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Introduction to Youth Policy
– Swedish and Turkish Perspectives

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Foreword

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs and the Department of Youth Services at the Directorate for Youth and Sports in Turkey are working together in the project *Youth Policy Cooperation between Turkey and Sweden* between 2008 and 2010. One aim of the project is to increase knowledge of the living conditions of young people in both countries. Another aim is to demonstrate the potential of young people and increase their participation in society.

The project has five components with the following themes: concepts in youth policy, knowledge of young people's living conditions, networking for people who work with and for young people, promotion of best practices for young people on the labour market, and awareness of provided social services and rights for young people.

This compendium defines various concepts that are used when discussing youth policy or young people as a group. This text is not an in-depth analysis, but rather is intended as an introduction to youth policy. This compendium is also one of the results of the youth policy cooperation project between Sweden and Turkey.

Within this project, there has been a need to define the concepts mentioned above. As a result, in this text Sweden's and Turkey's respective views on young people and youth policy are described by people who have worked with these issues at the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs and the Turkish General Directorate of Youth and Sports. This is followed by an article on youth policy by researcher Jonas Bjälesjö, who took part in the project.

Content

Youth and youth policy – a Swedish perspective

By Inger Ashing, The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs

This text is written in a Swedish context and is thus naturally based on Swedish conditions. As the text is intended to be used for discussions on youth policy between countries, it introduces a number of characteristics that are used in international comparisons.

Characteristics of youth policy

Defining young people

Young people are a heterogeneous group, whose most common denominator is their age. But age-wise the group is characterised by differences, as it includes 13 year-old secondary school pupils as well as 29 year-old young adults with their own homes, jobs and families. Besides age, other factors that can set young people apart are their gender, whether they were born abroad or in Sweden, if they have a disability and whether they live in a city or a rural area.

The primary target group for Swedish youth policy is the 13–25 age group, but other age groups may also be affected. There are many words that describe this period: child, teenager, youth, young person, young adult and so on, which can sometimes be confusing. In Sweden there are over one and a half million young people aged between 13 and 25.

Phase of life or social category

Youth can be defined either as a *phase of life* or as a *social category*. Phase of life refers to youth being the period between childhood and adulthood. The transition to adulthood can be marked by being fully grown, finding one's own identity, being able to support oneself or forming a family of one's own. Social category means that young people are a group with common needs, interests and characteristics and that they encounter similar structures and are affected by the same societal institutions and rules. The life phase perspective focuses on people's youth as compared to the rest of their life and to other generations, while youth as a societal category focuses more on the conditions during youth and within the category of young people.

Changed phases of life

Social development during the post-war period has changed and shifted the relationship between different phases of life. People in Sweden live much longer than they did 50 years ago. They attend compulsory education for a much longer period, and the transition between education and gaining a permanent foothold on the labour market takes increasingly longer. Women's participation in the labour market has increased significantly, and starting a family and having children now takes place later in life. Together, these shifts have led to a change in when certain phases of life occur in people's lives and also in how long the various phases last. Naturally, a description of these phases is very sketchy and general, and hides the fact that some changes are not unambiguous and that a large percentage of the population does not follow the course of events described here. However, such a description can still serve as a basis for analysing changes in the structural conditions for growing up in our society.

If childhood is viewed as the period before puberty, then this period has actually shortened by about a year during the post-war period. Physically, children become adults earlier. At the same time, children have access to communication (TV, radio, newspapers, internet etc.) and also travel extensively. Thus, they know much more about the surrounding world than children in the same age group did a mere 30 years ago. Youth can be seen as a phase which involves gradually liberating yourself from your parents, and can be defined as the time between the onset of puberty until you move away from home. This phase of life has grown slightly to include younger people and over the last decade the upper age limit has expanded as well. The following phase is where you are formally considered an adult but have not formed a new family yet. We can call this phase "young adulthood". This phase can be seen as a period of freedom, but is also characterised by a large number of life choices where you gradually take on various adult roles, choose further education and a career, decide where to live, look for a life partner etc. Having children is usually the last step in this establishment process. The upper age limit for young adulthood has increased gradually to include older people. The reasons for this include increased demands for education and an increasingly complicated and drawn out transition from education to the labour market, and probably also changing attitudes toward starting a family and having children.

Youth
Youth can be seen in a number of different ways, which result in different youth policy strategies. Views of this period can be split into different phases. Youth can be seen as a *transitional phase*, a *socialisation phase*, a *struggle for social status* or as a *period with intrinsic value*. There are differences between the different views, but they should not be exaggerated. Swedish youth policy has elements of all four of these views, but the latter two have the strongest influence.

When we discuss the extended period defined as youth, the basis for our discussion is youth as a *transitional phase*: you are in your youth while you wait to grow up, and adulthood is put off to an increasingly high age. One example of this is different political initiatives aimed at young people establishing their own independent life by getting a job and moving away from home. These initiatives are focused on both making youth a good period, and on moving on and growing up. One common motive for the welfare policies aimed at young people is to raise them into responsible adults. A large part of Swedish youth policy is about seeing youth as a transitional phase. School legislation and regulations for grants to youth organisations contain wordings about young people being trained in a democratic way of thinking. The development of society's support for young people's leisure pursuits and social activities is partly based on preventative motives. These are clear signs that youth is also seen as a *socialisation phase*. If youth is seen as a *struggle for social status*, the focus is on identifying which societal structures hinder the development of young people and to act to change these. One example of this is ensuring that young people have access to various forms of education or welfare systems. Another important area is representation. Initiatives to increase the number of young people in decision-making bodies can be seen as an indication that this view prevails. The view of youth as a *period with intrinsic value* is common. From a Swedish youth policy perspective, it is natural to see youth as a period that is valuable in itself. Young people are seen as a resource and not as a problem. The two last phases, youth as a *struggle for social status* and as a *period with intrinsic value*, have a clear focus on young people having knowledge and experiences that enable them to take part in society on equal terms with other groups.

Different conditions and prerequisites[1]
There are major differences in conditions between different groups of young people. Some examples from The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs' latest indicator report, Ung idag 2009, show that certain groups of young people do not have the same opportunities as others. Young people with foreign backgrounds reach educational goals and qualify for further education to a lesser extent than young people with a Swedish background. Young people born abroad are often worse off financially than young people born in Sweden, and they find it harder to establish themselves on the labour market. Young parents, especially single parents, are one group that is worse off financially than others. Young people born abroad who have children are extra vulnerable. Young people with disabilities are another group that experiences difficulties on the labour market compared to other young people, as are young people with a low degree of education, who are disadvantaged compared to young people with a high degree of education. Indicators also show that girls and boys are vulnerable in different areas. Girls are worse off than boys when it comes to mental health, work-related diseases, income, financial aid and compensation for reduced capacity for work. Boys do less well at school and a lower percentage of them are highly educated. They are victims of and take part in criminal acts to a greater extent, and more are hospitalised and killed as a result of violence. A larger percentage of boys also display a greater degree of risky behaviour in most public health surveys. Boys are also involved in more workplace accidents, debt claims, debts, evictions and long-term unemployment than girls. Indicators also show geographical differences between counties and municipalities regarding the number of young people who have moved on to higher education or have debt claims, debts and evictions.

