

# **You get what you ask for**

— Using surveys to learn about young people

## Foreword

The Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs and the Department of Youth Services at the Directorate for Youth and Sports in Turkey are working together in the project *Youth Policy Cooperation between Turkey and Sweden* between 2008 and 2010. One aim of the project is to increase knowledge of the living conditions of young people in both countries. Another aim is to demonstrate the potential of young people and increase their participation in society.

The project has five components with the following themes: concepts in youth policy, knowledge of young people's living conditions, networking for people who work with and for young people, promotion of best practices for young people on the labour market, and awareness of provided social services and rights for young people.

Within the framework of this cooperation project, this compendium is one of the outcomes. It presents a method and important starting points for gathering knowledge about the living conditions of young people. The text is written by Jonas Bjälesjö, a youth researcher at Lund University and Linnaeus University in Sweden, who has conducted several surveys about young people at a local level. Bjälesjö also participated in the youth policy cooperation project, for which Turkish and Swedish surveys were conducted at a local level. Below he describes why and how surveys are conducted, with special emphasis on how to follow up results.

# Content

Introduction .....	4
Surveys as a method – some reflections on the project .....	5
<i>Why</i> should we conduct a survey about young people in our municipality?	
<i>What</i> do we want to know about young people? – focus and delimitations	
<i>What</i> do we want to know about young people? – how to put a survey together	
<i>What</i> do we want to know about young people? – how do you formulate survey questions?	
<i>What</i> do we want to know about young people? – how do you conduct the survey?	
<i>What</i> do we want to know about young people? – how do you compile and convey the survey results?	
Survey results – possibilities and problems .....	12
Survey results – how do we use the results in future work? .....	15
Summary and reflections .....	19

# Introduction

*“In order to be able to create a good youth policy and meet the needs of young people, we need to know what young people think and learn about their living conditions. One method to accomplish this is to use surveys and then use the result from them.”*

The above quote sums up the subject of this report: How can surveys be used to obtain knowledge about young people and their living conditions? The central issues in this part of the *Swedish-Turkish youth policy cooperation* project are:

- What knowledge do we have about young people at the local level?
- What knowledge do we need?
- Which questions should we ask if we want to learn more about young people?

This report doesn't claim to give a comprehensive, thorough description and analysis of surveys as a scientific method or how best to analyse the living conditions of young people in general. It functions more as a kind of contemplation and handbook based on the concrete experiences and knowledge that the project has led to through meetings, discussions, group projects, workshops, exercises and the practical implementation of surveys in 17 Turkish provinces<sup>1</sup> throughout Turkey and in two Swedish municipalities<sup>2</sup>. The surveys carried out in municipalities in Sweden and Turkey are based on a work process that is divided into the following stages:

- Planning and preparations
- Implementation
- Follow-up and evaluation
- Changes and improvements
- Presentation of results

The following report reflects on ways to design, implement and analyse the results of these surveys. The account is based on the working process in the work groups, discussions, presentations, seminars and workshops that have been held in Nevşehir and Stockholm, as well as the concrete implementation of the surveys and the reflections of the municipalities involved on the approach and analysis. The report consists of three parts. The *first part* consists of a general description of surveys as a method, as well as the aspects to be considered before, during and after the implementation of a survey. This part features examples from the project's working process of creating a survey for its municipalities or towns. The second part describes and reflects on the implementation and results of the survey work. The actual results themselves aren't discussed. Here we will discuss the working process and the reflections, experiences, knowledge and conclusions that the survey project has resulted in for the people who worked on it. The *third part* discusses on a more general level how to proceed with this kind of survey, and above all how the results can be relayed back to the parties concerned in the municipalities and what measures can be taken based on survey results. A few examples will be given of how to continue work in municipalities based on the results and indications from this type of survey. These examples are based on some of the “LUPP” surveys (Lokal uppföljning av ungdomspolitik, Local follow-up of youth policy),<sup>3</sup> conducted in Sweden and their concrete results in some Swedish municipalities.

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<sup>1</sup> Adana, Bayburt, Bilecik, Erzurum, Eskişehir, Iğdır, Kocaeli, Konya, Mardin, Muğla, Samsun, Tekirdağ, Tokat, Van, Yalova, Yozgat, Zonguldak.

<sup>2</sup> Nacka municipality, Sundsvall municipality.

<sup>3</sup> LUPP survey, local follow-up of youth policy, is compiled by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs and provides municipalities with data on which to develop their work with an overarching municipal youth policy. The survey consists of 80 questions and is adapted to three age groups: year 7-9, upper secondary school and young adults aged 19 to 25. [www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/lupp](http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se/lupp)

# Surveys as a method – some reflections on the project

## ***Why* should we conduct a survey about young people in our municipality?**

The first thing municipalities should do when they are considering conducting a survey of young people's living conditions is to ask themselves the question: Why should we do this? This is really a question that provokes different answers depending on who it's asked of and who is asking. If officials and politicians in a municipality are behind a survey, which was the case for this project, then it's important at the planning stage to discuss and establish the reasons behind the survey with the people, organisations and authorities that will be affected by it in various ways. It is important not least to establish this with the people who will be the subject of the survey, in this case young people. One consequence of this is also to discuss how the results will be used, that is what measures the municipalities are prepared to take based on the analysis and results of the survey. Here too it is important to establish why this should be done, and also which measures and effects are expected at the authorities, organisations and individuals in the municipalities through the measures that are undertaken. It should not be the case that a survey is conducted simply because it *should* be conducted, and because all the other municipalities have conducted one without a clear idea of why they are actually doing so, or what their goals are regarding measures and expected results based on the survey results. This is important both in order to have a clear knowledge goal, i.e. knowing what you actually want to find out, and also in order to be able to design the survey properly. So how can this be made concrete? One useful approach is to think in terms of themes or areas. For example, if you are interested in knowing more about the leisure habits of young people because you believe that you don't know enough about what they do in their free time, then leisure habits will be the theme to base the questions around. If you connect this to the issue "Why should we conduct a survey about young people in our municipality?" then the answer would be that we need this as a basis on which to make decide on a good allocation of resources to various leisure activities in the municipality.

