

# Challenges of dealing with the issue of troublesome children in Finland

Welfare Model

# Comparative youth, welfare and justice

- Orientation lecture for the British, Estonian and Finnish students, Erasmus Common Study Programme, University of Tartu 26.1.- 5.2.2007
- Tarja Kuula BA Soc., MA in Social Science, PhD-Researcher, University of Kuopio, Researcher-Lecturer, HUMAK University of Applied Sciences.

# The Finnish example

- Recent Histories of Criminal and Child Welfare Policies
- Youth Process and the Welfare Route
- Variety of Services available

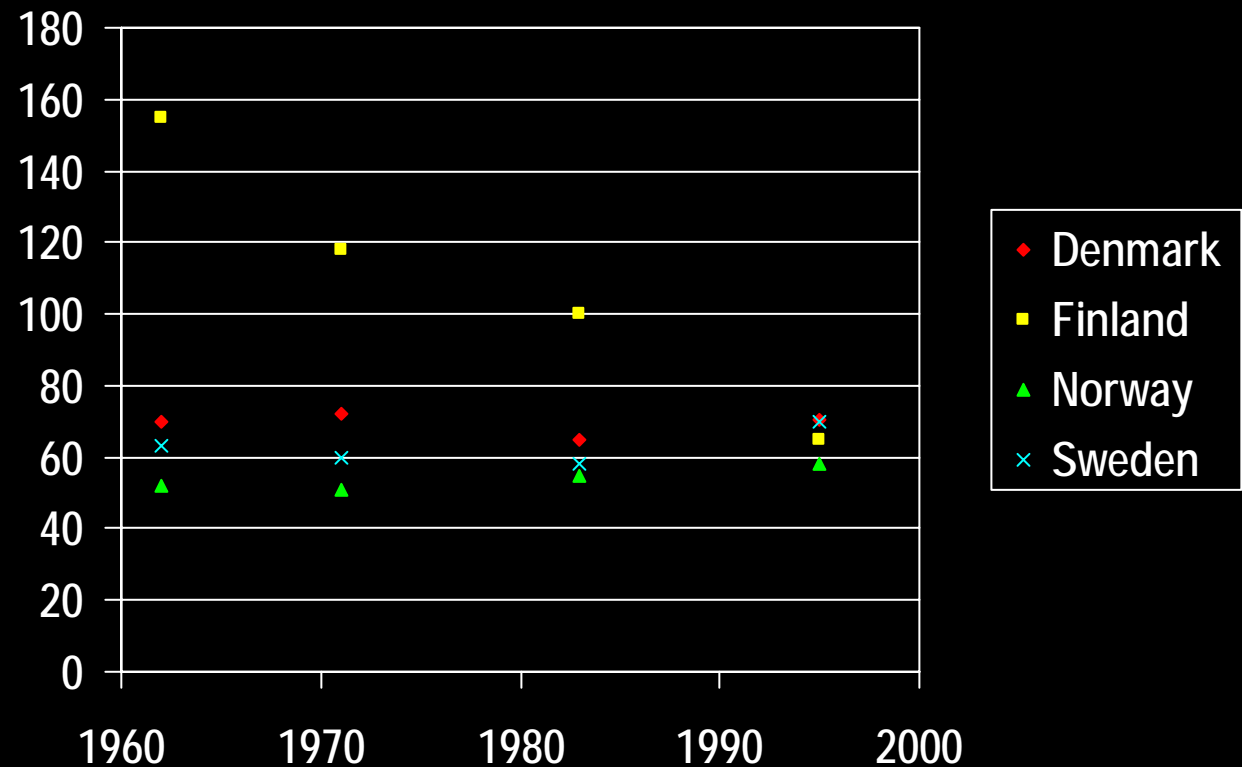
# Recent changes in Criminal Policy

- Finland a province of Sweden until 1809, then a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire, Independency 1917
- The age of criminal responsibility 15, young offenders 15-17 dealt with both the child welfare and criminal justice, 18-20 by criminal justice
- No separate Youth Justice Courts