We are born into a world that already exists. We do not choose our parents, do not choose when we are born, which country we grow up in or what gender we have. Because conditions vary considerably depending on which social class our parents belong to, which generation we are born into, which ethnic group we belong to and if we are born a boy or a girl, society has a responsibility to create socially fair conditions for growing up. One important purpose of youth policy is to improve the living conditions of young people.

What does youth policy mean?
There is no common, accepted, definition of what youth policy is or what it includes. Each country has its own national policy and decides what is to be considered youth policy. However, below we attempt to define youth policy.

Youth policy has various tasks. One youth policy problem is how to combine society's responsibility with the ambition to let young people decide over their own lives. Young people are dependent on adults; not just for their material prosperity, but also for their spiritual development. However, it is important that youth is not associated with dependency and adulthood with independence. There is a mutual dependency between young people and adults.

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[1] For a detailed description of the conditions of young people in Sweden in 2009, see Ung idag 2009 (The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs 2009).

A definition of youth policy
The concept of youth policy was first used formally in the 1990s. As far as we know, the concept has not been defined unambiguously in a document from the Riksdag or government. There is also a great degree of obscurity about how the term youth policy is used, as it can denote a number of different phenomena. In this section we attempt to clarify how the concept of youth policy can be defined.

Young citizens are affected by many aspects of social policy, above all by education, leisure and NGO policies. But areas like housing policy, criminal policy, healthcare policy, labour market policy, integration policy, equality policy and rural policy, to mention a few, also affect the living conditions of young people to a great degree. One characteristic of the expansion of the welfare state is increased differentiation and specialisation of the public sector in Sweden. This can be seen in the creation of an increasing number of political areas, for which various agencies are responsible. An increased sectorisation has taken place. Young people are, perhaps to a greater degree than others, the object of various public initiatives. This means that issues important to the living conditions of young people can be found in many different sectors. The development of a state youth policy can be seen as a reaction to this sectorisation, where the ambition was to create a comprehensive perspective based on the individual situation of each young person and to facilitate cooperation between different sectors.

One common definition of youth policy is that it is the sum of all the initiatives aimed at young citizens, everything that affects young people in any way. This could be the result of youth policy today being spread across many different sectors and the large number of actors in the area. Such a definition is only a summation after the event, a result of the effects of the general policy on a certain target group, and is not an expression of a conscious political will. By including everything, it also becomes a blunt instrument for analysis. How can you tell the difference between good and bad youth policy? Youth policy as a concept becomes void.

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs defines youth policy as an expressed political ambition for the living conditions of young people. In today's public system, political ambition is usually expressed in various kinds of goals or desirable outcomes. The expressed political ambition for national youth policy in Sweden is the goals, perspectives and main areas that have been determined by the Riksdag and government. It is their content that specifies and delimits youth policy.

Youth policy is a cross-sectoral or horizontal policy area that affects several sectors. The policy area as such is not responsible for the funds necessary to achieve the political goals. Instead, policy implementation must take place via the vertical sectors/policy areas that control the resources. For example, there are specific youth issues in housing and labour market policy, like grants for student housing or labour market initiatives for young people. In order to clarify these concepts we would like to define these kinds of issues as sector-specific youth issues, initiatives in a sector that affects young people in some way.

Swedish youth policy from an international perspective[2]

In order to clarify the content of youth policy, we will examine Swedish youth policy from a European perspective. It is hard to accurately compare the development of youth policy between Sweden and other countries. Initially it is important to remember that Swedish youth policy has developed over a long period of time, since the 1950s. In many other countries, youth policy is a much newer area.

In the following section, we compare Swedish youth policy with youth policy in other countries. Our ambition is not to be comprehensive; instead a number of cases will be discussed. Comparisons will be made based on the definition of young people, the view of young people and youth, and whether there is a youth policy sector. Finally, any distinctive features of Swedish youth policy will be highlighted.

Who is youth policy for?

The age range of youth policy varies between countries. The target group identified in the white paper, which serves as a guide for European cooperation on youth policy, is young people between 15 and 25. In international law and statistics there is a clear definition of young people as being between 15 and 24. However, this definition does not apply in the national youth policy of all countries. In some European countries, children and young people over 24 are also considered young people, and child and youth policy is the same thing. There are many countries that include people up to 30 years of age in the group defined as young people. Other European countries separate child policy and youth policy. In these countries the policy areas overlap to a certain extent, as child policy applies to people who are underage and youth policy applies to teenagers and young adults. In Sweden the target group for youth policy is between 13 and 25 years old.

Young people as a problem or a resource

Another way of comparing the youth policy work of various countries is to find out how they view young people. To put it simply, there are two perceptions of young people and they decide what the youth policy motives are: young people as being in a problematic situation because they are young, and young people primarily as a resource. The idea that young people are in a problematic situation is based on them being vulnerable, in danger and in need of protection. They are vulnerable because of the conditions of their childhood, personal circumstances or other social conditions. If, on the other hand, young people are seen as a resource, this means that young people not only will be valuable in the future; they are already valuable in their status as young people. They can contribute to society with their knowledge of what it is like to be young. Based on this perspective, young people are seen as responsible for their actions and competent enough to take responsibility. Both perspectives are represented in the youth policies of virtually all countries, with the main difference being which perspective is the most dominant.

In the European countries that have a long tradition of a combined child and youth policy, the problem-oriented perspective has often dominated. The countries in which young people are viewed as a resource in society are often the countries where youth policy is a relatively new policy area. Sweden belongs to the latter group.

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[2] This section is a summary of Adrienne Sörbom's chapter "Svensk ungdomspolitik i ett europeiskt perspektiv" (Swedish youth policy from a European perspective) in UNG 2003 (The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs 2003).

One youth policy sector
In some countries youth policy is delimited well from other political sectors, with a defined department in charge, its own legislation and its own administration. In other countries, youth policy is spread between several sectors (school, care, culture, health and so on). In yet other countries, there is virtually no youth policy sector and only a small degree of national coordination on youth policy. The countries that have a clearly defined youth policy sector often have a slightly narrower political focus. Items included are usually youth organisations and leisure time, while issues such as education, housing and health often are not included. In countries whose youth policy sector is not defined as narrowly, there is often a greater inclination to work cross-sectorally.

The view of youth policy as a political sector affects work at a national level in the various countries. There is a connection between how narrowly defined the youth policy sector is and how centralised youth policy is. In the countries that do not have a youth policy sector there is little coordination of youth policy. In countries with a clear and organised youth policy sector there is usually a department responsible for the coordination of youth policy on a national, regional and local level. Sweden is at an intermediate level when it comes to national coordination.

Characteristics of Swedish youth policy
It is hard to make straight comparisons between countries because of the differences between the target groups for youth policy, the dominating view of young people, and the way youth policy is organised. However, five tendencies can be discerned if Swedish youth policy is compared to that of many other European countries.

