

MENTAL HEALTH AMONG YOUTH IN ÅLAND

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE? WHAT IS BEING DONE?



norden

Nordic Centre for
Welfare and Social Issues



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FOREWORD

Youth in the Nordic Region - Mental Health, Work and Education

All children and young people are a huge resource. We have never had such well-educated and competent youngsters in the Nordic countries as we do today. At the same time there are all the more young persons who claim to be suffering from mental illness, and young persons who, for various reasons, risk ending up in vulnerable situations. Growing mental illness amongst young people is one of the most serious public health challenges facing our Nordic society.

The project Youth in the Nordic Region focuses on young persons who suffer from or are at risk of suffering from mental illness, as well as their situation at school and their later transition to work and providing for themselves. A further important topic of the project is early retirement and retirement on mental health grounds amongst young adults.

As part of the project we have produced reports which shed light on various aspects of these areas. The report you are holding in front of you aims to give a quick, clear overview of who does what in Åland in matters concerning young persons who suffer from or risk suffering from mental illness, and end up in long-term unemployment and with no meaningful purpose in life.

We have produced summaries of all the Nordic countries plus Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland. All summaries can be ordered or downloaded from www.nordicwelfare.org. We would like to point out to our readers that the summaries do not include everything that is done and that important and useful contributions may be lacking.

The Nordic countries have a lot of challenges in common; one of these is to ensure that all children and young persons enjoy good living conditions. We also know that particular efforts and investments are required for a heterogenous group of young people who are at risk of exclusion owing to mental illness, dropping out of their studies, long-term unemployment and other factors.

We can learn a lot from each other's different solutions and contributions. So let yourself be inspired!



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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Åland Islands or Åland is an autonomous, monolingual Swedish-speaking region of Finland. The Åland archipelago consists of 6,757 islands, of which about sixty are inhabited.

Åland's autonomous status means that those provincial powers normally exercised by representatives of the central Finnish government are largely exercised by its own government (Landskapsregering). Åland is divided into 16 municipalities, of which six have a population less than 500 and only two have more than 2500 inhabitants. As local government is a regional concern, the rules relating to municipal self-government are enshrined in Ålandic law, i.e. legislation passed by the Åland Parliament. The municipalities' decision-making power is exercised by the local councils, which are elected through general elections for a term of four years.

The population of Åland is 28,916 (31.12.2014). Of these, 7903 (27%) are under 25 (52.4% men and 47.6% women) and 9526 (33%) are under 30 (52.2% men and 47.8% women). Over 40% of the population lives in Mariehamn (approx. 11,000), the only town; almost 15,000 live in rural areas and approximately 2000 in the archipelago. The population of Åland comprises 0.5% of Finland's population. Most inhabitants (89%) have Swedish – the only official language on Åland – as their first language; 4.8% of the population speak Finnish as their first language and 6.5% other languages. Life expectancy on Åland is 81.5 years (women 83.2, men 79.7).

Åland is one of the wealthiest regions in Finland. Unemployment in Åland is well below that of surrounding regions. In August 2015, unemployment was 3.5%* (women 3.3%, men 4.3%); among young people, the corresponding figure was 5.6% (women 4.7% and men 6.4%).(Statistics Åland, 2015a)

** The data is taken from register-based labour market statistics, so it differs from the figures published by, for example, Statistics Finland, which are based on the sample-based Labour Market Surveys (AKU).*



SOCIAL WELFARE AND MENTAL HEALTH

In 2013, 45 children and young people (0-17 years) were placed outside the home in Åland Islands. This equals to 0.7% of the age group in the islands and is a smaller proportion of out-of-home placements than the general figure in Finland (1.4% or in total 18,000 children and young people). Figures for children and young people receiving community care in Åland are also encouraging. While 7.0% – almost 89,000 – children and young people received community care in Finland in 2013, the corresponding figure for Åland was only 3.3%. Overall, child protection reports have not increased over the past five years, and the statistics suggest good living conditions for young people in Åland.

Self-estimated health of High School and Upper Secondary School students has been investigated on aspects considering perceived school work load, study difficulties and lack of study motivation (Statistics Åland, 2015b). Less than half of all High School and Upper Secondary School students in Åland state that the work load is too high. More girls than boys state that this is the case, and the occurrence is higher for students in the theoretically oriented upper secondary programmes than in the practically oriented programmes. The prevalence of study difficulties is similar, between 30-40%, for all groups of students and with no great gender differences. More girls (10-15%) than boys (<10%) though, state that they experience lack of study motivation (Statistics Åland, 2015b).

