



Overview of the 2012 Youth Monitoring Yearbook “Youth and Social Inclusion”

In this document you will find a short summary of the 2012 Youth Monitoring Yearbook. The full text of the yearbook is available in Estonian at www.noorteseire.ee

The Youth Monitoring Yearbook is an analytical and detailed publication on the situation of youth in Estonia. It reflects the most significant changes that have taken place in the lives of young people and creates a basis for knowledge-based policy formation in specific fields related to the lives of young people.

The 2012 Youth monitoring yearbook focuses on youth and social inclusion and is divided into two parts. The first part provides the overview of the more significant changes that have taken place in the lives of young people in 2011-2012 in different fields including demographics, education, labour market, social status and economic well-being, health, offences and security,

youth work and civic activity. The analysis is based on the most recent changes in the youth monitoring indicators. The second part of the yearbook focuses on young people and social exclusion and looks at ways of alleviating such exclusion. The quantitative data analysed in the second part comes from different sources such as 2011 Estonian labour force study, 2011 Eurobarometer survey, 2004-2010 European Social Survey and Monitoring of children's rights and parenting carried out in 2011-2012. Qualitative data is based on interviews carried out by the Institute of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Tartu with 15 NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) young people in October and November 2012 in the framework of the youth monitoring project and the minutes from the Praxis Policy Dialogue on January 25, 2013 that focused on NEET cases. The following paper provides a short summary of the yearbook.

The publication of the Youth Monitoring Yearbook is supported in the framework of the program Developing Youth Work Quality initiated by the Youth Department of the Ministry of Education and Research and promoted by the Estonian Youth Work Centre. The program is financed by the European Social Fund and National Structural Support 2007-2013.

As of January 1, 2012 the number of young people between the ages of 7-26 living in Estonia was 314 137. This is 23.5% of the total population. According to the prognosis of Statistics Estonia, the number of young people is declining more quickly than the total population and as a result the share of young people in the total population will decrease even further. The continued decrease in the number of young people is caused by decreased birth rates as well as increased emigration.

Most young people are engaged in studies. In 2012, 57% of young people between the ages of 15-26 are engaged in learning. This share has remained stable despite the decrease in the number young people aged 15-26. At the same time, the number of young people active in the labour market is increasing, compared to previous year, the number of young people learning and working grew by 17.5%. The number of young people working and not studying decreased by 7%. As a result of these two changes, the share of young people who are simultaneously learning and working has grown from 11% to 13%. The level of unemployed youth has remained the same compared to last year (7%), but nonetheless it is considerably higher when compared to the levels before the economic crisis (see Figure 1).

Enhanced social inclusion is presently one of the central goals for the social field of the EU and Europe 2020 Strategy supported by various policy measures. Youth have become one of the most important target groups for social inclusion as in the majority of the EU countries young people are the most vulnerable risk group in the labour market (Eurostat 2009) and young people have very limited legal opportunities for making their voices heard; the socio-economic position of many young people in society is low and they lack rights and influence. Their inclusion is limited by poverty, strong dependency on their parents, and access to higher education, employment, housing or citizenship (Barry 2005).

In order to understand the concept of social inclusion, it is necessary to discuss the essence of social exclusion. This is examined in chapter “Social inclusion and exclusion of young people in Europe and Estonia”, where Avo Trumm provides an overview of the approaches to social inclusion of young people in the context of social and employment policies of the EU and Estonia. Firstly the chapter looks at terminology used in the EU social inclusion concept (social cohesion, social exclusion, poverty, social mobility, social capital etc.) and discusses relevant policy documents that create the necessary legal-political framework in order to better understand the