It's also important to discuss why we want to know something about these young people in particular (more about this later on). Which criteria do we use, and why? How have we chosen this selection and by which process? Many long discussions took place on this subject in Nevsehir. In most cases, people thought that they had limited knowledge of young people's opinions, how they experienced their situation or what their needs were in specific areas, and this formed the basis for the surveys. In order to be able to make (political) decisions, bring about changes and improvements and develop or create various activities, information was needed about the young people affected by these measures.

## ***What* do we want to know about young people?**

### **– focus and delimitations**

Once the goals are set, the next question you should ask yourself is: *What* do we want to know about the young people in our municipality? Here it is important to have a thorough discussion about which criteria should form the basis for the survey. Here are a few examples of criteria to discuss.

### **How comprehensive should the survey be?**

The scope of the survey, i.e. partly how many people to include, and partly the number of areas or issues, depends on the purpose of the survey and the time and resources available for the survey. It is important to thoroughly think through these issues since planning, implementation and analysis can take a long time and a lot of work. It is important to consider the time aspect carefully and create a detailed schedule for the collection and compilation of the material. The first question that should be discussed is how many young people to survey. This delimitation can be made based on various variables. School age is one such delimitation. For instance the surveys can target a certain year or level in school like secondary school (years 7-9), upper secondary school (years 10-12) etc. Other selections could be all the young people who visit a recreation centre, all the young people who live in a certain area, all the young people of a certain age, etc. The number of areas is also determined based on the time and resources available.

When deciding the scope and size of a survey, the question often arises whether to say a little about many young people or a lot about a smaller number of young people. However, in general it is best to try to limit the number of questions and areas so that the material is manageable and easy to grasp, i.e. possible to draw relevant conclusions from. Nonresponse and answer frequency are also important aspects connected to how many people one chooses to survey. Taking secondary school as an example, it is often better to achieve an 80-90 percent answer frequency in a single year than 40-50 percent in all three years at the same school. It is better to invest time and resources in trying to get as many as possible of your selection to answer than sending the surveys to lots of people and hoping that as many as possible of them answer. A smaller survey sample will also leave more time for reminders and for answers to be collected on more occasions if necessary.

### **Different political areas**

Once you have a well-defined answer to the question why and have decided to conduct a survey, you should discuss and decide which political areas are important to include. Youth policy and the living conditions of young people cover many sectors and the issues that affect young people can be found in virtually every political area, so it may be beneficial to think along the same lines and areas that define people's living conditions and society in general. For example:

Housing  
Leisure time  
Education  
Politics and social issues  
Culture  
Influence  
Health  
Employment

(compare Susanne Zander's (Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs) presentation in Nevsehir [www.ungenc.net](http://www.ungenc.net) and the LUPP survey, Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs: [www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se](http://www.ungdomsstyrelsen.se)).

Focus and delimitation are important here. It's often impossible to cover everything, so it's important to know which areas should be prioritised. This was also discussed intensely by the work groups during the workshop in Nevsehir. For example, one Turkish group discussed education, and wanted to know what the pupils thought about their education, what education their parents had, and if there were differences between urban and rural areas. One group discussed what possibilities young people had to practice a sport, while several groups discussed the importance of knowing what young people do in their leisure time in general and how they perceive their leisure time, albeit with different angles of approach. Since many people who are part of the project work at youth centres in Turkey and Sweden, several groups discussed how it would be interesting to know young people's attitudes to youth centres, what they feel about them etc. One group discussed issues regarding security for the young people in the housing area where they live. Reading habits, sports and cultural activities were other subjects discussed.

When conducting surveys, it's important to think about how many different areas you want to include, and to keep the number down if you want an in-depth result. However, you can choose a specific area of interest that you want to investigate within many different areas. One example of this would be reading habits among young people, an area that was discussed in the Turkish group and that also became a section of the national survey conducted in the 17 Turkish towns. Depending on how the surveys are constructed, questions about reading habits is an area that can increase knowledge and understanding in several of the general policy areas presented above. For example, reading habits can be connected to leisure time and school/education, and to culture and wellbeing/health. Therefore, it is important to consider areas that are more specific than the ones presented above. One example of this is reading habits.

### **Different (sociological) background factors**

The next step in the work process, of creating a manageable tool for analysis in the form of a survey, is to consider the focus and delimitations when it comes to sociological background variables like age (see above), gender, social background, home, ethnic background etc. The age interval is often decided first and is a starting point for various surveys, not least when it comes to young people. Gender is another important variable. Many surveys start with a question about age and then gender (compare the LUPP survey). This aspect is useful if you want to compare what boys think compared to girls throughout the survey, and also to limit the survey's scope to only boys or girls. Social background can also be an important variable that you want to focus on or limit yourself to. For example, this could include questions about parents' income, own income, parents' occupation, where they live, and so on. Based on these questions, you can see if the young people's opinions and answers differ in other areas based on these variables. This also applies to where they live. Place of abode can also be a basic delimitation of the survey's scope, both geographically and sociologically, i.e. wanting to survey what young people who live in a certain area think about the area or other things. The survey that was conducted in Sundsvall is an example of both limiting the survey area to a certain area and having questions specifically about that area. Ethnic affiliation is another variable that can be interesting to look at. For example, Nacka municipality discussed that they wanted to know how young people whose parents had immigrated to Sweden view their leisure time, and why so few girls with a foreign background take part in municipal leisure activities.

