

Helsinki

Participate and influence!

Guide to influencing opportunities for learners in Helsinki.



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1. Everyone can make a difference

Participation and influencing are part of every citizen's basic rights in Finland. Everyone can influence their own future, as well as the future of their local area. At schools and educational institutions, participation and influencing can mean practical things like food juries, environmental groups, the Ruuti Budget, the Youth Council and many others!

In the Education Division, participation is defined first and foremost as everyday actions, appreciation of other people and interactive activities. Taking responsibility and participating in local activities and decision-making are key skills for a person. It is important for everyone to learn to tackle matters, discuss their observations and act to resolve issues.

Practising participation, active citizenship and influencing is very important. It is good for learners to understand how their own actions can influence the world around them. Practising participation and influencing enables learners to find the most suitable influencing methods and address issues more assertively. Understanding different influencing channels and practising how to use them, as well as diverse interaction situations, prepare learners to function in society and carry out co-operation.

Developing interaction and participation has been set as one of the top priorities in the City of Helsinki's strategy for 2017–2021. Influencing and participation are also emphasised in the curricula for basic education and upper secondary education, as well as in the criteria for vocational training degrees at Helsinki Vocational College and Adult Institute. Participation and democratic action enable learners to grow into active citizens.

The purpose of this guide is to illustrate different influencing methods and inspire learners to tackle matters and make efforts to resolve issues. We all have a voice that we should learn to use.

We hope that you make inspiring observations about participation and influencing opportunities in Helsinki!

In the Education Division, participation is defined first and foremost as everyday actions, appreciation of other people and interactive activities.

2. Let's get inspired – everyone belongs to a student body!

- ▶ What makes your educational institution unique?
- ▶ What aspects of your educational institution's operations should be developed?
- ▶ How can you promote communality and influence matters so that everyone has a good and safe environment?
- ▶ What kind of action is taken against bullying and discrimination at your educational institution?
- ▶ What is everyone's right and duty as a member of the educational institution?
- ▶ What kind of activities would you like the student council to organise?

Student body

Students at a school or educational institution form a student body. [Legislation](#) obligates schools and educational institutions to enable learners to participate in the educational institution's operations and planning. The activities of the student body make it possible to influence learners' well-being and the atmosphere, practices and events of the educational institution. Together with the staff of the educational institution, the student body must ensure that equality and parity are promoted in practice.

The goal of the activities is to inspire learners to be active. Student body allows learners' voices to be heard, enabling them to bring up their thoughts and views more effectively.

Examples of student council activities



Student councils

- ▶ Have you created an annual plan for the board based on the student council's wishes?
- ▶ Have you discussed your co-operation wishes with the principal and the supervisory teacher?
- ▶ Have you planned a goal for each meeting? Does everyone know why the meeting is held?
- ▶ Are your meetings open to everyone?
- ▶ Do you have enough time to process matters thoroughly and develop your activities based on ideas?
- ▶ Can student council members attend your meetings remotely?
- ▶ How do you make sure that your meetings have a safe and good atmosphere in which all members are listened to?
- ▶ What kind of co-operation do you carry out with Finnish and Swedish-language schools and educational institutions and other parties?
- ▶ How is the student council heard in the educational institution's decision-making (e.g. regarding book, equipment and material procurements or the founding of courses and clubs)?

The student councils act as representatives of the student body. They must chart where pupils and students see issues and what things they would like to be changed. The student councils can plan different ways and methods to have everyone's voice heard. The principals and instructors of educational institutions play an important role in facilitating activities and giving space to active operators. It is important that the student council brings up learner perspectives in matters related to teaching and educational institutions' operations, and the education provider is obligated to allow learners to participate in the planning and implementation of operations.

The operations are made more open and inspiring when all learners know how the student council is appointed, what matters the student council is responsible for and how they can participate in the student council's operations. In order to ensure equal treatment, there should be diversity in the representatives of the student council. Furthermore, it is important that student council meetings are held on a regular basis, that they are planned well and that everyone knows what the goal of each meeting is. It is also important that enough time is reserved for brainstorming and discussions at the meetings.

Documents related to the student council's operations

The following documents on the student council's operations should be created for transparency.