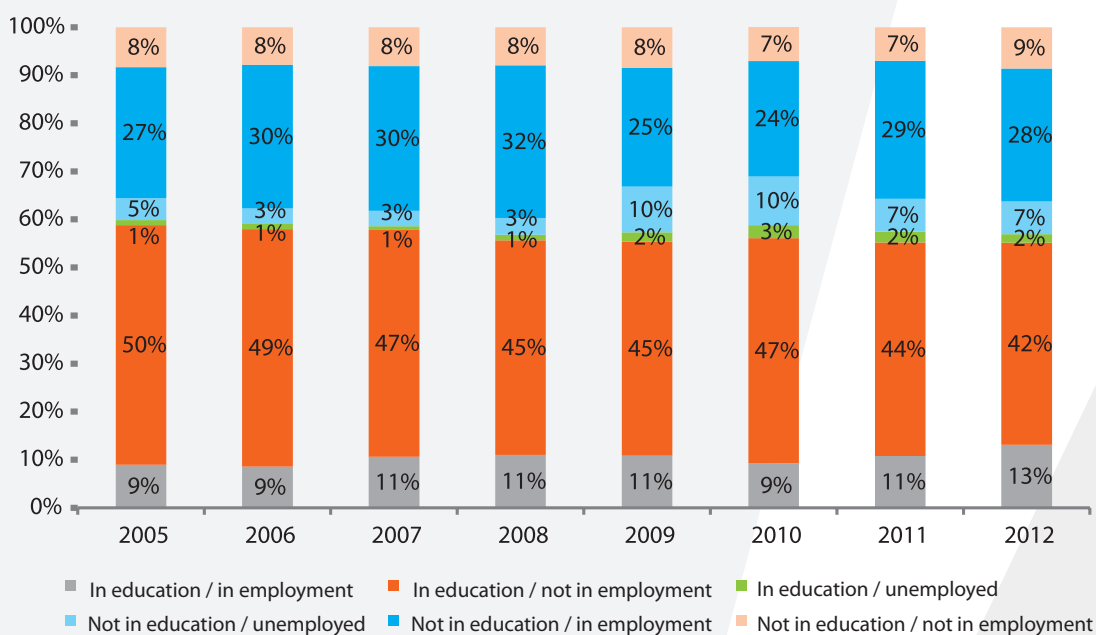


Figure 1. The distribution of the 15-26 age group in the labour market and the education system

social situation of young people. The second part of the chapter offers comparative analysis on the levels of social exclusion of young people in the EU member states based on indicators reflecting employment and financial situation. Based on the analysis we can say that the risk of social exclusion of young people in Estonia is somewhat lower than in the EU in general and in other member states. The poverty risk and material deprivation of young people in Estonia is somewhat lower compared to the EU average (see Figure 2).

It should be noted, however, that the rate of youth poverty and exclusion are higher than the EU average, which explains why young people should still be addressed as a separate risk group. It is also important to remember that during economic downturn the number of young people experiencing poverty and social exclusion rose considerably. In the field of social inclusion the sharpest problem for Estonian youth has for a long time been unemployment that deepened even further during the crisis years. The high levels of long-term youth unemployment are especially worrisome; more than one third of all unemployed young people have been out of employment longer than a year (see Figure 3).

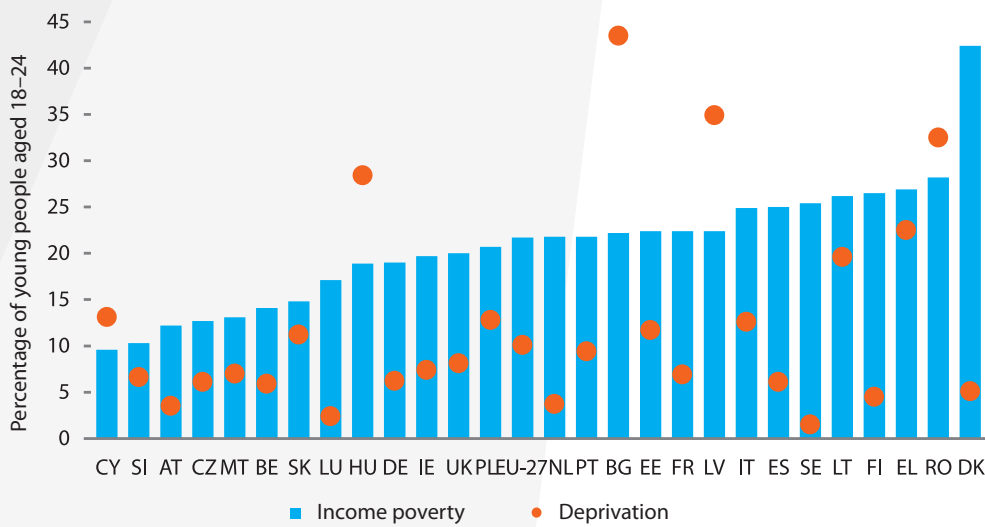


Figure 2. Rates of relative poverty and material deprivation in EU member states for young people aged 18-24