### ***What do we want to know about young people?***

#### **– how to put a survey together**

One of the most important demands when constructing surveys is the demand for *anonymity*. In order to receive results that are as significant and measurable as possible, it should be ensured that young people are and remain anonymous when they fill in the surveys. Surveys often contain two questions that are individual-specific; age and gender. These are often the only two individual-specific questions that should be asked.

One important aspect here is *which* questions we ask and *how* we ask them. This can be connected to how we define and understand concepts, questions and answer alternatives. This is applicable when constructing the survey and also when answering it.

For example, it's important how we define the various areas to be surveyed and who defines them. How do we define areas such as leisure time, health, security, etc? We may not interpret and understand these concepts in the same way. This issue is of central importance for how the survey questions should be designed and asked. In methodology literature and discussions about method, there is an expression: "You get what you ask for". That is, if we create a survey with answer alternatives about leisure time, then it's important that the answer alternatives are relevant to young people. The answer alternatives need to be part of their reality, and they also need to understand what the alternatives mean. This question has come up several times in connection with the LUPP survey in Sweden. At the moment, in spring 2009, I am compiling the results for a Swedish municipality in which the young people had trouble with concepts and words like active-passive, member, commission of trust, association, and decision maker. If the young people don't understand what these words mean, then they won't answer the questions, try to answer the way they think they are expected to or answer something else that wasn't intended.

In order to make the survey easy to grasp it helps to divide the various areas that the questions are about into *themes* and provide short written introductions to these themes. In the Nacka survey for example, they have divided the latest survey into different themes in an exemplary way, clearly describing the various subjects: “Here are some questions about your free time” [...] “Now there will be some questions about youth centres” and so on. In Sundsvall municipality, they are worried about young people who live on a certain housing estate and don’t feel safe. They have defined *why* they want to conduct a survey. Using this survey, they want to find out why the young people don’t feel safe so they can take action and make improvements. So *what* do they want to know? In order to take action and understand what it is that makes these young people feel unsafe, a large number of (survey) questions must be asked. These can be questions about the area’s physical design, the environment and opening hours at youth centres, school environment etc. These questions can then be collected under various themes and headings in the survey.

It is difficult to ask really good questions. You can never be quite sure of how people (and perhaps even less sure of how young people) interpret questions. They can easily interpret questions we see as self-explanatory in unexpected ways. Nor is it a given that you will include all the answer alternatives that are relevant to young people<sup>4</sup>, or that the available answers alternatives are interpreted and understood in the way you intended. Coming up with good questions takes a lot of thought and a lot of discussion. It makes great demands on language, logic and structure, as well as imagination and creativity. This is why it is a good idea to discuss these issues in different groupings. It’s important to initiate a constructive dialogue between the survey designers, young people, and representatives for schools, the leisure sector, politicians and civil servants – in short, everyone who is involved in or affected by the survey. This dialogue should be conducted before, during and after the survey, in order to evaluate relevance, interpretation and comprehension. One common and important method of conducting a survey among young people is to use so-called focus groups or pilot surveys.

### **Focus groups and pilot surveys**

A pilot survey is an initial smaller survey used to try out the design of the survey. For example, the survey might be handed out to a smaller number of young people belonging to a larger group, this group being the target group of the main survey.

Another method is to use a reference group, a group of young people very similar to the selection that you are intending to target. In both cases it is important that this is a group of young people that can be considered typical of the contemplated target group. A pilot survey tests the comprehensibility of the questions and answer alternatives, that it doesn’t take too long to fill in the survey and you risk losing people because they can’t “be bothered”, and so on. One way of minimising this problem is of course to be present when the surveys are filled in and assist people (but this could affect the demand for anonymity; see below). A pilot study can also be a way to test the survey, to get a picture of what young people prioritise based on their situation and their living conditions. Based on this pilot study you can then design a survey which takes into account the prioritizations made by the young people and isn’t stipulated by municipal civil servants and politicians. Such a pilot study could be a small survey in which you simply ask young people which aspects of life (housing, school, leisure time, work etc) are most important to them.

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<sup>4</sup> One example of the generation gap between the people who design surveys and the people who answer them is questions about leisure time, where there are alternatives like “outdoor life” but no questions about various internet meeting places like MySpace or Facebook (compare the LUPP survey).

## ***What do we want to know about young people?***

### **– how do you formulate survey questions?**

One central part of constructing a survey once you have considered and carried out the steps described above is to formulate the actual survey questions. As mentioned previously, the most important aspect is that the young people actually understand the questions and what they mean. Another important aspect is that the answer alternatives relate to the living conditions and imaginations of young people. Below are a few points that are important to bear in mind and can function as a kind of checklist when formulating questions. However, it is important to point out that survey questions can never be completely unambiguous. There is always scope for different interpretations.

#### **Don't ask too many questions**

Too many questions in a survey can result in surveyees tiring and losing their focus. There is a risk that they won't consider their answers carefully enough and simply try to finish the survey quickly. It is also common for people to skip questions.

#### **Use different themes**

If you divide your questions into different themes, which also function as headings for different parts of the survey, then it is easier to think about and see which questions could be removed due to similarities with other questions. The same applies to which questions can be reformulated as a single question.

#### **Don't ask leading questions**

Leading questions such as "What do you think about the poor choice of leisure activities in the municipality?" or "Why do so few people use the municipal leisure facilities?" are not recommended. Asking this type of question creates a negative feel about the leisure facilities in the municipality. As mentioned before, you get what you ask for.