Annual clock

The annual clock provides a rhythm for the operations and demonstrates to student body what the student council is planning to do over the course of the year.

Meeting memo

The meeting memo lists the matters discussed and decided on at student council meetings.

Agenda

The student council meetings use an agenda. The agenda facilitates preparing for meetings and provides structure for the proceedings.

Annual report

The purpose of the annual report is to assess the student body's activities and the implementation of the annual plan at the end of the operating period.

3. How can I make a difference?

- ▶ Do you want to promote common matters and carry out representational duties?
- ▶ Do you want to get things going and look into change opportunities directly with others?

There are many ways to influence, and the methods can be divided roughly into representational influencing and direct and participatory influencing.

Representational influencing refers to actions such as youth council activities. Representational influencing is often carried out by persons appointed in an election.

In direct and participatory influencing, learners are in direct contact with a person or party whose operations they wish to be changed. Direct and participatory influencing is a good way to speak out on matters important to learners. If learners wish for something to be changed, they can campaign in various ways to first have the matter included in the decision-making agenda and then bring up their own views on changing the matter. Direct and participatory influencing enables learners to bring up different areas for development with the concerned parties.

Examples of representational influencing

- student councils
- pupil or student representatives in various working groups
- membership of the board of the educational institution (comprehensive schools and upper secondary schools)
- membership of the management group of the educational institution (Helsinki Vocational College and Adult Institute)
- pupil and student representatives in parents' committees
- youth council activities.

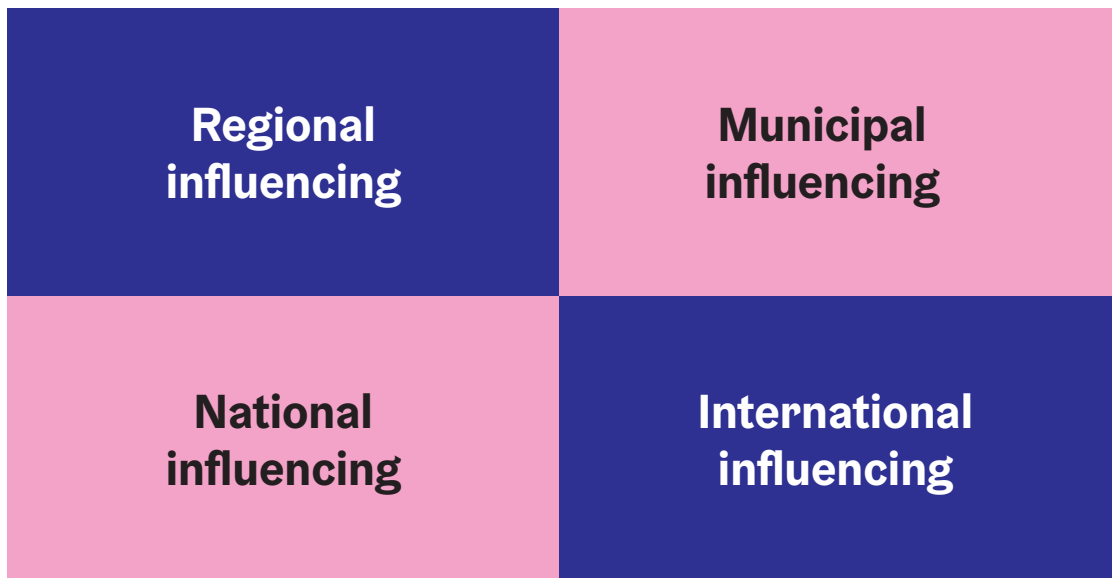
Examples of direct and participatory influencing

- contacting a person who can promote the change you want
- pupil mentor activities
- tutor activities
- environmental groups
- recess exercise instructors
- influencing through consumer choices
- campaigning
- demonstrations
- editorials.

4. Different influencing methods and channels – choose the most suitable options!

There are many methods and levels of influencing, and there is a variety of influencing methods and channels at each level. Helsinki operates the young people's influence system Ruuti, the objective of which is to activate and inspire learners to tackle and promote matters important to

them. The goal of the Ruuti system is to ensure that every young Helsinki resident can have at least one influencing experience a year. There is a multitude of ways to influence, and it is thus important for everyone to find a suitable way to influence and speak out.