Firstly, Swedish youth policy is characterised by being mostly aimed at young people between 13 and 25 years of age, and by the fact that it differentiates between child and youth policy. Another characteristic is that Swedish youth policy is broader than that of many other countries, in that it includes many different areas and is cross-sectoral. Welfare issues have a natural place in Swedish youth policy, not just club activities and education issues. Thirdly, we can see that Swedish youth policy bears clear signs of the postwar welfare policy in Scandinavia. This is a universalist policy, that wants to give all young people the opportunity to establish themselves as independent adults. In many other countries, youth policy applies to certain groups who are considered in need of special initiatives. However, a shift of perspective can be seen in Swedish youth policy, as the government and Riksdag now emphasize more clearly that these initiatives should specifically include disadvantaged young people. A fourth characteristic of Swedish youth policy is the will to see young people as a resource, which affects how the policy is framed. Instead of seeing youth as a problematic time that is full of dangers and that young people must navigate as best they can, Swedish youth policy emphasises that this phase of life has an inherent value. The initiatives prioritised are primarily those that can support young people in their own choices, combined with initiatives for especially vulnerable groups, like young people who are far from the labour market or live in high-risk environments. A fifth characteristic of Swedish youth policy is that there is a youth minister and national goals for youth policy. Sweden also has a state agency, The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, that is responsible for coordinating and following up national youth policy. However, the autonomy of the Swedish municipalities means that Swedish youth policy cannot be controlled by the state. If they wish, the municipalities can base their work on the national goals for youth policy work, but the final shape of youth policy is decided by the individual municipalities.

The emergence of youth policy in Sweden[3]

This final section describes the emergence of youth policy in Sweden, and the main content of this policy.

Swedish youth policy – as a delimited and independent policy area – is a relatively new phenomenon, although it has quite a long history. Two of the most important areas for the emergence of modern youth policy are the formalisation of the school system, and the organisation of leisure and club activities in the late 19th and early 20th century. For a long time, these areas constituted youth policy. The view that youth policy mostly involved issues about the leisure time and club-organised activities of young people dominated well into the 1960s. It was not until the 1970s that a shift came, from a sector-defined youth policy to a more comprehensive policy. Today's youth policy, which is based around the entire situation of young people and involves many different political sectors, started taking shape only 30 years ago.

Several inquiries and official letters have addressed the most important youth policy issues over the last few decades, and on several occasions work groups and committees have been appointed to suggest how youth issues should be coordinated. The development within the UN has been an important influence on Swedish youth policy. The UN proclaimed an International Youth Year in 1985, which in many ways was a starting point for a broader and more active state involvement in youth issues in Sweden. In 1986, a youth minister was appointed for the first time and during the 1990s and early 2000s the government has presented three youth policy propositions with goals and guiding principles.

Today Swedish youth policy includes all the areas of politics that affect young people's lives in any way. Both traditional youth areas such as leisure activities and school, and typical welfare issues such as work, housing and health have their place in youth policy.

It is convenient to describe the growth of youth policy in terms of several parallel lines of development. At the state level, youth policy has followed the general development of Swedish public policy as a whole. The Swedish state works with result-oriented management, which means that the Riksdag and government not only define goals, but also follow up the results achieved. At the municipal level, development in youth policy issues has primarily consisted of various kinds of projects aimed at developing the influence of young people in municipal politics, and around municipal cooperation. Both at state and municipal level, there is a distinct aspiration for a comprehensive approach and a cross-sectoral work method.

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[3] For a more in-depth exposition, see Ung 2003, The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs publication 2003:6 p 41-46, and Svensk ungdomspolitik – en underlagsrapport inför en bedömning inom Europarådet (Swedish youth policy – a preparatory report for an assessment in the Council of Europe), 1999, The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs report no. 14.

The content of Swedish youth policy

The national youth policy is aimed at all young people and promotes equal opportunities and fair conditions for young people. This means that factors like gender, foreign background, cultural or socio-economic background, age, place of residence, sexual orientation or disability should not affect young people's opportunities. In order to achieve equal opportunities and fair conditions, youth policy initiatives should primarily be aimed at those young people who have the worst conditions.

For a long period of time, youth policy has been universal in that it has, at the national level, primarily been based around initiatives for all young people. Of course, this has been combined with targeted initiatives in social policy or other areas. However, the approach has always been general, with a policy that does not single out certain groups as higher priority than others. The current youth policy states that initiatives should primarily be aimed at disadvantaged young people. This is a clear shift in perspective. Today's policy highlights the large minorities in the population of young people. This is similar to the starting point for youth policy in the 1950s and 1960s, when the arguments for having a youth policy were to prevent young people from becoming alienated or ending up in the wrong company. One important difference is how young people are perceived by society. The view of young people as a resource, which has emerged over the last 20 years, is one of the most important aspects of Swedish youth policy. Viewing young people as a resource means that they are not only valued because they will eventually become adults, but also because they are young today. Young people can contribute to the development of society with their knowledge and experience of what it is like to be young. The view of young people has changed considerably, which means that it can be problematic to compare today's youth policy with the previous policy.

Goals and perspectives for Swedish youth policy

In autumn 2004, the Riksdag passed a new youth policy bill, *Makt att bestämma – rätt till välfärd* (Power to decide – right to welfare). The two overarching goals for national youth policy are:

- Young people should have real access to influence
- Young people should have real access to welfare

These goals are aimed at young people being able to affect the development of society in general as well as their own lives and their local environment. This includes being able to influence aspects of their everyday lives, like their home, school and work environment, their circle of friends and their family. But they should also be able to influence the priorities of society. Young people should have influence because it is a right in itself, but also because their knowledge and experiences are valuable resources for society. The welfare goal is aimed at young people having access to a good material, cultural and social standard of living. Young people should also have good conditions for good physical and mental health. They should be protected from discrimination and other forms of abusive behaviour and from being subjected to crime and bullying.

There are several important aspects of the living conditions of young people that are difficult to formulate as goals. Instead, these have been highlighted in the youth policy bill as important perspectives and attitudes. There is no authority with specific responsibility to apply these perspectives; it should be done by all authorities. The Riksdag and government have determined four perspectives that decision-makers should always presuppose when shaping public activities for young people:

- The resource perspective
- The rights perspective
- The independence perspective
- The diversity perspective

The resource perspective means that the unique knowledge and experiences of young people should be utilised. The rights perspective means that young people have the right to good living conditions, for example good health and social and financial security. This also means the right to be involved in and affect their own lives, their local environment and the development of society in general. The independence perspective means that public initiatives should support young people's opportunities for independence. In order to achieve independence, access to knowledge and financial resources are needed, but also freedom from discrimination. Independence means both liberation from parents and the absence of restrictive factors such as addiction, constraint and oppression. The diversity perspective refers to awareness that all young people are not the same simply because they are young. In our coordinating, managing and following up on youth policy, it is important to remember that youth policy affects many different kinds of people – with different prerequisites, needs and desires.

Youth policy in Turkey

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Youth

Youth – a phase of life

Life phases may show variety in time from culture to culture and according to the scientific field in which they are used. The youth period, one of the life cycles is particularly associated with social aspects rather than biological. The youth period is considered as a continuously extending period today. This is due to factors such as the extension of the education period, women's taking much more advantage of the education and job opportunities and delay in finding a job and in the responsibility of starting a family.

The youth period is generally defined as taking place between the ages 15–25 in international conventions and statistics. Yet, the comparative studies show that countries have different definitions of youth in their national youth policies. In some of these definitions, "childhood" and "youth" are considered separate, while in some these two overlap.