#### **Simple and clear questions**

It is best to ask as short and simple questions as possible. It's important to avoid multiple questions in the same question, for example "Which of the following leisure activities do you and your friends like best?" You and your friends don't necessarily have the same preferences.

#### **Differences of degree**

When using answer alternatives of different degrees, such as: "very good, relatively good" and so on it's important that this difference of degree is the same across the entire scale. This means that "very good, relatively good" should be followed by "neither good nor bad, relatively bad, very bad". This means that surveyees have the same possibility to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction. There are two positive alternatives with a certain difference of degree, two negative alternatives with the same difference of degree as the positive ones, and one neutral alternative. For example, in one version of their survey Nacka municipality uses the question: "Are you satisfied with your leisure time?" The answer alternatives are:

- I am very satisfied
- I am fairly satisfied
- I am relatively dissatisfied
- I am very dissatisfied

So here you should use the words "fairly" or "relatively" for both of the middle alternatives. Even though "fairly" and "relatively" are similar, they don't express an identical degree of opinion. A neutral alternative like "Neither x nor y" or "Don't know" should also be included.

### **Different answer alternatives and open questions**

For many surveys, there is only the option to select one or several set answer alternatives. Since you can never be sure that you have covered all possible answers to a question, it's a good idea to include the alternative "other" or "Other, please state:" as a standard answer alternative. This alternative is often listed last. "Don't know" can also be a relevant alternative for certain types of questions. But it can also be worth considering, depending on the purpose of the survey, to combine fixed answer alternatives with various kinds of questions where the young people can answer freely. These can be open questions where they are specifically encouraged to give their opinion on something, such as the LUPP survey question: "Do you think that certain leisure activities are lacking, and if so, which ones?" The young people can give a maximum of three examples. You can also ask questions that encourage young people to develop their answers. For example, the LUPP survey ends with a question in which the young people can freely express their opinions on the conditions in their home municipality.

### **Few questions about a lot of young people or many questions about few young people – Balancing act between universal and specific**

The balancing act between being universal and specific was brought up several times during the workshop in Nevsehir. The Turkish group's task of designing a general survey to be used in all 17 towns brought matters to a head. These towns differ when it comes to socio-economic factors, demographics, culture etc, so there was a discussion about whether certain issues and areas were relevant for the various towns. There were creative and interesting discussions about what kind of questions can be used by all the towns and also remain relevant at the local level. For example, leisure activities were discussed as answer alternatives for various questions. Leisure activities that are common and are seen as natural in some municipalities don't exist in other municipalities. This example can also be seen in the Swedish LUPP surveys. One question in the LUPP survey is: "How often do you do the following things in your free time?" Answer alternatives such as "visiting museum/exhibition, go to theatre/musical/dance exhibition" are examples of activities that aren't possible for many young people in their home municipalities. However, the fact that they don't pursue those specific activities doesn't mean that they are uninterested in leisure activities. It makes it difficult to measure desire and interest in an activity when different areas have different opportunities. This aspect must always be taken into consideration when designing surveys and it was also discussed during the work process of formulating questions.

### ***What do we want to know about young people?* – how do you conduct the survey?**

At the same time as you are planning to conduct a survey and are discussing its scope (the number of subject areas, number of questions and so on) and the delimitations regarding the selection of young people to be surveyed, it is also important to consider *where* to conduct the survey, *how* to do so and *who* should be the one to conduct it.

If, as with the LUPP surveys, you choose to conduct the survey during school hours and in a computer room with school staff and other people who work with the surveys present, this will for obvious reasons result in a high percentage of answers and a chance to check on whether the surveyees understand the questions, as any unclear points can be explained on-site. However, you must be careful about the demand for anonymity, which is vital when filling in surveys. If there is staff present then you must ensure that no-one feels monitored or that there is a risk that the young people don't remain anonymous when they fill in the surveys. If they feel they are being monitored and think that their answers can be traced back to them, then you risk having them not answering based on their opinions and convictions. Instead they might try to guess what they think is expected of them by the adults. However, if you are aware of this situation and the risks involved, then it is still good to be able to use places like schools, or youth centres, to fill in surveys. It's an effective and controllable work method that results in a high percentage of answers and reaches the target group well.

There are generally two ways to fill out surveys. One is a paper survey, with surveyees receiving a questionnaire and a pen. The other alternative is that the survey is accessed and filled in on a computer. The first alternative is often the safest one; you have physical papers to keep track of and you are more flexible because you don't need to have access to computers, which don't move around easily. The second alternative is good because it's easy to compile from and above all easier to analyse since you don't need to enter and encode the material into digital form.

It's also important to consider who should be the one to hand out and collect the surveys. For example, if you hand out the surveys to the parents, who in turn give them to their children to fill in and return, then you don't know what the situation was like when they completed the survey. Just like with political elections, the surveys must be able to be filled in anonymously without anyone looking over someone else's shoulder. Remember that no matter how good your intentions, or how objective your perceptions, you always have influence on others, depending on the situation, relationship and your position as an adult.

### ***What do we want to know about young people?***

#### **– how do you compile and convey the survey results?**

The most important aspect when compiling the survey results is to always consider what the young people actually say, i.e. to let the data speak for itself. It's important to produce numerical summaries (percentages, absolute numbers etc) that provide a picture of how the young people answered the survey. This can be done in table form, in various graphic models and in writing. Keep in mind that the results should illustrate the various relationships and connections in a clear and accessible way. It's important to think through all the possible ways to make the survey results easy to understand. For example, cross tables are a useful tool. Perhaps you want to know the differences between the genders for certain questions. For some questions it can be relevant to add another variable, for example place of residence or type of education that the young people are attending.