During 1991-2013, 81 persons below 30 years deceased in Åland. The vast majority of these deaths occurred either during the first years of life, or during adolescence/young adulthood (15-29 years). A majority of the deceased were boys/young men. This is true for all ages up to 30 years, but is particularly significant for young men in the ages of 20-30 years; 27 of 36 deaths in this age span are young men. Accidents and violence is the most common cause of death amongst the young men. For young women the most common cause of death is disease. (Statistics Åland, 2015b).

In 2013 there were 887 suicides in Finland as a whole. This equates to 16.3 per 100,000 of the population (males 24.9, females 8.0). Eleven per cent of the suicides in the country were committed by persons younger than 25 years. Yearly statistics for Åland (2012) show eight suicides in the total population, seven of which were men. During a longer time-span, 2003-2012, four people below 25 years deceased due to suicide in the Åland Islands, two women and two men.

Young people in Åland Islands smoke and consume alcohol and drugs¹ more often than their parents, and boys have a higher and more frequent consumption than girls. (Statistics Åland, 2011) Considering consumption and choice of upper secondary education reveals that smoking is more prevalent amongst students in the practically oriented programs, than for the theoretically oriented programs. (Statistics Åland, 2015b)

Threats of violence, sexual harassments and bullying in school affect the health and daily lives of young people in all Nordic countries. Threats of violence affect both girls and boys equally, but is more common in the practically oriented programs (ca 10% vs. 30%). Sexual harassments are most common in the practically oriented programs, and the frequency is more than twice as high amongst girls than for boys. Between 30-40% of young women in upper secondary school report that they have experienced sexual harassments at least once. When it comes to bullying, the gender pattern is reversed although the differences are not near as large as for sexual harassments. Students in the theoretically oriented programs are less affected by bullying (girls ca 2% and boys ca 3%) than in the practically oriented programs (girls ca 4% and boys ca 7%). (Statistics Åland, 2015)

1 “Drugs” here defined as cannabis, medications without prescription, etc.

Overall responsibility for social welfare and mental health provision

In the autonomous Åland Islands, the Department of Social Affairs, Health and Environment is responsible for family policy, as well as maintaining and improving the welfare of children, young people and families. The social and health services are financed through a common budget for the whole sector (i.e. they are not directly linked to the budgets of the individual municipalities).

Five key players are involved in supporting and/or bearing responsibility for young people: the education system, ÅHS (Åland Health Service), municipalities (including the social sector), AMS (the labour market and study service agency) and FPA (Social Insurance Office). Some NGOs also play a role.

There is an Inspector for Social Affairs as well as a child ombudsman. The child ombudsman has been appointed to monitor the rights and interests of Ålandic children, and lobby decision-makers on matters concerning the lives of children and young people. Since 19 May 2014, the roles of Discrimination Ombudsman (DO) and Child Ombudsman (BO) have been combined.²

Social welfare services for young people

Education is compulsory until the age of 16 (as in the rest of Finland), so different services and support mechanisms are provided through the education system for young people who need help. Many schools offer support through social workers, psychologists, nurses and doctors.

Social welfare is offered according to the same principles as in the rest of the country. People in need of various kinds of support are provided with services through the social welfare offices, which are run by the municipalities. As the island's population is small, the social workers in the 16 municipalities do not specialise, but work with different tasks as well as with clients of all ages. The main tasks are usually issues relating to social benefits and housing, but sometimes also child protection and substance abuse.

² For more information see <http://www.ls.aland.fi/socialomiljo/barnoungdomar.pbs> .

According to THL (2015) the costs of social benefits in Finland have increased, both in terms of the total amount paid out and the number of recipients. Social benefits are closely linked to unemployment. According to THL's statistics, in 2014 the increase in the average amount paid to each recipient in Finland was EUR 136, but in Åland the figure was only EUR 53 (THL 2015, 4). A total of 524 households in Åland received social benefits in 2014. No figures are available that are specific to young recipients.

FPA (Social Insurance Institution of Finland/ SII) manages social security and many issues relating to benefits and rehabilitation, such as child and housing benefits, sickness, parental allowances, study grants, and reimbursement for medicines. AMS helps jobseekers and unemployed persons with matters relating to employment.

A third-sector organisation, Folkhälsan, offers services through a family support unit. It is a Swedish-language NGO that carries out scientific research and provides social welfare and health care services, as well as information and counselling in order to promote health and quality of life. Folkhälsan sells its services to the municipalities, which pay for the client's costs, and also arranges group activities for young people. The groups, which comprise six to eight young people aged 13-16, meet regularly with an adult group leader. Folkhälsan also runs a workshop called The Garage and two youth cafés. The Garage is an adult led activity for young people to socialize and be active, while fixing cars.