Youth is a biological, psychological, social and cognitive phase of life, which extends from childhood to adulthood. This phase should not be handled independently from the environment the young persons grow up. It is important to focus on the environment in which the young people live in – families, friends, schools, work places and leisure time environments, districts, etc. – how these environments change and how these changes affect young people.

From which point of view the subject is evaluated is important. A biologist may focus on the process between the beginning and end of adolescence, a lawyer on the age range regulated by law and an educator on the differences between the students at various class levels. Youth should be considered as a heterogeneous group with different interests, needs and conditions under social, economic and political conditions without being reduced solely to a particular age range.

Defining young people

Although the age of youth is presented differently in some research and documents in Turkey, the general view is that it is between the ages 12–24. According to the Turkish Civil Law, (2001), "Adulthood starts as one finishes the age of eighteen". According to the Regulations on Youth Centres (2003), you have to be between the ages 12–24 for the membership to the youth centres, and membership registry can be made, upon request, if the age is no younger than 7 and older than 26. According to the Turkish Civil Law and Law of Associations (from 2004), every legal and natural person having the capacity to act hold the right to become a member of the associations or found them. Also, young people finishing 15, may establish children associations or become members to already established ones. This shows that there is an overlap in age ranges of childhood and youth in Turkey.

Population in Turkey is 71.517.100 as of 31st December 2008. Median age is 28,5 and half of the population is younger than 28,5. Young population constitutes almost 30% of the population of the country.[4]

Youth policy

Youth policy offers education and experience opportunities for the young people to develop knowledge, skills and abilities so as to become active citizens in their community. Such solutions can only be reached with a policy which ensures that the young are autonomous citizens with equal rights in their youth rather than prepare them to the adulthood.

To get a democratic and participatory community, we require active participation of the young people to local and national decision-making. Although voting or being a candidate in elections are the significant elements of participation, participation in the democratic life means a lot more than this. Young people should be given the instruments and right to participate in activities and to influence the decisions that affect them and their community. Young people should be provided with the environment and opportunities in which they could be the subject of the change and development.

Youth policy should reflect the opportunities and challenges young people face in transition from childhood to adulthood, and should aim for concrete steps in areas of youth activities, non-formal education, information, mobility, volunteering and non-governmental organisations.

The basis of the youth policy is the citizenship education and civil participation. This basis should be founded in a cross-sectoral manner, covering all relevant sectors. Looking at youth policy from a wider perspective requires the cooperation of relevant institutions, local administrations and civil society.

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[4] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/AltKategori.do?ust_id=11

Historical background

Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, entrusted the Republic to the youth with the belief he had in the role they played in the social changes[5]. An education campaign was started for well-training of the youth and teachers were given the duty to train the youth and enlighten the public.

Throughout the Republican history, "youth" has usually been considered alongside "education" and/or "sports". Youth services, which are mostly perceived as sports and leisure time activities, have been under the responsibility of various institutions so far (Prime Ministry, Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports, General Directorate of Youth and Sports - GSGM - under the State Ministry).

In the first years of the Republic, intensive efforts were done to solve educational problems within the secular education system under the responsibility of Ministry of National Education. "Directorate of Physical Education and Scouting" was also established under the Ministry in 1933 for leisure time activities, regarded as significant aspects of education and training.

The history of the GSGM dates back to 1938 when General Directorate of Physical Education was founded. It has carried out activities in different periods under various institutions since then.

The formation of an organisation at ministerial level with the establishment of Ministry of Youth and Sports in 1969 was a very significant development in terms of youth services. Coordination was realised in services for youth, researches concerning youth were carried out and leisure time activities were extended to a wider spectrum. Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports was established in 1983 that gathered education, youth and sports under one roof. Services began to be carried out by a general directorate established under the Ministry. Later on, duties concerning services for youth were assigned to the Youth Services Department established under GSGM, which was under the Prime Ministry.

While there was an emphasis on the protection of youth in both the Constitution of Turkish Republic and GSGM legislation, this emphasis has been directed towards youth participation. Regulations have been made to decrease barriers in front of the youth participation:

• Age to vote was reduced from 21 to 18 in 1995, and the age to be elected as a member of the parliament was reduced from 30 to 25 in 2006.

• Activities of the youth in civil society has been gradually increasing thanks to the efforts of the Centre for European Union Education and Youth Programmes (National Agency[6]) which was established under the State Planning Organisation to execute the European Commission Youth Programme in 2002.

• Establishment of associations was facilitated with the Associations Law, which took effect in 2004, which contributed to the organisation in the field of youth.

• Municipality Law, from 2005 and City Council Regulations from 2006 have increased the participation of the youth in administration at local level.

• Financial support is provided to the registered youth clubs in line with the Regulations on Youth and Sports Clubs, from 2005.

Dialogue between public and civil society has gradually increased in the field of youth thanks to such developments. At the point reached today, the belief that a holistic youth policy is required with the participation of all stakeholders is shared both in public and civil society.

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[5] Republic was declared on 29th October 1923.
[6] http://www.genclik.gov.tr/

Current situation

There is no particular law comprising the issues involving youth. Rights and freedoms of youth have been included in the general acts of various institutions. These institutions offer services in areas such as education, health, accommodation, employment, working life, social security, cultural life, leisure time activities and protection from bad habits. Ministries of National Education, Labour and Social Security, Health, Culture and Tourism, Interior, Foreign Affairs and Justice and General Directorate of Social Services and Child Protection, General Directorate of Family and Social Researches, National Agency, Secretariat General for EU Affairs, General Directorate of Social Assistance and Solidarity, Turkish Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction and GSGM offer youth services within the scope of their own regulations.

When the legislation related to the youth in Turkey is analysed, young people are considered as a human resource that need to be trained in a way ensuring the integrity of the state as well as a group in society that needs to be protected against bad habits. This point has been expressed as follows in Article 58 of the Constitution entitled "Protection of youth", which leads to the youth policy:

> *"The state shall take measures to ensure the training and development of the*
> *youth into whose keeping our state, independence, and our Republic are entrusted,*
> *in the light of contemporary science, in line with the principles and reforms of*
> *Atatürk, and in opposition to ideas aiming at the destruction of the indivisible*
> *integrity of the state with its territory and nation. The state shall take necessary*
> *measures to protect the youth from addiction to alcohol, drug addiction,*
> *crime, gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance."*

City Council Regulations from 2005 establish the legal basis for youth assemblies and guaranteed the youth activities. Assemblies and working groups are defined as follows:

> *"Joint structures - principally women and youth assemblies - which were established on*
> *voluntary basis and which aim at contribution of various sections of society to city*
> *administration and their active participation in the administration of a liveable city of good*
> *quality based on governance approach and sustainable development in working areas of city council."*

Views raised at the youth assemblies are taken to the agenda of the city council and evaluated in the first meeting of the municipality assembly, hence this regulation has a potential to be a notable development for the youth and making their voices heard.

Strategic planning for the future

The Ninth Development Programme (2007–2013) and the Medium Term Programme (2009–2011), developed by the Prime Ministry State Planning Organisation with the participation of all institutions and organisations, state that:

- equal opportunities will be ensured for the disadvantaged also including the young people facing difficulties in the labour market, and programmes helping young people gain experience in the labour market will be developed,

- measures will be taken to ensure better communication between the young people and their families and the society, to improve their confidence and to increase their feeling of belonging to the society they live in, their sensitivity and their participation in decision-making processes.

