success.

### **Education and training: structures and cultures**

"Education, self-enhancement, always pays. The better the education, the better the prospects for employment" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.71). So said Minister Andersson in his response to the opening presentation by Ms Pia Viitanen (MP and Chair of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs) in the Finnish Parliamentary debate on young people's living conditions on 18th April, 1996.

There are clearly many arguments to support his view (such as the growing complexities of social life and the contribution education makes to active citizenship as well as the likely greater competitiveness in the labour market) but there are also problematics, particularly the (sub)cultural pressures *against* education which can counter-balance structural rationality in favour of education. The inflation of educational qualifications, and unemployment amongst those who have worked for better qualifications can lead, *over time*, to diminishing commitment to education by young people. Finland has not yet faced this possibility because there has not yet been sufficient time for these cultural counter-pressures to emerge. But they have started to emerge in the United Kingdom (see Furlong and Cartmel 1997). In Finland, there are still plans to maintain the expansion of education and training and to strengthen links between education and training and the labour market (National Board of Education, pp62-63). This will intensify the *structural* need for the acquisition of appropriate education and vocational qualifications, but it will not address the possibility of cultural disillusionment about such engagement, particularly amongst young people who are relatively disadvantaged by regional location or ethnic background, for whom such efforts may not result in significantly improved prospects in the labour market. It is already being argued in Finland that "questions requiring urgent answers concern the declining educational motivation of young people" (Huotelin and Kaauppila 1995, p.33), although any detectable decline is currently from a very high level of motivation.

This 'cultural' dimension to young people's assessment of whether or not it is worthwhile to apply themselves to educational study and vocational training carries a risk of compounding the exclusion of the most excluded. That is one reason why the international review team was particularly interested in the debate around the amendment to the Labour Market Support Act in January 1996 (the other reason was because this was the only issue in youth policy in Finland which appears to have created some level of publicly aired controversy and dissent). The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs criticised the 'haste' in implementing the amendment, arguing that there had been limited debate about the risks such measures (effectively withdrawing income support for young people unless they commit themselves to training) may create in confirming marginalisation. The young people targeted by the legislation - the small minority (around 10%) of young people without secondary level qualifications of any kind - may not be 'forced' into participation in

training, but instead driven further to the edge, having to find alternative means of survival if state benefits were withdrawn. A similar measure was taken in the United Kingdom in 1988 and did not achieve the desired effect that 'young people should no longer have the option of unemployment'; the latter was indeed the unintended consequence. At the time, however, in the UK only around one-third, and certainly less than half of young people remained in education beyond the minimum school leaving age and post-school vocational training was a reluctant option for young people who had left school and were unable to find a job. The situation in Finland is very different, with strong motivation amongst the majority of young people towards education and some 90% remaining in education or training beyond the minimum school leaving age. This may be, in part, a consequence of the contracted labour market (which is the most central reason given for improving post-16 participation in education and training in the UK - see Banks *et al* 1992) but, *in Finland*, we believe it is primarily for more positive reasons. This is why the international review team is somewhat perplexed by the arguably 'coercive' action of the Labour Market Support Act amendment, which is potentially divisive and does not sit comfortably with the general patterns of shaping youth policy, which derive from a consensual and integrative philosophy.

The amendment to the Labour Market Support Act was justified, in part, on the grounds that educational grants were lower than unemployment benefits. Yet the vast majority of Finnish young people elect to live on educational grants (and parental support) rather than unemployment benefits; financial considerations for most, are clearly *not* the driving force behind their decisions and are based on what the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs called 'independent career choices', a foundation which it argued should be universally sustained. The amendment puts this foundation in some jeopardy and was, therefore, perhaps premature, without exploring more deeply why a small minority of young people in Finland do not take the path of the majority (see Laaksonen *et al* 1994, Paivarinta 1996).

The other possible consequence of the amendment is to confirm the low(er) status of vocational training in comparison with more academic qualification, which does not assist youth policy objectives concerned with the stronger integration of academic and vocational study, to which the National Report makes reference:

"Extensive experiments have been undertaken in secondary education and training with a view to intensifying cooperation between general and vocational institutions" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.88)

"The intention is to upgrade part of current vocational education to higher education level... What actual change this will bring to education-industry relations is - despite certain promises - still unclear" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.145)

Vocational training, however it is constructed and positioned in relation to academic education, remains in most European countries a 'low' option, to the point where it is considered to be little more than a 'holding tank' (the view held by some Finnish youth researcher, according the National Report p.146). The international review team believes that there is a middle ground view of vocational training in Finland which need neither consign it to damning criticism nor offer the delusion that it is a specific response to the skills requirements of the economy. It is the latter (false) claim that exposes more basic vocational training to the criticisms so often made by youth researchers. The issue was encapsulated, in the context of the UK, by Gleeson when he wrote,

"colleges of further education have been known to plead with local employers for donations of equipment which is *no longer of any use* to them so that young people can be trained in *new skills*" (Gleeson 1989, p.64; emphasis added)

The Principal of Loimaa Professional Institute did not go quite this far, but did point to the difficulties (because of resource constraints) of equipping the youth workshops with modern equipment, although the institute itself had received donations of equipment from local employers (the Principal did not comment on whether this equipment was modern or 'no longer of any use' to employers in the real labour market).

It is for these reasons that the international review team was rather concerned about the loose usage of the term 'well trained' (see the National Report, p.75). We understand that at the most advanced levels of both

education and training, 'well-trained' is likely to mean the capacity to be active citizens and contributors to social and economic development, thus responding to the 'leading edge' of Finland's political and economic needs. At lower levels, however, 'well trained' remains more ambiguous. Does it refer to attitudes or skills? Is it in relation to social integration or economic prospects? Although the international review team was *told* of youth workshops (for example) which are concerned with developing *skills* relevant to the labour market (apprenticeship training and entrepreneurship are examples from a list provided in the National Report, p.37), we *witnessed* workshops which were primarily concerned with *attitudes* (learning to learn; getting up, time structures and the disciplines of work; doing something) - which is consistent with a view expressed elsewhere in the National Report:

"The aim is to encourage and motivate young people to undergo further training and seek employment, and thereby take control of their lives" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.36)

This raises the further question of whether it is really public sector *vocational training* programmes that are required - or something else, such as job creation, purposeful activity, or work experience. Later in the National Report, in a discussion of the positive experiences of workshops and them leading to applications for further vocational training and even self-employment, it is noted that "youth workshops promote an active lifestyle. They could be called 'intensive care units' in careers counselling" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.96). Like the youth researchers' critique of extended education as "waiting rooms and day-care centres" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.146) rather than institutions seeking to increase knowledge and skills, that is a long way from training in specific skills in order to promote employability.