Public health care and specialised mental health services for young people

Public health care in Åland is provided by the Åland Healthcare Service (ÅHS). There is one hospital, located in the northern part of Mariehamn, and healthcare clinics in most of the 16 municipalities. The hospital and clinics serve clients with mental health issues, but there are no specialist units. However, on-call psychiatric services are available 24/7.

Young people get support for mental health issues through two main channels: primary care, and special services. Primary care offers general services to everyone, while specialist services require a referral, as they handle more serious problems. The special services are divided into two groups according to the clients' age: young clients (< 18 years) are treated by BUP (Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Clinic), while adults (18+) are treated by the PPU (Adult Psychiatry Clinic). For clients recovering after treatment, there is a separate support organisation focusing on rehabilitation, PRM (Psychiatric Rehabilitation Clinic). PRM works with clients of all ages. In Åland these different psychiatric services are gathered in the Åland Psychiatric Clinic. (Åland Healthcare Service, 2016)

Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (BUP) is an outpatient clinic for children and young people under 18 and their parents. BUP carries out assessments and treats children and young people in need of treatment and support. The work is aimed at both preventive and palliative measures, and is designed on the basis of individual needs; this includes one-to-one discussions, family discussions and parent training. BUP collaborates with, for example, school psychologists, and the children and young people's polyclinic. BUP's activities include running the COPE parent training programme, in collaboration with Folkhälsan. BUP has been under pressure from the volume of clients requiring care since 2013 and has been forced to make its services referral-based, but professionals from many institutions such as hospitals and schools may refer patients.

The Adult Psychiatric Clinic is a specialist-led outpatient clinic that offers assessment and treatment to patients aged 18 and over. The clinic, which accepts referred clients, carries out assessments, formulates treatment plans, and offers practical treatment.

The number of patients in inpatient care in child and adolescent psychiatry varies by region and the number of outpatient visits per patient varies by hospital district. This probably reflects differences in care practices and service structures in the regions. The number of young people aged 13-17 treated in specialised inpatient psychiatric units (per 1000 inhabitants of the same age group) in Åland Islands is average, but the numbers are high for young adults aged 18-22 (THL 2014a, 44).



EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Roughly 350-400 students start upper secondary school every year in Åland Islands³, out of these around ten percent will drop out before completion. Most dropouts (70%) occur during the first two semesters of studies. The dropout reason is unknown in two thirds of the cases, for the remaining third the reasons are mainly change of studies or work (Statistics Åland, 2013).

Unemployment is much lower in the Åland Islands than in the rest of the country. In August 2015 the general unemployment rate in Åland was 3.5%, but for young people under 25 years the figure was 5.6% (women 4.7% and men 6.4%). (Statistics Åland 2015a)

Services for young unemployed people

As in the rest of the country, contact information for young people who leave compulsory school – with or without pass grades – but do not continue to the next stage of education is sent to outreach youth workers. These professionals are normally employed by municipalities. Participation is voluntary; young people contacted are under no obligation to cooperate with the outreach service. On Åland the outreach youth workers are called Ungdomslotsar ('youth pilots').⁴

The purpose of outreach youth work is to help those under 29 years with no links to an education institution or to the labour market, and who are thought to need public sector services or are at risk of social exclusion. Methods include street work, detached youth work, mobile youth work or outreach youth work depending on target groups and environments (OKM 2015). Outreach youth workers are adults who meet the young people and are prepared to do so in informal settings. They can also be seen

³ Young people from Åland also start education in mainland Finland or Sweden.

⁴ For more information see: www.ungdomslotsarna.ax/ungdomslotsen-hjalper-dig-hitta

as supporting adults who, although they represent society, do not exert any power in steering the young person in any particular direction. They are not authorised to decide on any issues relating to a financial support system. Outreach youth workers help the young person by taking the time to listen to the young person's perceptions of their situation, and their wishes, but they also know how, when and why to act as representatives of the official system. The outreach youth workers work together in a multi-disciplinary way at local level.

AMS, the Åland labour market and study service agency, is responsible for providing services to unemployed young people. AMS is an independent public service agency under the Åland Government.⁵ As in other parts of Finland young people whose education does not extend beyond the compulsory nine years, and who do not find a job, are recommended to return to education or participate in various types of activation measures. Some young people attend courses like 'How to write a good CV'.

