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*A study on state of the art of  
cultural activities on the sparsely  
populated areas in Finland*

Finlands Svenska  
Ungdomsförbund FSU rf  
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# The current culture policy in Finland with reference to the rural areas

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- ❖ In February-March Central Finland Community Support Association, the Council of Central Finland, HUMAK University of Applied Science and Central Finland Villages Association carried out an online survey for the communes in Central Finland.
- ❖ It examined what kind of co-operation and partnership the communes in Central Finland has got with the nearby NGO 's, as well as asked about the potential of collaborates.
- ❖ Nationally, the collaboration between the Finnish municipalities and third sector, in turn, was explained in a survey by the Local and Regional Authorities, Civil Society Policy Advisory Board and the Kane Arena Civil Association.

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- ❖ Both reports, imply that the communes are welcoming cooperation with associations and organizations. Municipalities see NGO's as important partners, and recognize the importance of the work of the volunteers and organizations.
- ❖ In Central-Finland cooperation is carried out at present, especially with senior citizens-, residential-, youth-, sports- and village associations, whereas, for example multicultural organizations are just not listed.
- ❖ In the national survey, in turn, the social and health side rose a significant role in organizations mentioned by the partners in local government.
- ❖ The municipalities in central Finland hope for more enhanced cooperation with NGO's in the future. Especially when it comes to service production. Also in the nationwide survey, production of public services emerged as a major issue, but the role of the third sector was seen alongside public services, not to replace them

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- ❖ One example of effective collaboration between authorities and NGO's in sparsely populated areas in Finland is the one in North Karelia, a region in eastern Finland. North Karelia's local authorities issued during 2014 the provincial associations a total of 6.7 million euros in the form of various grants and partnership agreements. About a thousand associations received grants.
- ❖ This is shown in the "Municipalities & Society allowances and co-operation in North Karelia 2014"-survey that was carried out by the North Karelia Villages Association. The report is the first comprehensive summary of the local NGO co-operation in North Karelia.
- ❖ It appeared that there were big differences between different models of local government support. For example, the main general grants were distributed in the cities of Joensuu and Lieksa, and particularly in the social and health organizations the subsidies were significant. In third came Kontiolahti. Among the municipalities that showed the largest supported for the activities in the villages rose Joensuu, Ilomantsi and Kitee.
- ❖ Ritva Pihlaja writes in her report, Kolmas sektori ja julkinen valta (The third sector and the public authorities), that the ongoing change in the municipal and service structure have changed the cooperation quickly and this is why the communes do not have a clear picture of how to collaborate with the third sector. The problems are manifested in the projects for example in procurement, methods and operating grants. This would require a systematic and coordinated planning, based on the principles of the definition of co-operation.

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# Examples of good practices

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- ❖ Fagerö Folkpark / Rangsby uf  
(Närpes, Ostrobothnia region in Western Finland) Interview with the associations chairman Christina Enholm
- ❖ Skäriteatern  
(Närpes, Ostrobothnia region in Western Finland) Interview with the associations chairman, Johanna Karhulahti
- ❖ UF Kamraterna  
(Sipoo, Uusimaa region in Southern Finland) Interview with associations chairman Niklas Lindqvist
- ❖ Vänö Vänner  
(Kimitoön, Archipelago Sea in the Southwest Finland region) Interview with the associations chairman Mikaela Venberg

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# Risks & challenges faced by voluntary culture associations in Finnish rural areas

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- ❖ Associations have long been aware of the fact that expanding the funding base is essential, but it has been proven very difficult in practice.
- ❖ There is a risk that the organizations in such situations are considered to be engaged in business activities.
- ❖ Project funding is seen as too short-lived, temporary, and a lot of extra emitting means to work.
- ❖ From the perspective of rural municipalities and the government, non-profit activities and the demarcation of business is not so much a question of tax or competition law but, above all, a socio-political question.
- ❖ Another significant risk is the fact that the population is constantly moving toward urban municipalities. The so-called urbanization has continued steadily since the 80s
- ❖ Several of the people we spoke to during the interviews wanted to see simpler models when it comes to applying for grants, or instruction for how to apply. People who are active in voluntary culture associations has day jobs and seldom have time for a lot of extra paperwork.
- ❖ Another typical problem is the division of labor within the organizations. In several cases, there is not the structural framework for how the economy should be managed, but most are made entirely without funding. Besides e.g. repair of the association house which often remains undone because of lack of money.

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# Recommendations how to improve providing cultural activities by voluntary culture associations in Finland

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- ❖ Simpler models of seeking grants and contributions
- ❖ Education in seeking grants and contributions
- ❖ Manage the economy through a purchased service on commission
- ❖ Greater collaboration provides greater contributions
- ❖ Benchmarking
- ❖ Open the doors to the public for a certain time during the year, for example, to attract new members (NGO festival).
- ❖ Cooperate also with urban associations to attract their "audience"
- ❖ Do volunteer exchange both nationally and internationally to gain new insights and influences
- ❖ Make certain that there are benefits for association members within the community
- ❖ Package the operation for various potential sponsors
- ❖ Focus also on small details regarding the association external - Branding