Even if vocational training is entirely about employability, it raises questions about 'employable for what'. Both in the National Report and in the discussions held between the international review team and those expert in training policy in Finland, reference was constantly made to there being no demand for untrained people on the labour market (for example, National Report, p.95) which justifies the assertion that young people should not be "tempted to enter the labour market prematurely" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.96) and reflects the point that employers complain of shortages of trained job seekers (National Report, p.93). But there is too little differentiation and critical distance on these *general* points: which labour market, which employers, what kind of 'training'? There is no distinction between traditional and technological labour markets (who empties dustbins in Finland?), which require different combinations of compliance and enterprise and or 'hard' and 'soft' qualifications and skills. It is natural for information to be given to the international review team about Finland's international competitiveness in leading edge technologies and its modern flagship companies such as Nokia, but there appeared to be great reluctance to respond to questions concerning the 'low level' economy, almost as if it does not exist.

Finally, the international review team was interested in two further questions in the field of education, training and employment. First, it notes the passing of the National Qualifications Act in 1994, within which "one of the guiding principles is that qualifications are granted independently of the way in which the required knowledge and skills have been acquired, whether in educational establishments, in self-motivating studies or on the job" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.82). This is clearly a move in the direction of competence-based qualification, in which 'how to do' is subordinated to 'can do'. The international review team was curious as to what had led to these developments and whether or not a full debate had taken place about the limitations, as well as the possibilities of this approach. It may be highly appropriate to lower-level occupations (at craft and technician level) but serious concerns have been expressed elsewhere about its suitability to professional activity, which clearly requires a broad base of underpinning knowledge in order to make appropriate judgements about the most effective action. Moreover, technical competence-based approaches to qualification are at odds with other trends towards the development of so-called 'soft' qualifications (such as communication skills, and problem-solving) which are seen as essential for the promotion of personal initiative and creativity (see De Wachter *et al* 1995). The challenge may be to ensure approaches to both which are complementary.

Secondly, and possibly part of the answer to our question as to who does the low-level jobs in Finland, the international review team heard suggestions that students may be taking the jobs that were previously done by the less skilled. Students can earn up to 2,000 FIM per month without any reduction in their study grant.

Even with the study grant and housing allowances, many students are left with around 30 FIM a day (less than 1,000 FIM per month), so it is essential to have some additional income. Some students are fortunate to find part-time jobs within their study institution and others received help from their parents. But others do cleaning and similar jobs, which pay around 30 FIM per hour. It is possible to take a further study *loan* of around 1,300 FIM a month, but the interest is regulated by the banks and many students are not keen on accumulating debts. If the ever-expanding number of students is, indeed, soaking up the available more unskilled and casual employment, then there is some risk of extending the continuum of advantage to disadvantage: while some young people have *both* education and employment, others may have *neither*. This is the kind of polarisation which is emerging in Australia, and causing concern since it is conferring both formal qualifications and valuable labour market experience on many young people, while compounding the exclusion of the few.

### **The logic of prevention**

The international review team believes that Finland's strong emphasis on *prevention* in youth policy is wholly appropriate. Other European countries faced with pressure on public expenditure have curtailed early, and constructive, intervention in education, youth work and training, only to encounter rising public sector costs in other departments (criminal justice, health, housing) which are having to deal with the consequences of those decisions.

Yet, while we do not think it is wholly necessary to attempt to assess the savings which accrue from 'prevention' strategies (though no doubt accountants would wish to do so), because there are other good reasons for making constructive interventions in the lives of young people, there are still interesting questions to be asked here. The international review team was made aware that the 'prevention of exclusion' argument is a significant persuader in the continuing political commitment to youth work. Both the AFLA and the Mayor of Vihti made reference to the 5 million FIM per person that lifetime marginalisation costs the state, so preventative youth work is important. But where did this figure come from? We have no evidence that anyone in Finland has (yet) suffered from a lifetime of marginalisation.

There are cost-benefit analyses which have been conducted, for example in the UK by 'hard-nosed accountants' (Coopers and Lybrand 1994) which demonstrate the impact of effective youth work on crime prevention. We welcome these arguments and perspectives (which implicitly, if not explicitly, inform so much of Finland's youth policy), and commend their foresight. But, while prevention has a logic, it is always difficult to prove. Without an intervention, would something different have taken place. Clearly, those implementing different strategies would like to think so, but we can never be sure. Is not traditional open youth work in Finland more an act of faith and social commitment by the older generation towards the young, rather than an act of science where costs and benefits are the only source of its legitimacy? We suspect that the '5 million FIM' argument is a convenient political cover, but if it continues to persuade political authorities to invest constructively in young people, it will have served its purpose.

### **Drug and alcohol misuse**

The claim in the National Report (p.101) is that there are no data on the prevalence of harder drug misuse. Certainly illegal drug misuse in Finland remains on a relatively modest scale, from the verbal evidence we were given, though alcohol misuse (especially when mixed with medicines) does seem to be a growing problem, and the views on this expressed in the National Report (p.171) were repeated at a number of meetings with the international review team. Not much mention was made, however, of any links between drug misuse and crime (despite comments in the National Report, p.106 and p.118). The international review team feels that these are all practical questions which do need to be addressed, first through a measured research strategy and then through youth policy development.

Mention in the National Report (p.176) of the 'protective effect' of moderate alcohol use should be disputed. There is still a contentious debate about the validity of the research which produced such conclusions. And this kind of argument may not help the inclination of young Finns to drink to get drunk (National Report, p.101). More considered alcohol messages may be needed.

## **Age thresholds**

The international review team was interested in the rationale underlying the many different age thresholds which are outlined in the National Report (p.107; pp.123-129). In some ways, such variations work against the possibility of 'integrated' youth policy. We were told that there was a 'jungle of laws' (about 100) relating to young people, with a wide range of age thresholds. Some consideration might be given to their rationalisation, if this is at all possible and can remain consistent with the wider legislative context within which they have been shaped.

## **Criminal justice**

According to the National Report (p.180), a tiny proportion of those in penal institutions are under the age of 20. Is this because there is so little youth crime in Finland (and certainly very few persistent young offenders), or because policy deals with it in a community-based and diversionary way. Is it dealt with in a 'gentle' supportive way (like the girl who was caught selling alcohol at school)? The National Report does not provide us with sufficient information on youth justice *policy*, although youth researchers note that,

"According to the 1993 crime statistics, two types of crime emerge as increasingly 'popular' among teenagers: care thefts and general vandalism" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.194)

These are both 'expressive' offences, usually precipitated by boredom. [we do not subscribe to the researchers' analysis that "crimes committed for 'kicks'... show that young people are ready to risk their own future in a spirit of living for the moment" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.195).] What is in fact more significant is that there appear to be limited upward trends in *instrumental* juvenile crime, such as burglary, theft or even robbery. This is the type of juvenile offending which tends to increase when young people are denied access to legitimate resources.