Among the most popular activation measures are the Youth Workshops, which offer training, social training and work experience to unemployed young people under 25. The workshops are places for young people to learn life skills, grow into adulthood and get hands-on experience of work. A workshop offers the young person an opportunity for guided and supported work, and an individually tailored path to education, completion of education in co-operation with the education provider, or employment in the open labour market.

5 For more information on AMS see <http://www.ams.ax/english/work-aland>



In Åland one youth workshop – Katapult – operates in Mariehamn. Katapult welcomes 12 young people at a time. The young people come to the workshop five days a week for six hours a day. They usually stay at the workshop for one academic year. The target group of Katapult are young people who are not in education, training or employment, or by other reasons risk social marginalisation. At the workshop the young people work both individually and in groups on issues relating to themselves, their self-perception and skills, as well as their future plans regarding studies and work. All participants also get an opportunity to work for a few weeks at a local business. Katapult is owned by a third-sector organisation, Ung Resurs rf., which sells its service to the County Council. The service is free for the participants. The young participants receive activation benefit while participating in the workshop.

Other organisations on Åland that offer support to young people include the Interest Association for Young People in the Archipelago⁶, Save the Children Åland, Association for the Disabled⁷ and Ålands ungdomsförbund and the Red Cross on Åland.

6 For more information see www.skunk.ax

7 For more information see www.handicampen.ax

REFERENCES

OKM (2015): *Uppsökande ungdomsarbete* (web article). www.minedu.fi

Statistics Finland (2015): *Comprehensive school drop-outs in academic years 1999/2000–2013/2014*. http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/kkesk/2013/kkesk_2013_2015-03-19_tau_002_en.html

Statistics Åland (2011): *Undersökning om ålänningars alkohol- och narkotikabruk samt spelvanor år 2011*. ÅSUB Rapport 2011:6

Statistics Åland (2013): *E-mail from Jonas Karlsson, Statistics Åland 21 Nov 2013*.

Statistics Åland (2015a): *Arbetslöshetssituationen augusti 2015* http://www.asub.ax/files/arblos_08_2015.pdf

Statistics Åland (2015b): *Kvinnor och män i livets olika skeden. Könsskillnader med rötter i barn- och ungdomsåren*. http://www.asub.ax/files/jamstallhetsbilaga_2015_hermsidan.pdf

THL (2015): *Toimeentulotuen menot 2015* (Utgifter för utkomststöd)(web article). www.thl.fi

Åland Health- and Medical Care (2016): *Psykiatriska kliniken* (web article) www.ahs.ax

ANNEX: PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES, RESEARCH & REPORTS

Services and projects

Children's Emergency Telephone: tel. +358 (0)18 25520 (local call charges) run in collaboration with the Swedish organisation, BRIS (Children's Rights in Society.

BRIS email contact: www.bris.se

BRIS adult telephone line for calls about children: tel. +46 77 150 5050

The youth workshop *Katapult* is a youth project financed by AMS. For more information see the AMS home page: www.ams.ax/verksamhetsplan-2015

The Åland Chamber of Commerce ran the Youth Enterprise project 2012-2015. The aim was to develop young enterprise by training entrepreneurial and creative approaches in children and young people at all levels of compulsory education. For more information see www.naringsliv.ax/projekt/ungt-entreprenorskap

The main objective of the Folkhälsan project Vision Zero Tolerance, which started in 2013 is to influence long-term attitudes to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco, in order to reduce the total consumption amongst young people. The project aims to raise the age of alcohol debut and reduce the harm caused by the use of drugs.

Reports

Aaltonen Carina m.fl. (2013): Ålands handlingsprogram mot riskbruk och missbruk 2013-2016. Alkohol, narkotika, tobak och spel. http://www.regeringen.ax/.composer/upload/modules/publikationer/slutgiltigt_andtsprogram.pdf

Fellman, Pernilla & Jansson, Anette (2013): Faktorer som kan bidra till att unga personer utvecklar depression. Implikationer för omvårdnad. Högskolan på Åland. http://www.ha.ax/files/va_exarb_fellman_jansson.pdf

Nikander Eivor m.fl. (2010) Barns och ungdomars hälsa på Åland - en lägesrapport http://www.regeringen.ax/.composer/upload/modules/publikationer/barns_och_ungdomars_halsa_pa__land_utan_sidnr_en_lagesrapport.pdf

Ålands landskapsregering (2014): Kartläggning av myndighetssamarbete för ungdomar som varken arbetar eller studerar eller befinner sig i riskzon för detta.

