

**The regional coordination of youth information
and counselling services in Finland:
summary of a short research based review**

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Summary about the results

The main focus of the short research based review realised in 2017 of regional support for organising youth information and counselling services was to find out in which direction the offer of support is needed to develop.

The main informants to discuss with were the three regional coordinators and their managers in the municipalities sheltering the regional support, which was funded by the State Regional Authorities in co-operation with Ministry of Education and Culture and content supported by Koordinaatti – National Centre of Expertise for Youth Information and Counselling in Finland. Besides the three discussions organized, EU youth strategy, Youth Act and National Youth Work and Youth Policy Programme were used as background material as also the main documents and literacy about the development of youth information and counselling services in Finland (see for example *Timonen-Verma & Fedotoff eds. 2003; Fedotoff, Leppäkari & Timonen eds. 2016*).

In this summary the main results of the review are represented through the figures realized during the process for reflecting the notions captured. The first figure describes those who were using the regional support in organizing adequate, user-friendly and up-to-date youth information and counselling services. During the review process (2017), the support was mainly targeted to the municipal youth workers offering youth information and counselling services. At the same time, various other target groups were also aware about the support and used it. In the future, they could probably use it even more if it will be offered more systematically for them.

The figure (1) shows with its outermost line how the idea of to whom the support is targeted can grow, so that all the people working with young people can be assumed to offer youth information and counselling services, thus could profit from the support. Like the figure reports, those at the moment not using the support to a great extent but who could be included more in the future are outreach youth workers, the personnel in the youth workshops and in general the youth services related for example to multi-sectoral co-operation like One-Stop Guidance Centres and libraries. In addition, the youth workers in NGOs and parishes, and the personnel in schools and educational institutions could profit from the support. Therefore, the review suggests that in the future, all these can actually be counted in to be included in the primary target group to whom the support should be targeted. The co-operation and networking between all the bodies working with young people also guarantees that all the young people receive valid information and counselling from the professionals nearby them.

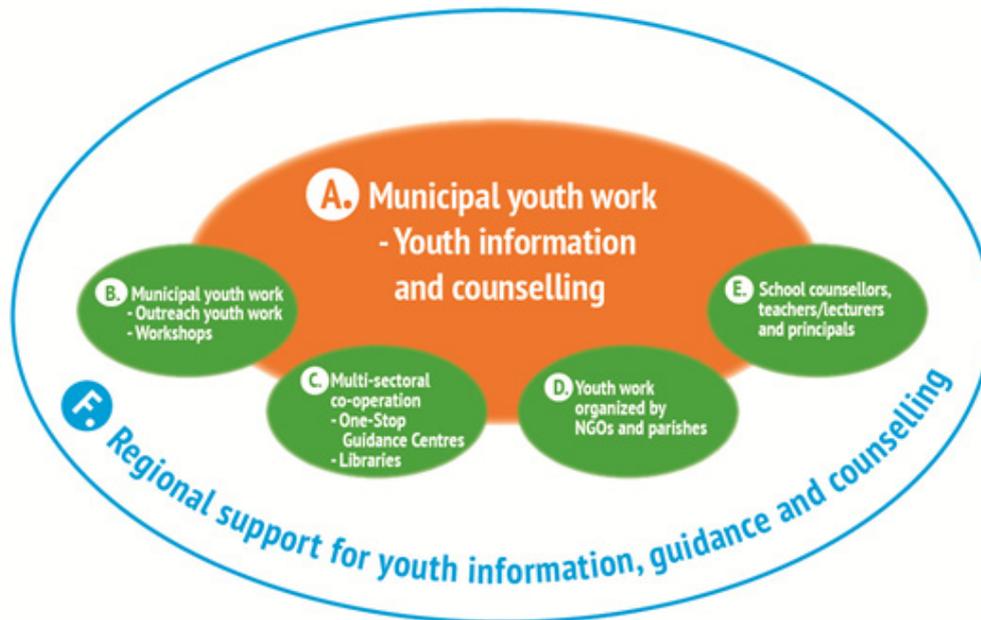


Figure 1. Description of the target groups whom the regional support for youth information and counselling has been offered to, and how it could systematically be offered more broadly in the future.