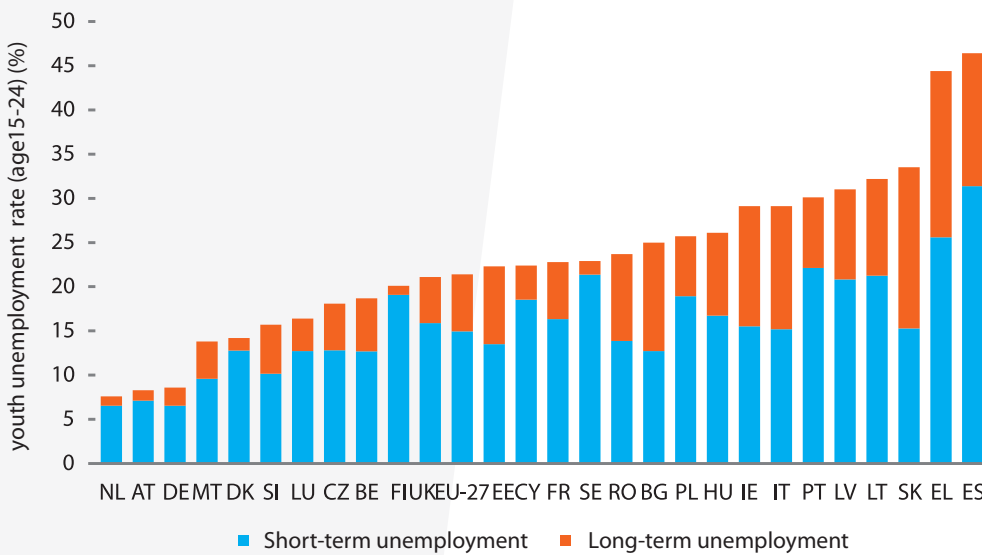


Figure 3. Youth unemployment rate (ages 15-24) in EU member states in 2011

Youth unemployment rate is most often connected to limited education. According to the latest study by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofond) circa one-sixth of young people aged 15-29 living in Estonia are not in education or employment (Eurofond 2012) (see Figure 4). In absolute numbers it is estimated that there are more than 40 000 such young people in Estonia and their number is growing. Estonia is no exception in this, the number of NEETs is growing in several EU countries. Just like young people in general, NEETs are comprised of people with different status, experiences and attitudes forming a heterogeneous group. It includes long-term unemployed, people doing unofficial irregular jobs, young mothers with small children, offenders with dangerous lifestyles, people with physical or mental disabilities and simply adventurers. In addition to their age the only thing that unites them is the fact that they are (currently) not studying or working.

In order to improve social inclusion of young people we should understand the risks that cause social exclusion, i.e. lack of social inclusion. This yearbook focuses on young people, who are not in education, employment or training – NEET youths, who are clearly in a much more unfavourable situation compared to their studying or working peers. Compared to ordinary young people, NEETs have a lower rate of social cohesion and they are threatened by social exclusion and alienation. Due to their low level of education and unemployment they have very meagre chances of obtaining a respectful social position that ensured them normal life quality. NEETs often cannot manage on their own and need the support and help of the government, close relatives and other members of society. They often need it for extended periods, in worst case scenario their entire life. NEETs pose a risk to the whole of society and bring about high economic and social costs. The article written jointly by Kairi Kasearu and Avo Trumm studies various aspects of

