

HUMAK UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
THESIS

Development of NGO Association of Estonian open Youth
Centres

2001-2011

Tiia Mugford

Keywords: Estonian youth work, NGO, an umbrella organisation, Youth Work Act, youth work union, organising youth work, organisation, organisation history, voluntary

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<p>Tiivistelmä</p> <p>Enam toetunud autoritele: Martinson Karl, Sikk Toivo, Bruus Kadi; Rute Jüri; Sikk Toivo; Roulston Kathryn; Laherand Meri Liis; Estonian youth work act 1999 and 2010; Estonian youth work strategy 2006-2013 jt.</p> <p>Antud diplomitöö eesmärk on salvestada MTÜ Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus (EANK) ajalooline mälu 10 tegevusaasta lõikes, selgitada välja suuremad saavutused ja kajastada tulevikuvaateid.</p> <p>Kuna ühingu tegevust ei ole siiani uuritud ega salvestatud siis on antud töö vajalikkus rõhutatud ka intervjueeritavate poolt.</p> <p>Tulenevad ülesanded olid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anda teoreetiline ülevaade noorsootöö kujunemisest eesti vabariigis, seadusandluse kujunemisest, rollist ja võimalustest avatud noorsootöös; • tuginedes intervjuude ja dokumentide analüüsi tulemustele luua ajalooline ülevaade organisatsiooni arengust 2001-2011. <p>Uuring hõlmab ülevaatlikku sissejuhatust eesti noorsootöö arengule ja peamistele pidepunktidele. Autor toetub eesti noorsootöö ja euroopa liidu noorsootöö seadusandlikele seisukohtadele, samuti EANK alusdokumentidele.</p> <p>Sisuline osa tööst keskendub EANK kui noortekeskuste katusorganisatsiooni arenemislugu läbi 10 tegevusaasta, toetudes transkripteeritud intervjuudele ja kategoriseeritud dokumentidele.</p> <p>Uurimistöö eesmärk ei olnud laskuda pisidetailidesse vaid anda ülevaatlik informatsioon EANK viimase 10 aasta tegevusest.</p> <p>Järeldusena võib tuua et EANK on tänu oma usaldusväärsetele liikmetele tugev ja eesti noorsootööd edasiviiv organisatsioon, kelle vajalikkus ka tulevikus on tõestatud.</p>	
<p>Asiasanat eesti noorsootöö, noorsootöö ühing, noorsootöö korraldamine, MTÜ, organisatsioon, organisatsiooni ajalugu, vabatahtlikkus, noorsootöö seadus, katusorganisatsioon</p>	

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ABSTRACT

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Title Development of NGO Association of Estonian open Youth Centres 2001-2011	
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<p>Abstract</p> <p>Bibliographical information:</p> <p>Martinson Karl, Sikk Toivo, Bruus Kadi 2000; Rute Jüri 2000; Sikk Toivo 2007; Silverman David 2000; Roulston Kathryn 2010; Laherand Meri Liis 2008; Estonian youth work act 1999 and 2010; Estonian youth work strategy 2006-2013</p> <p>The objectives of the work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an overview of the development of youth work in Estonia, including legislation, and the role and potential of Open Youth Work (OYW) • Based on the results of interviews and document analysis, to create a historical overview of the organisation's development from 2001-2011 <p>The lack of a reliable archive can cause confusion and misunderstanding, and lead to a lack of consistency. It can make it difficult for new board members to find out what has gone before, and that prevents them making an immediate contribution following their appointment.</p> <p>The research task:</p> <p>Interest in the problem of how the an umbrella organisation can effect the development of Estonian youth centres, and what tools are used. Because the activities of the Association have not previously been recorded, nor has it safely archived all its records, it is important to fill any gaps to assist in the Association's future direction and development.</p> <p>Methods used:</p> <p>A number of people who had been instrumental in the Association's activities and achievements in the past were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and analysed. In addition, documentary records were studied to affirm what had been discovered from the interviews.</p> <p>The most important findings:</p> <p>The Association engenders great loyalty from its members, it has made a significant impression on Estonian youth work in the past and should continue to do so in the future.</p>	
<p>Keywords Estonian youth work, NGO, an umbrella organisation, Youth Work Act, youth work union, organising youth work, NGO, organisation, organisation history, voluntary</p>	

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Introduction

In the 21st century one essential part of any developed society is good quality youth work which is achieved through planning and networking. The research work focused on networking and the development of quality youth work through the Association of Estonian Youth Centres (AEYC), and recording the Association's history retrospectively. Modernisation of existing youth centres and opening new youth centres required careful planning and a historical overview provides the opportunity to look back on the reasons for decisions made at the time. AEYC continues to have a large role achieving progress from voluntary input to youth work in Estonia. Records of important decisions, meetings etc. need to be accessible to those who will be involved in the years to come. How much has the situation changed following accession to the European Union (EU), and cooperating with international organizations?

This research topic was selected primarily due to the author's own experience of belonging to the AEYC's fourth management board, and a need to reflect on past events and achievements to save it. Interest in the problem of how the an umbrella organisation can effect the development of Estonian youth centres, and what tools are used. Because the activities of the Association have not previously been recorded, nor has it safely archived all its records, it is important to fill any gaps to assist in the Association's future direction and development.

AEYC operates as a voluntary non-profit organisation which brings together other youth work organisations. Youth workers, especially in small centres in rural areas, need to offer and receive information, as well as share their concerns and successes with a group of similar people who understand.

This thesis is based on the author's interest to preserve historical memory of the umbrella organisation AEYC, based on the opinions of people and their memories (with further affirmation from documented material) identify its major achievements and reflect on the Association's future.

The lack of a reliable archive can cause confusion and misunderstanding, and lead to a lack of consistency. It can make it difficult for new board members to find out what has gone before, and that prevents them making an immediate contribution following their appointment.

The objective is:

- To provide an overview of the development of youth work in Estonia, including legislation, and the role and potential of Open Youth Work (OYW);
- Based on the results of interviews and document analysis, to create a historical overview of the organisation's development from 2001-2011.

Abbreviations used the text are explained in Appendix 1.

Through the years, AEYC has been a visible and responsible partner for Open Youth Centres (OYC).

The study includes a comprehensive introduction to the development of youth work in Estonia and the main points of support.

The author uses source material which gives an overview together with the concepts of tells the story of the AEYC umbrella organisation's development of youth centres during 10 years of operation. The research is based on transcripts of the author's interviews and categorised materials or documents.

The author draws on Estonian youth work and the European Union's youth work legislation as well as the official documents of the AEYC. The main events are written based on the interviewees' opinions expressed in interviews, and existing documents.

The research objective was not to descend to the level of minute detail but concise information about the actions of the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres in the last 10 years.

Diploma author wishes to thank the tutors Urmo Reitav and Merja Kylmäkoski. AEYC organisation, and all the people who helped me. My special thanks to my husband, his patience, and of the language correction.

1 TERMS USED IN THIS RESEARCH

Young person - an individual aged from 7-26 years. (Youth Work Act 2010).

Youth work - the creation of conditions to promote the diverse development of a young personality that enables youth to be active, on the basis of their free will, outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system and work. (Youth Work Act 2010).

Youth work principles - followed upon organisation of youth work:

- 1) youth work is done for youth, and with youth, involving them in the decision-making process;
- 2) the needs and interests of youth are considered upon creating conditions for obtaining knowledge and skills;
- 3) youth work is based on the participation and free will of youth;
- 4) youth work supports initiative by youth;
- 5) in youth work the principle of equal treatment, tolerance and partnership shall be followed. (Youth Work Act 2010).

Open youth work method:

- is open to youth without setting reservations concerning their beliefs, skills, abilities, knowledge and economic preconditions; involves youth in the initiating of activities and their development;
- enables youth communication and developmental activity at a suitable time outside home and school and prioritises the development of youth initiatives;
- creates conditions for non-formal learning, first of all for empirical learning through activities and communication. (MoER 2006).

Open Youth Centre (OYC) - is the youth work institution that operates using the method of open youth work and where all young people can go on a voluntary basis and which is the centre of youth work organisation in the surroundings. (MoER 2006).

Youth work institution – public institution administered by the Ministry of Education and Research, an institution of local government or an institution of a private corporate body whose main activity is the organisation of youth work. (MoER 2006).

Youth Work Association - is a non-profit association, alliance of non-profit associations or a foundation with the aim of incorporating youth workers, youth work agencies or other persons doing and organising youth work and of representing their interests. (Youth Work Act 2010).

Area of youth work – a group of youth work services based on institutional contextual and/or formal similarity. (MoER 2006).

Youth work agency is a state agency administered by a ministry, a rural municipality or city administrative agency, an agency administered by rural municipality or city administrative agency, a legal person in private law or a company of a legal person in private law, the main activity of which is the organisation of youth work. (Youth Work Act 2010).

Non-profit Association - a voluntary association of persons, the objective or main activity of which shall not be the earning of income from economic activity. A non-profit association shall not distribute profits among its members. Associations of persons with non-profit characteristics and having no status of legal persons are not entered in the register and therefore the provisions for civil law partnerships apply to them. (Non-profit Associations Act 1996).

Non-governmental organisation (NGO) (alternatively known as non-profit...) - "voluntary group of individuals or organisations, usually not affiliated with any government, that is formed to provide services or to advocate a public policy". (Encyclopedia Britannica 2012).

Mobile Youth Work - is an outreach youth council concept. (ISMO 2011).

2 AN OVERVIEW OF THE YOUTH WORK IN ESTONIA

Estonian youth work has a long and varied history, but changes have certainly accelerated in recent years.

“To trace the recent development of youth work in Estonia we have to go back as far as the 17th century, where students in the first institution of higher education organised the first activities outside the formal education system.” (Martinson, Sikk, Bruus 2000, 39).

Estonia has been the subject of different political regimes during the past 100 years, having become independent for the first time in the country's history in 1918, after the fall of Tsarist Russia. (Taru 2011, 1).

People feel the need to belong somewhere, to participate and contribute. Active young people began to organise themselves. The state responded to the movements, and, according to Schlümmer (2009, 61, 62) in 1921 the Public Secondary Schools Act established the right of students to participate in the development of school life, creating associations and other groups.

Services to young people evolved from grassroots youth movements to more formal youth work in state-controlled youth organisations, but with alternatives.

In 1936 Parliament adopted the Youth Organisation Act and the Ministry of Education began to apply it. (Sikk 2007, 22).

Estonia has a long history as a nation, while political autonomy existed only from 1918-40, and is perceived as having been regained since 1991. But even during occupation by other states, Estonia maintained its own distinguished

cultural history, with an emphasis on arts, literature and (general and higher) education. (CDEJ 2001, 21).

According to Sikk (2007, 22) during 1940-91, the Soviet period, there was no national youth policy. Rather, the organisation of youth work existed in Estonia as part of the USSR, propagating one ideology.

“Youth work was used for ideological socialisation purposes, controlling youth and promoting the USSR’s agenda.” (Taru 2011, 9).

For nearly 50 years, the youth field developed their own ways of working. The idea was to encourage young people to become members of official organisations, through which the majority of activities were available. The Little Octobrist served those aged 7-9 years; after the age of 9 they could turn to the Young Pioneer organisation which provided for young people aged 10-15. The All-Union Leninist Young Communist League catered for young people from 14 years. The upper limit of age 28 was exceeded on occasion. (Taru 2011, 10). In the author's experience all age groups gained important social skills as the boys learned the necessary skills for the householder while the girls’ skills equipped them to become housewives.

Almost everybody was a member, at least during school time. These associations were abolished at the beginning of the nineties, providing scope for Western style youth associations to develop, but no adequate state support existed before the year 2000. (CDEJ 2001, 24).

At the end of 1980s there began what became known the Singing Revolution (1988–1991), the extraordinary progress of the non-violent path Estonia took to free itself from Soviet occupation. The national tricolour flag emerged as a symbol of freedom. In 1989 the Baltic Chain, an unbroken line of around 2 million people holding hands from Tallinn in the North, through Latvia to Lithuania’s capital - Vilnius - peaceably demonstrated their solidarity and determination. The songs of the young composer Alo Mattiisen (1961- 1996) are still found in the repertoire of youth singing festivals. There was a large attendance of young people. (Tammela 2009).

Nearly 50 years of Soviet occupation ended on 20.08.1991. The newly independent country needed to claw back state ownership and its control of society and the economy.

For the coordination of youth work, a Youth Department was formed in the Ministry of Education. In 1991, when Estonia first regained its independence, the Ministry of Education employed only two or three persons engaged in youth work. (Rute 2000; 69).

Since the prevailing, Soviet inspired, situation was no longer appropriate and the previous youth services were too long ago to reinstate, Estonian youth work would effectively start with a blank canvas.

“Due to the Soviet occupation, nearly 50 years of youth work had resulted in a situation which was not appropriate to the newly independent country, while few remembered the situation from 1936-40.” (Sikk 2007, 22).

“In Republic of Estonia the centralized youth work system established under regime of Soviets ceased to exist, though not entirely and not momentarily.” (Taru 2011, 14).

Different areas of youth work were the responsibility of several ministries and agencies. Interdepartmental co-operation was organised in the form of a youth socialising task force convened by the Minister of Education which lasted until 1998. In autumn 1999, the Minister of Education, proceeding from the basis provided by the Youth Work Act formed the Youth Work Council, which coordinated the opinions of the representatives from various ministries and youth associations. (Rute 2000; 69-70).

After regaining independence, economic restructuring, unemployment, monetary reform, the transition period opened up many new opportunities for young people. The National Youth Policy determined Estonia's attitude towards young people, the state recognises the young as equal members of society.

Estonia's first youth work partnership was with neighbouring Finland. The Finnish-Estonian cooperation began with a seminar on the 26.10.1993. Kärkkäinen, Taisto Head of Finnish Ministry of Education, Youth Sports and Youth Department, gave a presentation on "Youth and youth work laws." (Sikk 2007, 23).

The next step was the process to join the European Union and NATO, because the small and recently independent country did not have the resources to develop and defend itself.

"Modern youth work involved supporting the personal development of each young person, in varied environments, with the state as facilitator." (Taru 2011, 14).

In 1999, the Youth Work Act was adopted, which set out the counties' obligation to provide information and advice for young people. Subsequently, at least one information and counselling centre was established in each county, which received Ministry support. By 2008, Estonia had more than 21 county youth information and counselling centres, giving information on leisure time opportunities, health, rights, culture, participation, employment, education, etc. (Schlümmer 2009, 64- 65).

By the end of the period in question, the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) had retained overall control of youth work, but had delegated the responsibility for individual youth centres to local government. In addition, the numbers of MoER staff employed on youth work matters remained almost static despite the increase in activity because the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEYC) had demonstrated that it could be trusted to carry out some of the essential work such as training, while applying to various places for the funds to do so.

The AEYC was formed by youth workers, for youth workers and the members have been involved in offering critique and advice about the Association's direction.

The massive changes occurred in Estonian youth work over the first 10 years of the 21st century. Some of these changes were carried out by AEYC itself - alone or in cooperation with others.

2.1 Legislation

During the period 2001-2011 the Estonian legislature were busy making new laws to ease the country's transition from a part of the Soviet Union to a modern independent state. It was also necessary to programme the bringing of EU statutes into Estonian Acts as a condition of accession to the EU.

"The Constitution regulates the activities of the government of the Republic and local authorities." (Council of Europe 2010, 5).

The head of Ministry of Education's youth department, 1990-2001, Toivo Sikk (2007, 23) was proud of the progress made towards to the Youth Work Act, where the Child Protection Act (1993) was followed by the Hobby Schools Act (1995), Juvenile Sanctions Act (1998) and, finally, the Youth Work Act (1999).

This Youth Work Act defines youth work as the creation of conditions for young people from 7 to 26, to join activities which facilitate their development and enable them to be active outside their families, formal education acquired within the adult education system and to work on the basis of their free will.

The Youth Work Act 1999 led to the next step towards to the action plans.

Thankfully, the government has probably realised that the future of Estonia depends on the lives and aspirations of young people in Estonia. After two years of planning the "Estonian Youth Work Concept" and "Estonian Youth Work Development Plan for 2001-2004" became available. (Kivilo 2001).