Another important issue to be considered is how to best convey the results after you have conducted a survey. The common procedure is that the results are analysed and some kind of text or report is written about the results. It might also be important to think about who will carry out the analysis. Should you hand it over to someone from outside your organization, who is familiar with statistical analyses and/or the area surveyed? Or should you let someone from your own organisation perform the analysis, someone who not only knows the subject but also understands specific local circumstances and the young people that the survey is aimed at? Another important issue is to whom the results themselves are to be compiled for. Is it a work document for politicians, civil servants and decision-makers in the municipality, or should it be presented in a way that appeals to and is easy to understand for the surveyees (compare Värmdö municipality's LUPP report)? Or, should it be presented as a combination of the two? You can consider making different reports for different interested parties; one report for the public and the young people who took part in the survey and one report aimed at politicians, civil servants and decision makers. Which parts of the results should be emphasized? How should the results be summarized? The answers to these questions depend on the intended audience. If the survey has a broad scope (like the LUPP survey), deals with many aspects of the living conditions of young people and has an approach that touches upon certain delimited policy areas, then certain parts will naturally be more interesting depending on your profession. For natural reasons, questions about school should be more interesting to teachers and school staff. The questions about leisure time are more interesting to recreation leaders, sports and leisure clubs and organisations that work in the leisure sector. When compiling the results, being careful is of the essence. It is possible to hand over a lot of the analysis work to the readers of the report by placing more emphasis on presenting all the numbers in text, tables and graphic models than on conducting an analysis of the material. It is also important to have a strict schedule when conducting the survey, so that the analysis and presentation of the results doesn't take too long. Otherwise the survey may lose some of its relevance and topicality.

## Survey results – possibilities and problems

The Swedish municipalities have conducted their survey in accordance with the intentions set out in Nevsehir. Based on the discussion that took place in smaller groups, the Turkish groups have created and conducted a common national survey.

### Nacka municipality local survey

Nacka municipality chose to proceed based on the plans made in Nevsehir. They focused on analysing young people's situation in their free time, with one question that inquired about preferences for spontaneous or organised leisure activities. The survey that was conducted after the meeting in Nevsehir is seen as a pilot study for a larger, more extensive survey of culture and leisure habits to be conducted later in spring 2009. This survey will be broadened and include more areas (including health and opportunities for influence), more young people of different ages and all the parts of the municipality. Its intentions; *“include having the opportunity to develop their methods of gathering knowledge of the living conditions of young people, with particular focus on young people's habits and areas of activity in their leisure time”*.

Nacka municipality chose to conduct its survey in one part of the municipality (Saltsjö-Boo) among the eighth form pupils at two schools. They chose this area because of its wide range of housing types, making it interesting to analyse based on socioeconomic factors. A schedule for the survey work was created and presented. The survey was conducted during school hours and pupils could fill in a web-based survey anonymously in a computer room. The survey was established with the school management and teachers.

One problem that has been identified is the low percentage of answers, which is believed to be a result of the survey being conducted during the weeks before and after the school autumn holiday. Illness is another possible explanation. Therefore, the survey may be supplemented with group interviews or allowing the pupils who missed the survey because of absence due to illness to fill out the survey afterwards. In this case, group interviews must be considered a complement to the surveys, while the surveys filled out afterwards build on the previously conducted survey. However, this would entail a new analysis with new frequencies and percentages, which must be assessed carefully to ascertain whether it is worth the trouble. Perhaps a more complete sample should be used for the next survey? One possible way to increase the percentage of answers is improved establishment of the surveys at the schools.

Based on the increased knowledge provided by the survey work, it is hoped that the municipality's strategic planning and knowledge base for political decisions can be improved. The first survey was one way to test different questions and issues and also a way to improve on previous surveys of culture and leisure habits conducted in the municipality.

*“It is important that the planning of leisure activities is based on knowledge of the wishes and needs of the entire group of young people, which is why it is important to survey different age groups and young people from several parts of the municipality. Furthermore, it is important to look at what the young people's answers mean in order to see how the municipality's initiatives should be developed. Activity organisers, associations, volunteers and others should be stimulated to act based on the collected picture that the project will produce.”*

The results of the first survey have been presented to the committee for recreational activities, which is also the receiving committee for the survey. Nacka municipality assesses that the survey can lead to improved knowledge about survey methods, increased knowledge about young people, improved data on which to base the decisions of the committee for recreational activities, and as a means to identify areas that can and should be developed. The dialogue that has taken place between politicians, civil servants and recreation leaders in the project group has been an important part of the collaboration as a whole. This involved people from other sectors and with other experiences, including people who work in health and culture. More participants from the municipality will be involved in the future. The pilot survey and the larger survey of culture and leisure habits will be presented to politicians, civil servants and recreation leaders, in order to develop a cross-sectoral cooperation and deepen knowledge and improve investments in the leisure time of young people. It has also been pointed out that it is important to relay the survey results on a number of levels and sectors in the municipality (political level, civil servant level, schools, parents, the young people themselves, associations and youth centres, youth leaders and volunteers). Hopefully the results can form the basis for the planning, approval and implementation of new initiatives for young people in Nacka municipality. Another important possibility that has been identified is the exchange of knowledge that took place with the other participants during seminars and workshops in Turkey. Nacka is also interested in finding material for comparison and to cooperate in the future with Sundsvall municipality on survey design. Nacka municipality thought that it was problematic that they hadn't really had enough time to analyse the material.