Ålands landskapsregering (2014): Arbetsgruppen för översyn av lagstiftningen om arbetsmarknadspolitik Slutrapport. <http://www.regeringen.ax/.composer/upload//naringsavd/allmanna/Slutrapport.pdf>

Ålands landskapsregering (2009): Förslag till Ungdomspolitiskt program för landskapet Åland år 2009-2012 http://www.regeringen.ax/.composer/upload//ungdom/Forslag_till_ungdomspolitiskt_program_2009.pdf

Ålands landskapsregering (2009): Utvärdering av Åländsk ungdomspolitik (2008): Ungdomspolitiska kommittén 30 september 2008. http://www.regeringen.ax/.composer/upload//ungdom/Utvardering_av_alandsk_ungdomspolitik_30.9.2008.pdf



MINISTRIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES

The Government of Åland: www.regeringen.ax

- Diskriminerings- och barnombudsmannen/Discrimination Ombudsman: www.doaland.ax/do/

Department of Industry: www.regeringen.ax

- Ålands arbetsmarknads- och studieservicemyndighet/The Åland Labour Market and Student Service Authority: www.ams.ax

Department of Social affairs and Environment: www.regeringen.ax

- Ålands Hälso- och sjukvård (ÅHS)/Ålands Public Health Care Services: www.ahs.ax
- Ålands miljö- och hälsoskyddsmyndighet (ÅMHM)/Åland Environmental and Health Protection Authorities: www.miljohalsoskydd.ax

Departement of Education and Culture: www.regeringen.ax

- Ålands gymnasium/Åland Secondary School: www.gymnasium.ax
- Ålands folkhögskola/Åland Folk High School: www.afhs.ax

MUNICIPALITIES AND REGIONS

Municipalities (16)

- Primärvården/Primary Care: www.ahs.ax
- Specialistvården/Specialist Care 0–18 år (BUP): www.ahs.ax