Kivilo (2001) goes on to assert that the government had not paid enough attention to the existing youth organisations such as scouts and guides, sports organisations and other active youth organisations. In the Youth Work Development plan eight separate fields were listed which all needed funds. By the time the new Youth Work

strategy was devised for 2006 - 2013 there were more specific definitions, making a list of 10 areas of youth work.

Categories of youth work in Estonian Youth Work Strategy, 2006-13 are:

- 1) special youth work;
- 2) youth hobby education and hobby activities;
- 3) youth information;
- 4) youth counselling;
- 5) youth research;
- 6) youth work training;
- 7) recreational activities of youth;
- 8) work education of youth;
- 9) international youth work;
- 10) youth participation.

Eventually the Youth Work Act had to be overhauled to suit contemporary society. The evolution of youth work through research, training, international conferences etc. made a new Youth Work Act a logical step. The Parliament of Estonia (Riigikogu) adopted the new Youth Work Act in June 2010.

The process had started in 2005, when the Estonian National Youth Council made its first amendments. (ENL 2010).

“The Act provides the legal bases for the organisation of youth work. The Act defines the responsibilities within youth work of the Ministry of Education, county administrations and rural municipality or city government.” (Council of Europe 2010, 10).

Therefore, the administration structure in Estonia has two levels: national and local. At the same time the Government has devolved some of its responsibilities to county governors, who act as regional representatives of the state thereby creating a third level. The county governors have their own local administration.

According to the Youth Work Act (2010) county governors shall:

- 1) coordinate implementation of the national youth policy in the county;
- 2) analyse youth work in the county and prepare overviews of youth work;
- 3) supervise the use of funds allocated for youth work from the state budget;
- 4) fulfil other functions arising from legislation.

The strategies of the counties contain also a section on youth, but there is no legal obligation for the counties to operate youth centres, and they are given no funds to do so.

The Local Government Act (1993, revised 2007) states that the local government role is to organise youth work, however, there is no youth work in the list of maintenance tasks, which provides, under certain expenses of the state budget or from other sources.

Table 1. Youth Policy in Estonia, chronology (Council of Europe 2010, 10-14; Taru 2011, 14).

Year	Event
1993	➤ Child Protection Act
1993	➤ Local Government Administration Act
1995	➤ The Hobby Schools Act
1996	➤ Non-profit Associations Act
1998	➤ Juvenile Sanction Act
1999	➤ First Youth Work Act ➤ First Youth Work Forum
2001	➤ Concept of Youth Work ➤ Youth Work Action Plan ➤ Youth work development plan 2001-2004 ➤ European Commission White Paper: A New Impetus for European Youth
2004	➤ Local Government Act
2006	➤ Hobby Schools Act ➤ Estonian Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 ➤ Professional Standard of Youth Work
2007	➤ Standard of Hobby Education

	➤ Youth in Action 2007-2013 programme guide
2008	➤ Standard of youth worker
2010	➤ New Youth Work Act
2011	➤ Competency model for trainers in the youth field

There are numerous Acts which contain an element which is to do with young people, but may not feature significantly in youth work - nor, therefore, in this work. Table 1 shows only those Acts which have a strong connection with the subject of my research, Youth Work Institutions' umbrella organisation AEYC.

For the first time, in the Youth Work Act 2010, national and local youth councils and their rights are defined by law. The definition of youth organisation also changed. The Act changes the definition, and defines the principles, of youth work and the regulation of youth camps, youth organisation's annual support etc. (ENL 2010).

During the first 10 years of the AEYC's existence, youth work had progressed from the first Youth Work Act, 1999 to the latest, 2010, Act which incorporated the lessons learned during the intervening period.

2.2 Organisations involved in Youth work

In 2001 Estonia's modern youth work was in its infancy, the bulk of the responsibility for its planning and expansion belonged to the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER).

The biggest youth work demands are made of the MoER, which is required to prepare the national programmes of youth work, support the activities of youth organisations, and allocate annual funds to them. The Ministry carries out youth work supervision (and other related duties) on behalf of the State as prescribed in legislation and monitors the proper use of funds allocated from the state budget.

Full responsibility for youth work is shared between several ministries, whose responsibilities are described in the Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013.

There is a county government in each of the 15 counties, and each employs a chief of youth work. County governments also employ officials who, among other tasks, carry out duties related to youth affairs: education, sports, cultural events, social assistance, delinquent behaviour and services for those with special needs. (Council of Europe 2010, 5).

Part of the Estonian-Finnish cooperation involved the training of four Estonian youth workers. These four then returned to Estonia to begin the establishment of a youth workers' training system under the MoES, based on the Finnish model, and with the continuing oversight of the Finnish experts. (Sikk 2007, 24).

The following educational institutions provide professional training courses for youth workers:

- 1992 Tallinn pedagogical school
- 1996 Tartu University Viljandi Culture Academy
- 2004 Tartu University Narva College (Taru 2011, 15).

Table 2. Agents and Structures. Organisations involved in Youth Work. (Council of Europe 2010, 4- 9; Taru 2011, 14-15)

	Public authorities	Non-public body
National level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ministry of Education and Research, Youth department - Ministry in charge of youth; ➤ Other Ministries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ministry of Social Affairs (social assistance); - Ministry of Internal Affairs (juvenile police, work with juvenile delinquents); - Ministry of Culture (youth sports); - Ministry of Defence (preparing youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Advisory Council of Youth Policy (est. 2003); ➤ Students Council (since 1998); ➤ Estonian Association of Youth Workers (est. 1999); ➤ Estonian National Youth Council (est. 2002); ➤ Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for military service); - Ministry of Justice (co-ordinating the legislation, criminal prevention;. - Ministry of the Environment; - Ministry of Foreign Affairs; ➤ Estonian Youth Work Centre (est. 1999) National youth work authority; ➤ Youth in Action national agency (est.1997)- Youth in Action programme and training development; ➤ Parliament commission in charge of youth issues - Cultural Affairs Committee; 	(AEYC) (est. 2001);
Regional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ County government (15 county's; regulating Act 1994); ➤ Juvenile Committees (regulating Act 1998); ➤ Youth Information and Counselling Centres (est. 1999); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Regional Centre of Youth Information and Counselling Centre (est. 1999); ➤ County Youth council (est. 2006 in all 15 counties);
Local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Local government (224 LG; regulating Act 1993); ➤ Municipal Youth councils (in 45 municipalities); ➤ Municipal authority (youth centre, hobby-school, school youth work, juvenile committees); ➤ Young people's Work Brigades (est. 2004). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Local youth unions; ➤ Youth parliaments; ➤ Open Youth Centres (first was est. 1998); ➤ Centre of Youth information and Counselling; ➤ hobby-schools, youth NGOs, etc; ➤ Youth camps (est.1990).

Table 2 shows the multicultural cooperative youth scheme which should work perfectly, in theory, but in reality the situation is not so straightforward. It often happens that people's personalities intrude and the values of the individuals involved play an important part in cooperation and development.

By 2011 the situation had changed, MoER retained overall responsibility, but NGOs or the local municipalities owned and ran the youth centres. The AEYC supported those in the NGOs and local municipalities who ran the youth centres and having maintained control of the associated training were now beginning to work alongside licensed trainers.

3 RESEARCH METHODS

The methods used in the research are mixed research methods, mainly qualitative research including some elements of quantitative research.

Qualitative research methods predominate. Qualitative research gives the opportunity to the researcher to find their own unique way of analysis. It is mainly used in social research.

Tesch (1992) describes qualitative methods to a set of coloured balls, from which every researcher makes their own choice of colours and unique arrangement (Hirsijärvi, Remes, Sajavaara 2008, 161).

Denzin, Lincoln list the components of qualitative research, including first person accounts and biographical materials. Quantitative research uses statistical tables and graphs, to complement an impersonal, third-person prose. (Denzin, Lincoln 2005, 12).

3.1 Research questions

1. For whom was the Association of Estonian open Youth Centres (AEYC) established, and why?
2. How did AEYC develop over the last 10 years and what were its more significant achievements?
3. How do members exchange Information and work together?

4. How people perceive the organisation, the need for it, and its importance?
5. How important is it to the AEYC itself to have its own history recorded?
6. Where does the AEYC's future lie?

3.1.1 Research target

Documentation of the history of the AEYC and the underlying rationale, for the benefit of future generations.

The lack of a reliable archive can cause confusion and misunderstanding, and lead to a lack of consistency. It can make it difficult for new board members to find out what has gone before, and that prevents them making an immediate contribution following their appointment.

3.2 The selection of interviewees

The population, within AEYC membership is limited to those people deeply involved in the organisation: founders, board members (past and present) and executive managers. The author worked with the current management director of the AEYC. This led to email or 'phone invitations being made to 25 people, 16 of whom gave interviews (Table 3).

The first meeting was organised by the AEYC management director in Põltsamaa on 16.09.2011, which brought together six people who participated in the target group interview (Table 4) and 4 people were interviewed individually.

The second batch of interviews were held during the AEYC general meeting from 12-13.12.2011 in Karksi-Nuia, where 3 more interviews were recorded. Other interviews and the second target group meeting in Tartu (Table 4) took place in various locations and times, having been arranged by 'phone.

5 out of the 25 originally invited did not respond to the request for their contribution and a further 4 did not consider that they could make an important contribution to the historical study of the AEYC.

The interview selection therefore consists of a fixed target audience, who have been closely related to the initiation and AEYC action or cooperation. The selection included current and former board members and executives, as well as founding members who have not had direct contact with the Association recently. However, they have been kept informed of activities and the last group of people had been in direct contact with their previous since.

Interviews with the target groups consisted of a similar range of people, as mentioned earlier.

The selection consists of 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews of the AEYC's founders, board members (past and present) and executive managers. The selection of prospective interviewees was intended to be representative of the founders, and leaders, those whose ideas and actions shaped the Association.

It was agreed that interviewees remain anonymous and their responses are labelled by alphabetical characters (A to P). Interviews were conducted in several parts, according to the interviewees' familiarity with the organisation.

The target groups are marked with characters TG and a number, which shows who is talking, and the date identifies which of the 2 target groups it is.

The author of the research intended to reflect historical events over a 10 year period from 2001-11.

Table 3. Individual interviewees

Interviewee	Duration	Date and place of interview
➤ A	44:25	21.12.2011 Tallinn
➤ B	37:45	17.12.2011 Tartu

➤ C	39:58	17.12.2011 Tartu
➤ D	1:15:36	16.09.2011 Põltsamaa
➤ E	32:33	16.09.2011 Põltsamaa
➤ F	1:19:34	20.12.2011 Tallinn
➤ G	1:16:11	20.12.2011 Tallinn
➤ H	1:32:47	13.12.2011 Karksi- Nuia
➤ I	39:33	19.12.2011 Põltsamaa
➤ J	1:25:32	19.12.2011 Põltsamaa
➤ K	1:10:07	17.09.2011 Tartu
➤ L	28:54	16.09.2011 Põltsamaa
➤ M	56:56	13.12.2011 Karksi- Nuia
➤ N	1:05:06	13.12.2011 Karksi- Nuia
➤ O	59:40	19.12.2011 Tartu
➤ P	05:05	16.09.2011 Põltsamaa

Table 3 shows that the mean duration of the interviews was around one hour, ranging from 5 minutes to just 1 and a half hours.

Table 4. Target Group Interviews

Target group	Duration	Date and place
➤ TG (6 persons)	1:22:43	16.09.2011 Põltsamaa
➤ TG (2 persons)	46:42	17.12.2011 Tartu

3.3 Qualitative semi-structured interview

Through semi-structured interviews the author investigated what people remember of the rationale behind certain decisions and their consequences. There are no documents detailing the activities in the early years.

A potential problem, in particular relates to how the researcher categorises the events and activities as described, in particular the credibility of criticism concerns the basis of the researcher's subjectivity. The strength of the taped interview is that it is transcribed and saved. (Laherand 2008, 281).

Roulston says that the interviewee has an inner, true self, behind a public facade. The interviewer should not “lead” the interviewee. (Roulston 2010, 52).

In this research the author started the interview by putting the interviewee at ease, which allows the understanding of the historical development, to restore event through personal experience, what are the decisions and achievements of organisation. The topic of the research was important to the people and they responded enthusiastically. Youth workers generally have open personalities and it is easy to find out what worries them. The survey questions are open, moving through the open questions from general to more specific issues.

The Author benefitted from, but at the same time was possibly hindered by, having been a previous member of the board and had collaborated with the majority of the interviewees in the past. Interviews proceeded quickly and directly without reservations. It did happen that one person was unwilling to provide information on a certain topic and requested that it should not feature in the analysis, while another was quite happy for the same information to be recorded.

The author had good access to all documents relating to the early years, and the last 5 years, which provided the basic material on which to rely. Unfortunately lack of access to the full picture affected the third till fifth board documents, where it was not possible to rely on documented facts. Events of this period are therefore reflected on the basis of information obtained from interviews. The same situation applied with respect to the AEYC’s formation, and about the first youth workers’ training documents.

By analysing the activities of the Association, the author highlights the AEYC rise and fall: the early years of rapid progress, the central period of moderate activity, and the active awakening of recent years.

Interviewing of target groups used semi-structured interviews. Focus group interviews lasted an average of 45 minutes, and were transcribed from a voice recorder. Interviews were analysed using data central approach to the topic, with similar content in factors grouped together, which is grouped together all the text on the subject attending parts of the text.

3.3.1 Analysis of the documents

All documents are from the period 2001-11. Because the documentation held is so large, only the most important documents have been selected such as those summarising facts presented to the public authority. Therefore the Articles of Association, Annual reports, development plans, meetings protocols are included. For coverage of key projects, the criterion was to select those mentioned in interviews, with achievements over the years.

The list of documents studied:

- Articles of Association (2002, 2004, 2011).
- Annual reports (2003, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011);
- NGO Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEYC) vision until year 2015 and development plan for years 2010-2013
- General meeting reports
- Management meeting reports
- Grant-aided projects reports
- Letters to the members and partners

Having read the transcripts and other documents several times, all the important passages of text will be highlighted, copied and collated for analysis. (Laherand 2008, 318). The research is presented in different categories and sub categories, intended to provide a comprehensive and logical description of AEFC and its activities over the period being reviewed.

Table 5. Documents Analysed

Documents name	Name or responsibility	Date and place
AEYC Article of Association.	General meeting	06.02.2002 Tartu
AEYC management board activity plan 2002/2003	First management board	S.A. S.L.
OYC county competition conditions and procedures	Peep Ratas	2003 Tartu
AEYC register data (2.management board)	Marion Bobkov	05.11.2003 Tartu

AEYC Activity plan 2003/2004 Management board meeting	S.N. Marika	S.A. S.L. 15.01.2004 LANK
AEYC activity plan 2004 AEYC draft ERDF OYC renovation project 2004, comments	S.N. Marion Bobkov and Anne Kivimäe	2004 S.L. 26.03.2004 Tartu
AEYC expert assessment to the membership fee AEYC survey conclusion	Marika Markus Marion Bobkov	05.04.2004 08.04.2004 S.L.
AEYC draft to becoming a member AEYC Article of Association	Management board General meeting	06.08.2004 S.L. 23.09.2004 S.L.
Printout from the Central Database of the Registration Departments of County Courts	the commercial registry information system	24.09.2004 Tartu
Local youth work practitioners - Open Youth Centres	Doris Dupits, Marion Bobkov	2004 S.L
AEYC letter to the OYC OYC situation mapping	Management board Liis Kasemets, Leen Rahnu	07.04.05 S.L. 14.11.2005 S.L.
AEYC project background information. "AEYC custody capacity building". National Foundation of Civil Society	Heidi Paabort	01.11.2008 Põltsamaa
NGO Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEYC) vision until year 2015 and development plan for years 2010-2013	Riina Vaap	2009 Tallinn
AEYC Annual report 2003	S.N.	31.12.2003 Tartu
AEYC Annual report 2008	Kalvi Kants	25.05.2009 Tallinn
AEYC Annual report 2009	Heli Erik	29.01.2010 Tartu
AEYC Annual report 2010	Heli Erik	31.01.2011 Tartu
AEYC Annual report 2011	Heli Erik	30.01.2012 Tartu
AEYC Article of Association	General meeting	18.04.2011 S.L.

Table 5 lists details of AEYC documents which the author copied, studied and analysed.