GSGM has been assigned with the preparation of its first strategic plan encompassing 2010–2014 period, as outlined in the Regulations on Principles and Procedures Concerning Strategic Planning in Public Administrations dated 2006 and due studies are still continuing.

The following issues concerning youth have been included in the government programme:

• Ensuring that young people are trained as individuals who are equipped in all aspects, and stick to the fundamental values, protecting them against bad habits and ensuring that they look to the future with confidence. This has been identified as a priority to be considered in all policies.
• It is aimed that young people become significant actors to develop the competitive power of the country.
• Training young people in a way that will make them adopt democratic and pluralistic universal values, consider varieties as richness and have the feeling of responsibility.
• Activities to strengthen the youth will be sustained.
• It is aimed to continue the construction of sports facilities, to increase the number of youth centres and youth camps, to speed up the youth exchange programmes with foreign countries and to ensure incentive and support to the youth in terms of training sportsmen to the Olympics.

The following measures have been determined to be taken, responsible institutions and also co-institutions were identified[7]:

• GSGM and other institutions should cooperate to extend active labour force programmes for disadvantaged young people, carry out activities for children directed to crime, wide-spread the models of houses for children in need of protection, increase the number of child protection, care and rehabilitation centres, and care and social rehabilitation centres.

• GSGM should ensure the training of the young people as confident and healthy individuals who are integrated with the society and their active participation in social life. To do so it has been asked to complete the following studies:

> *"A National Youth Strategy will be prepared by analyzing country examples especially EU countries. Establishment of youth councils will be promoted and participation of youth into decision-making processes will be ensured. Youth will be oriented to art and sports in order to keep them away from violence and harmful habits. A research will be conducted concerning the purposes of usage of internet by young people in order to minimize the damages of factors threatening young and children in internet."*

GSGM Youth Services Department offers facilities and opportunities for the young people to evaluate their leisure time with social, cultural and educational activities. Youth Services Department carries out programmes for young people, youth leaders and youth workers with its six sections, namely Youth Centres, Youth Camps, International Relations, Social and Cultural Activities, Youth Clubs and Research and Guidance.

Coordination is ensured with various countries and international youth organisations, especially the Council of Europe (CoE) Directorate of Youth and Sport. International activities are organised in cooperation with the CoE to contribute to the development of youth policy in the country. Various activities are carried out in areas such as participation, social services, migration, gender, intercultural learning, volunteering and active citizenship, and exchange programmes between youth centres and non-governmental organisations are encouraged and coordinated with the Cooperation Protocol on Youth Policies, signed with Germany in 1994. Projects are developed for strengthening the youth centres in cooperation with United Nations and World Bank. Also, reciprocal youth exchange programmes are implemented and joint projects are held with various countries.

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[7] http://www.dpt.gov.tr/Portal.aspx?PortalRef=3

Certain specific conditions and problems concerning youth in Turkey

According to the report on "Turkey 2008 – Youth in Turkey" [8] developed under Human Development Reports of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), youth in Turkey is confronted with significant problems. Particularly the situation of "invisible" youth is highlighted in the report. Youth presented by the media as "single, healthy, dynamic and usually middle-class students" actually comprises only one-third of the age group 15–24. Outside this category, the "invisible youth", mostly comprising young women, (women who are neither in education nor at work, physically disabled people, young people having given up all hope and stopped seeking jobs, juvenile delinquents, street children and youth living on the streets, internally displaced and victims of human trafficking) are usually neglected.

Access to the education is seen as one of the fundamental problems of the education system in 2009 Programme of the Government. When compared with OECD and EU country averages, particularly the schooling rates outside the scope of compulsory education are low. The imbalance between the genders, particularly in the areas of education and employment, is noted:

> *"In our country, the ratio of neither employed nor in education young population 15–29 year age group is quite high. This situation is more explicit among women. Moreover, the ratio of neither employed nor in education population is decreasing in men as approached to the age 29 and it is vice versa for women. It is observed that, being inactive with respect to education and employment is more permanent for women."*

The rate of unemployment among youth is double the rate of general unemployment, which is also very high. According to the results of the Household Labour Questionnaire, unemployment rate of the young population in the age group 15–24 is 27,9 % in January 2009.[9] The report "Youth in Turkey" states that the rate of population increase is higher than employment increase; and underlines that there are significant gaps in the area of services under social state, while pointing out that strong family support in the society should not be taken for granted.

Opportunities provided for the participation of the young people in political and social life have been limited. The rate of young people who are members to non-governmental organisations is only 4% according to the report "Youth in Turkey". Young people do not trust policy mechanisms and politicians in Turkey, as observed in many countries. The rate of the young people actively working for a political party is 4,7%.

According to the report, the old age dependency ratios, may pose challenges as well as provide opportunities for governments. Turkey has a "15-year window of demographic opportunity", to prepare today's youth for the challenges of 2023 and beyond. By then, about 70% of Turkey's population will be of working age and the working-age population of Turkey will be increasing, though at a decreasing rate, until 2040. This so-called demographic transition, when the population growth rate is declining while the working age population keeps rising is called "the demographic window of opportunity". Such an episode is a one-off "opportunity" in a country's history and it is necessary for Turkey to make good use of it so as to prepare today's youth to the challenges of tomorrow. Turkey will have achieved an efficient use of demographic window of opportunity as long as it ensures possibilities and opportunities for young people, sufficient investment in their education and increase in the rate of youth participation in labour force without further delay.

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[8] http://www.undp.org.tr/publicationsDocuments/NHDR_En.pdf
[9] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/Start.do

Result

A holistic and sustainable youth organisation is needed in Turkey. A youth act needs to be prepared and put into force with a point of view regarding the youth as resource and adopting them being present in society as young people, and with a participatory approach having all relevant parties take part in the process. Youth policy should be considered and developed in connection with all policies; a super-structure ensuring coordination between the relevant institutions and organisations in the services to be carried out should be paid special attention.

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Youth policy cooperation
between Turkey and Sweden
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What is youth?
The concept of youth is as vague and diverse as the concepts of culture or identity, for example. Behind it are many opinions, interests, understandings, experiences, ways of life etc. among both young people themselves and the values and opinions of the people and institutions around them. That's why young people often find themselves frustrated and lost when expected to represent the diverse category of youth (cf. Bennett 2000, Giddens 1991, Johansson, Sernhede & Trondman (ed) 1999 and Ziehe 1989).

To understand and define youth means different definitions and categorizations by different people in different contexts. In order to be open to change and development regarding what it means to be young and concerning youth's influence and participation, it's important, to *not* fall in to a traditional interpretational framework. For example youth as "a problem", youth as a single category with the same interests and goals in life, or youth as first and foremost part of different social and cultural context where subcultural meanings and interests dominate and where youth is defined and analyzed from assumptions around "otherness" (see examples and discussions around this in Hauan & Heggli 2002, Löfgren & Norell 1994, Muggleton & Weinzierl 2003, Sernhede 1996, Sernhede & Johansson 2001 and Ziehe 1989).