# Reduction in prisonrates

- 1950's the prisoner rate in Finland 4 times higher than in other Nordic countries (Finland 200/100 000 inhabitants, Sweden and Norway 50)
- At the beginning of 1990s Finland had reached the Nordic level (70/100 000 inhabitants)
- No counter effects in crime rates

# Prisoner rates 1950-2000 (per 100,000 population)



# Political background

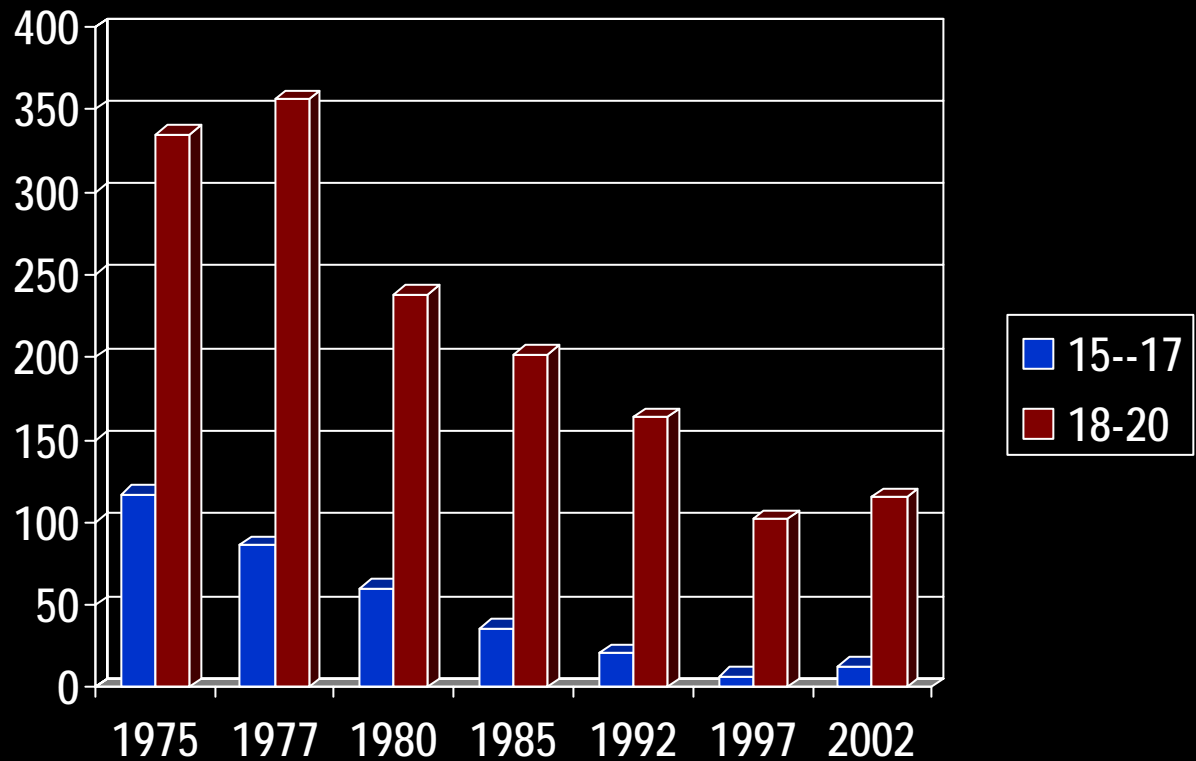
- The overall change in Finnish penal policy was part of a wider social and political reform movement of the 1960's
- Close relations to other Nordic countries, political embarrassment
- "Rational and Humane Criminal Policy" a key issue for the practitioners, researchers and prison administrators

# Political culture

- Criminal Policy expert orientated
- Multiparty system
- No "law and order" – requirements
- Consensus between different political parties
- One major daily newspaper
- Preparatory levels
- Social and economic solidarity

# The number of young prisoners 1975-2002

Source: Statistics Finland



# Finnish youth justice today (Statistics Finland 2003)

- Fine, 74% of court sentences with 15-17
- Juvenile prison, minimum of 14 days, maximum of 12 years, all over 2 years, 1%,
- Conditional imprisonment, 20%
- Community service, 1%
- Juvenile Punishment, 0,8%
- Correctional practices, 0,7%
- Waived, 4,3%
- Mediation – about 4000 referrals a year