From 2008, the documentary materials were taken from the AEYC website, the archive was prepared for use by its members and partners

4 ASSOCIATION OF ESTONIAN OPEN YOUTH CENTRES

The Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (AEYC) was formed in 2002 and liaised with MoER as well as training and supporting its members who were running OYCs in Estonia.

The AEYC is a nationwide umbrella organisation, connecting various Open Youth Centre's (OYC) operating on the open youth work method. (Article of Association 2011).

In the Association news-sheets 2003/4 (Appendix nr 2, a-b) the introduction was: Estonian Youth Club Union (EYCU) is a national non-governmental umbrella organisation which unites the Open Youth Clubs in different regions of Estonia. The organisation was created in November 2001 and the first function was to create a network of Estonian Youth Clubs and support their activities.

In the beginning there were 7 innovative and active persons who were ready to contribute their time and energy to establishing the new organisation.

“Only one from the active group could not be a member because they did not have proper NGO status, but they did help us much as possible.” (G 2011, 20.12).

The first achievements were:

- Incorporation documents were signed in November 2001
- The Articles of Association were approved 06.02.2002 (Article of Association 2002)
- Application for registration at Tartu County Court made on 14.02.2002.
- NGO Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus [Estonian Open Youth Club Union), Reg No 80165169 registered in Tartu County Court Division of the registry card proceeded approved 18.02.2002. (Registry card 2002).

Under the first Articles of Association the name of the organisation was Estonian Youth Club Union. Any prospective member of the association had to have been

carrying out Open Youth Work for at least one month and accept the Association rules. (Article of Association 2002).

“The official opening was in 2002. We started the logo contest where we had a selection of four examples, the best solution was made by Raul Oreshkin and it is still in use.” (F 2011, 20.12).

Under the new Articles of Association since 18.04.2011 the name of the association in English became Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (abbreviated to AEYC).

A political decision was made in 2000/01 to decentralise the MoER from Tallinn to Tartu. (Youth policy in Estonia 2001, 38).

According interviewees A, C, G, F, N, (2011) the first AEYC main office was situated in Tartu, to be close to the partner MoER.

In the early years, the head of the youth department from the MoER was a great supporter and counsellor to the organisation, as well as many other organisations created at that time.

Representatives of the new, mostly one year old, youth centres, had the expectation that, in addition to local government support, the Open Youth Centres (OYC) would also have extra support from the state, and this in turn would yield yet more OYC funding from local government. The result was better than expected, the extra funding facilitated a doubling of the number of OYCs in Estonia, from 60 to 120.

The first big job was open the local government project competition for funding to the OYCs. There was also an important Integration and Migration Foundation project, “The youth worker in a multicultural environment”. (While multiculturalism as understood in Western Europe was not obviously applicable to Estonia, there was a particular need to address the needs of the residual Russian population who had stayed in Estonia after independence). It is important that the Estonian National Agency for Youth in Action Programme (ENEB) and Integration and Migration

Foundation have mentioned the youth centres' users and youth workers as direct target groups in their project's consultation.

Estonia's greatest achievement through the AEYC is the functioning repository project "Varaait", which funds the coordinated purchase, safekeeping and sharing of sports and other equipment between centres.

Under the new Articles of Association 2011, in summary, the association is a public umbrella organisation, acting on the basis of open youth work, and which organises youth work associations and their employees, provides further training and develops OYCs. As constituted, the association supports youth work entities, provided more than 75% of their clients are aged 7-26 years, and their youth work is performed by professional or adequately trained youth workers.

In 2011 the Association remains in existence, but while it flourished by having a key role in the building and opening of new OYCs, during the first half of its existence when OYCs were expanding, now that austerity measures are resulting in youth work budgets being cut, AEYC's role has become less clear. The Association should be lobbying for the retention of OYCs, but it may not have the skills or the audience to make lobbying productive.

4.1 AEYC formation

The AEYC was the result of people coming together to discuss how modern youth work could be brought to Estonia, and what form it would take. The exercise was a success and those involved decided to maintain contact for mutual support. As time progressed the Association had a pivotal role in the rolling out of OYCs across Estonia.

Every organisation has stories to tell about its establishment; when, how and why. This organisation was established by active and innovative people who needed to be

heard and wanted to share their experiences and knowledge. The details of the formation of this umbrella organisation were available from people's memories.

In 2000-1, the EYWC created training courses, "Estonian development training for Youth Centres" to facilitate the opening of youth centres. The part-time course lasted one year, and the monthly training weekends were attended by two delegates from each of Estonia's 15 counties. The project was financed by Phare foundation, one of whose priorities was Open Youth Work.

"The idea originated from the situation in Estonia in 1999- 2000, youth work had not yet been defined - the specific subjects and priorities were not decided yet. At this time the first Youth Work Act was adopted, and the initial strategy." (A 2011, 21.12).

"At the time when the training started there were only a few of the very first youth centres open, either 3 or 4." (H 2011, 13.12).

As some C, M, D (2011) interviewees related, they did have their first experience and knowledge from their twinned city in Denmark, who gave the first help and training. But they felt themselves alone and did not know how to manage a Youth Centre nor how to produce a basic strategic plan.

"In strategy there was discussion about open youth work, OYCs, but at the same time it was almost still in its infancy, non-existent. Perhaps there were only a few centres, but it's understanding what they are, how they should work." (A 2011, 21.12)

A good way to find youth work's organisational problems and needs, was that each applicant was asked to complete a questionnaire and submit an essay. The competition for course places was through the county governors, whose advisers were conveying information to the target group.

"Those people invited to the course were actually already carrying out youth work or were starting youth work." (H 2011, 13.12).

EYWC's interest was in making good preparations for opening more youth work institutions all over Estonia, and to find some common understanding about youth work. One clear requirement was to give a good grounding in managing a Youth Work Centre (YWC) economically and how to find extra resources. They were also taught how to use a variety of skills in working with young people.

"I remember it was good that someone was thinking about the subject which I needed at this time." (C 2011, 17.12).

According to the interviews C, D, M, F (2011) some counties' governments in Estonia already employed a youth work counsellor who complemented the youth workers. Both sides needed someone who writes a project application and has information about the grant funds available.

According to the course organiser, in 2000-1 interactive learning methods were completely new to Estonia and project application skills were at an elementary level. The training course also covered teamwork, creating a wide range of activities, visiting Finland to observe youth work in Turku etc.

"An incentive experience was a practical examination in Finland, in Turku youth work institutions. It was an eye-opening trip experiencing street youth work as well as open youth work." (F 2011, 20.12).

Interviewee H (2011, 13.12) remembers the main thesis which the head of the youth department from MoER described, which she says is still in force.

One interviewee, D (2011, 16.09) was impressed by following the project rules and producing well-detailed external funding project applications from the very beginning.

"It was this training that inspired a very large number of youth centres. As a result of the training our youth centre was established." (H 2011, 13.12).

“For me, this training gave so much extra that supported me to take the young people to the town hall and we negotiated accommodation for the youth centre, a 3 storey house which is still being used.” (C 2011, 17.12).

The training course brought together people from different backgrounds and with diverse experiences. People learned to cooperate, and the result of this at the end of the course was the birth of the AEYC.

"I think it was the best possible training for starting the system from scratch. As a result of the training a firm foundation, resulted in the now-functioning organisation. And I think that then everything else followed." (G 2011, 20.12).

“I think the greatest value is that network, that I can see those same people today, in fact all of these people remain connected.“ (D 2011, 16.09).

Youth workers attending this course felt that they did not have support systems in Estonia and the value far exceeded the EYWC project leader’s expectations. The training brought people together and imparted details of what OYC means. The delegates needed to keep in contact with each other afterwards. Before the group of people completed their training, they resolved to establish a body to connect youth centres. With the help of trainers their group work resulted in the first important document, the Articles of Association. The group of people who contributed their ideas for the document promised each other to keep in touch for mutual support.

"AEYC was created because the youth centres were alone, no one hears a single small voice but it becomes stronger when united with other voices.“ (E 2011, 16.09).

The NGO AEYC Articles of Association were officially completed on 06.02.2002. Six youth centres were founder members of the association:

1. NGO Jõhvi Open Youth Centre (Jõhvi);
2. NGO Tähe Youth Club (Tartu);
3. NGO Viljandimaa Youth Centre (Viljandi);
4. NGO Open Youth Centre “Koht” (Tartu);

5. NGO "Öökull" OYC (Tartu);
6. NGO Põltsamaa Youth union "Juventus" (Põltsamaa).

All youth centres were registered as NGOs. The Association was regulated by the Non-profit Associations Act (1996) which said that the membership of NGOs may only consist of other NGOs. This stipulation was removed when the Act was changed in 2004.

AEYC was expected to represent Estonia in the international arena as well as involving itself with the introduction of youth work in the republic.

The AEYC originally began as a collection of enthusiastic volunteers whose expertise and contacts got things done. Today, the enthusiasm of the volunteers remains, but the network of contacts could benefit from being expanded to help the message to be heard.

4.2 The main objectives and Articles of Association

The Association was initially intended to provide information, develop and run training courses and generally support the members. At the same time there was a desire to help others to write successful applications for funds.

The youth centres were establishing drawing on the experience of other countries, the best example was from their Nordic neighbours in Finland. Society needed to offer something else for those young people who did not participate in the hobby school or sport activities etc. also those who were excluded from school, or otherwise marginalised.

Analysing the AEYC documents from the starting point, the main objectives were to help to resolve the main difficulties with establishing the OYCs. The youth work was newly born, there were too few trained people and a lack of knowledge of how and what to do. For that reason, it was useful to be able to ask advice from youth workers who had the necessary knowledge and personal experience. The AEYC wanted to

help, by communicating with the youth workers as they came across problems and were able to help, to find the best solution they could.

The main problem at the beginning of the 21st century was when the local municipalities delegated the youth work to the third sector. For the new youth centres the actual questions were to do with financial problems and identity, defining the role and place of the youth work in the local administration. (Tupits, Bobkov 2004, 2).

The interviews revealed some examples which had affected the objectives of AEYC work. One significant problem was that youth work was mostly carried out on a voluntary basis, there was virtually no support, financial or otherwise, from the State or local government. In 2000-4 local government held the opinion that there was no need to support youth centres by paying workers' salaries. Only the maintenance costs were covered, mainly the costs of accommodation.

"Each youth centre had to keep certain opening hours, which were dictated by the local government. It was very difficult to prove to the municipality expenditures which were not tangible." (E 2011, 16.09).

Youth work was grant-aided project based, and if the worker did not have skills in applying for project funds then the results were insignificant. Also there were not so many sources of funding at that time, that came later with accession to the European Union in 2004.

Youth workers also worried that youth work was not perceived correctly.

AEYC started with traditional OYC meeting seminars. The idea was to organise the task for youth workers using thematic topics and different workshops, e.g. youth work definition and youth policy, OYCs' place in local government. Special attention was paid to clarifying the youth worker's needs. (Tupits, Bobkov 2004, 2).

AEYC was preserving information exchange and cooperation between youth centres, in order to provide non-formal education for its members, also better training and support for the OYCs to formulate youth work policy through partnerships with local governments, ministries and other relevant partners.

"I know that at the beginning it was important to work out how to be a good partner to the other organisations and a reliable collaborator to the MoER. This was difficult at first, establishing relationships was crucial." (A 2011, 21.12).

EYWC was a good partner from the outset. Their support included advice, as well as introducing AEYC to the public sector in seminars and meetings. An important theme at the time, which still remains true today is the question of State support to the OYCs - how to give support, and for what.

"At the time the next action plan for youth work was being developed and they asked advice from the practical experts, those who were working in youth work." (A 2011, 21.12).

The earliest, most important, issue was to help youth workers by sharing the necessary knowledge and to assist in the creation of OYCs. At the beginning of 2000 there were few youth centres.

The 2002 Articles of Association stated that the goal of the Association was to create a network of OYCs in Estonia, and to support the actions and activities of its members.

To achieve its goals the Association:

- developed the model of OYCs;
- protects the interests of OYCs and their employees;
- co-operates with the state and local administrations, and other youth organisations.

The first AEYC Articles of Association followed the Youth Work Act 1999 and the strategy plan entitled "Concept of Estonian Youth Work 2001-2004". In 2006 the Youth Work Strategy 2006-13 was published, and the Youth Work Act was completely revised in 2010.

These changes also required updating of the AEYC basic documents, such as Articles of Association - revised in 2011 - and also led to the writing of the first Vision and Development plan 2010- 2013. Now, in 2012, the strategy is coming to the end of its currency and a new version is being worked on.

The Association's vision and agenda have been produced by cooperation between its members' youth workers. The preparation of the document was based on relevant national documents and principles of strategic planning.

The goal of "AEYC vision until year 2015 and development plan for years 2010-2013" is to create a unified framework for the activities and development of the organisation connecting youth centres.

In the recently revised Articles of Association (2011) the objectives align with the new Youth Work Act and Strategy 2006-2013. The goals of the Association continue to be to develop youth work services and improve its quality.

In order to achieve this, the Association:

- supports and provides advice on the development of youth work infrastructure
- represents interests of youth work associations providing open youth work in relationships with public, private and third sector institutions;
- initiates, supports and implements nationwide and international cooperation and development projects;
- deals with the organisation of professional further training for the employees of OYCs, compiling and publishing youth work methodological materials;
- supports single and joint applications by the association's members;
- coordinates the cooperation of youth work associations and organises the exchange of information;
- participates in the development of youth work politics at all levels
- advises youth work institutions.

The new organisation had to initiate the new projects, also secure additional funding for ongoing projects.

In 2009 the year report reiterated that their main aim was to develop youth work in Estonia through the professional and personal qualities of their members. They wanted to maintain communication and cooperation between the youth centres, and offer the youth workers themselves training in various skills and techniques. The Association's contacts in the political world allowed them to promote their members' agenda to the decision makers.

A second tranche of training is required now, because people are coming into youth work who were not available to be trained in the early days. The Association is content to share the training with licensed trainers but there is a need to promote youth work through effective lobbying.

4.3 Open youth work practitioners' experience

The interviews gave the author the chance to hear what the people who actually carry out the youth work think of the situation.

In the opinion of one target group, looking at the field as a whole, then the situation has progressed tremendously over the past 20 years. The problem is that such progress depends on subjective assessments. The structure is as much subjective. Local government provides the example that if the school director leaves, then another will be recruited and the school remains open but if a youth leader moves on then it is likely that no replacement is recruited and the youth centre will close.

One target group member asserted that there is nobody able to act as lobbyist, to promote youth work in parliament nor to political factions. It was suggested that perhaps the various organisations should come together to work together or even merge. Youth work needs to be promoted like any other product or service. (TG2 2011, 17.12).

There was a common theme running through the interviews that youth work had to be promoted, could not afford to sit quietly while others took whatever action was taken.

“The Youth Policy Council as such does not work, possibly because the need was imposed from above, any pressure group remains stable and stronger when the pressure is generated from ground level.” (TG1 2011, 17.12).

The current feeling is that the Association should be involved in trying to oppose or reverse planned closures of youth centres.

4.4 Main Activities and responsibilities

In the early years the Association started to build itself up. It received great assistance from EYWC, also the State was ready then to help with advice to establish new youth centres through the local government.

The purpose of the Association's activity and means of achieving it. In more detail, the Association aims to develop youth work services in Estonia, improve their quality; and thereby develop the membership of the Association by:

- supporting the development of youth work infrastructure, giving advice as needed
- representing open youth work bodies in dialogues with public, private and third sector bodies
- initiating and supporting cooperation within Estonia and at international level
- organising professional training for employees of OYCs, producing and propagating youth work methodological materials
- supporting single and joint applications by the Association's members
- facilitating cooperation between youth work associations, promoting the exchange of information

- participating in the development of youth work policies at local and national level

The membership of the Association comprises open youth work bodies registered in the Republic of Estonia, which have been so registered and active in open youth work for at least 1 year, which own or rent accommodation, use competent persons and operate on a not-for profit basis. (Articles of association 2011).

The AEYC has members and supporting members, who observe the rights and obligations of the Association:

- the full member has the right to vote and obligation to pay membership fee;
- supporting members must apply to become a member after 2 years, or leave the association;
- membership applications are decided at a general meeting of the association.

The association acts in accordance with its own statutes, rules and regulations and board decisions as well as legal acts valid in the Republic of Estonia and the European Union. (Articles of association 2011).