In many cases youth is considered a biological/psychological category defined by the bodily and psychological changes of adolescence. But it's also a sociological and cultural category defined by society's cultural opinions and views and the lifestyles, media images etc. that "create" the definition of youth and youthfulness. However, one perspective that is very common is that young people are considered different and deviant from adults and adulthood. Juveniles, for example, are neither a child nor a grown-up. They are in transition: young, soon to become adults that in many ways ought to be integrated clearly in society.

The concept of youth has a lot of definitions due to different perspectives. According to the ideas and conceptions of youth in Sweden and Turkey, youth can be a:

- Legal/political category (for example the way the different societies treat youth when it comes to the right to vote, basic human rights, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child etc.).
- A social category (for example youth as part of different social structures and institutions in society. Family, marriage, social responsibilities etc.).
- A cultural category (what kind of cultural expectations do we have of young people, how do we define young, youth etc. what kind of opinions, activities etc. do we associate with youth, what do young people like and do, what kind of taste (music, film, sports, hobbies, leisure activities etc.) and lifestyles do young people have and participate in).

There are different indicators used in different societies and countries to signify the entrance in adulthood. For example graduating from higher education, marrying, getting a job, moving away from your parents and settling in your own home, having children and a family of your own etc.

What is youth policy?

Since young people are part of and members of society, youth issues and youth policy are also part of all the different areas of policy in society, for example health policy, labour market policy, housing policy etc. In the following text, some concepts and perspectives related to youth policy will be presented. In general it seems like "youth as a resource" is a central theme, but there are different ways of realizing this statement. The influence, participation, commitment, involvement and creativity of young people are also focused on. A summary of the general guiding principles for youth policy from a European perspective can be found in "The European White Paper On Youth". This is a policy document[10] concerned with suggestions to improve the lives of young people aged 15–25. Four general priority areas have been put forward:

- Participation
- Information
- Voluntary service for young people
- Better knowledge about young people's situation/living conditions

Five priority areas have been identified that are not exclusively related to young people but in which political decisions have an affect on young people's lives:

- Education, lifelong learning and mobility
- Employment
- Social integration (preventing poverty, social maladjustment and social exclusion)
- Racism and xenophobia
- Autonomy/independence

(The European White Paper on Youth)

The main focus in this text derives from these priority areas. The starting point is also focused on the influence and needs of young people and the view that youth are a resource. In the following text these themes are summarized under different headlines/chapters.

Youth policy is, on a comprehensive level, about participation in society and how to enable participation, influence and an understanding for the fundamental democratic principles that guide society in different areas of life. In order to increase the participation of young people, knowledge both among policymakers and the young people themselves is necessary. It's also important to communicate that participation, just like the fundamental liberal rights of freedom (of speech, association, assembly, etc.), both give the individual possibilities and also entail responsibilities. Both Sweden and Turkey are trying to develop youth policy issues and increase their visibility. But it is also important (as mentioned in The European White Paper on Youth above) to take into account young people in other policy areas related to the EU directive that stipulates "Integration of a youth perspective in other areas of policy".

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[10] A policy document is a document that states the fundamental principles of action for an organization.

Before discussing the importance of the participation and involvement of young people in a general sense, it's important to discuss some of the important policy areas mentioned above that are crucial for a comprehensive view of young people's situation. These are policy areas that can give young people access to welfare and enable them to influence their lives (cf. Swedish government proposition 2004/05:2). The Swedish government states in the government bill for youth policy 2004/05:2 that the national youth policy is a general policy area and that initiatives for young people are taken by a large number of participants/institutions in many different sectors of society. Initiatives at different levels and in different areas also affect each other and the results in those areas (Swedish government proposition 2004/05:2 p. 21). According to the Swedish government, a comprehensive approach to the following areas is a prerequisite for a prosperous life situation for young people:

- Education
- Employment
- Health
- Influence
- Leisure/Culture

Education is important for young people because it's an important means for influence, and thereby influence and power over their own lives. Education is also central for integration into society, economic growth, social justice and cultural tolerance. Education helps young people's personal development and identity. It gives them greater social skills and the ability to work together with other people, thereby helping them function as citizens in different contexts. However, it is important to remember that education and learning does not only take place inside the formal education system, it is something that we encounter at work, at home, in leisure activities, in voluntary work for NGOs, etc. That is, education and learning happens in a variety of social interactions and relations.

Employment is often dependent on education. Employment, like education, is an important means for influence and power over one's own life. The unemployment rate is often high for young people (especially those without any education) and a long period of unemployment for young people often leads to social marginalization and low self esteem. Unemployment among young people is also a political problem for society, because it results in young people's power of initiative, entrepreneurial skills and creativity remaining unexploited. Unemployment at an early age often leads to difficulties in entering the labour market, and without much work experience it will always be hard to get a job. This can become a vicious circle and drive young people into social marginalization.

Health is essential for every young person's life situation. It also has a great impact on young people's view of society, how they function socially and their personal wellbeing. This means that health will also affect young people's ability and willingness to participate in society and influence their lives. Many European countries have a worrying development when it comes to health. A lot of people, including young people, are overweight and physically inactive. Policies to create better conditions for physical activity have a high priority, as do efforts to create better eating habits. Mental and psychological problems are also major concerns in many countries. Stress, anxiety, fear, headaches and sleeping problems have increased to a great and worrying extent among young people, especially young girls. The above problems are also often related to school work (cf Bjälesjö 2005 & 2007).

Being able to have an **influence** is crucial for the welfare and prosperity of young people. To have the possibility to make one's voice heard affects one's outlook on life and welfare and also provides real access to an influential life and welfare. The possibility for young people to participate and young people to be represented in different political sectors improves equality in different aspects (age, gender, opportunities for education and work, social and/or ethnic background etc.). For young people to have influence on their local environment, school, policy making in different areas concerning them etc. is important for their well-being and for democratic processes and values in society.

Young people's right to quality **leisure time** and access to **cultural activities** are also of great importance. Free time is important in young people's lives. And it becomes more and more important for their identity and personal development as society changes and adolescence is extended in many countries. Meaningful leisure time and interesting cultural activities are part of the welfare and well-being of young people. Therefore, one main goal should be to create the opportunity for young people to both participate in and create leisure and cultural activities. It's also important to recognize different needs related to gender in this context and to be aware of and support new forms of leisure and cultural activities. It's important to support existing youth organizations and associations, but also to support the creation of youth organizations and associations by young people. The recruitment and education of qualified youth leaders and recreation leaders has a crucial influence on both the activities and young people's personal development and identity. Meeting places, such as sport facilities and youth centres, are also considered crucial to young people's wellbeing and opportunities to exert an influence. For example, sports contribute to good health (see above) and can be part of an understanding and involvement in a democratic process in society.

The main purpose for coordinating these policy areas is to obtain more efficient follow-up on and knowledge of young people's life situation and a more systematic coordination of the analysis of and reporting on young people's life situation (Swedish government proposition 2004/05:2 p. 33–42).