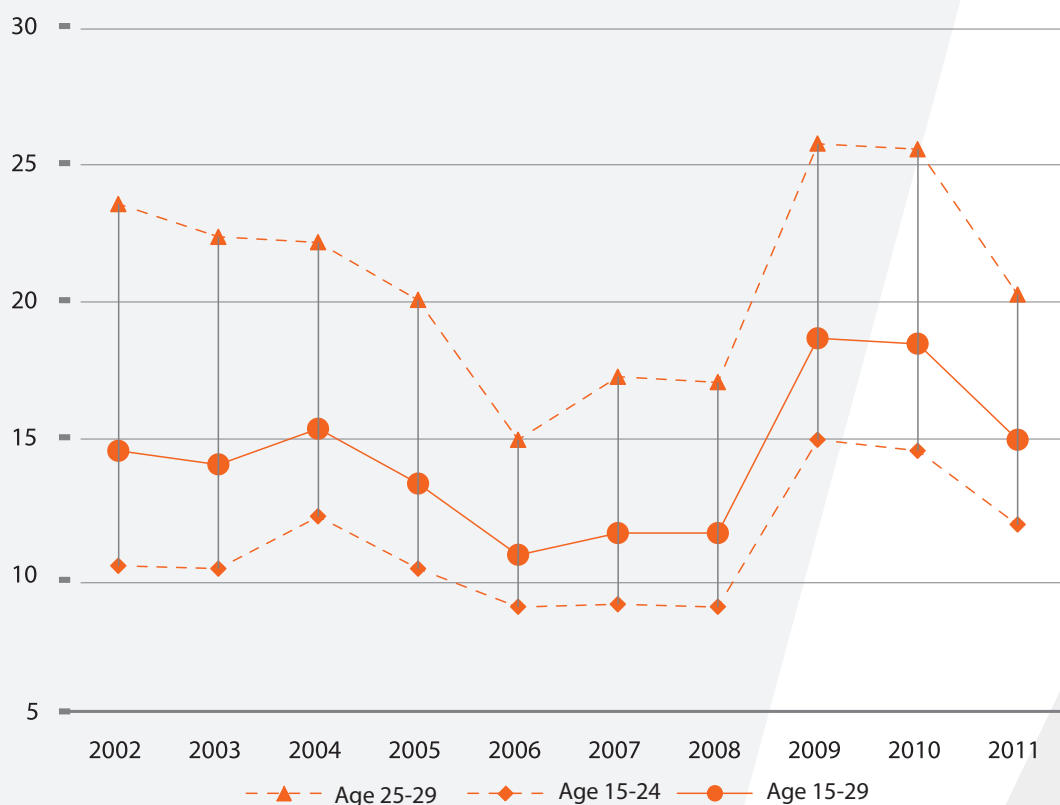


Figure 4. Changes in the proportion of NEETs in Estonia by age groups, 2002-2011 (%)

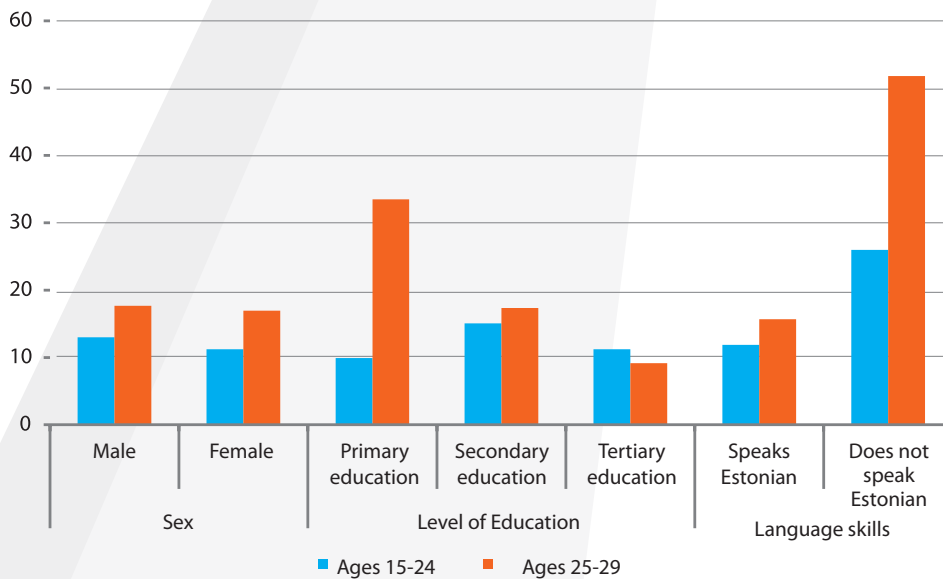


Figure 5. The proportion of NEET youth on the basis of sex, education and Estonian language skills, by two age groups, %

social exclusion of young people and focuses predominantly on NEETs living in Estonia. The first part of the chapter provides a short overview on the essence of social exclusion and the distinctive features of youth exclusion on the basis of literature. The second chapter focuses on outlining NEETs' socio-demographic background and possible risk factors on the basis of Estonian data. The third chapter looks at the consequences of being a NEET youth, i.e. how much it prevents them from fully participating in society, increases perceived social exclusion and limits future prospects. In brief, a youth with a lower level of education are at a higher risk of ending up as NEETs: the proportion of NEETs among young people with basic education is especially high among the ones aged 25-29. So, the impact of a teenage school drop-out can be felt especially strongly after turning 25 (see Figure 5).