AEYC Development strategy in 2004:

1. Ensure AEYC organisational sustainability. (Non-profit Association tax benefit enrolment. Structural Change: CEO recruitment. Regular Board operating. Enhanced membership. Projects, etc.);
2. Put the website online. Sharing up to date information between members and non-members. Networking tools include seminars, website and mailing lists for both email and post. It is equally important to identify the needs of OYCs by making visits, undertaking research and running questionnaires;
3. Training and seminars;
4. General promotion of OYC;
5. OYC institutional strengthening (Participation structures in a round table in the work, policy development, cooperation on every level, cooperation with MoER);

6. To formulate an identity and retention of OYC as a discrete field of youth work. For that it is important to define the concepts, define the aims and to choose a course of action;
7. International cooperation.

When starting to rewrite the vision and agenda in June 2008, AEYC had no document regarding its own strategic development. Managing the organisation and determining its development were largely the responsibility of the management board and the input of members in such matters was limited. (Vaap 2009, 4).

At the end of 2008 the AEYC vision and the mission was formulated:

By 2015, NGO Estonia Open Youth Centres Association will be a well-known and reputable organisation uniting most of the youth centres whose opinion on youth work and its related fields is taken into account at local, national and international level. (Vaap 2009, 4).

The organisation works in a visible fashion, engaging the potential of its members and youth to the utmost. The working principles of AEYC are open youth work and non-formal education.

The mission of NGO Association of Estonian open Youth Centres is to value the profession of youth worker, influence the development of youth politics in Estonia and at international level and, via its members, raise the quality of youth work services, by creating conditions and opportunities for Estonian youth to participate in non-formal education. (Vaap 2009, 4).

The Association's is at a crossroads today, the work which has sustained it over the past 10 years is mostly complete so the members and the board must agree on a future direction and work together to ensure that they maintain the momentum.

4.4.1 Representation.

AEYC was formed to provide an organisation uniting many small youth work practitioners who would be almost insignificant, but united they have to be heard. Most important is the amount of trust which the members have in the AEYC management board.

“AEYC have clear support and stands by its members and OYC youth workers.” (H 2011, 13.12).

“In the first years we were representing both our own youth work institution and AEYC, it was important to show that those two were working alongside each other.” (G 2011, 20.12).

“I am sure that the first management board had strong, charismatic people who convinced the MoER of youth work’s importance, that something so special needed to have the Government’s support.” (D 2011, 16.09).

AEYC’s aim is to facilitate good communication and cooperation between policymakers and local practitioners. The state initiated the European Social Foundation Programme “Developing youth work quality” for period 2008-2013”. The main aim of the programme is to enhance the employability of young people through high quality youth work. The programme highlights that youth work is a learning process, and has an important place in lifelong learning. (EYWC 2012).

AEYC and EYWC made a partnership contract at the end of 2010 for the following three years. During this period 150 youth centres will have financial support to make youth work services more well-rounded. The introduction of mobile youth work service, MoNo, in Estonia was given impetus through the training of 90 youth workers.

This is one way to stimulate OYCs to be more active, and become noticed also at the local municipality level.

In the process of consultation for the new Youth Act the AEYC was suggesting the requirement for a longer holiday for the youth workers, at the same level as teachers (56 days) or school youth leaders (42 days). However, an amendment was made to the Employment Act and for technical reasons this could not be introduced. (K 2011, 17.09).

Youth workers' holiday entitlement remained at the standard worker's 28 days
AEYC gets the information from the Ministry more quickly than individual OYCs, such information will be passed on to the general meeting.

AEYC's current way of looking at their work is to help the Government policies to be implemented in the youth work institutions. More recently they have concentrated more on supporting activities and development – the actual quality of youth work. AEYC now deals more with the bigger projects for their members, who share the duties and the benefits which result.

“Today I feel that because of this big project we also got attention from the State. Now they would like our opinion on the future strategy plan. It is good because it gives us the possibility to be involved, which we always wanted.” (D 2011, 16.09).

AEYC gives a helping hand to the individual youth centre, which probably has only one or two workers, if they run out of ideas or need emergency help. They communicate at local government level, at least to clarify the main principles of the youth work and possibly help with better understanding giving positive direction.

The Association continues to represent their members, but the board should take note of the fact that they represent well under 50% of the OYCs. If they could interest more OYCs in joining as members then they would become a stronger campaigner, and would benefit financially from the additional subscriptions and any contributions in time and energy which the extra members may offer.

4.4.2 Training

Since its establishment AEYC has provided annual training as one of the main aims. The training sessions were open to all youth work institutions in Estonia. Some courses were organised for special target groups, or for AEYC members only.

Organisation of training is usually carried by the management board, but AEYC members can organise various training courses and invite interested people to attend. AEYC also gathers and publishes information about training courses run by others.

“In the early years of the 21st century there was no training available in Estonia. A few youth workers managed to attend courses in other countries, but most could not travel out of the country for training.” (I 2011, 19.12).

In 2003 AEYC developed a training syllabus in cooperation with the Integration and Migration Foundation. It was published by AEYC in 2004 under the title “Open Youth Centres in the development of a multicultural society: a manual for development plan preparation, implementation and evaluation”.

“The development plan training was very good, it was useful to cooperate with other youth workers, for networking and collaboration in development plans.” (I 2011, 19.12).

“The first major breakthrough was to hold the first summer school and in the autumn began the preparatory work for the development plan.” (G 2011, 20.12).

“In 2003/4 4 different groups worked independently to produce development plans for a total of 40 OYCs. Several years later the training was repeated to cater for more recently appointed staff who had taken up their posts after the original sessions took place.” (A 2011, 21.12).

Experience has shown that youth workers' attendances on courses had been very low because they could not be released from their duties in the youth centre.

“Compared with the lack of specialised training for youth workers in the early days, current availability is much better.” (N 2011, 13.12).

Most AEYC training takes place within their general meetings which are called two, three or even four times per year.

Summer schools lapsed around 2005 for financial reasons, but were reinstated in 2008 towards the end of the decade.

The summer schools usually take place over two or three days and activities include workshops, lectures and training seminars in subjects which youth worker need such as methods of training, encouraging entrepreneurship, developing career, etc.

AEYC does not concentrate so much on providing training courses, especially when there are so many free courses available from licensed trainers. That training which is carried out, is mainly planned to coincide with the general meetings, with topics being mainly based on earlier research into the training needed, or responses from those on the Association's mailing list.

4.4.3 Supporting activities in Open Youth Centres

The biggest effects on Estonian Youth Work of the supporting activities which the AEYC have produced over this ten year period, are the concentrated projects which have made significant changes to the small youth centres which had limited possibilities.

In more detail, the Association aims to develop youth work services in Estonia, improve their quality; and thereby develop the membership of the Association by:

- supporting the development of youth work infrastructure, giving advice as needed;

- representing open youth work bodies in dialogues with public, private and third sector bodies;
- initiating and supporting cooperation within Estonia and at international level;
- organising professional training for employees of OYCs, producing and propagating youth work methodological materials;
- supporting single and joint applications by the association's members;
- facilitating cooperation between youth work associations, promoting the exchange of information;
- participating in the development of youth work policies at local and national level. (Articles of Association 2011).

It is important to highlight the Association's most significant achievements during the first ten years, as identified by the interviewees.

To build up the list and important information to members, the first project was funded by the Swedish bank, Hansapank, which has a prominent place in Estonian retail banking and has since been renamed Swedbank. The project's name was "Let's stars shine". With their support it was possible to register a suitable domain name (www.ank.ee) and to build up the first informative AEYC website. The Association continues to use the domain name today. The original website has been revised once and it is planned to update it again.

Over the ten year period, which I studied AEYC have had a crucial effect on youth work institutions through the projects. There have been many short term projects but it is worth marking the biggest achievements. By 2003 the number of youth centres had already risen to 115.

"AEYC can be proud of themselves. There was a very active group, thanks to whom the project was completed, otherwise it might have been prolonged. In 2003 the first County OYC contest was announced." (B 2011, 17.12).

Starting in 2002/3 a valuable result was achieved with the cooperation of MoER, when the management board devised the first set of conditions for the eligibility of youth centres to take part in the forthcoming County OYC contest. It was a good start

for the County OYC contest, where the local youth centres submitted competitive bid for funds to organise activities or buy equipment.

County OYC competition conditions and procedures, 2003 Tartu. Competition was launched from 01.04.2003. Eligibility, any youth work institution which:

- provides youth work under the Youth Work Act
- whose main aim is youth development youth work
- has been open for at least 3 months before the start of the competition
- is open to young people at least 20 hours per week;
- is responsible for youth worker and accommodation;

The period for submission of bids expires 30 days after the date of the announcement. (Ratas 2003).

“I was in the working group which developed the source document. It remains unchanged and is in use today, so it seems that was a good document.” (G, 2011, 20.12).

Government's decision to divert the OYC subsidies to the county government from the state budget was a major achievement, and also underlined the government interest in the youth work field. According to interviewee B (2011, 17.12), once something has been committed to be funded from the state budget it is difficult to delete it afterwards.

"The budget was not large, but did affirm the State's priority". (B 2011, 17.12).

AEYC was a partner to organise the expert group for the project, and concentrate to the resolution.

One respondent E (2011, 16.09) expressed the view that, while the AEYC has identified and dispatched advisors to join the counties' committees which allocate the budget to individual youth centres, she felt that the commission should include government representatives.

AEYC have always deputed an independent expert to the County OYC contest committees. This expert does not have voting rights, but can draw the decision makers' attention to mistakes or point out good ideas deserving of additional support. Sometimes the commission, having served for several years may fail to notice the real needs of everyday work involving young people and/or youth workers.

Another significant achievement of the Association involved the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Estonia was the only recipient in Europe where the money was given for renovating youth centres. Communities and Local Government. Regeneration and economic growth. European Regional Development Fund 2007-2013 (ERDF).

“The impetus came from the management director in 2004, who wrote the project and made conditions for ERDF programme measurement 4.3. This was big step towards making OYC renovation possible.” (H 2011, 13.12).

The interviewees' opinion was that the second major achievement is the OYC renovation project, which was first the subject of a competition in 2004.

The officially recorded details of the fund are "Living environment development operational programme" under main heading "Development of education infrastructure" in the category of "open youth centres, information and counselling centres and hobby schools modernisation" Approval of the investment plan for 2007-2015. (Riigi Teataja 2012).

The first renovation programme project for the OYC, resulted in fewer than ten youth centres being renovated from the first competition, the second in 2008 included 34 youth centres while the third is ongoing having started in 2012. (Riigi Teataja 2012).

“VARAAIT” is a project providing places where various equipment can be stored for use in activities such as sport, hiking, camping, music, art or other leisure activities. The project started in 2006 and ran until 2010. In 2011 responsibility for the project was given to the hobby schools but will be returned to youth centres.

“VARAAIT” will lend equipment for use by other youth work institutions without fee (free) for any non-profit event or project. The commitment to lend equipment lasts for two years, after that the youth centre can decide whether they want to continue to lend out or just keep it for their own clients to use. As at 2011, 40 centres are in the project.

ESF is a 3 year project, 2010-2013, helping to integrate young people into society by imparting life skills which will be welcomed by prospective employers. The project is coordinated by AEYC reporting to EYWC, and 150 youth centres are participating.

MoNo is one new initiative under the ESF project, dealing with mobile youth work practice. 30 youth centres were involved in 2010 and others are still joining (up to a maximum of 50). The project includes training 90 youth workers, the production of a handbook and provision of the necessary tools.

Funds are available for groups of at least 60 young people aged 12-16 years, wishing to participate in local activities which cannot be funded from other sources. Funds can be approved up to August 2012 and are allocated by a committee, comprising one youth worker and 4 young people, in each county.

The AEYC held its traditional summer camps, which took place in 2002- 2004, and continued, after a break, from 2008. The summer camp idea is to bring people together to share ideas and experiences, also to participate in workshops, training and other activities. It is a good start to get know new people and secure future cooperation between youth centres. From the Association side, many participating OYCs have gone on to become members.

The Association created several large projects bringing funding for groups of youth centres, to prove the Association’s even-handedness these funds can be accessed by AEYC members and non members alike. The interviewees felt that AEYC intervention may help avert threatened closure due to public expenditure cuts.

Projects to be debated are clearly shown in the agendas for the members’ meetings which are held two to four times each year.

The AEYC has contributed a great amount over the years, their achievements are not likely to have been made by any other person or body if the Association had not existed.

4.4.4 Networking - cooperation with organisations.

The AEYC had been formed at a time when a number of bodies and agencies were involved in some aspect of youth work, the new Association was successful in gaining an audience or cooperation with many of them. As the implementation of youth work became more intense AEYC found itself coordinating plans and action between, for example, MoER and local municipalities who had become responsible for the OYCs in their area.

“In the very early days (2002) there was a meeting with the education minister. We were nervous, because the outcome of the meeting would dictate whether or not AEYC would operate at all. I felt that this was a most important step.” (G 2011, 20.12).

This meeting was a success, and marked the beginning of a successful and professional working relationship between the Ministry and the AEYC representatives. This relationship prepared the way for successful, harmonious and productive cooperation for several years which benefitted both parties.

Several respondents described their own visits to local administrations to present their OYC vision and discuss their local implementation. One common theme was that the initial presentation may have been politely received, but the discussion came alive only when the AEYC delegate was able to describe situations from their own experience as youth centre leaders,

The AEYC cooperates, among others, with:

- Ministry of Education and Research (MoER)

- Estonian Youth Work Centre (EYWC)
- Local administrations, at local or county level
- Estonian National Agency for Youth in Action Programme (ENEB)
- Integration and Migration Foundation (MISA, formerly known as MEIS)
- Estonian National Youth Council (ENL)
- Estonian Association of Youth workers' (ENÜ)
- National Foundation of Civil Society (KÜSK)
- Youth newspaper (AKEN)
- Estonian school youth-leaders Union (EHJL)
- Estonian Youth Institute (ENI)

The day to day operation of the youth centre is likely to bring the individual youth worker into contact with other agencies, such as police, social workers etc and it should be possible for these relationships to be developed locally with no need for input from AEYC. (D 2011, 16.09).

The consensus was that face to face contact is the most successful way to secure and maintain cooperation. However, as the focus has shifted from opening new centres to possibly closing those which exist then AEYC may find it better to join with other organisations to present a united front when closures are threatened.

4.4.5 International Cooperation

AEYC fosters international relationships for 2 reasons. Firstly the Association aims to promote itself abroad because it increases the chances of worthwhile cooperation or exchanges with other countries. Secondly communicating with youth work providers in other countries is an effective way of learning from the experience of others, or even testing Estonian ideas with practitioners elsewhere.

Open youth work methods had evolved, elsewhere in the world, several years before, and we did not want to reinvent the wheel. At that time, there was no

lack of information, information flowed freely between AEYC and MoER. The MoER was interested in Europeanisation. (F 2011, 20.12).

In 2003 and 2004, AEYC was accorded observer status with the European Confederation of Youth Clubs (ECYC), which had been formed in 1976, but their involvement lapsed temporarily. However, international cooperation and networking was once again stimulated in 2007 with the application to become a member of the ECYC. The first 2 years were spent as an observer member, with full member status being acquired in 2009.

A delegation of ECYC representatives visited Estonia on three occasions, in 2004, 2008 and 2011.

ECYC's stated aims are to:

- promote cooperation between youth club organisations in Europe;
- increase international awareness amongst young people;
- promote programmes of youth exchange, joint training and seminars;
- encourage the active involvement of young people in their community.

ECYC membership comprises about 18,000 youth clubs, youth centres and projects, involving more than 3.5 million Europeans.

ECYC's core aim is to support youth clubs and other forms of neighbourhood youth work. Encouraging young people to participate is one of the leading principles of open youth work as practised by ECYC members.

ECYC believes that Open Youth Work offers young people, who wish to join in, developmental and educational experiences which will allow them to be active in a world society and meet their own need for personal development. Open Youth Work takes place in youth clubs, youth projects, youth centres, and, through detached youth work, on the street. (ECYC 2012).

As funding becomes harder to find it is sensible to keep international cooperation in sight, so that AEYC can benefit from the experience of others in making more efficient use of their funds.

4.4.6 Influence on youth policy.

The AEYC has had mixed success in influencing youth policy. It appears that their successes have occurred in training, and when dealing with the MoER and local municipalities and their youth centres. However, attempts to improve the representation or conditions of youth workers were less successful.