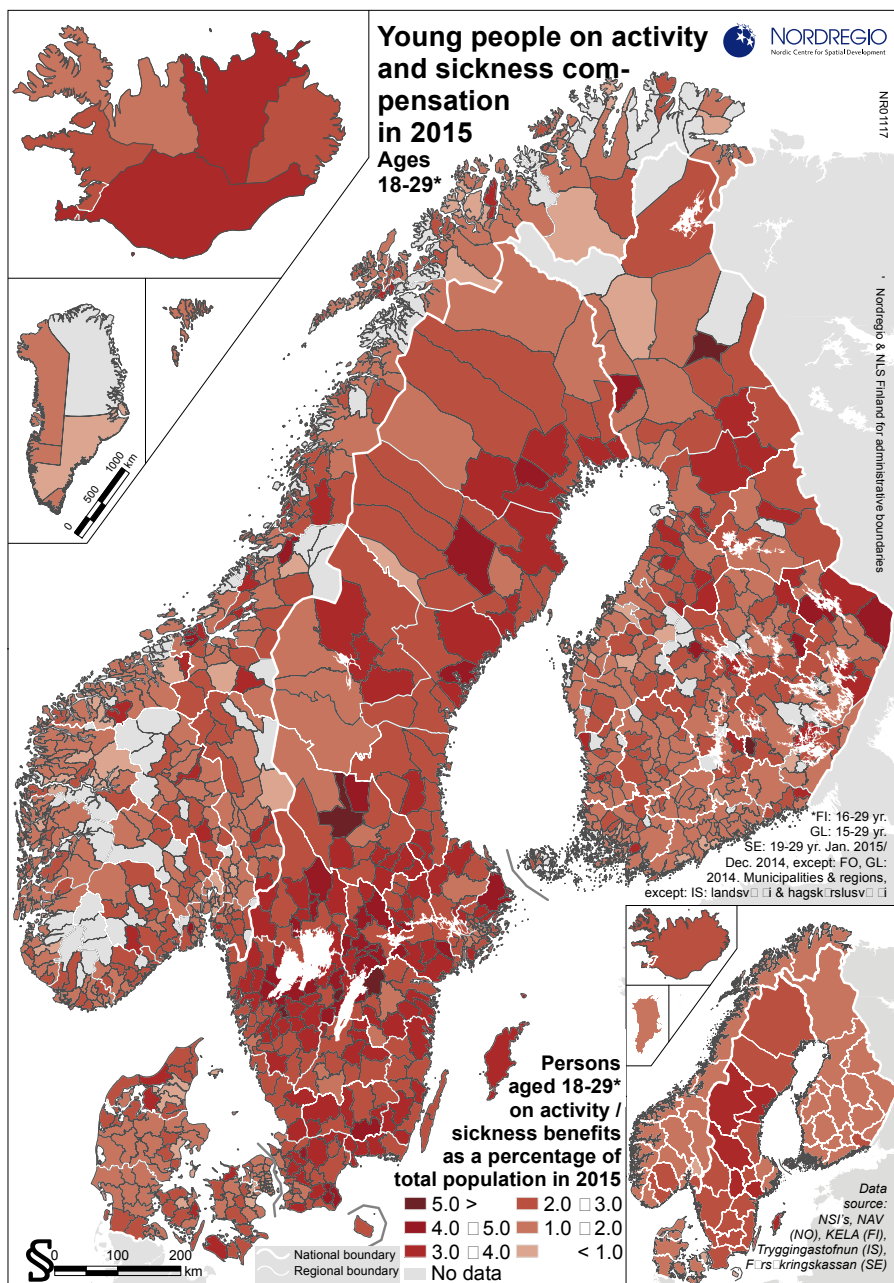
RESEARCH

- Ålands statistik- och utredningsbyrå/Statistics and Research Åland: www.asub.ax

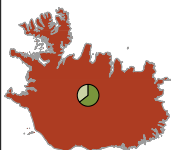
CIVIL SOCIETY

- Emmaus Åland: www.emmaus.ax
- Folkhälsan/NGO in the social and welfare sector: www.folkhalsan.ax
- Intresseföreningen för ungdomar i skärgården/Youth Organization: www.skunk.ax
- Klubbhuset Pelaren/Åland Fountain House: www.klubbhusetpelaren.ax
- Rädda Barnen/Save the Children: www.raddabarnen.ax
- Ung Resurs/NGO in the social sector for young people: www.ungresurs.ax
- Ålands handikappförbund/The Åland Disability Federation: www.handicampen.ax
- Ålands ungdomsförbund/Åland Youth Organization: www.ungdom.ax

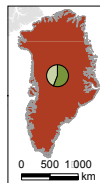
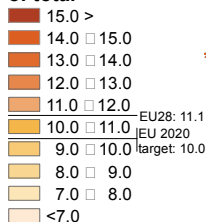




Early school leavers in 2014 by NUTS 2 regions Persons with at most lower secondary education, aged 18 to 24*



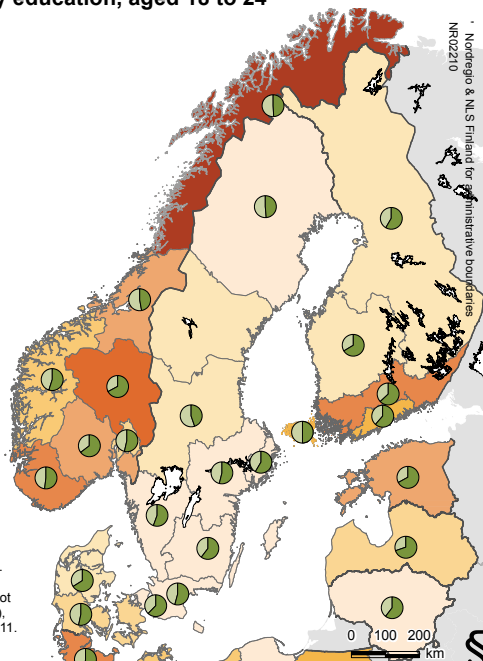
Early school leavers: percentage share of total

