



Policy on Youthwork

2014-2018

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Policy on Youthwork 2014 - 2018



1. Introduction

The process of policy on youthwork here presented is a result of the Icelandic Youth Council's labour, whose practices are in accordance with youth law (nr. 70/2007). The role of the Youth Council is, among other things, to draft proposals regarding "emphasises and policy making in the field of youth issues", and the policy making process sketched here is part of this procedure. The aim of the policy making is to delimit important projects which parties involved with the field of youth issues have to address in the coming years.

In policy on youthwork, an emphasis is placed on aspects that facilitate a necessary development and progression of youth issues in Iceland. The policy making process has a long precursor and has come to be through the work of the Youth Council over the past four years. The process and work methods are explicated in the closing words.

In the making of the policy, a certain impasse within the field concerning definitions and concepts came to light. It is important to call attention to these problems, given the fact that a shared understanding of key terms is necessary in this kind of practice. The policy also discloses an urgency to systematically work on these issues and more clearly explicate key terms.

The policy is structured as follows: First, a definition of seven central goals, aimed for in the field of youth issues in the coming years. Second, several ways in which these goals can be achieved are enumerated. Furthermore, parties responsible for the implementation of these goals are suggested, as well as listing ways to measure progress.

Further steps include working on ways to execute each plan and to set them in motion. This must take place through collaboration between the Youth Council, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, the municipalities, social organisations, universities and research institutions.

A list of references brought to bear in the policy making process is presented at the end of the summary. It is moreover suggested that the policy in youth issues should take effect from 2014 to 2018.

2. Goals

The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture's policy in youth issues accounts for, among other things, the legal obligations of the government in accordance with articles regarding the Youth Council (Laws on Youth nr. 70/2007) and government contracts with organisations, associations and parties involved with youth issues. The policy applies specifically to organised youth activities as it is defined in abovementioned laws, i.e. organised social and leisure work where children and adolescents collectively work in their leisure time toward ideals, goals and interests which they consider important.

The following goals should be aimed for:

1. Nationwide organisation regarding youth issues are coordinated in order to facilitate cooperation between all parties engaged in issues of youth.
2. The participation of children and adolescents in youth work is bolstered and the activities account for the needs of each individual.
3. Children and adolescents should have direct impact on policy making and decisions concerning youth work.
4. The funding of youth work is secure and equality is ensured in the allocation of funds.
5. Information and the mediation of information concerning youth work must account for the needs, expectations and situations of children and adolescents.
6. The education and training of those who work within the field of youth issues is professional and it facilitates increased quality in youth work.
7. Diversity is encouraged in research within the field of youth issues and it is ensured that research findings are used for the benefit of youth work.



1. Nationwide organisation regarding youth issues are coordinated in order to facilitate cooperation between all parties engaged in issues of youth

One of the roles of the Youth Council is to facilitate cooperation between youth organisations, social organisations, schools and municipalities regarding issues of youth. A greater number of parties (individuals, groups, businesses) also support issues of youth for longer or shorter periods of time. One of the main flaws in the organisation of youth issues in Iceland is therefore a lack of a single shared forum of cooperation and dialogue for everyone concerned with youth issues. By creating shared space, an important and professional exponent for children, adolescents and youth work would be created. It is imperative that the environment and organisation of youth work are constantly developing and that they take aim of the requirements of modernity. This is why changes must be made in the organisation of youth issues.

Ways:

- Systematically work toward increased cooperation and dialogue between all parties engaged in youth work and between those who deliberate regarding youth work.
- Establish a cooperative forum for everyone involved in youth work in cooperation with independent social organisations, the youth work of municipalities and others with the aim of, among other things, bolstering cooperation and collaboration between respective parties and to create a single strengthened exponent in the field of youth issues.
- Ensure that the new shared cooperative space for youth work has an increased presence within public policy making.
- Reconsider youth law.
- Create a securer frame around laws which stipulate what kind of services public parties should offer children and adolescents in leisure time.
- Define quality criteria for public parties who work with youth issues, such as, concerning the activities of community centres for teenagers and leisure centres.
- Reconsider the role of the Icelandic Youth Council.
- Ensure that young people have direct access to the management of youth issues and that their issues are represented by a member in the Youth Council.
- A stronger budget becomes the basis of a more efficient organisation.
- Ensure that new organisations, groups and individuals who work within the field of youth issues are able to extract support from the government and municipalities.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, municipalities and independent social organisations.