The Association had been looking for a way to officially participate in producing youth policy, without success, they were not eligible to join the Estonian Association of Youth workers' (ENÜ). Then MoER, invited youth associations to convene to discuss issues of youth policy.

This was the forum where our words were heard. It consisted of the Hobby Centre Managers Union (HAKK), Estonian school youth-leaders Union, AEYC and others who wanted to take part in making youth policy. Piret Talur initiated the forum and the meetings stopped when she left the post. (F 2011, 20.12).

“We negotiated with the Estonian Trade Union Confederation to clarify the youth worker’s role and rightful place, but it remains unresolved today.” (G 2011, 20.12).

The trade union in Estonia is quite weak compared to unions in some other developed countries and would not be able to influence policy themselves.

However, the Association was invited to join in official discussions about youth work. In 2002, the AEYC began to participate in Youth Forum working groups, and they were invited to participate in the MoER strategy/action plan discussion.

The respondents reported that they felt there had been some success in their involvement.

“I am sure that the State’s expectations of the AEYC were high this may be a reason for the good cooperation partnership, we were an organisation who could help develop youth centres.” (D 2011, 16.12).

“I think that AEYC is now a considerable partner to the state, with whom they can talk about this issue and deal with.” (A 2011, 21.12).

However, it is a never-ending task and their input will always be required.

The target group (2011, 16.09) consensus is that Estonian youth work provides challenges all the time.

The Association has established its network of collaborators over several years, and some solid working relationships have developed.

4.4.7 Development of mobile youth work in Estonia as a new youth work field.

Studying the mobile youth work project gives an insight into the way in which AEYC can initiate and coordinate a large project.

AEYC started its mobile youth work project, named from the abbreviation of mobile youth work, MoNo, in 2010. It was just one element of the project “Enhancing the competitiveness, and reducing social exclusion of young people, offered by youth work provision of the service through the youth centres for society“. This 3 year project, was supported by the European Social Fund (ESF) in Estonia.

Action is being taken to develop mobile youth work services. This programme was be the basis for a manual for mobile youth work, and trained 90 youth workers who are going to immediately implement what they learned in their own areas.

AEYC coordinated the mobile youth work. In 2010 30 youth centres carried out the MoNo services. (AEYC Annual report 2011).

The first concerted training in Estonia for Mobile Youth Work took place in 2010 in Tartu, Tartu, being a multicultural city with many subcultures. (Liiva 2010).

Specht (2011) tells how many young people spend time on the streets, denied many fundamental rights.

ISMO (2004) describes 4 methods of mobile youth work; individual aid, street work, group work and community work, prioritised according to the local situation. These methods are interconnected.

MoNo implementation focussed on four areas:

1. street work,
2. work in the internet,
3. organising youth work in another area,
4. youth work services taken to where the young people's gather.

Interviewee Karmo Tihane (2011) said that he had been involved for a year with the MoNo project coordinated by AEYC. Karmo is introducing mobile youth work in Keila parish where they started by observing forums and social media and advising local young people about problems which may result from written material or pictures posted online. Merely walking in the town, casually making connection with young people fosters familiarity and trust, while youth centres can be promoted in community public events.

Before the pilot scheme mobile youth work was used in Estonia only randomly, AEYC now wants to make it part of formal youth work policy. Only a few places in Estonia had practical experience before but in January 2011 the Association started the implementation of mobile youth work on a unified basis in 30 districts by financing programmes implemented under "Development Youth Work quality" a project of the European Social Fund (ESF) with the Republic of Estonia. In 2012-2013 60 more locations were included bringing mobile youth work to 90 areas of Estonia. (AEYC 2011).

The topics of work are:

1. Street work, which is addressed in two parts. The first is street work, whose main purpose is observed in the village or town, to establish contact with young people and guide them towards the various activities provided by youth work. The second is to “crime walk,” observing unsafe areas, and with the possibility to communicate with young people if it is safe to do so. If it is not safe then another agency, eg Police, needs to be involved.
2. Online work will focus on online social media (such as rate.ee, orkut.com, facebook.com etc.), different forums, photo portals and communication tools. Youth workers are looking for contact with young people, starting discussions and replying to electronic communications.
3. Youth services to young people where they congregate will focus on activities where the youth worker will be on the young people's "territory", such as: beach, park, skate park, bus station, main street, shopping centre, playground, stadium and so on. The young people will not know, at least to begin with, that the person is a youth worker.
4. The fourth trend is to extend outwards from places where youth services are provided to take activities to places where nothing had previously been offered. A crucial aspect is that the young people have to know that the youth worker is committed to attend at a certain place, at a certain time. Suitable venues may be schools, community centres, houses of the village societies and cultural facilities. (AEYC 2011).

The next step is the MoNo bus project which commenced in 2011. The idea is to make a successful business plan, to allow the initial purchase of the MoNo bus, and cover its future running costs. The money for the project was given by National Foundation of Civil Society.

The business plan caters for rural youth, in order to give them opportunities for participation in youth work which equal their urban counterparts.

Action and outcomes:

1. Creating the environment for mobile youth work (a bus with different types of equipment) and composing a system for introducing the bus;
2. Organising 30 meetings with young community members and public servants from 10 different local municipalities;

3. Dissemination will increase awareness of mobile youth work, at least for 40 youth workers;
4. At least 30 youth workers across the country will be involved in content making process. (AEYC 2011).

Mobile youth work shows how AEYC became involved in the coordination, implementation and subsequent expansion of mobile youth work.

4.4.8 Carrying out research.

The AEYC have previously undertaken research or issued questionnaires, often on an ad-hoc basis, or which are connected with a specific project. An example of the former would be: how many youth centres exist in Estonia?

However the surveys are not all carried out to academic standards, nor do they have proper analysis, mainly conclusions and in some cases it is not known for which purpose the data were used.

The first research was undertaken in 2002 when members of the management board were compiling the first OYC database. On 15.03.2002, on their own initiative they made a list of Youth Centres, which were then visited on 01-04.04.2002 (observing and interviewing youth workers: equipment, working conditions etc.). The costs were paid from the Ministry of Education activity year support. As a result of this, the common Open Youth Work model was written.

For example, there was one survey undertaken in a general meeting, with the aim of creating an action plan for 2005. There were 16 responses from OYC leaders. (Bobkov 2004).

The results showed expectations from main activities of the AEYC:

- definitions and explanations
- training
- speaking to the field of youth work
- the need for information

- project ideas and implementation
- organisation of joint applications by AEYC
- training
- investment (inventory, repair)
- public relations

Perceived benefits of membership:

- seminars
- training
- information
- people and ideas
- OYCs county contest.

In 2010 Marti Taru, Rene Mäe, Mart Laanpere and Epp Reiska did research into many aspects of OYCs and their operation.

For a similar reason a similar style of research was carried out for the ESF program “Developing youth work quality” in 2011. The research was named “Which animal is OYC”. The practical researchers included youth work students from the universities.

The 2010 research has been the subject of proper analysis, but in 2011 AEYC carried out research which resulted in only a short overview, without analysing the collected data. They are offering their materials to youth work students.

The study reveals a number of interesting suggestions and points of concern. Unfortunately, it is not known how much, nor in which form the wishes of members shall be heard. However, in recent years, and in the years to come, scheduled also follow closer collaboration with the youth centres to develop and use the necessary lobbying material as the Estonian Youth Work Strategy 2006-13 expires and requires replacement. Time will tell how successful they will be. The organisation needs to maintain their historical records with such information.

Being in a well regarded position in the youth work field, AEYC can initiate useful research, subject to funding being available. Sadly, where research has not been carried out in the past there is no historical to use in future research.

4.4.9 Publications.

Members and non members alike may look to the association to provide publications to document or educate in different aspects of youth work.

The prime working tools are two handbooks, publications by AEYC or as a partner and the idea generator:

1. Holm Kaidi, Jedomskihh Jelena, Kasemets Keit, Kasemets Liis, Pikner Tarmo 2004. OYCs in the development of a multicultural society: manual of development plan preparation, implementation and evaluation. AEYC. Tallinn http://www.meis.ee/library?book_id=60

“Good manual and interesting project. This project belonged EYWC, which was also a partner to AEYC. This work was published as a manual for such an organisation.” (F 2011, 20.12).

2. Jedomskihh Jelena, Rahnu Leen, Randver Nelly, Valgmaa Reet 2005. Handbook. A youth worker in intercultural communication. MEIS. Tallinn http://www.meis.ee/library?book_id=58

This was followed by another handbook project which addressed youth work in a multicultural environment. That was my project, all of this ideology, idea and execution were my work. There are basic work techniques, examples of how to do this job, how to establish contact with the games, how to behave in any situation, and so on. The second part, it was prepared, through training, practical training for youth workers, those games which are featured were chosen by participants in those games. (F 2011, 20.12).

Public Relations (PR) has formed a significant part of the activities of the Association through the years. It has been instrumental in the use of a logo and the purchase of branded items, thanks to various projects.

“There was no money to pay professional rates for the AEYC logo, it was produced free of charge by Valga youth centre leader Raul Oreshkin. It has proved to be an enduring, popular and instantly recognisable symbol of the Association.” (H 2011, 13.12).

Branded goods are aimed at introducing the body through both practical items and new partners as well as to express appreciation to their active members. Where youth workers are too busy to publicise their own successes, cynical media may choose to use only those negative stories which can arise. AEYC can help by gathering and publicising their members’ good outcomes.

A continuously innovative approach towards the media is important for enhancing the value of the umbrella organisation. AEYC has now opened a Facebook account to keep members and others informed of upcoming events.

4.5 Organisational Management

The organisational management has been fine tuned over the lifetime of the organisation, different remedies have been applied to get round problems as they arise.

The management team do not work in the same place, nor meet often enough to have any concerted purpose. It requires 3 or 4 salaried staff to cooperate and carry out the work. The one person who is currently on a salaried contract should be able to secure the funds to employ the additional staff. (TG2 2011, 17.12).

„In addition the board is appointed for a two year period, new members spend the

first year becoming familiar with the task, then after the second, more productive year, there is another election and the process begins again.“ (TG3 2011, 17.12).

„If the board were elected for a 3 year period then the third year would be more productive than ever. Beyond the third year there is a danger of complacency creeping in.“ (TG2 2011, 17.12).

„The Estonian National Youth Council (ENL) is held up as a good example, where board members are elected for differing periods of tenure, 1, 2 or 3 years. The ENL has none of the founder members remaining, but the organisation is flourishing.“ (TG1 2011, 17.12).

The consensus is that there should be a reasonable number of salaried staff to deal with what needs to be done, but the funds are not available and some of the work has to be carried out by volunteers.

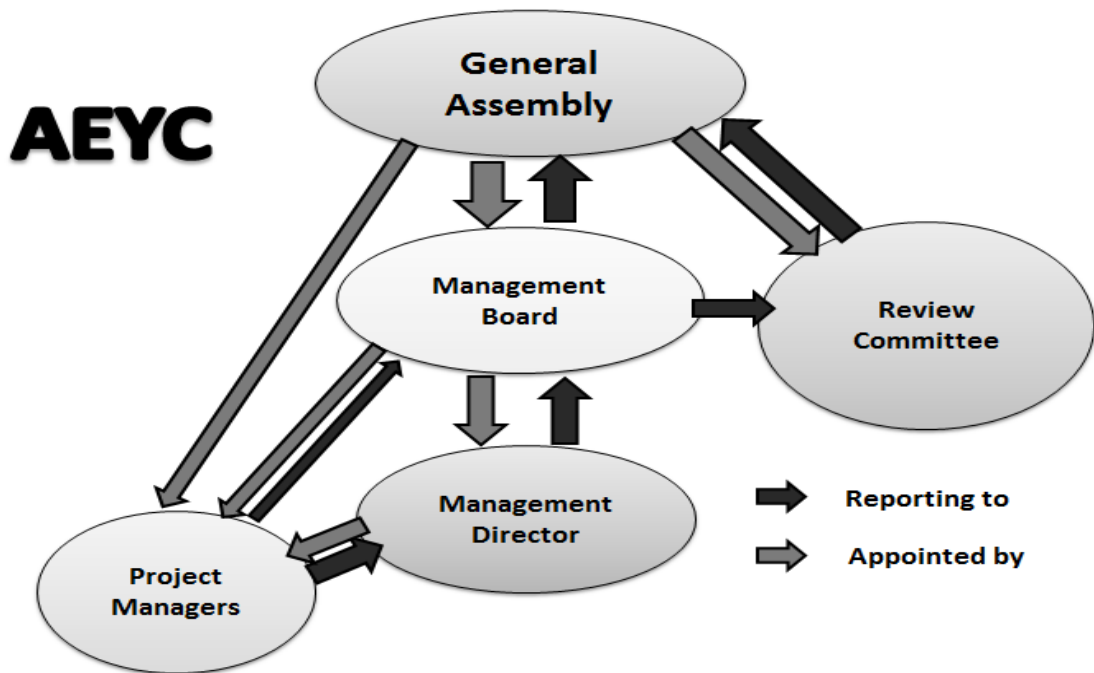
4.5.1. Structure

The structure of the Association was decided at the outset, the membership take most decisions while the board members do the executive work.

The AEYC Articles of Association reflect the structure of non-profit management arrangements as demanded by the NGO Act (1996).

The highest authority of the Association is the general meeting of its members. The general meeting is responsible for selecting the management board and review committee members, and replacing them at prescribed intervals.

Figure 1. AEYC leading structure



In 10 years the original six members of the general meeting of 2001 had increased to 52 members (legal persons and their agencies), representing a total of 78 youth centres, plus one observer member - according the 2011 year report .

The association's activity is reviewed by a review committee, comprising up to three members elected by the general meeting

General meeting of the members:

- the overall control of the Association is vested in the general meeting of its members;
- the general meeting passes decisions on all issues which have not previously been devolved;
- the purpose of the general meeting is to represent its members and pass important decisions regarding the Association;
- The general meeting is scheduled at least twice a year and the members are notified of its date, location and agenda at least fourteen days beforehand;
- any member may make suggestions to change the agenda until it has been confirmed by the general meeting;
- the general meeting can approve motions if the majority of the authorised representatives of its members are present.

Activities reserved to the general meeting:

- appointing management and review committee members;
- approving annual financial reports regarding the economic year, and management and review committees' reports, the agenda, budget and rules and regulations;
- determining the number of board members based on a recommendation of the sitting management;
- should it become necessary, merging the Association with other organisations, dividing it or ending its existence;
- deciding priorities;
- stewardship of statutes and objectives;
- membership of, or affiliation to, other organisations;
- setting the membership fee and its methods of collection;
- acceptance of new members;
- dealing with claims against the Association, and appointing a representative if required;
- the decisions of the general meeting are made based on a simple majority of votes cast by full members of the Association. To change the statutes, reorganise or end activity and change rules and regulations a 2/3 majority of votes is needed. In order to change goals set in the statutes, 9/10 majority is needed. (Articles of association 2011).

The procedure of the selecting the management board members in general meeting:

- the number of board members for the next period will be suggested by the sitting management team at a general meeting;
- within 30 days of the new board being appointed, the outgoing board must notify the personnel changes to the Business Register and report on their performance;
- candidates for election to the board may be proposed by any member;
- candidates who secure the most votes join the board. (Articles of association 2011).