In advanced western societies, responses to juvenile crime have largely proved ineffective, whether they have been focused on punishment or treatment. Most young people who do commit crime grow out of it as they approach adulthood, although criminologists are now interested in whether, if adulthood does not bring *employment*, patterns of youthful offending will persist into adult life. There is now growing interest in a 'third way' of responding to youth crime, which is based on conceptions of 'restorative' (rather than retributive or reformative) justice. This ensures that young offenders are retained within the communities where they have committed offences but are required to 'make good' the bad they have done. This may happen already, in an informal, way in Finland. Youth crime may not even be an issue for youth policy. But the international review team feels that, especially in relation to the possibility of an emergent drugs culture, any youth justice policy must be compatible with the philosophy and principles which inform other strands of youth policy which currently exist: prevention, integration and constructive intervention.

## **Housing and mobility**

The international review team heard little about the housing situation of young people, nor about specific housing policies directed at young people. Any discussion tended to focus on questions of mobility, in terms of the availability of accommodation for study away from home and the feasibility of finding accommodation for young people who wish to return, independently, following their studies, to more remote regions of Finland. We received few answers to these questions; responses tended to concentrate on the accommodation for school and higher education students studying away from home, and the fact that there was a one-way 'drift' towards the more populated areas of Finland, notably Helsinki but also Oulo, Tampere and Turku, which were more exciting for young people and provided better prospects for the future.

The international review team was also interested in the feasibility of the ASP home saving award described in the National Report (pp.112-113), when young people's resources are so limited.

We concluded, perhaps mistakenly, that although more young people are now having to remain for longer in the parental home, and are more discontented about having to do so, there are not significant housing problems for young people. There does not appear to be any visible homelessness, although there was some comment about the 'street kids' who do live at home but spend all their waking hours away from their homes, because of tensions with their families.

The housing question we established was to do with out-migration and not being able to return to original communities because of a lack of building plots and permits (as well as a lack of jobs). But this may have been rather special in relation to Loimaa and Vihti, which are strategically located in the Helsinki hinterlands. (We suspect there are fewer problems, in terms of *housing*, for those returning to more remote parts of Finland - the issue there is more likely to be one of employment.)

The AFLA said that there were distinct trends of young people moving to regional centres of population and commented that "In the long run, this can be a problem". Agriculture is not so big any more and cannot provide sufficient employment (although the state offers subsidies for loans so that children can take on their parents' farms). There are various 'incentives' to attract businesses and people to municipalities where the population is growing old. Such municipalities have to provide good services in order to attract people to them, but often do not have the capacity - in terms of the tax-paying population - to levy sufficient resources through local taxation to achieve this end.

Whether the Finnish authorities have to come to terms with irreversible rural de-population is in part a political question and in part contingent upon the aspirations of young Finns. Since the international review team did not visit any such isolated rural area, it is not possible to comment further on the contribution of youth policy to the needs and aspirations of young people in those communities.

### **'Social action', 'wanton individualism' and youth participation**

The National Report (p.205) comments on the increasing popularity of unconventional forms of social action, while drawing attention to the decreasing levels of participation by young people in traditional structures, such as youth organisations. The international review team was told about active young Finns who organised around issues such as the environment and, during our second visit, about the trouble at an animal rights demonstration (caused, we were told, by a small number of political activists surrounded by large numbers of naive young people who were caught up at the event). There is a paradox here. Youth policy, both now and in the past, though in different ways, has encouraged young people to have a say and play their part in society. Participation in the past was through youth organisations; today, 'civic responsibility' takes more eclectic forms. A thread running through contemporary youth policy in Finland is about counteracting 'wanton individualism' and promoting 'life management' and personal initiative. Yet the legitimacy of personal initiative and social action appears to be highly regulated: social action is encouraged so long as it does not transgress the parameters of acceptability.

One might anticipate that there will be more 'social action' by young people which will be attributed to wanton individualism. Not only are single issue commitments (across Europe) becoming more typical of patterns of young people's 'political' interests, but recent changes in youth policy (in Finland) have moved decision-making process away from the orbit of youth participation. This has been justified, in part, on the grounds of the declining interest of young people in playing an active part in youth organisations, but it dangerously leaves young people on the margin, outside the fields of political action, as the National Report suggests:

"From their margin, some young people observe, disparage and cynically mock the players of the political field... They disregard the political arena, seeing that it has failed to keep its promises... The political field is left to 'them', the old traitors and gamblers. At most, young people communicate their own political views aggressively, with insults and cynical shrugs" (Ministry of Education 1997, pp.202-203)

The abandonment of youth boards at municipal and provincial levels, the replacement of the National Youth Council with the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, are but the most obvious symbols of processes which have 'estranged' youth people from participation. Political disengagement is a pervasive phenomenon, not just restricted to youth work structures, although it is in youth work that the greatest effort is often made, professionally, to ensure the participation of young people. Proposals for making funded local youth work more targeted and specifically focused suggests that decisions on the priorities for youth work will be made by politicians and professionals. Does this make youth committees redundant, or little more than tokenistic? And if so, should there be other mechanisms for engaging with and involving young people in the debate on issues which affect them. The very fact that young people do feel strongly about the environment or animal rights suggests that disaffection with formal politics has given way less to resignation and more to new political independence (a question posed by the National Report, p.199). The political challenge is not to suppress these new found enthusiasms, or even try to co-opt them, but to enlist them in the broader debate about young people's futures and how best to maximise their possibilities.