# Welfare model

- Distribution of income, free health care, no school fees, high standard municipal schools, day care for all children, long maternity leave, paternity leave, well-resourced youth work etc.
- With troublesome children the focus is primarily in the earlier and current needs of the child

# Child Welfare Boards

- Nordic welfare law 1896,
- Child welfare boards
- First Child Protection Law 1936, biological elements, the nature of the practises were social
- 1983 the child's subjective right to protection, best intrest of the child

# Youth process and the welfare Route

- Under 15-year old, social work (financial support, family therapy, support at home, holidays and other open care services)
- 15-17: Police - social worker - hearing – prosecutor – social worker's investigation – court – social welfare board's presentative, referral – social work involved

# Routes to insitutional welfare care

- Social worker prepares a case for the social municipal welfare board, board makes the decision, child is entiteld to ombudsman. If she/he or the guardian opposes the order, the case is dealt within the District Court, verified by 90% of the cases
- In case of hospital care, the chief medical doctor makes the descision.

# Variety of Services available

- =====
- 
- *FINLAND*
- 
- *Reformatory*
- *Shelters for battered family members*
- *Mother & baby homes*
- *Special psych. units*
- *Youth clinics (detox)*
- *Foster care*
- *Childrens' Homes /Special Children's' Homes*
- *Independent living*
- *Youth Homes*
- *Private care*
- *Placed with parents*
- 
- 
- =====

# Involuntary placement

=====  
 (Fig.2)  
**Involuntary Placement in the Finnish Childcare System 2002**  
 Approx. No. involuntarily resident      Approx. No.      Approx %  
 10-17s in institution      of total

---

<i>Reformatories</i>	24 8	25	10%
<i>Shelters for battered family members</i>	75	3	5%
<i>Mother &amp; baby homes</i>	15	1	7%
<i>Hospitals</i>		27	4%
<i>Special psych. units</i>	2900	Unknown	30%
<i>Youth clinic (detox)</i>	20	5	25%
<i>Foster care</i>	2968	442	16%
<i>Children's homes</i>	2800	316	11%
<i>Independent supported living</i>	78		11%
<i>Youth homes</i>	460	34	14%
<i>Private care</i>	96	0	0%

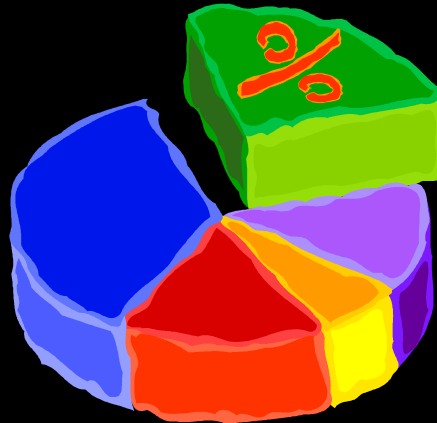
=====

# The Child Welfare Act

- The child has to be taken into care if he is at risk or is risk or danger to others, there are deficits in his living conditions/environment and the open care services have not been adequate

# The Helsinki District Court – involuntary placements 01-04 2005, N=31, 10-17

- 29% crime the immediate cause



# Increase in psychiatric problems

- The number of children taken into foster care increased 30-40% during the 1990's
- The number of psychiatric admissions of minors increased in 1996 from 2562 to 4192 in 2000. In the same period the involuntary treatment increased from 10,9% to 19,7% (Riittakerttu Kaltiala-Heino 2003)
- According to Kaivosoja (1999) fourfifths of minors in Institutional Welfare care present conduct problems

# challenges of the Finnish system

- Roughly one third of the involuntary removal's of 15-17 year old troublesome young are dealt with in the Muncipal boards and verified in district courts, only about 50% of all cases are dealt in local courts (Kuula Tarja, Pitts John and Marttunen Matti 2006)
- A risk can form a base for loosing a human right for freedom
- UN Committee for the Rights of the Children
- Slow justice system
- More research needed of the treatment regimes, variation between districts
- Co-operation between practitioners