Figure 2. Numbers of General Meeting and Management Board Meetings

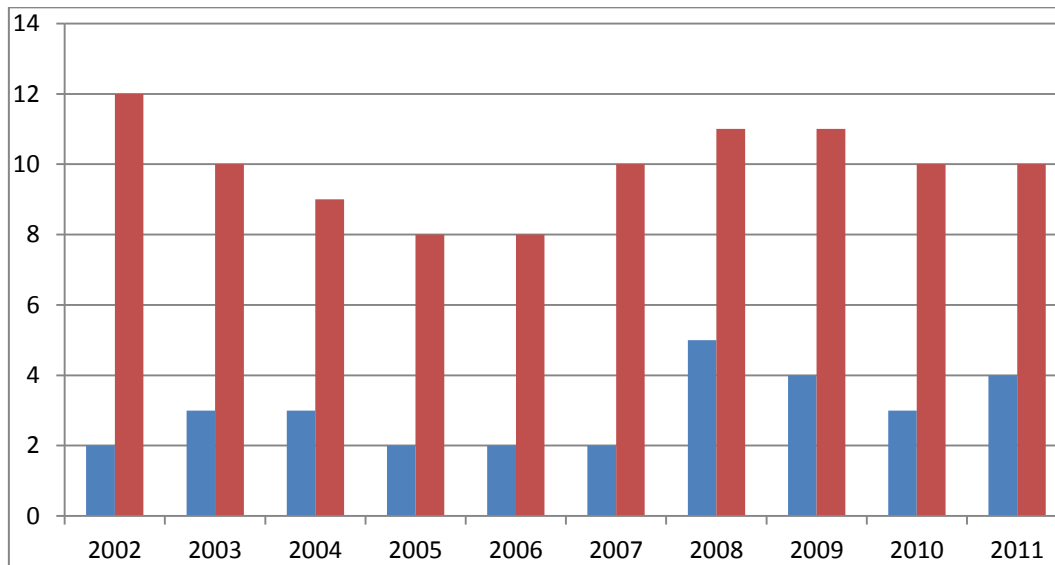


Figure 2 shows the approximate numbers of meetings as recorded in the documents, but not including phone meetings. The lowest period, 2005-6 is affected by missing data and the numbers are interpolated. Later figures are from the year report documents 2008-2011.

The structure has suited the organisation from its inception, it has ensured that the members are involved in decision making, while the salaried or voluntary members of the board carry out the agreed tasks.

4.5.2 Managing board

The board was set to be from 3-5 members, elected for a 2 year period.

According to the Articles of Association, the management board of the Association consists of three to five members, at least three of whom are authorised members of the Association. The managing board started in 2001 with 3 people, and in the next elections at the end of 2003 five board members were appointed. One member of the previous board continued as a managing director, with a salaried contract from the management board. The main reason for hiring that one was the amount of labour-

intensive work to be done, running projects etc. At the beginning of 2005 the managing board terminated the managing director's contract.

The Articles of Association lists some duties which are reserved to the management board:

- the management board manages and represents the Association;
- the management team appoints a chairperson, and vice chairperson.

Other tasks reserved to the management board include:

- coordination of the Association's day-to-day work;
- formulating plans of action and the Association's annual budget;
- recruiting and retaining membership;
- deciding on the acquisition and transfer of immovable and registered assets, and determining conditions for any transfers;
- the meeting of the management can pass decisions if more than 50% of the members are present. (Articles of association 2011).

The first managing board was chosen in 2001 after one year's training for youth workers. The team of youth workers who been together for one year became good friends and while the selection for the first board was only 3 people, others were happy to help them when they needed.

"The first board comprised three people, the minimum allowed by Articles of Association. It was thought in the beginning that it is better to not have too many in charges." (G 2011, 20.12).

The first Management Board made a division of work in which one was responsible for the information, the second was responsible for finding funds (Sponsorship, public support, etc.), and the third publicised what they were doing, and also on the operational tasks, which had to be done quickly.

The first steps were to build up the organisation and its promotion. The management

board was keen to find cooperation partners. Early partners were EYWC and the head of the MoER youth department.

The management board apportioned work, where possible, according to the skills of those involved, or to be compatible with what they did in their full-time employment. While the sharing of duties in the first management board worked perfectly for the first year, the additional workload did cause problems in their paid work.

“Personally I could not see any future for the Association, the reason being that in the beginning many promised their help should it be needed, but in reality they did not. All 3 of us became exhausted in the end.” (G 2011, 20.12).

The result was that from the three management members two felt they were overworked and did not wish to continue in the next management board.

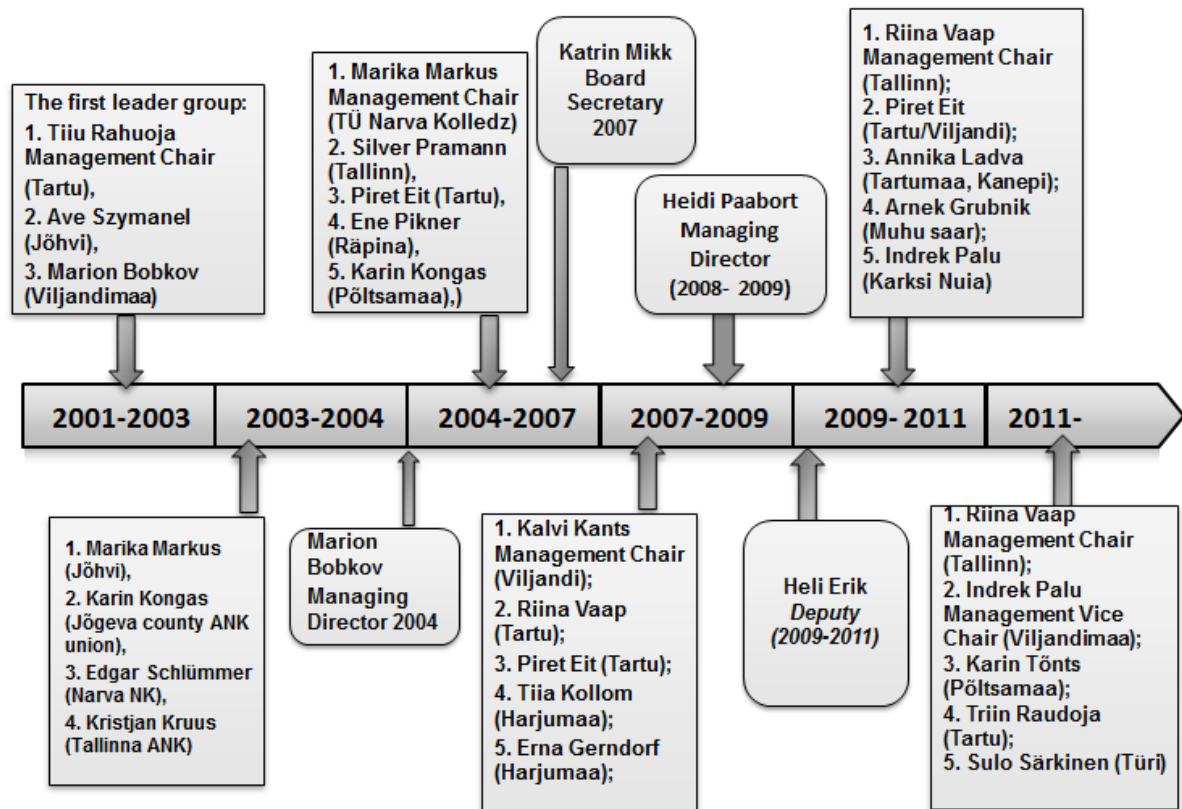
That was one good example from the first board team’s experience and the next management board was chosen to comprise five people. The next lesson arose when the new board quickly found that, being new with no remaining member giving continuity they spent some time learning how the board worked, before picking up where the previous board had left off. This resulted in a change to the selection process so that at least 2 board members from the previous management team will be carried forward to the next one, and they can quickly pass on the necessary information. This saves time and energy. Also because the management board is not salaried, being voluntarily based, it can cause resentment or make other problems at work or in the family if others feel too much time and effort is being spent on AEYC business.

People needed to make decisions and sometimes not in favour of the AEYC board. The result is that of the five management board members two to four have executive roles while the remaining one to three are non-executive.

From 2001 to 2011 (figure 3) there have been five management teams, during the election of which the principle of continuity was stressed meaning that at least one

member from the previous management remained. In 2004, a managing director was hired, in 2007, a managing secretary was employed and from 2008 onwards, a managing director was hired once again.

Figure 3. AEYC Management Boards 2001-2011



The short periods of salaried employment could be due to reliance on project based income. When the project finishes, the funding stops and the salary cannot be paid. Conflicts can arise where people have different perceptions and expectations to others, at other times misunderstandings may occur.

In some instances, because most of the executives are women; maternity leave was the reason to interrupt the contract.

By the summer of 2008, AEYC had a stable membership with both active and passive members. Board meetings were held regularly, a general meeting was held at least twice a year. However, the contribution of member organisations into the activity of the Association was not considerable. The board which was elected in

2007, themselves elected a new managing director in March of 2008, one of whose tasks was to plan for the stable development of AEYC, and a part of which was the need for a document outlining the paths of development.

Adjustments have been made to the numbers of board members to suit circumstances. During the life of the Association, changes were made to ensure continuity from one team to the next by retaining one or more existing members in the new team.

4.6 Financial resources

Many social activities have to work hard to find funding, and Estonian youth work is no exception. There has been little spare money to allow the AEYC to do as much as it would like at any stage.

The bulk of the Association's income arises from funds distributed for grant-aided projects. The Ministry of Education and Research financial support is the next most significant contribution, followed by membership fees. The remaining small income is the fees charged for the Association's services.

Figure 4, Breakdown of AEYC income, by annual income

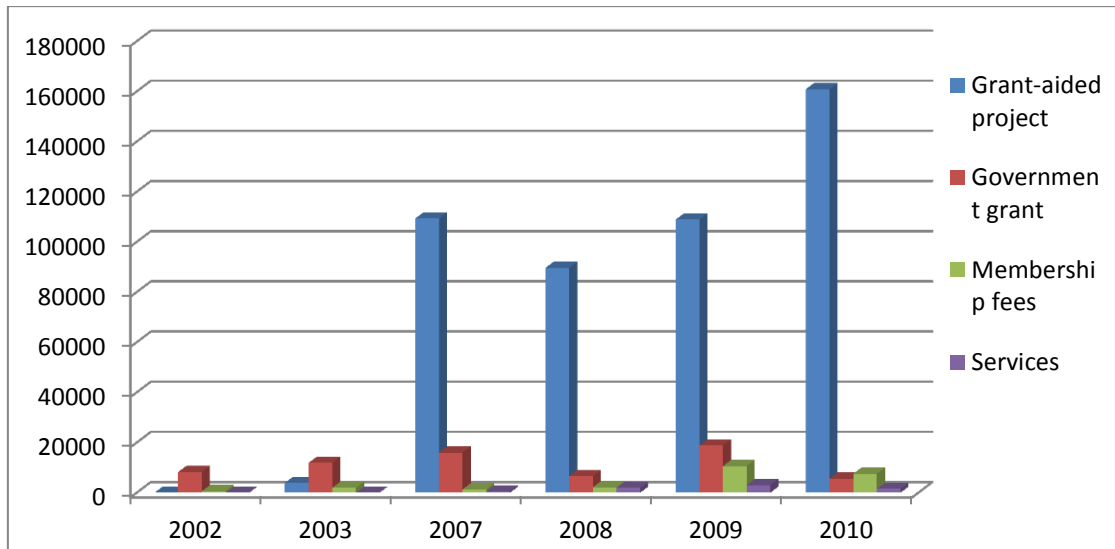


Figure 4 shows also fees for services which is the smallest income and mainly derived from training fees or summer camp fees.

Throughout its existence, the Association has had to put off doing things which it wanted to do, due to the lack of funds for salaried staff and it will never be possible to quantify the effects of these not being done.

4.6.1 Principles

The management board appointed the management director who is responsible for finding additional funds. The economic activity is open to the management board and also members if they would like to write the project under the AEYC's for cooperation purposes with other OYCs.

Economic activity:

1. The Association is required to keep books, to pay national and local taxes and present the required declarations and reports
2. The income of the Association includes the following:
 - membership fees,
 - charitable gifts,
 - income from the sale of literature and other objects

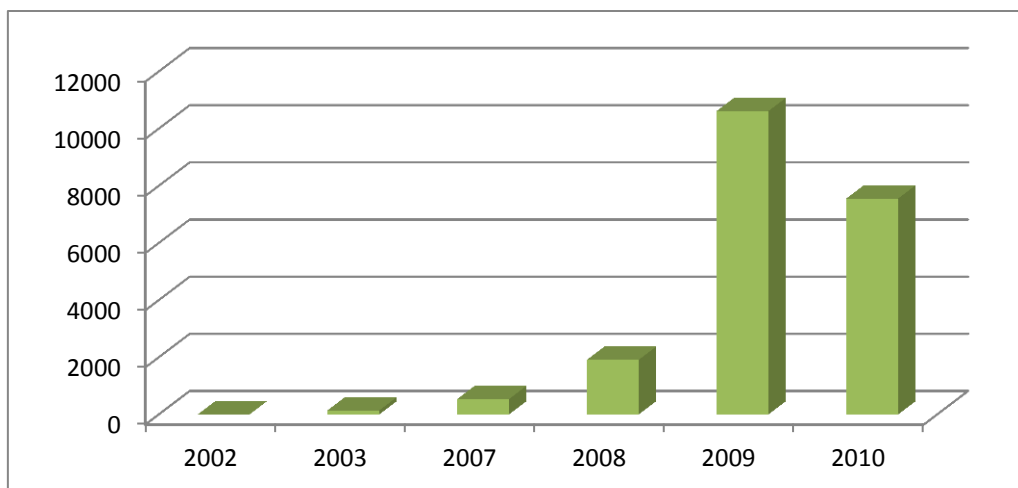
3. The management is responsible for the economic activity of the association.
(Articles of Association 2011).

4.6.2 Membership fees

The membership fee is an annual sum paid by every full member. Provisional membership can last up to one year with no membership fee payable.

In the early years subscription receipts were small and the general meeting resolved to raise the subscription, but mitigating the effects on members for whom the revised fee would be too high by allowing exceptions.

Figure 5. Subscription



The joining fee in 2002 and 2003 was the equivalent of 6 euros. In 2004 it was proposed to increase it so that at least the organisation's main needs - such as the website - would be covered with it. Negotiations took place with members and an independent expert about the membership fee.

The membership fee today is 150 euros per year and there is no longer a joining fee.

„The membership fee goes towards the costs of organising general meetings,

management board meetings and ensuring the Association becomes self-financing.“ (M 2011, 13.12).

The Association is presented with a dilemma as high fees produce income, but deter members from joining - or staying in the organisation once they have joined. Conversely, if the subscription is lower it may stimulate membership applications, but is bound to starve the Association of funds to carry out their agenda.

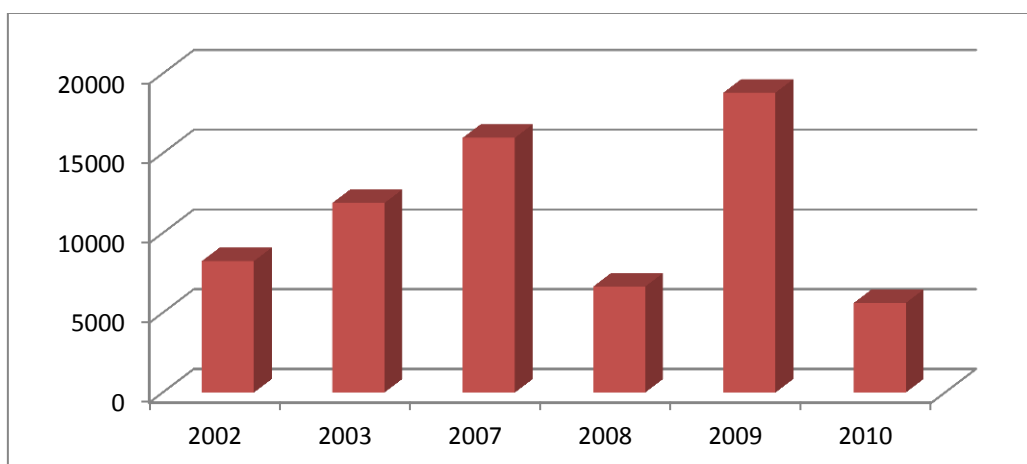
4.6.3 Government grant

The government support is coming from MoER and it varies from year to year, but in the main it covers the minimal running costs which are incurred.

Both target group interviews share the same opinion, as do the 16 individuals interviewed, that one umbrella organisation cannot operate without employees, and that their salaries should be primarily financed by the state.

The Association have received each year varying support for the operating costs from the MoER budget. Because the yearly amount varies it does not give a stable income for the salaried employment of the management board, or at least 2-3 people.

Figure 6. Government grant.