## **Social exclusion**

'Social exclusion' is a complex phenomenon, subject to a variety of conceptualisations and definition (though see Room 1995). It is relative and absolute. It is objective and subjective. It is caused by institutional practices and individual responses. As the National Report suggests, it is "like a bar of soap, fairly easy to grasp, though just as likely to slip from one's fingers" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.178). The international review group, while recurrently hearing the comment that youth policy in Finland was directed at preventing exclusion, was not convinced that any young people in Finland are at risk of the kind of exclusion currently being experienced in some other European countries. But that is perhaps a different form of exclusion, one characterised by long-term unemployment, abject poverty, homelessness and possibly dependent drug misuse. In Finland, youth researchers have distinguished between overt and covert exclusion. Overt exclusion, or rather its repercussions, they argue, can be seen in statistics; but the view of the international review team is that there is very little statistical evidence of exclusion in Finland. Covert exclusion, the researchers argue, is by definition hidden. It means,

"losing control of everyday life, which may be shown by only small and insignificant manifestations, but which subjectively experienced still run the risk of evolving into a repressive vicious cycle" (Ministry of Education 1997, p. 179)

As the National Report (p.182), the most excluded are not visible or receptive to statistical study. It seems to the international review team that there is a great deal of *speculation* about the social exclusion of young people in Finland (or at least the risk of it), with virtually no concrete evidence of either its scale or the attitudes and experiences of those who are excluded. If socially excluded are not receptive to statistical study, then alternative approaches to discover the nature of their situation are required. Finnish youth researchers appear to be highly adept at conducting small-scale qualitative research, but this is focused on either articulate post-modern young people or spectacular representatives of highly visible youth cultures. The international review team would suggest that they turn some of their attention to more 'ordinary', excluded young people in order to provide a more grounded analysis of the patterns and nature of social exclusion amongst young people. Youth policy would then have a firmer basis for developing re-integrative initiatives in their direction.

## **VALUES AND PRINCIPLES**

### **Principles underpinning youth policy**

The Council of Europe has set out a framework for youth policy (see document of S410 October 1996, Budapest CDEJ report). Although pitched at the level of principle, and requiring 'translation' to test their application in relation to specific policies affecting young people, these policy principles provide an important foundation for a concluding reflection on national youth policy in Finland.

## **Integrated youth policy**

Global (or holistic) and integrated youth policy, by definition, has to be based upon the coherent co-ordination of sectoral policies, with the co-operation of different actors/institutions/levels.

The international review team wishes to compliment the authorities in Finland for seeking to establish principle and practice which addresses the living conditions of young people - clearly a 'holistic' perspective on young people to which youth policy is addressed. The legislative framework for such an approach is set out in the Youth Work Act 1995.

Coordination of the youth policies is a central theme within the Youth Work Act: development measures needed to improve young people's conditions must be included in the action and financial plans of the ministries and coordinated by the Ministry of Education on the national level, by provincial governments on the regional level and by local authorities on the local level. The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs deals with and issues statements on youth work to be included in the action and financial plans of the ministries, though the ministries are not bound by its recommendations or responses..

At the level of both national and local administrations, there have been obstructions to this desired approach. At the national level, there is variable commitment to an integrated youth policy, which demands engagement across government departments. Every Minister predictably says that co-operation and co-ordination is important but, when it comes to tough political decisions, there are inevitably other forces at play, such as trade unions' powerful influence on the labour market, or the lobbying power of pensioners, who represent some 20% of the population. Young people have less political clout, and this is reflected in political decisions, such as the 10% cut in the budget for youth work.

Nevertheless, the Finnish government has endeavoured to establish reasonably effective partnerships in relation to youth policy. Given the rigid division of labour within the central administration, this was described as "quite successful for an old fashioned corporation". The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs, as a 'standing committee' with a focus on youth policy, represents a model of partnership for emulation elsewhere in youth policy structures. Yet not all ministries whose activities affect the living conditions of young people are members of the Advisory Council. The international review team observed that, at government level, networking and an integrated approach is more likely to materialise when it is born not for the sake of integration but in order to solve a particular problem. The task force of permanent secretaries to consider the issue of youth unemployment provides a good example. It is *key issues*, rather than networking for networking's sake, which precipitate cross-sectoral activity, and no doubt this is the case at all levels. Yet to ensure a genuinely integrated youth policy, there must be *reactive* and well as proactive structures - allowing for the possibility of reflection on the impact of wider decisions which may *affect* young people. Finland has already moved in this direction. It was surprising, however, that the cross-departmental liaison which informed the NUOSTRA strategy (during which two officials from twelve ministries were involved) was not sustained within the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs. The participation of all ministries concerned with youth in the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs would, no doubt, give stronger symbolic and practice effect to the co-ordination of youth policy at a national level.

Within the ministry with lead responsibility for youth affairs (the Ministry of Education), the combination of youth issues with broader interdependent areas such as education, science, culture and sports does appear to be relatively efficient, and demonstrates that it is possible to overcome sectoral barriers inside the same ministry, although the concern has also been expressed that youth policy questions, as a discrete focus, risk becoming blurred within or subordinated to such wider agendas. However, the separation of responsibility simply for 'youth' also carries the risk of marginalisation, as evidenced by its place within the work of the AFLA. There are therefore different models which may equally facilitate (and equally obstruct) greater integration in youth policy.

At the regional and local level, the same issues apply. Separating out 'youth issues' from other policy arenas can segregate rather than integrate youth policy, and detach it from policy structures (such as employment or social welfare) which have a significant impact on the living conditions of young people. The international review team, notwithstanding earlier observations about the dismantling of youth boards at regional and municipal levels, can see a logic in doing so. But to ensure the construction, rather than disappearance, of youth policy which moves beyond youth work to address the living conditions of young people, there needs to be a clear political commitment to this end - perhaps through the formation of cross-sectoral sub-regional bodies containing representation from the political administration, professional fields, and young people. Such bodies might be responsible for ensuring that 'youth audits' take place around *any* proposed changes in legislation or social policy (cf how will these affect the living conditions of young people; to what extent are they compatible, or do they conflict, with existing arrangements, and so on) *and* for initiating practical action on different aspects of the living conditions of young people within their jurisdiction. The concern of the international review team is that, despite the laudable goals of the Youth Work Act 1995 and a strong steer from the central administration, municipal partnerships and cross-sectoral co-ordination at the local level appears to remain *ad hoc* and dependent upon what is effectively the personal initiative of politicians or professionals committed to these issues. The implementation of integrated youth policy demands a stronger policy framework than that, though any formal (legislative) requirements would undermine the autonomy of individual municipalities.

For an integrated youth policy to be operationalised, therefore, there has to be a crossing of institutional borders and a breaking down of barriers between departments. Economic conditions in Finland indicate that there will not be additional resources available to youth issues, and therefore the goal is to achieve the more efficient use of resources through effective co-ordination - that is the political agenda.

The objective of the Youth Work Act 1995 is not to promote youth work *per se* but to improve the living conditions of young people. The most important issue is therefore the competence of the professional authorities in working together to assess young people's living conditions and to develop joint strategies to ameliorate them. To do so, they must first see things as a whole, before dissecting issues in ways which may not conform to traditional departmental boundaries. Young people who are resistant to school invariably are difficult at home, cause problems on the street, and may be involved in drugs or crime. To improve their 'living conditions' demands grass-roots networks of teachers, parents, police, health and youth workers *and* creative grass-roots initiatives which overlap the specific responsibilities of any of these groups. That is the challenge in the *application* of an integrated youth policy for it sits uncomfortably astride more established institutional and legislative boundaries.