Regional influencing

Student body

Students at a school or educational institution form a student body.

Student council

A group of students who are elected by other students to represent them and help plan activities for the students.

Educational institutions' own groups and teams

Based on learners' suggestions and activity, educational institutions host various groups and teams that learners can utilise to promote matters that they find important. Learners can also tackle any issues they observe themselves and found groups to promote matters. Examples of such groups include environmental teams, food juries, well-being groups, tutor activities, eco-supporters and peer mediators.

Ruuti funding

Ruuti funding consist of annual funds allocated to pupil and student councils to be used for developing communality or improving the pleasantness of the study environment.

Ruuti Budget

Young people come up with ideas, vote and negotiate every year on what kind of leisure time activities and services are provided to young people in Helsinki.

Educational institutions' own events and activities

Educational institutions can organise their own events and participatory activities, such as theme days, events and campaigns.

Co-operation with businesses and organisations

Businesses and organisations operating in the area can be co-operated with.

Municipal influencing

Student council days

Student councils assemble every year to share experiences and develop activities.

OmaStadi

Helsinki residents can draw up proposals and make plans that benefit everyone in Helsinki. Residents aged over 12 can vote and thus participate in influencing decisions.

Helsinki Youth Council

Elected for a two-year term, the Youth Council makes sure that young people's voice is heard in the City's decision-making. All Helsinki residents aged 13–17 can become candidates and vote in the Youth Council election.

Young people's initiative

Young people can create initiatives to develop Helsinki and improve its operations.

Sponssi grants

Young people aged 7–28 can apply and receive grants for implementing their ideas and projects.

Young Voice Editorial Board

In the Young Voice Editorial Board, young people aged 13–19 can speak out on and influence societal matters in the media.

People's initiative

In accordance with the Local Government Act, every resident of the municipality can create an initiative concerning the municipality's operations.

Parishes

Young people can participate in parishes' activities and influence what kind of services young people are provided with.

National influencing

Collective activities

Participating in collective activities enables young people to promote important matters, such as nature conservation.

Youth Parliament

Upper comprehensive school pupils' Parliament clubs enable young people to examine society, as well as how they can influence and participate, through current topics. The Youth Parliament meets in the Parliament every two years for a plenary meeting.

Direct democracy campaigns and influencing on social media

In direct democracy, power is exercised by citizens, who have an equal opportunity to influence society. Voting is an example of direct democracy. Social media can be used to start a campaign or speak out on important matters.

International influencing

European Youth Parliament

European Youth Parliament (EYP) Finland is part of the international EYP network operating in 40 countries.

HundrED Youth Ambassadors

HundrED Youth Ambassadors is an international network through which young people can share innovations and information to improve the world.

Organisations

Different organisations carry out international influencing work as well, such as Findory, the UN Association of Finland, the Guides and Scouts of Finland and Plan. Development organisations can also organise international youth activities.

Student organisations' international co-operation

Several student organisations carry out international co-operation.

Finnish representatives at international meetings

The Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi appoints Finnish representatives for UN meetings and certain other international meetings.

Exchange student organisations

Different exchange student organisations (AFS, YFU, Rotary Finland) provide learners with opportunities to experience different cultures.

5. Do other people know what you want to promote?

- ▶ What is your target group and how can it be reached?
- ▶ Is your message clear, understandable and memorable?
- ▶ What different communication channels can you utilise to get your message across?
- ▶ Have you created a communication plan?
- ▶ How do you utilise social media and videos?
- ▶ How can you contact the City's decision-makers?

Communication plays a key role in influencing. In the simplest of terms, influencing can be defined as communication intended to change views on a matter. For example, when communicating about the decisions of the pupil or student council board, it is important to provide the entire educational institution community with the information. Thus, the decisions are transparent in the community and everyone knows what the pupil or student council has decided and why.

The perspective of accessibility must be taken into consideration in communication. The message must be clear and understandable. The information must be readily available and up-to-date. Communication must also not be discriminatory. Word choices should be paid attention to. When providing information, thought should be given to what is being communicated how, when and to whom. For example, when realising an event, the target group must know well in advance where and when the event will be held and what kind of an event it is.