The importance of participation and involvement

For youth policy to be successful, it is very important to make young people part of society and increase their participation. On a local level youth policy is also about giving young people influence and responsibility (for example at youth centres, youth clubs, festivals, events, summer camps etc.) to plan and carry out activities, which also will give them experiences and possibilities for the future that they can use in their future life. For example, NGOs often have an important part (especially in Sweden) to play in fostering responsibility, social competence and democratic values among young people. To let young people lead and administrate projects like camps and festivals is a good way to increase participation and influence. Furthermore, youth centres can be used as recruitment and competence centres for skilled young people. They can function as part of a network of places where young people have the possibility to develop and learn important things that could be useful for them in their future lives. At the same time, the following statement is also important to consider:

*"How can you have any influence when you don't
know what you can have influence over?"*

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The quote above indicates that to have real influence, young people need to be part of a creative process to a greater extent. How do different institutional settings for young people create possibilities for young people not only to be part of activities but also to define, plan and implement the conditions for these activities? At the same time it's very important to remember that most youngsters visit youth centres just to meet friends and socialize and this might be the main goal for these meeting places.

It's also important to consider festivals, summer camps and similar events as important meeting places per se. That is, the event or meeting in itself, regardless of its content, is the important thing because it functions as a focal point for strength and power which creates an interest, will and energy to continue working with young people and youth policy issues. Festivals, summer camps and similar events are important as recurrent opportunities to unite around different issues and activities. They fulfil an important function as rituals that give a symbolic confirmation that young people and their issues are taken seriously. Those events and meetings are an occasion to unite and create legitimate demands around youth policies.

Since one of the main points of a strong youth policy is the participation, involvement and influence of young people, it's important to discuss and find ways *how* young people can become part of the decision-making process for the activities intended for them. That is, what kind of "good examples" are there of activities not just *for* young people but also *by* young people. This is fundamentally a question of democracy, influence and the right to decide. Of course the fundamental responsibility for planning, organizing and implementing decisions and activities for young people can't always be placed on young people not capable of handling that kind of responsibility. But in many areas young people can handle these responsibilities to a greater extent, and it is important that there are real and concrete plans for achieving this. It would be interesting to see concrete examples from both countries of how young people interact and participate in the daily realization of activities on the basis of a democratic viewpoint and participation. So far in the cooperation project there have mainly been various statements about the importance of this aspect and which rules and conditions that are in effect, *not* HOW to accomplish it. For example, it could be of interest to investigate HOW the planning, programming, preparation and implementation of youth activities has taken place. One way of doing this is to follow young people through the system, that is, to follow individuals through all the steps and through the activities that he or she participates in.

One interesting question is why so many girls are attending the government youth centres in Turkey. In many ways the youth centres seem to function as "safe havens" for girls where they can meet other girls and socialize and pursue activities on their own terms. These are activities mainly focused on and practiced by young girls. In Sweden it's often the opposite. Traditionally, and still today, it is mainly young boys that occupy and are active at youth centres. But there are also various meeting places and youth centres in Sweden that mainly attract young girls through their focus on more cultural activities like dancing, music, handicrafts etc. (Bjälesjö 2007, Ungdomsstyrelsen 2008:2:106)

Today there are new trends when it comes to influence and ways of socializing, being together and networking (the main condition for involvement, participation and influence). The use of the internet (chat rooms, net surfing, net communities etc.) has to a great extent replaced (or will do so) traditional organized activities for young people. However, the question is if it is actually the same content that young people are seeking out, and that it is only the structure that has changed. It might be a wise strategy to be careful not to interpret these new forms of social fellowship, interactivity and involvement as inactivity (which often is the case). A more accessible way to get young people more involved and keener to participate is to use the same channels (chat rooms, net surfing, net communities, Facebook, MySpace) that young people use for social networking, fellowship and friendship.

Personality, networks and influence

It also seems that personal characteristics are crucial in creating good conditions for the influence of young people. It's important to create a good environment for participation and influence with a combination of dedicated people among politicians, administrators and youth workers in particular and young people active at youth centres in general. It also seems to be a great advantage if these people have a vast and extended network of acquaintances. Through their position it's important that they function as links between adults and young people as well as between decision-makers and young people.

As well as personal characteristics, local support and an extensive local network are also important. The "local" concept seems to contain two parts: local in the meaning familiar with and part of the local community, but also local in the meaning recognition and acceptance from the local young people. In these circumstances concepts like trust and respect are important for creating confidence and conditions for commitment and influence among young people. It's important that young people feel respect and trust towards the people that function as their spokesmen and their link to decision-makers and politicians, both locally and on a national level. The respect and trust of youngsters is earned by these people's character, behaviour and actions. These are factors that should be included in staff recruitment routines.

Another important aspect is that organization and structure in general are crucial for the development of participation and influence among young people. Different youth centres and meeting places for young people in both countries are part of a national network and structure, where both governmental and non-governmental organizations and authorities are involved. But there seem to be differences between Sweden and Turkey. The organizations and structures differ, as does the degree of government involvement, local government and municipal dependence/independence from the national government, the form and organization of voluntary associations and associations under government management focused on youth activities, etc.

For example, in Turkey the voluntary work for young people and at youth centres is unpaid and done in people's spare time, but it also seems to be an activity that is valued in various parts of Turkish society. It seems to be part of a structured rewards system that is acknowledged and has positive value. For example, it can lead to government employment etc. Even though this voluntary work has an individualist motivation, it is also part of and connected to non-voluntary structures and contexts. For example, the youth workers have clearly defined roles, detailing what is expected of them and what their work should include. In Turkey the youth centres therefore seem to have a more focused and explicit role and are part of a firm context and structure compared to Sweden.

In Sweden voluntary work is also unpaid and done in people's spare time, but it's not valued and part of a rewards system in the same way. It's mainly individual and part of the private sphere/civil society and performed via NGOs and/or a "world of voluntary, non-profit organizations" that are characteristic of Swedish society and part of Swedish social, cultural and political history. These voluntary non-profit organizations often have employees in charge of youth activities. For example, the Swedish leisure sector for young people has historically been characterized by explicit professionalism featuring employees within a municipal occupational structure. In order to learn from each other in future and find "good examples", it seems important to produce a detailed description of how these different types of organizations are run and function in everyday life.

Through strong youth club/youth centre networks on a local level supported by municipalities through national governmental institutions, it's possible to strengthen young people's possibilities to fulfil the 4 goals of the European Unions youth policy ("participation", "information", "voluntary service among youth" and "greater understanding of youth"). With the help of long-term political and financial support, it is possible to arrange activities where young people can participate voluntarily over time and thereby get to know the organization, develop friendships and feel comfortable in this context. Long-term commitments foster social networks and thus also facilitate understanding. With a strong political and financial position it is also easier to market activities towards the main target group and interest them in participating.

These meeting places can also be important hubs in the integration of a youth perspective in different policies that are not immediately considered youth policy areas. This can be achieved by functioning as good examples of policies on democracy, participation, integration etc. through strong networks including a supportive political infrastructure. It's also through these meeting places that young people learn the decision-making processes and the conditions for (political) influence. Paths and possibilities for influence include both formal channels like youth centres and other kinds of meeting places for young people and youth councils/pupils councils. They also include different forums set up for communication and activities for and by young people. Young people acting as intermediaries between young people and governmental institutions are also important, people like youth and recreation leaders.

Swedish research shows that personal contacts and associations/organizations are the most common way for young people to exert an influence (Törnquist 2002:37). But in order to give young people real influence they must be given concrete, responsible work.