### **Co-management/Participation**

Co-management of youth policy and practice, through the active participation of young people is a principle and aspiration which is easy to espouse but often extremely difficult to find the mechanisms to turn into a reality. Any such mechanisms will always be subjected to criticism, not least on the grounds of the 'representativeness' of the young people involved, allegations of 'tokenism', and the fact that those young people who are so often the primary targets of youth policy (the more disadvantaged and excluded) are almost certainly *not* involved. But the *process* of youth participation is an essential one for the renewal of civil society and the possibility of young people having some say in the decisions made about their futures. The Council of Europe recommendation 'On Youth Participation and the Future of Civil Society' (R[97]3) calls upon governments to support the development at local and regional levels of appropriate structures for political and civic participation by young people.

Participation in public life in Finland is generally high, although but this fact has to be reconciled with other aspects of Finnish identity and life such as solitude, individualism and a lack of communication. This was the paradox noted in the report by the panel of expert on cultural policy in Finland (Renaud 1995, p.129).

Finland also has very strong traditions in the public and financial support to youth organizations. It was through youth organisations, historically, that young people developed the skills and the opportunities for wider participation in public life. [In Finland, as elsewhere, politicians at many levels first acquired their political knowledge and started their political careers as members of youth organisations, yet few appear to

remember this!] However, there has been a decline in both the membership of, and active participation, in youth organisations. There are assertions that young people are losing interest in influencing the political process. Many explanations have been given for these trends. Minister Andersson himself suggested that perhaps they simply reflected the increasing privatisation of society, both economically and personally.

While there may be concerns about young people 'switching off' from political and social participation, there are counter-arguments. It is suggested that young people are active in different ways, particularly around the environment and green values. They are more inclined to take extra-parliamentary action on single issues, such as animal rights and occupying housing.

Young people in Finland, it was suggested to the international review team, are disappointed in what parliament has done for them, and there is a deep mistrust of politicians (a point confirmed in the findings of the Barometer surveys). The media has contributed to such views, reporting more on the personalities of politicians and scandals in political life rather than on the substance of policies. Nevertheless, there is still a big consciousness in young people about things they consider are unjust - it is just their forms of expression that have changed and they channel their concerns differently.

Youth researchers in Finland corroborated such perspectives. There has been a dramatic change in forms of youth participation, they said, arising from changes in youth culture, which is characterised by individualisation, green tendencies, post-materialism, and informal networks. No longer is participation a product of effective organisational structures; it is more to do with 'charismatic individualism'. But some old traditions do persist. The Scouts have retained, and increased, their numbers - largely because they have accepted greater individualism and flexibility. Youth organisations which have remained highly structured (such as those related to the church or political parties) have not been successful in attracting young people's interest and participation: they are considered to be too much 'like school'. The state-oriented 'camp' tradition is breaking down; new networks and new organisations are emerging.

The international review team was told that there was a 'lot of experimentation' with new ideas to promote youth participation. Indeed, one of the reasons for the development by Alliassi of youth information and communication systems on the Internet was to encourage young people's voice to be heard independently of the structures of youth organisations. Alliassi also arranged shadow elections in 1995 for young people between the age of 15 and 18 to elect their own 'youth parliament'. Youth organisations themselves are exploring different methods of making themselves more attractive to young people. Youth committees in the municipalities (such as the one in Vihti) are re-appearing, formed often through 'open call' youth elections in schools and youth centres. This initiative derived from the collaboration of teachers and youth workers and has used a number of methods to establish such committees, following the rapid disappearance of youth boards. Neighbourhood councils, acting on local issues, have made contact with youth centres in order to involve young people in initiatives. Municipalities working together on the development of local strategies to address the living conditions of young people have sometimes established teams of professionals and young people to consider appropriate action on particular issues.

It was also argued that young people informed the youth policy debate in less direct ways. The youth Barometer surveys young people's activities and opinions. The Finnish Youth Research Society conducts studies to find out *why* young people act and think in those ways. At the other end of the spectrum, youth workers maintained that consultation and participation largely took place informally, through face to face contact. Nonetheless, this provided a mechanism for 'channelling' young people's views into the local policy arena. The Helsinki Youth Department stated that it was highly sensitised to young people's experiences and view, and shaped its work accordingly.

These diverse ways of engaging with the views of young people and promoting their participation are to be commended. No doubt links are forged with a far broader spectrum of young people; the criticism always levelled at participation in youth organisation was that those most actively involved tended to be self-selecting or selected, and represented something of an elite; few youth organisations ever even reached the more socially problematic.

The risk attached to such eclectic measures, however, lies in the fact that in such processes there is often no *guarantee* or *right* of access to decision-making forums. The National Report talks of changes in youth policy

as contributing to effecting a transition 'from rights to opportunities' for young people. This could be interpreted as convenient rhetoric to justify the erosion of rights (though the international review team does not subscribe to this view), but to allay such suspicions, young people clearly need to have authentic access to 'opportunity'. Central to this must be the opportunity to have a place and a voice in decision-making processes. This requires an infrastructure and resources; otherwise, as one individual commented, "the whole process of youth participation is just a game".

The international review team feels therefore that, despite welcoming the raft on new initiatives to secure and support youth participation in Finland, there should be a more formal structure of communication and co-operation between administrative structures and young people (whether this is through youth organisations, youth committees, or by other means), encouraging young people to contribute to the elaboration of policies that concern or have an impact on them. Young people should be *institutionally* connected to decision-making processes at all levels. This is consistent with the Council of Europe's Charter of Participation of Young People in municipal and regional life, adopted by the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe following the 1st European Conference on Local and Regional Youth Policies in 1988 (see CLRAE 1988) and developed through the 'Llangollen Declaration' at the 2nd conference in 1991 (see CLRAE 1991). Perhaps provincial and municipal authorities, and even sub-regional networks concerned with youth policy and the living conditions of young people, should be required to demonstrate evidence of having established suitable consultation and participation processes.

### **Mobility**

The Council of Europe believes that young people should have access to mobility and international experiences in the context of the greater Europe. Finland is proving extremely adept at promoting this principle of youth policy, on behalf of young Finns wishing to travel to other countries. The international review team certainly gained a strong impression that Finnish young people generally have a very internationalised view of the world.

Travel is a major activity of young people in Finland. Within the country, there is a network of 160 hostels managed by the Finnish Youth Hostels Association. Girls and young women tend to travel much more than boys and young men. Travel has become a particularly popular pastime for young women in Helsinki; no fewer than *half* of them travel abroad at least once a year (Lahteenmaa and Siurala 1992d, p.49). The National Report states that 100,000 young Finns travel abroad every year. The Helsinki Youth Department, in particular, is very active in securing money from the European Union, especially under the Youth for Europe programme. There is almost always one youth group or another from Helsinki abroad on a study visit or exchange programme. On a less organised basis, young Finns are among the most active Inter-Railers in Europe (there are three Inter-Rail centres in Finland).