Children's plans and their success in school and access to the labour market are influenced by the social status of their parents through parents' behaviour and attitudes. On average, the level of education of the parents of NEETs is lower than that of the parents of their studying or working peers; fewer parents of NEETs than average have higher education (see figure 6). Among NEETs it is also more common to have an unemployed parent and less common to have a self-employed parent (an entrepreneur).

Lack of Estonian language skills is a great risk factor, which can lead to young person dropping out of school and having difficulties in finding a job (see Figure 5). Therefore, there is a connection between the family of origin and domestic environment and youth's social exclusion. It is remarkable that among the 15-25 year NEETs there is a larger per cent of married or cohabiting people than among their non-NEET peers. NEETs are also more likely to have a child compared to their studying or working peers. Therefore, starting a family and having a child early is a possible risk factor that increases the probability of becoming a NEET, especially

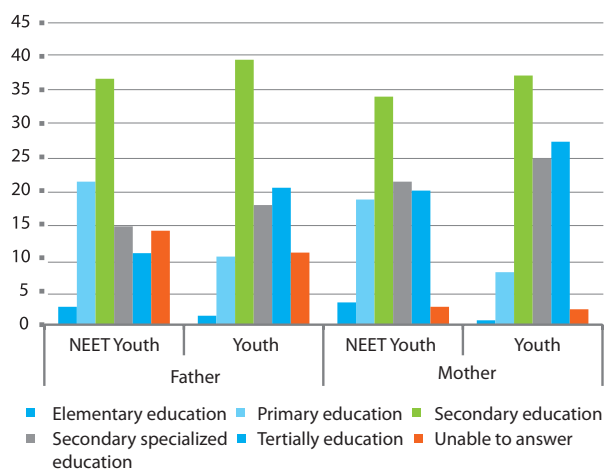


Figure 6. Level of education of the parents of NEETs and ordinary young people, %

among girls, because it might cause them to drop out of school, which in turn makes it more difficult for them to access the labour market afterwards.

NEETs are remarkably less satisfied with their lives than their non-NEET peers. Their trust towards institutions and people is also lower (see Figure 7). There is a larger per cent of people, who meet their friendly less frequently than once a month among NEETs than among non-NEETs. NEETs have less access to the internet and participate in leisure activities less than their peers. Therefore, these young people are often hostile towards the whole society, trust people in their private circle less and are more sceptical towards their employers. Dropping out of school and difficulties finding work increase social exclusion, which in turn reduces youth's opportunities and readiness to actively shape their lives.

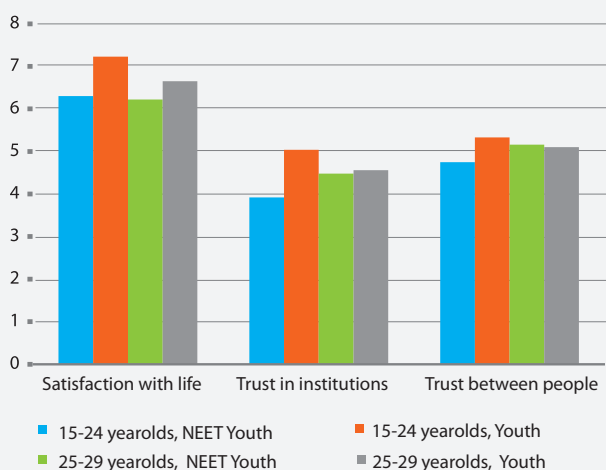


Figure 7. Overall life satisfaction, average estimation of institutional and interpersonal trust on a scale of 0-10, by age groups and NEET status