Communication can utilise different channels such as social media, podcasts and YouTube videos. Representatives of national and local media can also be contacted. The channels of Ruuti and the City of Helsinki are also good platforms for local communication.

More to read

Finnish legislation provides for matters related to participation.

- Subsection 3 of Section 6 of the **Constitution of Finland** decrees that children shall be treated equally and as individuals and they shall be allowed to influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development.
- Section 8 of the **Youth Act** states that young people must be given an opportunity to participate in the processing of matters pertaining to local and regional youth work and politics. Young people must be heard in matters pertaining to them.
- Section 47a of the **Basic Education Act** decrees that the education provider must take action to see to it that the pupils have an opportunity to participate in the school's operations and development, and put forward their opinion about matters relating to the pupils' status. Pupils must be given an opportunity to participate in the preparation of the curriculum and related plans, as well as the school's rules of conduct. The school must have a pupil council composed of its pupils. Several schools may have a joint pupil council.
- Section 33 of the **Act on General Upper Secondary Education** decrees that the education provider must promote all students' participation and ensure that the students have an opportunity to participate in the educational institution's operations and development, and put forward their opinion about matters relating to the students' status. Students must be given an opportunity to participate in the preparation of the curriculum and related plans, as well as the rules of conduct. The student council's task is to promote students' co-operation, influencing opportunities and participation, and to develop co-operation between the students and the education provider.
- Section 106 of the **Vocational Education and Training Act** states that the education provider must provide the students with an opportunity to influence operations within the meaning of the Act the development thereof, as well as decision-making affecting matters pertaining to the students and the students' status. The different educational institutions of the education provider may also have a joint student association. The student council's task is to promote students' co-operation, influencing opportunities and participation, and to develop co-operation between the students and the education provider. In addition to student council activities, the education provider must otherwise ensure that the students have opportunities to participate and influence matters. The education provider must provide the students with information about available participation and influencing methods.

[531/2017 Vocational Education and Training Act](#) (in Finnish).

[10.8.2018/714 Act on General Upper Secondary Education](#) (in Finnish).

[21.12.2016/1285 Youth Act](#) (in Finnish).

[21.8.1998/628 Basic Education Act](#).

[11.6.1999/731 The Constitution of Finland](#).

Reading tips:

European Youth Parliament Finland <https://eypfinland.org/en/>

Finnish Development NGOs – Fingo <https://www.fingo.fi/english>

The City of Helsinki's project grants <https://www.hel.fi/kulttuurin-ja-vapaa-ajan-toimiala/en/grants/Grants+for+youth+activities/>

HundrED Youth Ambassadors <https://hundred.org/en/ambassadors>

Kuntalaisaloite <https://www.kuntalaisaloite.fi/fi>

Basics of the curriculum of upper secondary education (2019) Finnish National Board of Education (2019). *Basics of the curriculum of upper secondary education.* (in Finnish)

Youth Parliament <https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/NuortenEduskunta/NuortenParlamentti/> (in Finnish)

Young Voice Editorial Board <https://nuortenaani.munstadi.fi/>

Youth Council <https://ruuti.munstadi.fi/nuorisoneuvosto/>

Pupil council activity instructor's guide https://opinkirjo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/oppilaskuntatoiminnan_ohjaajan_opas.pdf (in Finnish)

Pupil council activities <https://omaoppilaskunta.fi/in-english/>

Participatory budgeting <https://omastadi.hel.fi>

Basics of the curriculum of comprehensive education (2014) Finnish National Board of Education (2014). *Basics of the curriculum of comprehensive education.* (in Finnish)

Plan International <https://plan.fi/>

Ruuti initiatives at the City of Helsinki <http://ruuti.munstadi.fi/aloitteet/>

Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi <https://www.alli.fi>

The Guides and Scouts of Finland <https://scouts.fi/>

Rotary Finland <https://rotary.fi/en/front-page/>

The UN Association of Finland <https://www.ykliitto.fi/un-association-of-finland>

AFS Finland <https://www.afs.fi>

Youth for Understanding <https://yfu.fi>

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