The commitment to promoting mobility for young Finns is reflected by the fact that experts in internationalism are included in the membership of the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs.

### **Intercultural learning**

The Council of Europe believes that young people should have the opportunity for inter-cultural communication and learning in order to support the promotion of tolerance and the peaceful management of conflict.

Finland has an 'ideology of harmonisation' and a number of initiative to promote 'tolerant Finland', combat racism and enhance positive ethnic relations. Finland, as the National Report (p.30) observes, still has only a small proportion (1.4%) of ethnic groups which are not of Finnish origin, although in Helsinki 4% of the population is not of Finnish origin. Nonetheless, immigration has risen considerably in recent years, causing young Finns to become less tolerant and the Finnish government to establish an anti-racism action programme in 1996.

The greater level of immigration to Finland in recent years is related to Finland becoming a member of the European Union in 1995. Minister Andersson ( who is the minister responsible for the anti-racism action programme) informed the international review team that membership of the EU has reduced the importance of traditional national status but has been 'compensated' by a commensurate growth in national *identity*, particularly as reflected in art and culture. The future of Finland is within a system of monetary union and mobility with the European Union, which implies some dilution of Finland's strong monocultural identity. There is a major challenge for Finland to promote multiculturalism, a challenge which is being taken up at the highest levels of government. Although in-migration is still relatively low, even with the 'quotas' required by the European Union, there are concerns that young people, who used to be the most tolerant population group in relation to immigration, are becoming *less* tolerant. Spasmodic outbreaks of racist activity revealed "extensive, long-standing and to some extent organised xenophobia" (Ministry of Education 1997, p.31). This suggests that concerted action to combat racism and to promote civic action for tolerance, with the lead being taken by government, is not premature. Ensuring that intercultural learning is an underpinning thread of young people's activities and experiences will be an essential component of any strategy.

## CONCLUSION

### Youth policy in Finland

Youth policy in Finland is pursued within a strong consensual framework, premised upon early and constructive intervention in the interests of social integration. Finland's youth policy appears to serve the vast majority of young people well. It is generously resourced, despite the need in recent years for public expenditure austerity measures, and impressively coherent across policy domains. It has sustained remarkable social cohesion, despite the rapid emergence of significant transition problems for young people, particularly in relation to the labour market. The international review team received a picture of an evolving youth policy in which there were no transparent tensions between different policy arenas and which had widespread support.

Yet the international review team was left with some possible gaps in this picture. We are not even certain whether they are in fact gaps, but there was an almost worrying silence on matters about which we would have welcomed information: immigration, homelessness, drug misuse, long-term unemployment and the alternative economy. Perhaps these issues are so small-scale that they are residual policy problems; perhaps they do not exist.

Within the picture we received, it would be easy - theoretically - to dismantle it and subject it to more intense critique. At one of our meetings, we were encouraged to highlight what were referred to as the 'irrationalities' in the system. We have certainly not shied away from raising *practical* questions about the logic and rationale for some dimensions of youth policy in Finland, but we feel it would be somewhat futile to engage in a more theoretical critique. Political administrations have a tough enough task as it is, and one might ask whether or not, if cross-sectoral 'youth policy' is to receive special attention, then why not a 'children's policy' or a special 'pensioners' policy'. In some respects, to address the question of 'youth policy' is to usurp traditional distinctions within the political administration between, for example, education, housing, health, social security, defence and criminal justice. It is naive to assume that one can just 'cut in' to these departments on behalf of just one sector of the population. Conversely, however, it is important, critical, to ensure that one department is not working *against* the direction being taken by other departments in relation to different sectors of the population. That is where 'youth policy' becomes important. It is commonplace for policy documents relating to young people to trot out the statement that 'young people are our future', but it is nonetheless true. Young people are the source of renewal of our societies, and the people on whom *we* will depend in the future. It is important that adequate resources are directed towards their needs and their aspirations, that policy development is based firmly upon principles consistent with democratic participation, and that intervention is wherever possible constructive so that it contributes positively to the lives of young people and the societies in which they live. Youth policy in Finland has been shaped effectively to achieve that end.

### The international report

This report, produced by an international review team drawn from six European countries, is intended to complement the National Report on youth policy in Finland. The National Report, as Minister Andersson informed us, was a focus for a process. The lives of young people in Finland have been affected by many recent economic, social and political changes, of which the recession, immigration and membership of the European Union are some of the most significant. There needs to be a serious and sustained discussion on the shape and direction of youth policy. It is to that debate that it is hoped the international report will make a useful contribution.

Beyond this additional contribution to the *internal* reflection on youth policy *in Finland*, the international report is also part of a wider process of international reviews being undertaken of youth policy in a number of European countries. This is not a competition in which there are winners and losers, but an endeavour to allow for the cross-fertilisation of ideas concerning youth policy, not only within countries (through comparing and contrasting National and International Reports) but across countries (making use of Reports

from other countries in order to refine and development thinking about youth policy within individual countries). Finland, like the international review team itself, has paved the way for this process to materialise. Both the National Report and the international report provide models (in terms of structure and content), which future reviews will no doubt consider before their work is undertaken. Neither the Finnish authorities nor the international review team had any blueprint for the process which was adopted. The process was therefore imbued with uncertainty (and, no doubt, anxiety). But the work of both the Finnish authorities and the international review team has pioneered a process which is designed to improve the development and application of youth policy not just within those countries participating in the review process but across Europe. The principles and practices of youth policy can facilitate or obstruct the life-chances and prospects of young people, can forestall or cement social exclusion, and can deny or enhance active citizenship. To steal a phrase from the Finnish context, the aspiration for youth policy must be to create an effective framework for the improvement of young people's 'living conditions' and for the advancement of the prospects of individual young people without disadvantaging others in the process.

The international report is based on material acquired by the international review team from a number of sources: the National Report; government documents, reports and legislation; promotional literature and material from a range of agencies; handouts provided during visits; photocopies of presentational material; and copious notes taken during visits and discussions. Additional literature was also consulted and that which is referred to in the text is listed in the following bibliography.