#### **Sundsvall municipality local survey**

In Nevsehir, Sundsvall municipality defined its survey area based on its own experiences and work with youth activities in the Granloholm housing area. They chose to use a survey to find out "*how secondary school pupils who live in Granloholm perceive their situation regarding: housing, safety and leisure time.*" They wanted to find out how young people perceive their life situation and living environment. An electronic survey was produced by the municipal executive board and the young people filled in the surveys over the course of two weeks during school hours and assisted by the school staff. The municipality hopes to be able to improve the situation of the young people in Granloholm. They see the possibility for this in the future via the Granloholm Brågrupp (which consists of representatives from culture and leisure, school, social services, police, church, real estate managers and businessmen in the area). This group helped to formulate the survey questions. In the future, they hope to be able to use the survey to reach deeper into certain areas and bring about improvements for young people. Their intention was to distribute the surveys to all the secondary school pupils living in Granloholm. However, the problem is that they are spread over several schools, even though it is mainly one school that has Granloholm as its catchment area. Together with two adjacent schools, this served as the basis for the selection of young people. This meant that there was a high dropout rate, and the survey reached only 48 percent of the total number of young people in Granloholm aged 13-16 (which was the selected age span).

Based on the survey answers, three areas or issues have been identified for further assessment. Firstly, according to the survey girls are less satisfied in general with their life situation in Granloholm. How can their quality of life be improved? Secondly, the area where both girls and boys feel the least safe is in the centre during the evenings. What should be done to change that situation? Thirdly, few young people use the youth centre in Granloholm. How should this be changed? The survey is seen as a chance to improve work on the safety issue. They are also considering how best to convey this knowledge to young people, parents, politicians and civil servants. Through the survey they want to plan for the future and create meeting places where a dialogue can take place in order to make it possible to improve safety in the housing area.

### **Turkey national survey**

It was decided beforehand that the Turkish towns would conduct a common national survey with common questions. Seventeen provinces all over the country took part, with a total of 4 590 young people from a private upper secondary school, a public secondary school and a vocational school taking the survey. The survey data was collected at the towns' youth centres using a paper survey. Based on group discussions and workshops in Turkey, they agreed on a survey with 5 overarching areas: Personal information (mostly family circumstances), sports activities, organisation of leisure time, reading habits and leisure activities.

Unlike the Swedish municipalities, where the survey was conducted on behalf of and in collaboration with the local political decision-making authorities, the survey was prepared and controlled at the national level through the General Directorate of Youth and Sports, Youth Services Department. They have “[...] prepared this survey in order to evaluate how young people spend their leisure time. According to the results of this survey, Youth Centres of 17 provinces will plan and organize the activities for the Youth Centres in the provinces regarding their needs.”<sup>5</sup>

One problem about the survey that was expressed in the Turkish group was that certain survey questions were too detailed. For the next survey they want to develop simpler questions and questions that are perceived as more practicable, that are easier for the young people to understand. Some participants also wanted to change the design or formulation of the questions, and some wanted a smaller number of questions. One interesting suggestion that came up was to involve families (parents, siblings, relatives etc) and ask them questions about the leisure habits and interests of young people. They also discussed the possibility of being able to change the surveys according to local needs, which could be an advantage. Several of the Turkish representatives inquired about this possibility. It was often discussed whether the needs of the young people should be given more consideration in general when constructing the surveys. More open questions where the surveyees can develop their ideas were also requested. Focus groups were also suggested for future survey polls, as was “field work” before designing the surveys and formulating the questions. Several people inquired about some form of discussion forum and national meeting between the different towns and the people who conducted the surveys, where they can discuss and exchange ideas and suggestions on how to design surveys. The people who conduct the surveys in the different towns should be able to get together at a national level before, during and after the survey is conducted. This way they can continue to analyse, develop and improve the survey questions and issues. They also wondered about the possibility of finding a way to compare experiences and results with the Swedish municipalities. Interest was expressed in creating and conveying “good examples” and manuals, based on everyone's experiences and knowledge of designing and conducting surveys. In Turkey's case it also seems important for the continuation of the process to find possibilities for cooperation and ways to learn from each other, as the surveys need to be coordinated between so many different towns.

In both the Swedish municipalities and the Turkish towns, the time aspect appears to have been a problematic factor. At times it has been hard to plan how much time various aspects would take and to have total control of the various stages of the survey process, from planning to end product.

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<sup>5</sup> Survey produced by: Turkish Republic, Prime Ministry, General Directorate of Youth and Sports, Youth Services Department.

## Survey results

### – how do we use the results in future work?

Perhaps the most important issue is how to use the survey results in future work. It's important to see the compilation and results of the survey as the beginning of something, not the end. The question is how to use and follow up on the survey results with concrete measures. If the municipal decision makers have participated and given their approval, then it should also be in their interest and be their responsibility to follow up on and use the survey results as a basis for political measures and changes. Many municipalities say that they have a political responsibility to follow up and use the LUPP survey (see Värmdö municipality, for example). However, this is done in different ways, which I will come back to later. This project seems to be well established politically, with politicians and civil servants in key positions for youth policy involved in the process. It also seems that the surveys conducted were well established with the municipal decision-makers, and that the results will be followed up with political measures. This is evident not least through a number of political actors and bodies being involved in the planning, implementation, evaluation and analysis of the survey.