To what extent are politicians and civil servants available for young people? To what extent is it possible for young people to personally contact politicians and civil servants in charge of youth activities? It seems important to find a good mode for cooperation and exchange of experiences. Even if there are channels for influence and possibilities for young people to contact politicians and civil servants, young people often don't know this, or feel and think that there is no point in trying because no one listens to them anyway. The question therefore is whether to create more formalized communication channels for young people *or* to strive for more spontaneous connections and contacts? Sometimes different "languages" can also be a problem. That is, the way politicians, civil servants etc. communicate their opinions, decisions and the reasons for different decisions, give feedback and information is hard to understand for young people. It would be of great interest to investigate and invent new modes of communication for this situation.

The voluntary work of young people is essential for the realization of youth policy. The work itself is also crucial for the development of a sense for democratic values. Through this work young people become increasingly involved in and more knowledgeable about society and its functions. Voluntary work also results in general knowledge and skills that can be an asset in whatever future employment and career young people choose. This kind of commitment often provides young people with a knowledge base and skills that are useful for a professional career in general. Furthermore it strengthens young people's self esteem and is considered a formal qualification in different areas of public life.

Learning processes

One important area of youth policy is the importance of learning and education as a preparation and investment for life. Education and learning is also considered both an individual contribution but also an important contribution to society. There are different perspectives of learning as part of the future for young people. Learning by doing as a way of creating knowledge that you as a person really understand yourself is one way of creating knowledge. This method can be compared to the traditional method of a teacher/supervisor talking and young people listening. An interactive process might be considered a better method of learning and put forward as a good example for youth centres too. The change in technology can also be considered important in the learning process, to use this new technology and for young people to be more familiar with it. Personal ability will be more and more dependent on learning in the future, as will communication *between* students/young people instead of communication between teacher/supervisor and students/young people as a learning method. Another method is to develop "a research based education", creating your own empirical material to learn from.

One circumstance that in many ways seems to affect (and often limit) the extent of young people's influence is the aspect of time. It is significant for many (descriptions and definitions of) young people that they seem to live in another time span; they want results and solutions immediately, they want answers at once. From this perspective, a clash arises between rules and traditions for decision-making *and* youth's different perspective and desire to change things with fast results, solutions and answers. But on the other hand a looser organization with short-term projects and no time limits might work with a structure that characterizes a lot of youth centres.

A more general reflection that arises from the idea of a loose organization with short term projects is the ability to create continuity in the work on young people's influence and activities. Mainly it's about continuity for the people working in the field, both young people, politicians, decision-makers and civil servants. For natural reasons, young people's commitment and involvement don't extend over a long period of time (even if adolescence today is often considered longer and actually *is* longer for a lot of young people). The important thing here is to provide for continuity over time regarding young people who are actively interested and emotionally involved. This could be difficult, but one suggestion is to develop some kind of mentorship to counteract a lack of continuity and secure the transformation of knowledge. When active, interested and emotionally involved young people disappear someone else has to take over and continue their work, otherwise there is a risk that existing activities, channels, networks and possibilities for influence will disappear. This problem is not as serious if the activities in question are surrounded by a strong structure and organization with a long continuity over time.

Aspects of "decision-making" and "non-decision-making"

Another important aspect that has been brought to the fore is something we can call "project culture". That is, projects in general, and therefore different kind of projects in communities, tend to follow clear models and patterns. The order of decision-making and selection of people to include in the project follow strict criteria. Furthermore, the expectations and goals of the projects are so fixed that the form directs the content to a very high degree. Many times it seems like political prestige and image runs the risk of both take the sting out of and strongly affecting the content of the activities. It's important that different youth projects don't just become formal or official political statements, but more importantly are turned into concrete activity to meet the needs of young people. In general, it's important to take into consideration how young people's experiences and living conditions are given enough attention and understanding in the specific cultural circumstances inside different projects, since it's precisely their experiences and living conditions that are the starting point. The assessment of which youth activities and measures are appropriate is often implicitly based on a ready basic idea and/or model of how "youth projects" should be designed, a public-oriented model with a system of confirming rituals surrounding it. This "project culture" follows its own rules and regulations and maintains its own rituals to confirm and justify its activities. In this kind of model there is limited space for different experiences, and especially ideas. Reports, conferences, evaluations, study material, surveys and workshops become a filter through which the people involved look at the possible ways of organizing, working with and implementing the activities. Even if not all, or perhaps not even the majority, of activities are affected by this kind of "project culture" it's still important to always be aware of these, often unconscious, conditions that govern the shape and form of the activities (cf. Gerholm I: Arnstberg 1992).

In what ways do we measure and estimate young people's participation in decision-making? There are often structures and regulations where young people (in theory) participate but where their actual influence is marginal and young people are marginalized in the decision-making process. Young people are often listened to[11] but they don't get the opportunity to be part of the implementation of the measures or proposals where young people have been a body to which a proposed measure is referred for consideration. That is, young people are often a body for consideration and producers of ideas *but* not part of the decision-making process. They become reactivated in the process when the decisions have been made, the general principles are laid down and the order of decision is set. Likewise young people don't always receive any feedback on or recognition for their point of view. The function as body for consideration might give them an actual influence, *but* it might also be a way to neutralize young people's actual influence by giving them a formal influence in the form of opportunities to comment and have an opinion, but no influence over the practical implementation of the youth policy in question. This might create both a diminished interest and reduced ability to contribute to the development on a local level in the community and to the needs and living conditions for young people locally. However there are examples where young people have been given responsibility and confidence to implement things, for example different events. In this way the view of young people has changed in a positive way. One way could be to allocate funds that young people are put in charge of.

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[11] That is, before political decisions concerning young people are put into action, the decision-making organization, authority etc. often sends out the basic data for these decisions to the various organizations that the decisions concern.

It's also important to analyze the selection process of young people for different assignments. Sometimes it's difficult to recruit young people for assignments and voluntary undertakings and therefore it might be necessary to hand-pick them. This can be a sensible solution, but at the same time it's also a procedure that means that the understanding and sometimes arbitrariness of certain people decides who or what is represented. It seems important to find a balance in the governing between a firm and steady way of accompany the young people in their participation and involvement *and* letting them govern themselves with as much responsibility and influence as possible. It seems important to help them help themselves. Another way is to hand over the decision-making process to the young people themselves (through the election procedures that already exist in the local policy-making process) when it comes to who will represent them and the necessary conditions for influence. Or handpick the young people that enjoy most respect and have the most extensive network among other young people. One suggestion regarding decision-making and influence is that the young people should concentrate on a couple of issues that they work hard with to force through. In that case there will be better opportunities to really change and influence things.

Conclusion

There are some themes that seem crucial for opinions and insights about young people's influence. These are about *definitions* and interpretations of participation and influence and *possibilities* for participation and influence. Also how relations and a mutual understanding are produced between adults (politicians, civil servants and decision-makers) and youngsters. In relation to this, communication *between* these adults is also a central issue. Furthermore, it's a question of how to create trust and legitimacy between each other. Meeting places for young people as areas for contact and the activities themselves are also crucial starting points. The formal channels (youth organizations, youth councils/pupil councils) function satisfactorily in most local settings and seem to be, both in Sweden and Turkey, a much-needed democratic institution.

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