Assessment: Review and scorecard will be made latest in 2018.

2. The participation of children and adolescents in youth work is bolstered and the activities account for the needs of each individual.

The participation of children and adolescents in youth work must be increased and the varying needs of individuals and groups must be taken into account. The fact that youth work has social, preventative, pedagogical, cultural and educational value has to be kept in mind. The government's contribution therefore must ensure that all children and adolescents are afforded equal opportunities with regard to the participation in youth work without discrimination of any kind, such as, based on race, skin colour, gender, sexuality, nationality or social position, property possession, disability, descent, or other conditions which might affect them, or their family or legal guardians.

Ways:

- Systematically account for the varying needs of individuals, groups and organisations in drafting plans for youth issues.
- Ensure that the environment and facilities for youth work are accessible for all and increase the visibility of given facilities.
- Ensure participation of marginalized groups and minorities in youth work.
- Encourage active participation of both genders in youth work.
- Facilitate balance between participation in youth work, other leisure work, family life and education.
- Guarantee all young people easier access to governance and services, for example through increased electronic services.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, municipalities and independent social organisations.

Assessment: Review and scorecard will be made latest in 2018.

3. Children and adolescents should have direct impact on policy making and decisions concerning youth work

Laws regarding youth issues claim the following: “All activities involving children and adolescents should aim to ensure their welfare and encourage them to be innovative and to actively participate.” Youth work should therefore increase social skills and prepare children and adolescents for participation in a democratic society. Basing youth work on the needs of children and adolescents is important; as is their direct impact on issues that concern them and that they are able to assume actual responsibility.

Ways:

- Bolster the democratic influence of children and adolescents in relation to the policy making of the government and municipalities.
- Emphasise increased democratic practice in youth work and the participation of children and adolescents in all decisions regarding policy making.
- Respect and follow the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in all youth work and inform children about the treaty.
- Increase the influence of youth sectors of social organisations and municipalities in policy making and decisions.
- Found a democratic forum for children and adolescents through which young people’s perspective are mediated to the government.
- Offer direct democracy in which children and adolescents can vote on issues that concern them. This is carried out within a space that is appropriate for children and adolescents.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, municipalities and independent social organisations.

Assessment: Review and scorecard will be made latest in 2018.

4. The funding of youth work is secure and equality is ensured in the allocation of funds

The economic foundation of the parties engaged in youth work varies. Activities organised by schools, municipalities and larger organisations are based on securer channels of funding while various independent organisations, groups and individuals are often faced with financial uncertainties. This difference in financial circumstances must be evened out by, among other things, ensuring equality in the allocation of funds.

Ways:

- Ensure increased and securer funding of youth work.
- Ensure that the government and municipalities retain measures of equality in the allocation of funds to youth issues.
- Develop means by which the new shared cooperative forum for youth work is able to influence decision making in relation to funding for youth issues.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, municipalities and independent social organisations.

Assessment: Review and scorecard will be made latest in 2018.

5. Information and the mediation of information concerning youth work must account for the needs, expectations and situations of children and adolescents

The mediation of information as well as people's pattern of communication has undergone great transformation in recent decades. Young people are generally quick to adapt to technological developments in media and communication. The mediation of information and communication increasingly takes place within social media. Administrators and other parties engaged in youth work must adjust the framework of youth work and the mediation of information to children and adolescents to these transformations.

Ways:

- Utilize contemporary technology and social media to increase the flow of information and facilitate increased participation in youth work.
- Encourage the use of social media in leisure work and youth work.
- Present the use of social media within youth work which is in accordance with the requirements of modernity.
- Ensure that children and adolescents adopt communication patterns on social media that are in compliance with the ethical values of society.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, municipalities and independent social organisations.

Assessment: Review and scorecard will be made latest in 2018.