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Appendix 1:

**Visits to Finland by the International Country Review Group**

**Programme for first visit, March 2-6, 1997**

**REVIEW OF NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY**

**FIRST VISIT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNTRY REVIEW GROUP  
TO FINLAND, MARCH 2-6, 1997**

**Sunday, March 2**

Participants arrive in Helsinki

Accommodation: Hotel Grand Marina

Address: Katajanckanlaituri 7

Tel. +358-9 16 661

Fax +358-9 664 746

A meeting room 611 ("Conference suite", 6<sup>th</sup> floor) has been reserved for the group for discussions, from 5pm

Dinner at the Hotel

**Monday, March 3**

9h45 Collected at the hotel, Ms Ulla-Kaisa Aho

10h00 Meeting with Dr Claes Andersson, Minister of Culture and discussions with civil servants responsible for youth affairs  
Address: Ministry of Education, reception room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor

12h00 Lunch at the Ministry of Education, restaurant Vitrimi

14h00 Discussions with the research group  
Address: Ministry of Education, room 516, 5<sup>th</sup> floor

18h00 Collected at the hotel, Ms Ulla-Kaisa Aho

18h30 Dinner and sauna at Veikkaus Ltd (Finnish Money Game Company) hosted by Risto Nieminen  
Address: Karhunkierros 4  
Tel. +358-9- 85 261  
Fax +358-9-840 291

**Tuesday, March 4**

8h30 A meeting room 611 ("Conference suite", 6<sup>th</sup> floor) has been reserved for the group for possible discussions

9h45 Collected at the hotel, Ms Ulla-Kaisa Aho

10h00 Discussions with civil servants  
Address: Ministry of Education, room 303 (Pohjoisranta 4)  
- Ministry of Education  
- Ministry of Labour  
- Ministry for Social Affairs and Health  
- Ministry of Environment

13h00 Lunch, restaurant Aleksander Nevski  
Address : Pohjoisesplanadi 17

16h00 Discussions with the representatives of the City of Helsinki  
  
Programme organised by young people

### **Wednesday, March 5**

8h00 A meeting room 612 ("Conference suite", 6<sup>th</sup> floor) has been reserved for the group for possible discussions

9h45 Collected at the Hotel

10h00 Visit to Finnish Youth Cooperation, Allianssi  
Address: Olympic Stadium  
Eteläkaarre, 00250 Helsinki  
Tel. +358-9-348 2422  
Fax. +358-9-149 290

12h00 Lunch

14h00 Conclusions at the hotel, room 612 ("Conference suite", 6<sup>th</sup> floor)

- feedback and discussions on the content of the next meeting (if necessary, civil servants responsible for youth affairs can be present)

19h00 Dinner at Restaurant Sipull  
Address: Kanavaranta 3

### **Thursday, March 6**

Departure

## Programme for second visit, May 21-27, 1997

### **Wednesday, May 21**

Participants arrive in Helsinki

Accommodation: Hotel Haikko Manor

Address: 06400 Porvoo

Tel. +358 19 57 601,

Fax +358-19-5760 399

(about 45 minutes' drive from Helsinki, transportation arranged from the airport)

A meeting room has been reserved for the group

For discussions from 5 to 11 pm (please contact the Reception for details)

Dinner at the hotel

### **Thursday, May 22**

A meeting room has been reserved for the group for the morning (9-11)

11h00

Lunch at the hotel attended by Ms Ulla-Kaisa Aho

13h00

Visit to the Association of Finnish Local (and Regional) Authorities, hosted by Mr Kari Sjöholm, Senior Advisor on Youth Policy and Sport

Address: Toinen linja 14

00530 HELSINKI

Tel. +358-9-7711,

Fax +358-9-771 2445

Themes:

1) Introduction to Finnish local administration

2) Local youth affairs

15h30

Visit to the International Cultural Centre, Caisa

Address: Kaisaniemenkatu 6 B

Hosted by Ms Tuula Meres-Wuori, Director

18h30

Dinner, restaurant Sundmans

Address: Eteläranta 6

Return to Haikko Manor

## Friday, May 23

- 9h15 Departure for Loimaa from Haikko (a small town of about 7,100 inhabitants, 165 km northwest of Helsinki. See also pages 42-43 in the Draft National Report)
- 10h30 Bus to Loimaa from the Helsinki Bus Station attended by Mr Kimmo Aaltonen, Ms Ulla-Kaisa Aho, Ms Silja Kinnunen and Ms Nora Rutanen-Couavoux
- (Change of buses in Forssa, one hour's wait)
- 14h10 Arrival in Loimaa
- 14h30 Visit to youth work shop "Juotos" presented by Mr Osmo Toivonen, Planning Officer and Ms Pirkko Suhonen, Project Coordinator
- 15h30 Meeting with other officials responsible for youth work at Loimaa district
- Theme: Youth work in small town  
Presented by Mr Hannu Laurila, Deputy Mayor,  
Mr Risto Sinervo, Rector  
Ms Heli Ojala, Planning Officer  
Mr Pasi Oksanen, Researcher  
Ms Leila Ketola, Manager for Cultural Affairs  
Ms Marjatta Laine, Programme Secretary  
Ms Taina Myllynen, Programme Secretary  
Ms Susan Tuovinen, Youth worker  
Ms Päivi Peuranto, Programme Secretary  
Mr Vesa Rintala, Work shop Coordinator  
Ms Johanna Leskinen, Work shop Coordinator  
Mr Heikki Pelli, Youth Worker  
Ms Eila Rautanen, Advisor
- 17h00 Accommodation: Bed and breakfast at Vanha-Martti (old Martti's) farmhouse  
Address: Venttontie 174  
32200 LOIMAA  
Tel. 02-7683 234
- 18h30 Dinner and sauna at Vanha-Martti attended by MP Olavi Ala-Nissilä

## Saturday, May 24

- 10h30 Departure for Vihti (a small town northwest of Helsinki and 110 km from Loimaa)
- 12h00 Arrival in Vihti
- Meeting with local authorities  
Mr Arno Miettinen, Mayor  
Ms Päivi Veikkolainen, Youth Director

- 13h00 Lunch  
attended by Mr Eerikki Viljanen, Chairperson of the youth council  
Ms Ritva Selimäki, member of the youth committee  
Ms Kaisa Artola-Haasto, member of the local youth parliament two representatives of the local youth council
- 14h15 Visit to youth club  
attended by Ms Milla Hepo-Oja, Vice-Chairperson  
Ms Kaisa Artola-Haasto, Secretary  
Mr Kimmo Järvinen
- 15h00 Visit to two youth (and children) centres  
attended by 8 members of the Vihti youth council
- 16h45 Departure for Helsinki
- 17h15 Arrival in Helsinki
- Accommodation: Hotel Grand Marina  
Address: Katajanokanlaituri 7  
Tel. +358-9-16 661, Fax +358-9-622 2633
- Dinner at the Hotel

### **Sunday, May 25**

A meeting room has been reserved for the group (9 am to 4 pm)