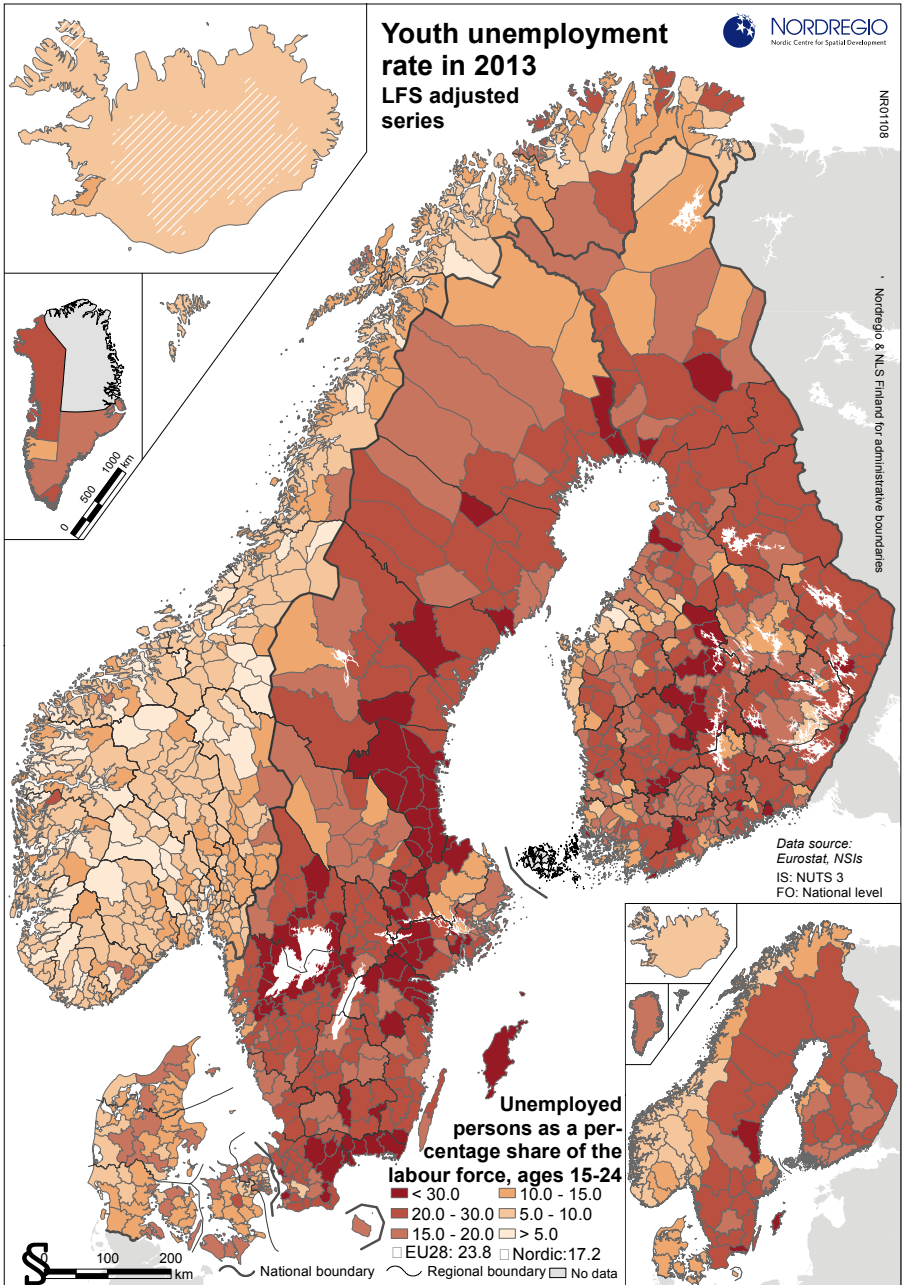


Early school leavers: gender shares

Females Males
EU28:

* Percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 having attained at most lower secondary education and not being involved in further education or training. Regional level: NUTS 2. In EE, IS, LT & LV, NUTS 2 equals national level. AX, GL: estimates. AX: Share of early school leavers probably over estimated, as students studying in Sweden are not included in estimates. SJ: Jylland, Nordjylland (DK), Mellersta Norrland (SE): No gender data. FO: 2011. Source: Eurostat & (for AX, FO, GL) NSI's.

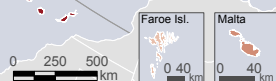
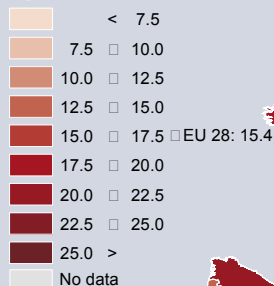




NEET rates in European countries in 2014

Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)