6. The education and training of those who work within the field of youth issues is professional and it facilitates increased quality in youth work

Maximising professionalism, education and training in the field of youth issues is the shared role of government, municipalities and parties engaged in youth work. The societal demands on those who work with children in schools and sports and other youth work are constantly growing. Important developments have taken place in relation to these issues. Around a decade ago, education in leisure studies and social education was established on the university level. Furthermore, many social organisations have their own system of education and training (informal education systems) for their leaders. It is therefore urgent to further increase the quality of the activities and ensure that quality and professionalism is the guiding principle in all youth work. Here, the increased education and training of top level individuals is the key.

Ways:

- Build more diverse foundations for basic and continuing education for individuals working with youth issues.
- Increase the requirements for education and experience of those of work within the field of youth issues.
- Create a rigorous legal frame around parties working with youth issues in which their rights and duties are stipulated.
- Formally evaluate and recognise the training and education that takes place within youth organisations.
- Bolster university studies in the field of leisure studies and social education.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, municipalities and independent social organisations.

Assessment: Review and scorecard will be made latest in 2018.

7. Diversity is encouraged in research within the field of youth issues and it is ensured that research findings are used for the benefit of youth work

Universities, research institutions and parties engaged in youth work are able to facilitate increased development and knowledge regarding youth work through substantial research. It is important to ensure diversity in research and promote innovation and recruitment in research on youth. Special care must be taken to ensure that data and findings are systematically utilised in order to improve and strengthen youth work in the country.

Ways:

- Always safeguard the interests of Icelandic youth in policy making regarding Icelandic youth research.
- Allocate research funds to the Icelandic Centre for Research mandated by the ministry.
- Ensure innovation and necessary recruitment in research on youth issues and pave the way for innovative research subjects.
- Facilitate ongoing longitudinal research within the field of youth issues.
- Strengthen researchers' service to social organisations.
- Shape policy concerning open access to data gathered by means of public funding for the benefit of other researchers.

Responsibility: The Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, municipalities and independent social organisations.

Assessment: Review and scorecard will be made latest in 2018.

Closing Words

On the shaping of the policy

The policy has been shaped over a long period of time and has come to be through the work of the council over the last four years.

In the spring months of 2012, the Icelandic Council of Youth was joined by an advisor who was given the role of project manager and editor of the policy making process. The steering committee of the Youth Council held a number of meetings from May to October 2012 in which the emphasis was placed on policy making and stage analysis. A so-called SWOT-analysis was, among other things, the fruits of that labour. During the fall months of 2012, a survey was designed and then sent via the internet. The survey was sent to most parties involved in youth work, organisations, institutions, groups and staff from varying municipality community centres. Moreover, the advisor conducted interviews with staff from ministries, institutions and other parties concerned with the issue. The steering committee initiated a meeting between then Minister of Education, Science and Culture, Katrín Jakobsdóttir, and representatives from the youth councils of the municipalities in October 2012. The meeting was attended by around 50 youngsters, aged 15-20. They discussed their opinions with the minister and actively partook in group work which revolved around the position and future of youth work. Moreover, during the policy making process, existing information regarding work on the analysis and shaping of policy in youth issues from the last three years, was summoned, as well as other research findings within the field, see references.

The policy on youthwork was publically presented on the 10th of December 2012 and afterwards, parties working in the field were invited to hand in comments. Comments came from 11 parties and the newly formed Youth Council surveyed all the comments with the aim of taking them into consideration.

The comments revealed, among other things, criticism on the work methods utilized in the policy making process. Various social organisations expressed that they had wished for stronger involvement in the process. All parties who sent in comments were invited to a meeting with the Youth Council, where they expressed their views and comments on the policy making process. Following a detailed review, the Youth Council emphasised strongly that the comments would be addressed to the extent possible.

“Policy on Youthwork 2014-2018” presumes that the work in the field of youth issues will generally focus on aspects most widely agreed upon. With these emphasises in mind, necessary developments in youth issues in Iceland will be expedited.

“Policy on Youthwork 2014-2018” was approved unanimously in the Youth Council on the 5th of June 2014. Furthermore, minor alterations in phrasing and suggestions by a proof-reader were unanimously approved in a meeting of the Youth Council on the 11th of August 2014.

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