The third chapter of the yearbook points out that NEETs are less satisfied with life than other young people. The fourth chapter looks at the factors that affect NEETs life satisfaction and the extent to which it depends on their age, level of education, sex and values. The analysis shows that male, unemployed, 25-29 year old NEETs with basic education are the least satisfied with their lives. Besides the so-called external factors exclusion is also connected to young people's personal characteristics, attitudes, values, life satisfaction and individual behaviour. In brief, it can be said that being NEET has

a worse impact on young men than women. One of the reasons for it, also confirmed by interviews, is the prevalence of traditional gender ideology, on the basis of which the man has to be the breadwinner for the family. For young men NEET status entails dependency on family members, which limits their social and economic independence. Young women probably find it easier to put up with economic dependency; besides professional fulfilment they also have the alternative of starting a family and defining themselves through children. On the other hand, NEETs are less open to changes and less oriented towards self-empowerment than ordinary young people and this also explains their remarkably lower life satisfaction. However, there are no major differences in life satisfaction value-by-value in the NEET group.

Life events shape a young person's values and satisfaction with life to a great deal. Discontinued studies or inability to find work force young people to re-examine their current values and are accompanied by a decline in subjective wellbeing. The influence of negative life events to satisfaction and value orientation is not immediate but takes place over a longer period of time. Hence it is most likely the long-term and/or repeated periods of not working and studying that decrease young people's satisfaction and self-esteem and increase the risk of cultural exclusion. Altered values and lowered self-esteem might deepen young people's passivity and distrust towards offered assistance and support that eventually makes working with NEET issues complicated and is very often inefficient. Therefore it is safe to say that in order to solve the problems of dissatisfied and culturally excluded NEETs, we must provide counselling based on trust and equal relationships. This helps a young person realize who they are, what their abilities are, what opportunities are available for them and what direction to take in life.

Making sure the rights of children and young people regarding participation are followed is an important part of alleviating social exclusion. Recently it has been stressed more and more that the voices of children and young people must be audible and valued in society and children and youth must be involved in decisions that influence their lives. This refers to all levels starting with the family and moving up to higher decision-making processes (Lister 2008). Article by Pirjo Turk on "Ensuring the rights of young people through involvement" discusses how rights on youth participation and

autonomy are safeguarded and provides an overview on how young people can make their voices heard on different levels and how the Estonian adult population feels towards involving youth. Generally the Estonian public feels that listening to what young people have to say is as important as listening to adults (see Figure 8).

The results of monitoring, however, show that with more specific questions and examples this inclusive attitude does not always translate into actions. The opinions of Estonian youth is most often asked and taken into consideration at home and when the issue relates to young people directly. When it relates to the whole family, it happens somewhat less often. On the institutional level, including young people in decision-making processes is less common. On issues dealing with school-life or society at large, young people have limited opportunities for making their voices heard. These results might suggest that for young people hierarchical power structures at schools are so self-evident that they cannot even imagine having a say in matters relating to school life. The monitoring also showed that young people have experienced different levels of injustice and bullying at schools. These results suggest that the school environment is

not always friendly towards all young people. Confrontational relationships might cause tension for young people and endorse social exclusion. Therefore it is important that in a school environment the teaching methods used are not authoritarian, but more inclusive and respective. It is also very important to minimize school bullying as power relations among young people might discourage bullied students from voicing their opinions. Even though general attitudes among young people and adults promote youth inclusion, young people are not very active or interested in certain issues. The results of the monitoring showed that the less decisions made in certain situations directly influenced young people (e.g. developing laws that influence young people), the less young people were interested in voicing their opinions. So young people sense their right to be involved in decision-making processes, but very often are not given the opportunity to do so. On the other hand they also do not feel the responsibility to participate. Young people in Estonia were least likely to be consulted on issues dealing with the community or society at large. Ensuring youth rights and safeguarding their participation is in accordance with the principles of a democratic society. Even though youth councils are legitimized in Estonia,