There have been many changes in the operational environment of youth information and counselling services during the last fifteen years affecting the nature how the youth information and counselling services has been produced in Finland, see the figure 2. In Finland the Youth Act, and the way the municipal youth work services has been described in it during the series of updates, has had an impact on the idea who has thought to have the responsibility to offer youth information and counselling services in local level, namely the municipal youth workers. At the same time, Finland has had an active policy on activating young people outside of education, training and employment in the name of Youth Guarantee. This involves a new kind service concept called One-Stop Guidance Centres, and as a longitudinal investment in outreach youth

workers and youth workshops doing youth information and counselling related work. So the situation now is that there are devoted youth information and counselling professionals among the municipal youth workers working for the delivery of the service on a whole time or part-time basis, and many more professionals in other environments and professions doing youth information, guidance and counselling as part of their work. All of these professionals could profit about the co-operation with other practitioners doing the same and for example, about the knowhow and principles developed during the years by doing the youth information and counselling (see for example the principles of [ERYICA – European Youth Information and Counselling Agency](#)).

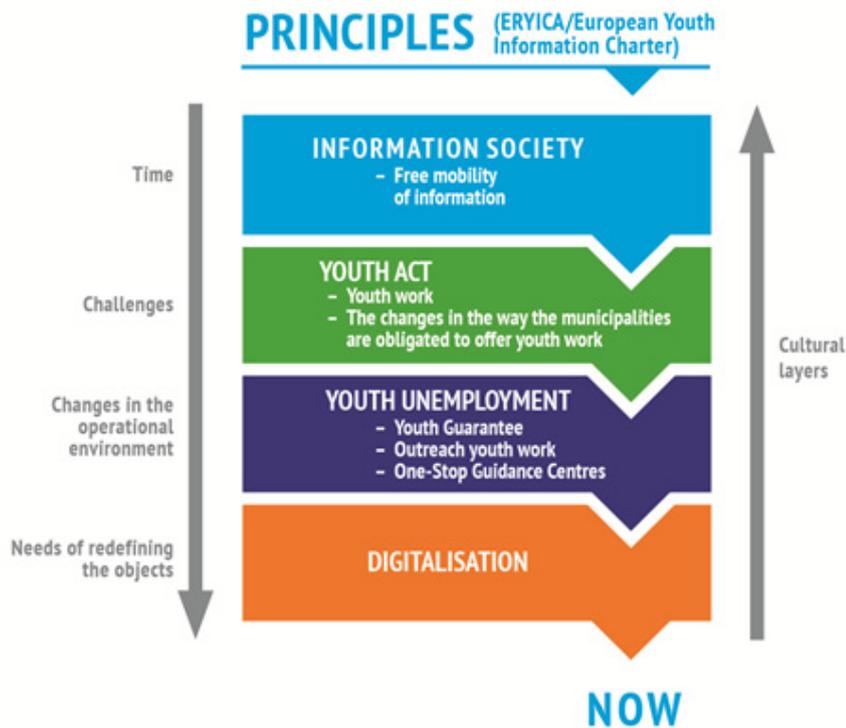


Figure 2. Overview of the changes in the operational environment of youth information and counselling services affected most on the nature of the services.

As a third result, it was found out that often the discussion of youth information and counselling services could be sharpened by highlighting more regularly the importance of youth information and counselling, which is because of the wellbeing of young people. The wellbeing aspect helps to operationalize the preventive nature of the service: doing youth information and counselling is for example helping the young person to see the variety of opportunities available or telling young people about their rights. The wellbeing aspect brought the regional coordinators to think that the service should be there for all the young people, meaning that all the professionals working with young people are important actors in delivering it. This kind of discussion pointed out the needs for development how the accessibility of youth information and counselling services is measured in Finland: measurement should base on the individual level experiences of young people instead of the data about the amount of the municipalities having youth workers registered doing youth information and counselling as a part of their job. The research was commissioned by Koordinaatti – National Centre of Expertise for Youth Information and Counselling in Finland.

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