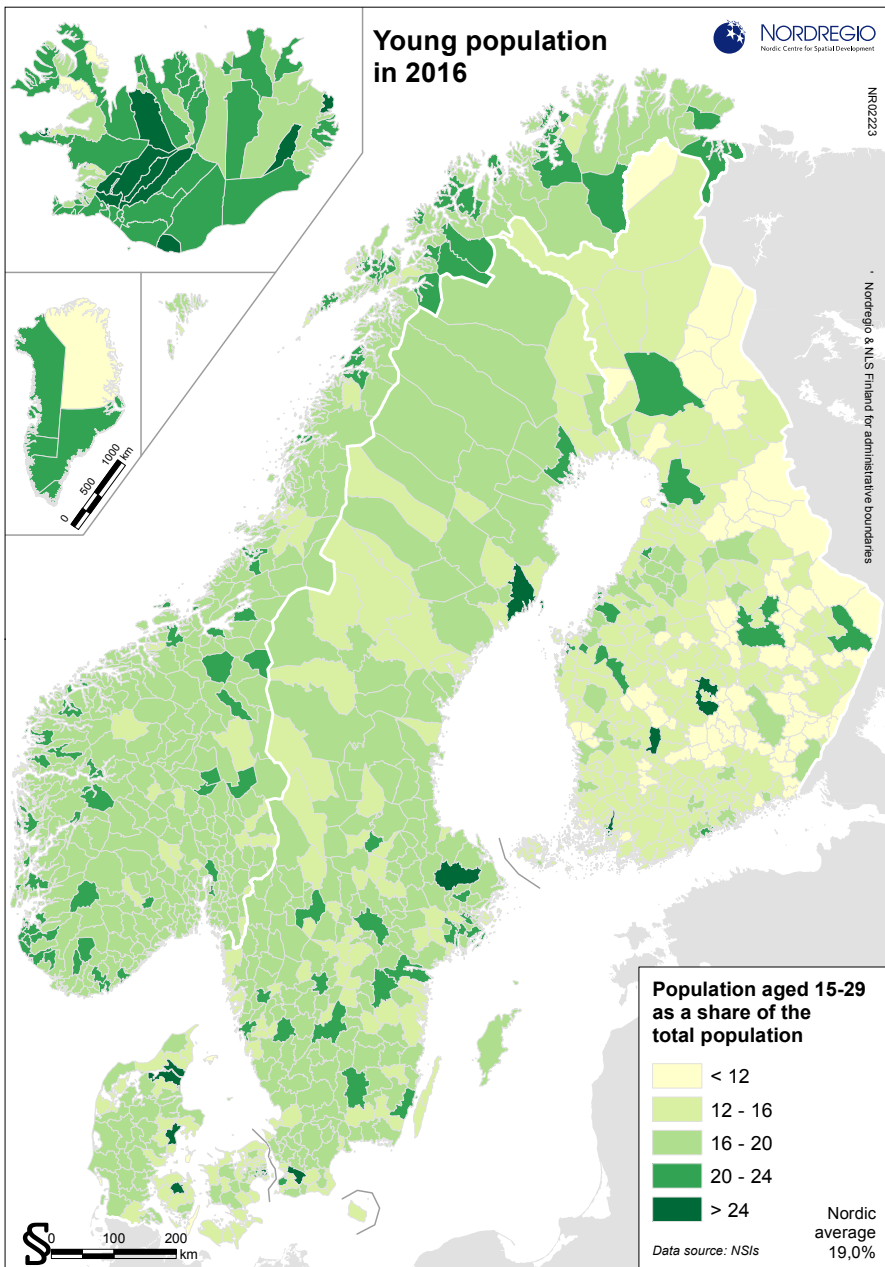
NEET percentage of total population, ages 15-29




FO: 2011
Source: Eurostat, NSIs

NR01116

Nordregio, NLS Finland & ESRI for administrative boundaries



A stylized map of the Nordic region, including Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, set against a blue background. The map is white with black outlines for the coastlines and borders.

The Nordic co-operation involves Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, as well as the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.

NORDIC CENTRE FOR WELFARE AND SOCIAL ISSUES – AN INSTITUTION UNDER THE NORDIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Although there are some national differences in the Nordic welfare systems, there are also great similarities between the countries. National differences provide opportunities for comparison and learning from each other's experiences. The Nordic Centre for Welfare and Social Issues is a key-actor in explaining, supporting and developing the Nordic welfare model.

Our work aims at developing strategic input to politicians, compiling research findings and arranging Nordic and international conferences on current welfare issues.

Our focus areas are:

- Welfare policy
- Disability issues
- Labour market inclusion
- Alcohol and drug issues
- Welfare technology

Nordic Council of Ministers

The Nordic Council of Ministers is the official inter-governmental body for co-operation in the Nordic region. The ministers within each specific policy area meet a few times a year to collaborate on matters such as working life issues, social and health policy, and education and research.

Within each policy area, there is also a committee of senior officials, comprising civil servants whose task is to prepare and follow up issues.

Nordic Council

The Nordic Council is the official parliamentary body of the Nordic co-operation. Members of the Nordic Council are members of parliament in the individual countries.

The Nordic Council meets twice a year. The decisions taken at the meetings are implemented by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic governments. The day-to-day political work is carried out in committees and political party groups.



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