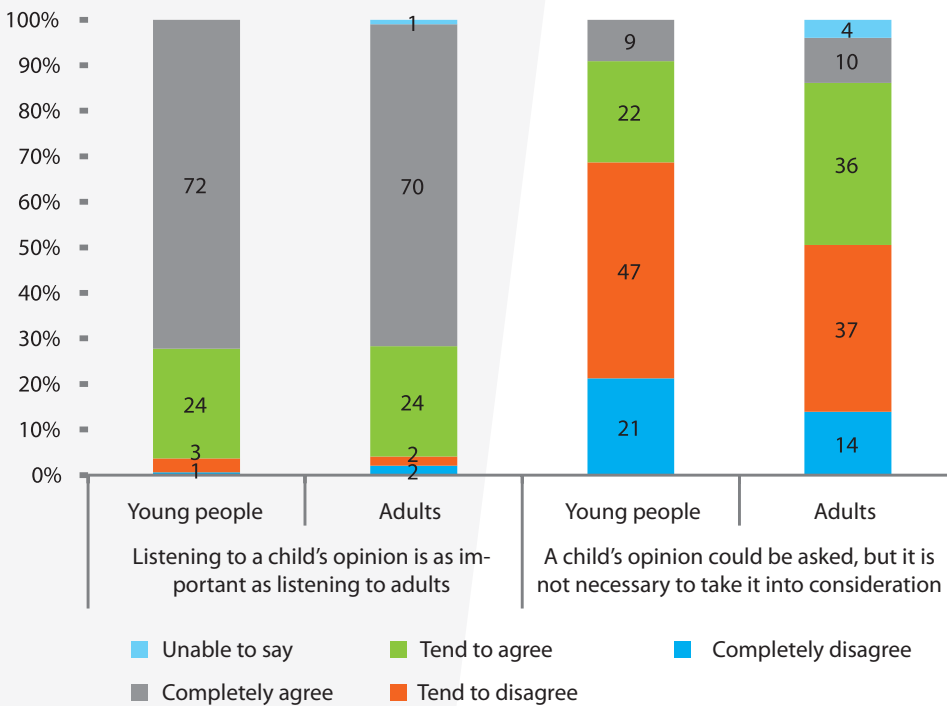


Figure 8. When asking children's opinion, how strongly do you agree with the following statements? (%)

the authorities are perhaps not yet able to value and apply the contribution of young people to a greater degree. This might be caused by the fact that Estonia is still a young country with a developing democracy, but the parenting methods of older generations have tended to be rather authoritarian and not involve children and young people (Vermulst, A.A et al 1991). Therefore it is understandable that the idea of involving children and young people into decisions on the community and society level is somewhat of a novelty.

In order to increase youth involvement and participation we need to improve the methods and skills of young people so that they are better at recognizing and expressing their needs and desires and develop their courage so that they are actively intervening in developments around them. Once again youth work offers unique ways for this- youth environmental projects, community development projects, volunteer work, youth councils etc. Article by Üllý Enn “The role of youth work in improving social inclusion” is based on the principle that effective support to the wellbeing and coping of young people requires cooperation among different fields and youth work has an important role to play here by creating opportunities for self- development in addition to opportunities offered by families, school and work. What is more complicated with inclusive youth work, is reaching the necessary target group.

The current Youth Monitoring Yearbook focuses on social inclusion of young people. Social inclusion can be defined as the opportunity for everyone to fully participate in society, including having a job and being economically active. Inclusion lets people who are experiencing

difficulties in society create positive links with their social surroundings and experience that they make a difference in society. Youth social involvement therefore means creating opportunities for young people, especially for disadvantaged youth, so that they can participate in society, attend school, work, have opportunities during their free time, communicate with other members of society, participate in decision-making processes that involve youth issues. When working with NEETs, it is important to consider that just like young people in general, NEETs also form a heterogeneous group where its members have a different status, experiences and attitudes. It includes long-term unemployed, people doing unofficial irregular jobs, young mothers with small children, offenders with dangerous lifestyles, people with physical or mental disabilities and simply adventurers. In addition to their age the only thing that unites them is the fact that they are (currently) not studying or working. Reasons for being a NEET also vary. Therefore the key to solving youth exclusion lies in a combination of methods that consider the needs of young people. Effective solutions for increasing youth involvement can only come about when different fields and institutions work together, it may be the family, friends, teachers, youth workers, councillors, but also the police or family doctor. The responsibility for supporting youth cannot be placed on one specific institution alone, because every case is unique, with each individual the trustee might turn out to be different. These trustees though can be offered support networks, counselling and information on assistance so that the helpers are not alone in their task.