Lunch at the Hotel

15h40 Collected at the Hotel by Ms Ulla Helsingius

16h00 Cruise and dinner

### **Monday, May 26**

9h00 Meeting with Finnish civil servants responsible for youth policy at the hotel

Lunch at the Hotel

A meeting room has been reserved for the group  
(9 to 6 pm)

18h15 Collected at the hotel by Ms Ulla Helsingius

18h30 Dinner, restaurant Amadeus  
Address : Sofiankatu 4

### **Tuesday, May 27**

Departure

Appendix 2:

**Documentation received during visits to Finland by the International Country Review Group**

The Youth's Academy - a co-operative network for all organisations that work with young people

From Knowledge to Action - Helsinki Youth Department research study (plus copies of OHPs outlining the research process and findings)

Organisational Reform at the Ministry of Education - memorandum of 18/2/97 (including sentence: "at the annual negotiations, it will also be possible to agree on the formation of expert networks which will replace the former youth boards")

Diagram of declining levels of youth unemployment (since the peak of 1994) by levels of education. Decline is by around 10,000 (or slightly more) under-25s a year.

Decision-in-Principle by the Council of State on Measures for Promoting Tolerance and Combatting Racism (Ministry of Education Anti-Racism Committee) - this includes both general measures and measures by different administrative fields.

Copies of OHPs used by Kimmo Altonen in his presentation to the international review team of the National Report (a very useful summary of key points)

The Aliens' Act and Aliens' Decree (unofficial translation)

Allianssi - copies of OHPs outlining its main areas of work

Statutory Placement Job - A Way to Get Ahead in Life. This is a summary of research by the Helsinki Youth Department: Harri Taponen (1994), *Youngsters in Statutory Placement Jobs in the City of Helsinki*, Youth Office of Helsinki (Finnish translation available). The study suggests that young people's views and experiences of these temporary job placements are very positive, for a number of reasons.

*Why do some youngsters turn down the job offers?*, report on youngsters in Helsinki who did not respond to job offers, Helsinki Youth Office, October 1994

Narri Headlines (provision and activities of the youth centre visited)

The Finnish Youth Research Society

*The social and family consequences and costs of the unemployment of young people* (report prepared by Lasse Siurala), Council of Europe, November 1995

*From Knowledge to Action: The fourteen-year-olds in Northeastern Helsinki*, Helsinki Youth Department, June 1996 - summary document of the study

Pro-Youth international - handout on Allianssi's European Internet information project

Allianssi - a dynamic umbrella organisation of the Finnish youth work (handout on Allianssi)

Finnish Youth Co-Operation - Allianssi (more detailed information on its history, activities, structure, and member organisations)

The Youth Work Act 1995 (working translation, not official)

What kind of information can I find in Pro Youth International? (A4 sheet)

Youth Barometer interview schedule August 1996

Youth Barometer interview schedule March 1997

[note: questions differ considerably between the two]

Finding from Youth Barometer 1996:

- \* most important source of spending money
- \* youth workshop activities
- \* ready to take part in youth workshop activities?
- \* source of music mainly listened to
- \* most interesting channel of information
- \* 'I'll achieve a better social status than my parents'
- \* a newly-employed young person could be given smaller wages than those usually paid for the job
- \* the employment situation will improve substantially in the next five years
- \* if you thought the cause important, would you be ready to take part in a public demonstration?
- \* do you have confidence in political parties?
- \* what is the most important area in which policy makers should invest in Finland? [overwhelmingly employment]
- \* as a rule, one can rely on the government to make the right decisions
- \* in our times people do not necessarily have to belong to any interest organisation
- \* membership in the EU has proved beneficial for Finland
- \* the current welfare benefits make people passive and discourage them from making an effort [two thirds agree to some extent]
- \* success in life depends on your own actions [nearly two-thirds agree fully]
- \* violence in society will grow unless the unemployment situation eases soon [over two-thirds agree to some extent]
- \* democracy works well in Finland and ensures adequate opportunities for influence to citizens [more than half agree to some extent, but the unemployed/untrained are far less positive]
- \* racism has increased in recent years among young Finns [two-thirds agree to some extent]
- \* how relevant to your own life do you consider decisions made in the European Union [generally more than half say relevant to some extent]
- \* how relevant to your own life do you consider decisions made in the parliament [two-thirds say relevant to some extent]

Allianssi Youth Information - Youth Databank and ProYouth

A Programme at a Secondary-Level Institute which awards Diplomas in Youth and Leisure-Time Instruction (youth work training curriculum)

University of Tampere - The youth work module (curriculum and reading list)

Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (role and composition)

Case: A Young Person Studying Away from Home (travel, housing, income, health care, meals, culture and free time, other benefits)

Basic Facts about Refugees and Asylum Seekers (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Spring 1996)

Ministries within the Council of State (Helsinki, June 1996)

Regional Councils in Finland - taking charge of regional development (glossy brochure)

The Association of Finnish Local Authorities (handout)

Statistical data on municipalities [here there are 452 municipalities!]

Association of Finnish Local Authorities (copies of 18 OHPs used during presentation)

Caisa - International Cultural Centre (some basic information)

Loimaa in figures (A4 sheet)

Loimaa Professional Institute (brochure in English)

Project 'The Living Conditions of the Youth' (Loimaa district study)

Mina Olen OK:

Intoxicant project questionnaire

Intoxicant project findings and recommendations

Vihti municipality:

Structure, administration, youth work provision, resources, staffing, premises, measures of support for organisations, special projects

Take It Heasy booklet (in Finnish)

Appendix 3:

**Other materials acquired for background and context**

Youth and Life Management: Research Perspectives (eds Helve and Bynner)

Finland Winter 1996-97 (p6: Proposed decrease in number of municipalities, from 455 to about 350; and p7: Growth to continue in big centres, countryside in difficulties)

Youth and Change (eds Lahteenmaa and Siurala)

Towards generational experiences of education: Education in the life-course of Finns (Huotelin and Kauppila)

English Summaries of three papers in The Finnish Journal of Youth Research ('The Softest of the Toughs', 'On the Ideology and Culture of Skinheads' and 'Drugs as Means of Opposition')

Finland FactCard in English

Nordicum: scandinavian business review, March 1997 (pp22-23: useful up to date summary of economic growth, investment, unemployment and inflation)

The Development of Education 1994-96: National Report of Finland. Produced by the National Board of Education (including, first page, Finland in a Nutshell)

education & research 2000: development plan for education an university research for 1995-2000. Produced by Ministry of Education (para 2.3 is most useful to us: From education to employment - from employment to education)

Young People in the City (on the work of the Helsinki Youth Department)