#### How is result feedback taken care of?

So how do the affected parties in a municipality receive feedback on the results? The first step is often to analyse the results and publish them in some form of written text. There are various ways to do this. They range from strictly scientific reports to more popular pamphlets, to short and simple summaries a few pages long. It is also common for reports to be made available in a digital version that can be downloaded by interested parties. This report is often hosted on the municipality's website. As mentioned previously, the results are presented in different ways depending on their intended audience. After that, discussion and work meetings follow, where the people who conducted the survey, the people who worked on the analysis of the results, and politicians, civil servants and other affected parties discuss and plan which political measures can and should be implemented. In this context it's also important to convey the results to the young people and involve them in the political decision-making process and its implementation. When large surveys with a lot of surveyed areas are conducted, it is often necessary to try to prioritise a few specific areas. This was the case with the LUPP survey in Sweden, for example. Based on the analyses and reports I have conducted myself, the municipalities that are members of the Astrid Lindgrens Hembygd association have created different types of plans of action in which the work process and the participants vary. Oskarshamn municipality has published the survey results on its website, as have most municipalities. Oskarshamn municipality has also published a more attractive and intelligible "popular version" that makes it easier to reach young people, for example. Schoolteachers have also been encouraged to tell the students where they can find the results. The TV monitors in upper secondary schools have also been used to provide the students with feedback. The municipality has also organised seminar days based on the LUPP report, which produced the following conclusions:

*“Measures in health, leisure and safety are prioritised. The suggested measures include Improving the physical and mental health of pupils by reducing alcohol use and consumption of sweets, and by reducing stress and smoking among young people. Other suggestions include more meeting places for young people in the shape of more youth centres and evening cafés.”*

(PowerPoint presentation from the LUPP project group in Oskarshamn municipality)

All of the inhabitants in Oskarshamn municipality were also informed about political work based on the LUPP survey results using advertising supplements. Värmdö municipality chose to identify three categories to inform of the LUPP survey results:

- Politicians and civil servants
- Schools and youth centres/activity centres
- Parents and the general public

It is important that the survey feedback reaches the people who work daily in the affected areas. For example, employees in the leisure sector at various levels should have the opportunity to comment, analyse and discuss the results and which measures can or should be taken based on the survey. For example, various work groups, reference groups etc can be formed to create plans of action. These groups should then have the opportunity to dialogue, in some kind of forum, with decision-making politicians. In Vimmerby municipality, recreation leaders use the LUPP survey as a means and an instrument to affect the political decision-making process.

It's also important that all levels and areas that work with the issues handled in the survey have the opportunity to participate, and feel that they are part of the work and decision-making processes that follow the results.

One way to follow up on the results, and continue with the work after the survey is completed, is to present different parts to different actors and organisations. That is, if you work in the school system, on the school board, as a teacher, as a politician with school issues as your main area of interest, etc, then these are often the issues that you are passionate about and want to be involved in. You often don't have the time to familiarise yourself with other areas that you don't work in. This is why forums should be created, allowing work to continue on certain parts or specific areas of the surveys.

### **How can feedback be organised – examples from LUPP**

In some municipalities a special project group has been formed with actors from various areas, often a politician and some civil servants in the school and leisure sectors. These function as conveyors and contacts between the people who compile and analyse the survey results and other affected parties in the municipalities. Hultsfred municipality has one of these project groups, for example. Other municipalities such as Eksjö felt that feedback to the school pupils was of central importance. This was the opinion of the people who conducted the survey, the people who are to conduct them in the future, and those affected by possible political decisions and measures. Therefore, the results were presented to the pupils, who could discuss and analyse the survey results themselves. In Eksjö a youth policy program was created based on the 2005 LUPP survey, and this is also the case in many of the other municipalities that have conducted the LUPP survey. For example, Värmdö municipality sees the LUPP survey as a tool and a basis for decision making for their youth policy program, which the municipality is responsible for. Eksjö chose to involve a broad range of political areas and people in the LUPP survey work. When I presented the report, people from a wide range of political committees and areas attended. The results process was presented to virtually all political sectors at the same time. This can be a good method to create political unity and leverage behind surveys as a method and a basis for decision making. However, this can also make it difficult to reach a consensus on which areas to prioritise because a large number of actors with different experiences, fields and interests are involved in the work process.

## Possible survey effects and results – examples from LUPP

Hultsfred municipality is a good example of how the LUPP survey results can have an effect. The following quotes are from the report and analysis that I made based on the municipality's LUPP survey in autumn 2007. In the report there are comparisons to the same report in the municipality from autumn 2005.

*“When it comes to the atmosphere in schools, upper secondary pupils are more positive than pupils in year 8. 85.9% consider the statement that the atmosphere at the school is positive to be very or relatively accurate. This figure has improved significantly since 2005. At that time, 69.6% answered that the atmosphere at school was very good or relatively good. [...] In Hultsfred the upper secondary school pupils are much more satisfied with the school environment in 2007 than they were in 2005. In 2005 just over half (53.4%) of the pupils were very or relatively satisfied with the school environment. In 2007 this figure had increased to 76.3%. Above all, it is the number of people who answered ‘very satisfied’ that has changed (from 9% in 2005 to 28.5% in 2007).”*

Based on the largely negative figures and analyses I presented in spring 2006, derived from the autumn 2005 LUPP survey, the municipal politicians worked with the school to create a plan of action to improve the school environment in upper secondary schools. There was a previous record of dissatisfaction at upper secondary schools and there was an awareness among politicians and the school management that something should be done. However, the LUPP report provided concrete information on how the pupils perceived their school atmosphere and environment. A comparison with nearby municipalities that I had also conducted analyses for presumably contributed to even greater ambition to rectify this problem. The fact that I two years later could show that the pupils' opinions of the school environment and atmosphere had changed considerably for the better, clearly shows the result of the political measures. This creates a positive outlook and the feeling that change and improvement is possible. It also shows the importance of continuity in surveys. Regular surveys have often shown to be successful. In this way it is possible to see what effects political measures based on a survey have over time. Then, if more surveys are conducted, this results in a more efficient instrument for gauging the effects of various measures and how to improve the living conditions of young people. Another concrete example of how the LUPP survey work process can lead to concrete measures and effects can be found in Oskarshamn municipality. There they set the following goals for the LUPP survey in 2007<sup>6</sup>:

- To develop the local youth policy by finding out about the situation of young people and what they think is important.
- That the LUPP survey makes it possible to set measurable goals for municipal activities.