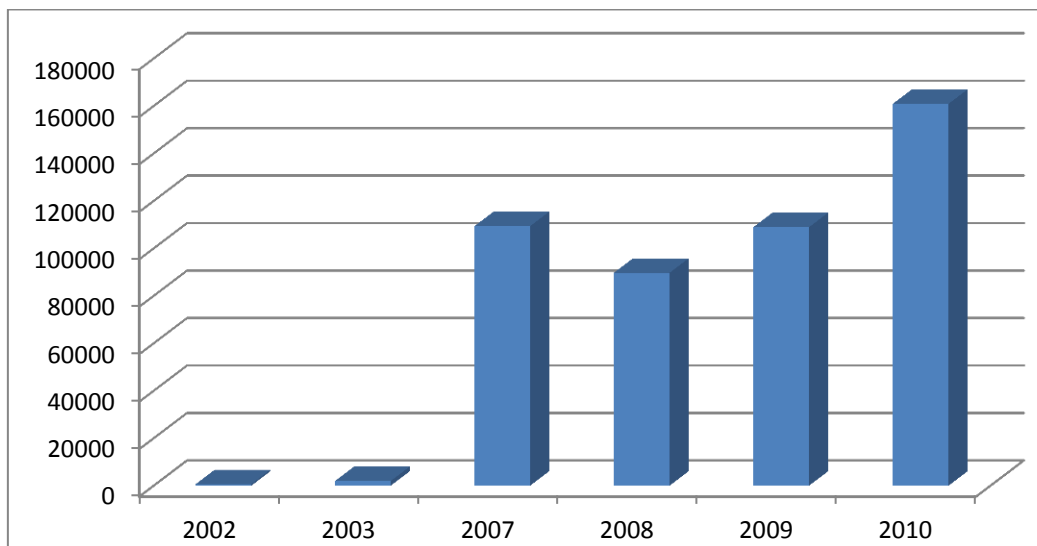


4.6.4 Grant-aided projects

Grant-aided projects are usually written and run by management board or the management director.

During the first years there were few funds to apply to, but joining the EU in 2004 opened up new possibilities and bigger projects to include more OYCs.

Figure 7. Grant-aided projects



The first two years' income was more for the small projects.

Over the years the support to the OYCs via projects has grown as EU funds have been received.

4.7 Membership

AEYC is one organisation for other organisations to contribute to and benefit from. It concentrates on the development of youth work via the membership OYCs as local government or non-profit organisations. Its members are the Association's raison

d'être.

The membership in the first years could be only another NGO and because of that the Local Government (LG) Youth Work Centres could not join as a member organisation. When the law changed in 2004 the Association made similar corrections also in the Articles of Association, and the number of members grew.

"Every organisation who was interested to be a member has been accepted. We had the same criteria as in the County OYC contest, the eligibility for which was first devised by Toivo Sikk." (G 2011, 20.12).

The need to get more members is partly due to pressure from the MoER, which wants to see a strong organisation which has the majority of Youth Work Institutions as members. To make the process easier for the future members, there is a status of support member, as observer status made for young institutions or for local institutions who are waiting for local permission to proceed.

Under Articles of Association (2011) members are obliged:

- to obey the statutes of the Association as well as legal acts valid in the Republic of Estonia and the EU;
- to carry out the decisions of the bodies of the Association;
- to use and keep the Association assets carefully.

Further financial obligations may be imposed on the member only if approved by a general meeting.

There has been no separate record of lapsed memberships, but analysing the existing documents the number is not likely to be significant, perhaps 1-4 members and the main reason is the closing of the youth centre.

The 2003 activity report says there were 115 youth centres, of which 22 were AEYC members with 34 OYC. (AEYC Annual report 2003, 2). In 2011 there were 250 youth centres, of which 52 members with 78 youth centres. (Vaap 2011, 3).

The Members rights from the Articles of Association (2011) are as follows:

- to participate in the activities, events and projects organised by the Association;
- to be informed by management and others about the Association's activities;
- to be elected to the bodies of the Association and participate in their work;
- with approval of management, to represent the Association in appropriate work groups and events;
- to offer suggestions to improve the Association and its activities;
- with approval of management, to use the Association's assets and symbols;
- to apply for the reduction of their membership fee by up to 50%, or to be excluded from the obligation to pay membership fee for one financial year.

Figure 8. AEYC total membership, by year.

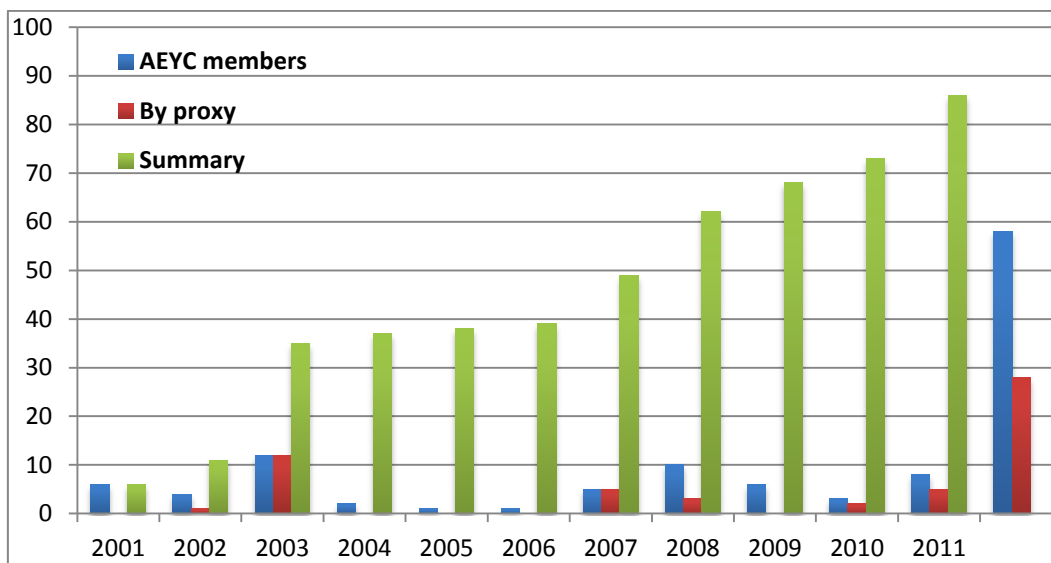


Figure 8 has to be provisional because there seems to be no continuous correct data of membership changes. A 2012 document summarises the membership numbers, but it does not give the number whose membership lapsed and no longer belong to the AEYC. Some youth centres have merged, some have lapsed and then joined again.

Because of the inconsistent membership data it is impossible to produce meaningful and consistent figures.

In 2008 there was a survey connected with the “Varaait” [Storehouse] project and one question requested an explanation why some are not the member of the AEYC. In most cases the answer was that it has not been done because of the lack of time. Local Government was waiting to see what the organisation is doing. Some Youth Centres did not yet have a clear legal background. Several centres wanted more information about enrolment and the resulting rights and obligations. 20% of respondents said they had started the process to join. There were also some youth centres which felt the membership fee was too high. (AEYC 2008).

It is clear that AEYC represents fewer than 50% of Estonia’s youth centres, yet there is no alternative organisation for the others to join.

4.8 Looking to the future of youth work.

The 2011 Articles of Association confirm that the organisation originally concentrated on establishing youth centres and represent their members, but in 2011 the emphasis shifted to improving the quality of the services offered, and the development of plans for the future.

In the new climate of reduced expenditure it may be possible to maintain services at lower cost by sharing accommodation, equipment or other facilities with other bodies, such as schools or hobby schools. At the same time there are reported to be 40 large, modern youth centres built with ERDF funds, but there is no money to equip, staff and open these centres. One respondent suggested that the AEYC should become involved.

Many youth workers are young and inexperienced, it is possible that AEYC could introduce a “buddy” scheme whereby these novice workers could be helped by a designated person with more experience. At the same time, some of these younger new workers could become active in the Association to gain experience to replace

the longer-serving people when they leave. This would have the added advantage of having a voice from people who are closer to the ages of their clients and who can promote the views of young people.

Conclusion

Having looked at the development of Estonian youth work, it can be concluded that in a short period much has been achieved, while there are still a long way to go to meet the needs of the youth-based service.

Youth work development is a continuous process which requires recording to maintain a connection between what has already been done what is planned, which would be the anchor for new ideas.

Study of AEYC history reveals several previously unknown facts, because each Board serves only for 2 years. As an example, manuals which will be relevant for many years, interviewees referred to basic rules for Open Youth Centres and summaries of studies have been conducted, upon which can be based an evaluation of practical youth work.

The main purpose was to review the AEYC activities recorded in the period 2001-2011, according to the information available. The interviews reflected a passion which showed the people's pride in contributing to the achievements of the organisation.

The interviews reveal the strengths of the organisation. It has devised and maintained its own training programme and has recruited a number of hardworking volunteers. Useful contacts have been made and the Associations views are sought and listened to. At the same time it supports its own members, and non members too.

There are drawbacks too, there seems to be inadequate funds to have as many salaried staff as they think they need. The frequent changes in board members result

in quiet periods while the new members are finding their way around, before they become productive. It appears that their membership runs at only 30% of the potential membership which denies the organisation funds from subscriptions, as well as personal input in terms of time energy, and expertise which additional members may contribute. The Association is not represented assertively enough in the political arena where it could usefully lobby on behalf of its members. Working with other similar organisations, or even merging, would give AEYC a bigger voice.

In conclusion, the author can claim that the area of research is of great interest and needs further investigation, in more detail, rather than concentrating on the more comprehensive picture of the overall situation to identify the strategy for the future. A firm recommendation to AEYC would be to maintain proper archives, because there is currently missing documentation, nor is their website easy to use. Such research will require more time and human resources, as well as full access to trust and agency documents.

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APPENDICES

No 1 Abbreviations

AEYC - Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres

EYWC – Estonian Youth Work Centre

OYC – Open Youth Centre

MoER – Ministry of Education and Research

MoNo – Mobile Youth work

NGO – Non-governmental or non-profit Organisation

USSR - Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

ESF – European Social Fund

ERDF - European Regional Development Fund

ECYC - European Confederation of Youth Clubs

YWC – Youth Work Centre

Avatud noortekeskus on noorsootöö seaduse alusel tegutsev kohaliku omavalitsuse või eraõigusliku juriidilise isiku noorsootöö asutus, mille eesmärgiks on noorte toimetuleku ja tööõhve vaimulise suurendamine sealhulgas:

- sotsiaalse kompetentsi tõstmine
- kutse-eelsete oskuste andmine
- mitte-formaalse õppimise konkurentsivõime kasvatamiseks.

Keskused lähtuvad **avatud noorsootöö põhimõtetest**, mis tähendab noorte omalgatuse toetamist, õppekava puudumist, erinevateks noori huvitavateks ja arendavateks tegevusteks tingimuste loomist. Eritähe rõhk on noorte koostöö- oskuste arendamisel.

Avatud noorsootöö eesmärk on pakkuda noortele inimestele vabatahtlikkuse alusel osaluse, arenguile ja harduslike kogemuste saamise võimalusi, mis ühtel pool võimaldavad olla aktiivsed demokraatlikus ühiskonnas ning teisalt rahuldada oma vajadusi.

Avatud noorsootöö meetod on noortele arendavaks tegevuseks tingimuste loomise viis, mille korral tegevus

- on avatud igale noortele seadmatu eelingimusi tema toekspidamistele, võimetele, oskustele, teadmistele ja rahalistele võimalustele;
- kaasab aktiivselt noori tegevuse algatamisse ning arendamisse;
- võimaldab noortele suhtlemist ja arendavat tegevust, mille seeläbi kodu- ja koolivalisel ajal seades esikohale noorte omalgatuse arendamise;
- loob tingimused mitte-formaalseks õppimiseks, eelkõige kogemuste omandamiseks läbi tegevuse ja suhtlemise.

Open Youth Center is a youth work institution that works as a part of local government or as a private law corporate body. Open youth center acts on youth work law. Its purpose is to increase young people's managing skills and readiness to enter labor market, including:

- raising social competence;
- providing pre-vocational skills;
- informal learning for raising competitiveness.

Youth centers originate form **open youth work principle** which means absence of curriculum, supporting youth initiative, creating conditions for different developmental and interesting youth activities. Special attention is drawn to developing youth co-operational skills.

The purpose of open youth work is to offer young people, on the basis of their voluntary involvement, developmental and educational experiences which will equip them to play an active part in our democratic society as well as meet their own developmental needs.

Open youth work method is creating conditions for developmental activities for young people. Activities are:

- open to every young person irrespective of his beliefs, skills, knowledge and financial possibilities;
- includes young people in decision-making processes (planning and organizing);
- provides young people with communicative and developmental activities that are in appropriate time, sets priority to developing youth initiative;
- creates conditions for informal learning, foremost for acquiring experiences through action and communication.

Estonian Youth Club Union (EYCU) is a national non-governmental umbrella organisation which unites the open youth clubs in different regions of Estonia. It has been found in 2001 to create a network of Estonian Youth Clubs and support their activities. There are about 115 Youth Clubs in Estonia, 37 of those run full membership in Estonian Youth Club Union.

Focus of work:

- to help creating new youth clubs in Estonia
- to be a representative organisation for youth workers in Estonia
- to organise seminars and workshops for youth club workers
- to promote and conduct national and international corporate projects
- to be institutional partner in youth politics for the state and local government

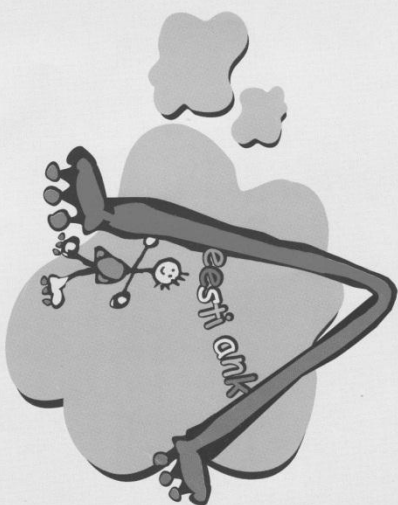
Primary target group of EYCU is the leaders and volunteers of open youth clubs, but through them dealing with young people at the age of 7-26 years.

Not any open youth club discriminates its members on the ground of gender, race, religion or political affiliation. Neither does Estonian Youth Club Union.



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MTÜ Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus
veeb: www.ank.ee
e-mail: ank@ank.ee

EESTI AVATUD NOORTEKESKUSED

WWW.ANK.EE

HARJUMAA

- 1 ANK Viiekarlenia Meisa 30, Ristipere, Nissi vald viire@hnt.ee, 523 7297
- 2 Suur-Ameerika 35, Tallinn tan@amirfo.ee, 641 8355
- 3 Haabersti Avatud Noortekeskus Harjorann@hnt.ee, 674 0058
- 4 Olesmate tee 5, Harku, Harku vald katri.pihleed@mail.ee, 657 5672
- 5 Kella Avatud Noortekeskus Padiski mnt 281, Kella linn sm@soho.ee, 373 1447
- 6 Kemu Noortekoostis Siinastus Halba, Kemu vald ilie.asasema@mail.ee, 5698 8718
- 7 Kristiina Avatud Noortekeskus Siinastus pst 4a, Tallinn kuu@knt.ee, 6802
- 8 Kuuasalu Avatud Noortekeskus Kulu mnt 6, Kuuasalu vald kylli.tuuk@kuusalu.ee, 606 6393
- 9 Lasnamäe Avatud Noortekeskus Kanu 4, Tallinn k32.8614.5556.5621
- 10 Loksa Avatud Noortekeskus Tallinna mnt 36, Loksa linn miike@lokka.ee, 607 7156
- 11 Märta Avatud Noortekeskus Keitseküla tee 5, 561 5 0577
- 12 Mustaste Avatud Noortekeskus Ehitajate tee 82, Tallinn mar@hnt.ee, 654 7216
- 13 Maha Vaba Aja Keskus amie.cst@mail.ee, 605 9516
- 14 Noorte Meeletubi lük@kalameia.ee, 641 4171
- 15 Norme Avatud Noortekeskus nom@hnt.ee, 677 5232
- 16 Oru Noortetuba Oru Mts, Oru, Kose vald orumit@hnt.ee, noortetuba@okas.ee, 601 9230
- 17 Noortekeskus pahlurite@hnt.ee, 674 1319
- 18 Priita Vaba Aja Keskus Mervälja tee 3, Tallinn priita@vabaja.ee, 645 7025
- 19 Auhella tee 9, Põhja-Pringi vald reevilla.noortekeskus@mail.ee, 605 6783
- 20 Revilla Noorte- ja Vabalaekeskus Kose jk, Kose vald arg@kose.ee, 607 4633
- 21 Saaremaa Noortekoostis Tule 7, Saue linn em@saue.ee, 679 0192
- 22 Tabasalu Noortekeskus teenuste 2, Tabasalu, Harku vald teit@tabasalu.ee, 603 2017
- 23 Tallinna Noorte Noortekeskus Pärnu mnt 6, Tallinn tan@hnt.ee, 641 2271
- 24 Niigi tee 1, Viimsi, Viimsi vald viimsi@vnt.ee, 605 6926
- 25 Aasame Noortekeskus "Ekit" Kaesaku 16, Aasame, Saue vald duoon@hnt.ee, 609 6171

HIUMAA

- 26 Kaina Noorte Saalis Hiiumäe 28, Kaina vald kaina28@hnt.ee, 462 2883
- 27 Roodupõli 18, Kärdla linn meelis.kivimail@mail.ee, 524 3366
- 28 Palade ANK Palade küla, Puhla vald heu@tus@mail.ee, 5664 3876

JÄRVAMA

- 29 Jumona Noortetuba K. Lutsu tn 7-2, Kohla-Järve linn jumona@hnt.ee, 5552 9585

KUUSSAARE

- 30 Jõhvi Noortekeskus Sompaa, Jõhvi linn jhk@ntk.ee, 337 0430
- 31 Kohla-Memme Noortetuba nom@hnt.ee, 677 5232
- 32 Kooli j Kohla-Norme, Kohla-Norme lüh@hnt.ee, 520 4137
- 33 Lohusuu Noortetuba Lohusuu tee 18, Lohusuu, Lohusuu vald lohusuu@lohusuu.ee, 339 3632
- 34 MTÜ Virmama Hestagruvakeskus merogruv@hnt.ee, 357 2910
- 35 Narva Noortekeskus Vastelävi 9, Narva linn noortek@estpak.ee, 359 1639
- 36 Silmaste Avatud Noortekeskus Kooli j Kohla-Norme, Silmaste vald silmaste@onk.ee, 397 5755

JÕGEMAA

- 37 Jõgeva aleviku Avatud Noortekeskus Jõgeva alevik, Jõgeva vald megas.jaans@jnt.ee, 772 1965
- 38 Kõrre Noortekeskus Ala 34, Jõgeva linn jogevaan@hnt.ee, 5609 7121
- 39 Kuremaa avatud Noortekeskus Kuremaa, Jõgeva vald imo@hnt.ee, 5609 7121
- 40 Laisne Jõgeva vald karmo.kurvit@mail.ee, 517 6386
- 41 Põltsamaa Avatud Noortekeskus K. A. Hermani 1, Põltsamaa linn pnt@põltsamaa.edu.ee, 5245 3659
- 42 Siimla Noortekeskus Siimla, Jõgeva vald kev@siimla@hnt.ee, 5561 8806
- 43 Vainastvere Avatud Noortekeskus õhtu@vkn.ee, 5391 6786

JÄRVAMAA

- 44 Albu Noortekeskus Albu, Albu vald albu@albu.ee, 387 0500
- 45 Ambla Avatud Noortekeskus Pihk 15, Ambla, Ambla vald ege.kim@mail.ee, 383 4038
- 46 Kaas-kaasi Noortekeskus kaas@hnt.ee, 385 7489
- 47 Koeru Noortemaja Paide tee 3, Koeru, Koeru vald koerunoortekas@hnt.ee, 385 4364
- 48 Kõigi Kõrre Noortekeskus Kõigi Kõrre, Koigi vald kkk@hnt.ee, 5341 6740
- 49 Tõrja Noortekeskus Kooli 1, Tõrja, Paide vald tar@hnt.ee, 516 7382
- 50 Tuuri Noortetuba Herdani 1, Tuuri linn ur@tuuri@hnt.ee, 5857 8237

LAANEMAA

- 51 Haapsalu Noortekeskus Etne 8, Haapsalu linn vaip@hnt.ee, 473 7246
- 52 Kõrre Noortekeskus Nõmme 48, Kõrre linn noortekeskus@nõmme.ee, 479 6386
- 53 Noortetuba vald avatud noortekeskus Püksi tähe, Püksi, Noortetuba vald tina.roo@noortetuba.ee, 472 4355
- 54 Sääre Noortekeskus Sääre aleviku Noortekeskus vt@saare.ee, 489 6356, 479 6386
- 55 Täetähe vald laste- ja noortekeskus Nurme 12, Täetähe, Täetähe vald vt@taetähe.ee, 479 6356, 479 6386

LAANERAJAMA

- 56 Arna Pärnu Noortekeskus vallivallas@rakverevald.ee, 508 8555
- 57 Haljala Noortekeskus Tallinna mnt 8, Haljala, Haljala vald halj17@hnt.ee, 325 9590
- 58 Kadema Noortemaja Kadema küla, Kadema, Kadina vald halli@kadmeka@kadima.ee, 322 8624
- 59 Kunda Noortekeskus Kooli 13, Kunda linn ka@kunda.ee, 322 1666
- 60 Laetvere laste- ja noortetuba lta@hnt.ee, 5323 5535
- 61 Lepna lastetuba Lepna lastetuba l@lepna.ee, 5323 5535
- 62 Enneva pnt 14-2, Lepna, Rakvere vald valivallas@rakverevald.ee, 509 8255
- 63 Pajusti noortemaja Pajusti aleviku Noortekeskus k@pajusti@hnt.ee
- 64 Rakvere lastetähe Olingu Laste Plevakeskus Ed. Viile 2a, Rakvere linn mry@hnt.ee, 516 4468
- 65 Iina rumm@hnt.ee, 322 4494
- 66 Laasa 14, Rakvere linn aikka.2.rooa@vini.vaid mee@hnt.ee, 5342 9977
- 67 Minna noortekeskus Sõmeri aleviku Noortekeskus Tiigi 2, Sõmeri, Sõmeru vald mehe.vai@mail.ee, 5554 6063

RAPLAMAA

- 68 Kaitu Noortetuba Keskand 17, Kaitu, Kaitu vald kaitu@hnt.ee, 5252 9516
- 69 Kohla Avatud Noortekeskus Põsti 5a, Kohla, Kohla alevi vald ra@kohla@hnt.ee
- 70 Raiküla Valla Avatud Noortekeskus Pärnu Noortetuba Tamme jk, Tamme, Raiküla vald raiky@estpak.ee, 5241 8271
- 71 Nurmiku, Rapla linn, Nurmiku@hnt.ee, silm.kruus@rapla.ee, 485 5710, 5344 8698
- 72 maira.paju@mail.ee, 5342 9902
- 73 Verpola, Märramaa vald verpolaj@hnt.ee, 482 7384, 528 7841

SAAREMAA

- 74 Kommandandi Noortekeskus Kommandandi 10b, Kuressaare linn smuul@hnt.ee, 455 4590

TARTUMAA

- 75 Aasteku Noortekeskus Aasteku, Aasteku vald illireas@mail.ee, 730 2384, 524 5621
- 76 Anne Noortekeskus Anne Noortekeskus info@annekt.tartu.ee, 748 1763
- 77 Eiva Noortekeskus Kesk 30, Eiva linn 745 7201
- 78 Hälly Noortekeskus Hälly Noortekeskus Uus 56, Tartu linn krist@halley.ee, 5985 6150

VALGAMAA

- 79 Oopari Noortekeskus Oopari aleviku Noortekeskus kultu@oopa.ee, 765 5212, 506 3390
- 80 Ühiste Avatud Noortekeskus "Tank" Sõmeri aleviku Noortekeskus mehe@hnt.ee, 523 7793
- 81 Valga Noortekeskus J. Kuperjanovi 5, Valga alevi@pdspp.oh@hnt.ee, 766 1678

VILJANDIMAA

- 82 Abja Noortetuba Puhula linn fer@abja.ee, 528 7962
- 83 Hõiste Avatud Noortetuba Hõiste, Pärsti vald kerkel@hnt.ee, 433 2530
- 84 Kerkel, Karkas vald kerkel@hnt.ee, 433 2530
- 85 Nürme 5, Suure-Jaani vald ter@hnt.ee, 5800 2781
- 86 Palsu Avatud Noortetuba pal@hnt.ee, kai@palu.ee, 439 3280, 5554 7129
- 87 Saarepaed Noorte Klub "Shak" parikl@hnt.ee, 439 6120
- 88 Suvireve Avatud Noortekeskus Nürme 5, Suure-Jaani linn suvireve@hnt.ee, 439 6120
- 89 Viiratsi aarmaja noortekübi Sakala 3, Viiratsi, Viiratsi vald maira.paju@mail.ee, 5342 9902
- 90 Jätkoosoni 18, Viilandi linn vik@reit.ee, 433 3993
- 91 Vohna laste- ja noorte Plevakeskus roud@hnt.ee, 437 7166
- 92 Oisu noortetuba Oisu, Hälly vald vive@hnt.ee, 5691 9032

VORUMAA

- 93 Rouge Noortekeskus Keskuse 1, Rouge, Rouge vald voru@rouge.ee, 785 5384
- 94 Voru Noortekeskus Voru 23, Voru linn voru@nk@mail.ee, 5650 3991

POVUMAA

- 95 Tamsalu Plevakeskus Kesk 2, Tamsalu linn tamsp@hnt.ee, 323 0916
- 96 Kooli 24, Tapa linn vee.pajup@mail.ee, 327 1233
- 97 Uja Noortetuba Sõmeru vald jamar.kukk.00@mail.ee, 551 8199
- 98 Ühina noortetuba Ühina kultuurituba, Ühina, Sõmeru vald vee@uhina.ee, 5854 0972
- 99 Vaekeila noortetub Vaekeila kool, Vaekeila, Sõmeru vald vaekeila.kool@gmail.ee, 5867 1886
- 100 Valke-Määrja Noortekeskus tams@hnt.ee, 325 5568
- 101 Valke-Määrja vald valke-maarja vald noortekeskus@v-maaria.ee, 325 5038

RAKVERE

- 102 Abja Avatud Noortekeskus ilmar@abja.ee, 509 2063
- 103 aly@povimaa.ee, 792 1515
- 104 Kooli 15, Võõra linn ilijyrgenson.007@mail.ee, 5558 4668
- 105 Rapla Avatud Noortekeskus Aia 7, Rapla linn, 5598 2063
- 106 Verora Noortetubi Uus 1, Verora, Verora vald verora@hnt.ee, 522 1588
- 107 Supeluse 1, Pärnu linn jastekeskus@hnt.v.parnu.ee, 443 1541
- 108 Pärnu-Maasipi Käivimaja Avatud Pärnu mnt 28, Pärnu-Jaasupii, Hällingu vald halling@hnt.parnu.ee, 449 4262
- 109 Pärnu-Pleivi vald Pärnu-Pleivi mnt 2, Vändra, Vändra alevi vald vank@hnt.ee, 443 0346

RAKVERE

- 110 Kaitu Noortetuba Keskand 17, Kaitu, Kaitu vald kaitu@hnt.ee, 5252 9516
- 111 Kohla Avatud Noortekeskus Põsti 5a, Kohla, Kohla alevi vald ra@kohla@hnt.ee
- 112 Raiküla Valla Avatud Noortekeskus Pärnu Noortetuba Tamme jk, Tamme, Raiküla vald raiky@estpak.ee, 5241 8271
- 113 Nurmiku, Rapla linn, Nurmiku@hnt.ee, silm.kruus@rapla.ee, 485 5710, 5344 8698
- 114 maira.paju@mail.ee, 5342 9902
- 115 Verpola, Märramaa vald verpolaj@hnt.ee, 482 7384, 528 7841

RAKVERE

- 116 Kommandandi Noortekeskus Kommandandi 10b, Kuressaare linn smuul@hnt.ee, 455 4590

TARTUMAA

- 117 Aasteku Noortekeskus Aasteku, Aasteku vald illireas@mail.ee, 730 2384, 524 5621
- 118 Anne Noortekeskus Anne Noortekeskus info@annekt.tartu.ee, 748 1763
- 119 Eiva Noortekeskus Kesk 30, Eiva linn 745 7201
- 120 Hälly Noortekeskus Hälly Noortekeskus Uus 56, Tartu linn krist@halley.ee, 5985 6150

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- 121 Oopari Noortekeskus Oopari aleviku Noortekeskus kultu@oopa.ee, 765 5212, 506 3390
- 122 Ühiste Avatud Noortekeskus "Tank" Sõmeri aleviku Noortekeskus mehe@hnt.ee, 523 7793
- 123 Valga Noortekeskus J. Kuperjanovi 5, Valga alevi@pdspp.oh@hnt.ee, 766 1678

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- 124 Abja Noortetuba Puhula linn fer@abja.ee, 528 7962
- 125 Hõiste Avatud Noortetuba Hõiste, Pärsti vald kerkel@hnt.ee, 433 2530
- 126 Kerkel, Karkas vald kerkel@hnt.ee, 433 2530
- 127 Nürme 5, Suure-Jaani vald ter@hnt.ee, 5800 2781
- 128 Palsu Avatud Noortetuba pal@hnt.ee, kai@palu.ee, 439 3280, 5554 7129
- 129 Saarepaed Noorte Klub "Shak" parikl@hnt.ee, 439 6120
- 130 Suvireve Avatud Noortekeskus Nürme 5, Suure-Jaani linn suvireve@hnt.ee, 439 6120
- 131 Viiratsi aarmaja noortekübi Sakala 3, Viiratsi, Viiratsi vald maira.paju@mail.ee, 5342 9902
- 132 Jätkoosoni 18, Viilandi linn vik@reit.ee, 433 3993
- 133 Vohna laste- ja noorte Plevakeskus roud@hnt.ee, 437 7166
- 134 Oisu noortetuba Oisu, Hälly vald vive@hnt.ee, 5691 9032

VORUMAA

- 135 Rouge Noortekeskus Keskuse 1, Rouge, Rouge vald voru@rouge.ee, 785 5384
- 136 Voru Noortekeskus Voru 23, Voru linn voru@nk@mail.ee, 5650 3991

* Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühenduse liikmed
* The active members of EACY

No 3 AEYC Questionnaire

- 1 What do you remember about the formation of AEYC? How was the leader group selected, and what were the first tasks to be started.
- 2 What was provided to, and expected by, the young people ?
- 3 What models were used as examples from which the Estonian youth centres' network evolved?
- 4 What sort of strategies were devised to help local government implement their youth centres.
- 5 Who were the first members, the first working partners and other contributing bodies.
- 6 What sort of financial arrangements were made, and how has this changed over the years.
- 7 What were the members' priorities and expectations in the first year and how has this changed over the years.
- 8 What tools did you have to bring the plans to fruition?
- 9 What equipment was available?
- 10 How much work was involved, how many hours were taken?
- 11 How much was known about the details of the work?
- 12 What knowledge was required of you, was appropriate training made available?
- 13 Who was your inspiration or role model?
- 14 What sort of reporting was required?
- 15 What barriers were there which impeded your work
- 16 What can you remember about positive cooperation with others? Was/is it easy to find people to cooperate with
- 17 How significant was publicity throughout the period in question?
- 18 How important is it, do you think, To complete all aspects of each task, over many years if necessary?
- 19 How much demand is there for multicultural youth work?
- 20 What methods and tools do you use now? How do you keep from burning out?
- 21 Do you expect to be a role model for the young people?
- 22 What sort of changes have you experienced since you joined AEYC?
- 23 Looking towards the future, would you wish to change the organisation, and if so - how?
- 24 What would be the main task of the organisation in the future? What would you consider essential to preserve the integrity and image of AEYC?

No 4 Paabort Heidi 2008. AEYC membership and „Varaait“

Area	OYC all together	AEYC members	OYC „Varaait“
Tallinn	14	12+2	2
Harjumaa	25	10	5
Viljandimaa	19	1	4
Põlvamaa	10	2	2
Raplamaa	8	0	2
Valgamaa	11	1	1
Pärnumaa	7	1	1
Lääne-Virumaa	27	1	2
Jõgevamaa	16	6	3
Ida-Virumaa	21	2	4
Läänemaa	8	0	1
Saaremaa	7	3	3
Hiiumaa	7	1	2
Võrumaa	18	1	2
Järvamaa	20	3	1
Tartu	11	4	2
Tartumaa	12	1	0
KOKKU:	241	51	36