Based on the vision:

*“Young people in Oskarshamn can develop according to their own prerequisites, are an important resource and have real access to welfare and power.”*

Where the goal is:

*“[...] based on the results of the survey, to develop three measures as part of the mission to utilize the resources, competences and opinions of young people.”*

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<sup>6</sup> The measures presented in bullet points and the quotes in the following section are from the Oskarshamn municipality plan of action based on the LUPP survey.

The process surrounding the LUPP survey is described by Oskarshamn municipality as follows:

1. Answer the survey
2. Analysis and presentation of the results
3. Feedback
4. Create 3 measures
5. Plan of action/budget
6. Follow-up
7. Evaluation

After feedback it's important to consider how to use the results. Oskarshamn municipality formulated this as follows:

- During autumn 2008 the municipal council will decide on three measures.
- It will then be a year since the pupils filled in the survey.
- We have one year to implement the three measures.
- In autumn 2009 it's time for a new survey that will also gauge the success of our measures.

The three measures decided on by the municipal council are:

- Create more meeting places for younger teenagers through more youth centres with a broad range of useful, well-structured activities, as well as extended opening hours at current youth centres.
- Create a good meeting place for young adults (16–25 years old) through investments in Ungdomens Hus.
- Improve the eating habits of secondary and upper secondary school pupils through initiatives to have them eat breakfast and to stop pupils from consuming sweets and soft drinks during the school day.

Apart from these three measures, the municipality identifies some overarching effects and results that the LUPP survey has given rise to. *Firstly*, real knowledge about young people's lives. *Secondly*, a tool for teaching in schools. *Thirdly*, data for other actors who work with young people. *Fourthly*, they have developed collaboration with neighbouring municipalities.

One possibility that several municipalities have taken advantage of in LUPP surveys is to ask their pupils specifically local questions. These can't be included in the existing LUPP survey for technical reasons, but there is the option of creating a supplementary web-based survey that the young people can fill in when they fill in the LUPP survey. Because the LUPP survey is usually taken during timetabled school hours, the students are all in one place, which is a good opportunity to conduct the local surveys. For example, in Oskarshamn municipality the local survey included questions about Hamngatan in Oskarshamn, which local young people consider a rough area in many ways, with a lot of incidents at nights and weekends.

- Do you spend time on or around Hamngatan on week nights and weekend nights?
- What do you think could make Hamngatan safer during week and weekend nights?
- If it was up to you, what kind of activities would you like to see in the harbour area?

Developing tools to be able to combine specific local questions in, or in connection with, a national survey could be one issue to discuss for the Turkish towns that are conducting national surveys. This question was discussed and several participants wanted to make it a reality (see page 18).

In some municipalities, for example Söderköping, they use the LUPP material in schools to perform analyses and create tables and graphic models. In social studies classes, this contributes to the knowledge process when discussing the results in areas like municipal organisation, decision-making processes, democracy, influence etc.

## Summary and reflections

To sum up, it has been very interesting and instructive to follow this project, the purpose of which was to find out what knowledge the various municipalities and towns had of young people at a local level, what knowledge is needed and which questions need to be asked to be able to learn more about them. In this case the collection of knowledge and the knowledge process was about designing a survey, analysing the results of the survey and suggesting measures based on the results. My general impression is that the work process of conducting the surveys has been a reflective learning process for everyone involved, and that it has contributed to increased knowledge and skills in terms of how to best investigate the local living conditions and prerequisites of young people. During meetings and workshops in Sweden and Turkey, discussions and group work were characterised by a creative, interested attitude in which group discussions and arguments have always moved the process forward. This creative approach influenced the questions included in the survey as well as the choice of subjects, question formulation, detailed discussions about the questions, etc. Discussions also took place after the surveys were conducted, which shows a contemplative approach to the process, with the goal of evaluating one's own work and the chosen work methods. Important discussions have also taken place about how this knowledge can be used in the future, focusing on how to convey knowledge, feedback, cooperation, and political decisions and measures. Work on the survey and its purpose has been well established among the affected parties. For example, there are plans and ideas about how future surveys of the living conditions of young people can clearly involve young people in the construction of the surveys, by using focus groups, pilot surveys and discussion forums that include young people. The LUPP survey conducted by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs has functioned as an important source of inspiration in the construction of surveys for all the municipalities and towns. The cooperation and consideration between the Swedish and Turkish participants was at times made more difficult by the differences in the countries' cultural, social and political conditions, as well as the fact that they don't share a common language. *However*, these differences have also spurred the participants to try harder to understand each other, which has contributed to learning processes and knowledge being acquired, not only about the other party and country, but also about the conditions and prerequisites that are sometimes taken for granted in one's own culture and country. Participants have learned from each other, and aspects of their own countries have become clearer and more apparent, as they have learned how things work differently in other places. In the end, this seems to be one of the project's strengths. In my estimation, the work in the group has progressed well. There is a strong will to learn, understand and improve among all of the project participants, which has also meant that they have completed the undertakings they pledged to complete. Several participants requested more practical exercises and more concrete group tasks, and less lectures and presentations. It is also my estimation that the group work and concrete tasks were the most constructive. Finally, I am confident about the future of the project and I hope that the contact and learning processes shared by Sweden and Turkey continue to grow.