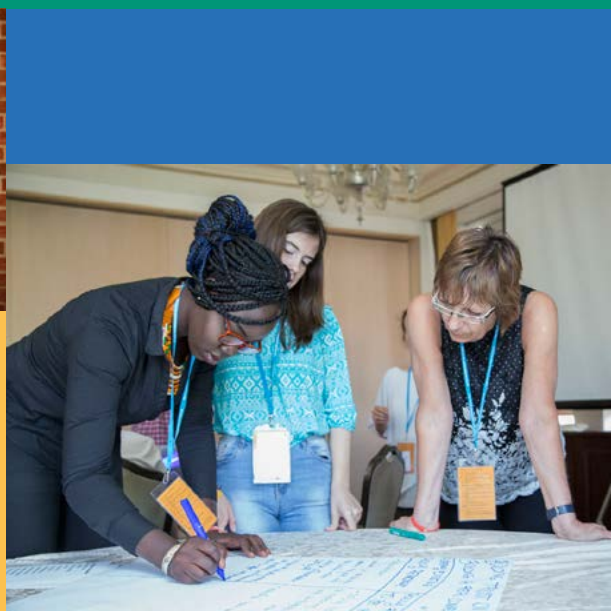


# INSIGHTS INTO YOUTH POLICY EVALUATION



## Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission  
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



EUROPEAN UNION

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

# INSIGHTS INTO YOUTH POLICY EVALUATION

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# Introduction

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**T**his publication draws on a multi-country review using contributions from correspondents to the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC) on national youth policy evaluation culture and practices. It aims to provide insights into the reality of youth policy evaluation across different countries in Europe, understood here as the assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact of policies that seek to support young people in transition in becoming active members of society. The publication includes evaluations and assessments of national and European policy initiatives in the field of youth, conducted at the level of the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Youth policy is developing and growing in importance in many European countries. It needs to keep up with the fast transformation of society and how it impacts young people's lives. Nowadays it is widely believed that evaluation research counts and supports the growth of prosperity and social justice (OECD 2012: 4, 6-7). It can improve various policy decisions, from legislation to service provision, from organisational and local level to international level. In this way, youth policy evaluation supports learning and improvement. In the policy cycle approach, all decisions and implementation steps may be inspired and informed by policies that have been implemented earlier or are being implemented elsewhere. The knowledge generated by youth policy evaluation in a specific area can support further development in the same place, in other areas or in other countries or regions.

Evaluation culture and practices are changing all the time, therefore it is important to mention that this volume of *Insights* summarises the study *Youth policy evaluation review*, which gives a more detailed analysis of the data collected through the EKCYC network between April and November 2019.<sup>1</sup> Some case studies shared in both publications are based on previous policy cycles and were selected to elicit a specific aspect of evaluation.

The country models and the analysis in this publication are intended to enable and inspire policy makers, youth organisations and researchers to understand the key elements and steps in youth policy evaluation but also to reflect on the findings of the survey regarding the practice in 30 countries. Much can be learned, and much can be improved.

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1. The survey was conducted between April and June 2019 for the *Youth policy evaluation review* among EKCYC correspondents. Some 30 countries are covered by the results: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium (French-speaking community), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, The Netherlands, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Sweden, The United Kingdom and Ukraine. Case studies were studied from May to November 2019.

The third volume of *Insights* begins with definitions, motivations and practicalities for youth policy evaluation: what is youth policy evaluation, why carry it out, and how? The following chapters present an overview of the evaluation process and the main steps in youth policy evaluation, cross-sectoral aspects of evaluation, examples from other sectoral policies and how evaluation can support better youth policy. Finally, it explains how evaluation can be better used and what support is available for policy makers and organisations interested in carrying out evaluations. We hope that this will become a useful guide to the integration of evaluation into policy planning, design and implementation. The EU-Council of Europe youth partnership will continue to develop the *Insights* series and other educational and visual support tools to contribute to the improvement of youth policy.

## Chapter 1

# Youth policy evaluation essentials: what, why and how

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### 1.1. What is youth policy evaluation?

Youth policy is a combination of public interventions, represented by national, regional or local actions, aiming to create conditions for learning, opportunity and experience, which enable young people to develop their knowledge, skills and competences. This will allow young people to be actors of democracy, to integrate into society, and enable them to play an active role in both civil society and the labour market. The key aims of youth policies are to promote citizenship learning and an integrated policy approach.<sup>2</sup>

Policy evaluation uses evidence gathered through research to support the policy process: design, delivery and adaptations of public interventions. Monitoring is the process of collecting, organising and using information to track the implementation of a policy. Monitoring and other activities, methods and tools, including social research and statistics, are used in order to collect and analyse data and information for evaluation.

Therefore, policy evaluation is a complex practice involving policy makers, practitioners, researchers, but also policy and services beneficiaries. In the case of youth policy evaluation, the beneficiaries we need to involve in evaluation are mainly young people and youth workers. Ultimately, evaluation seeks to identify and describe the value of policy measures for these beneficiaries, using data and research methods.

Youth policy may be widely interpreted as cross-sectoral (that is, covering several fields of action relevant for young people). Therefore, youth policy evaluation entails the assessment of sectoral policies and the assessment of the collaboration between the organisations responsible for developing and delivering those policies. Some of the most common policy areas with relevance for young people include education, training and learning, the employment and labour market, social inclusion, participation, active citizenship, volunteering, housing and health.

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2. See Glossary on youth, <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/glossary>, accessed on 27 March 2020.



## 1.2. Why evaluate youth policy?

Monitoring and evaluation of public policies:

- ▶ contribute to ensuring accountability of the sector – as they offer the information needed to understand how each policy is planned and implemented;
- ▶ support learning in the field and the development of better policies;
- ▶ support inter-institutional and public communication and promote the results and impact of the policy in question;
- ▶ allow the participation of stakeholders, including policy beneficiaries, in the policy process.

All these advantages are of great value for the youth sector. The cross-sectoral nature of youth policy and the numerous correlations needed with other sectoral policies including education, social inclusion, employment, health, sport, housing, etc., should be borne in mind. In this context, monitoring and evaluation are needed to ensure the accountability of each institution and stakeholder involved, which allows for the promotion of specific results in the field of youth to all relevant policy makers.

The needs of young people are evolving faster than public policies, therefore, the results of monitoring and evaluation are extremely valuable in supporting decision makers in amending and adapting youth policies to better answer those needs.

The participation of young people in youth policy monitoring and evaluation is an important exercise in transparency, good governance and democracy. It also helps to adapt youth policy to the rapidly evolving needs and aspirations of young people.

Participatory evaluation is an important principle for the youth sector. Young people's participation in youth policy contributes to:

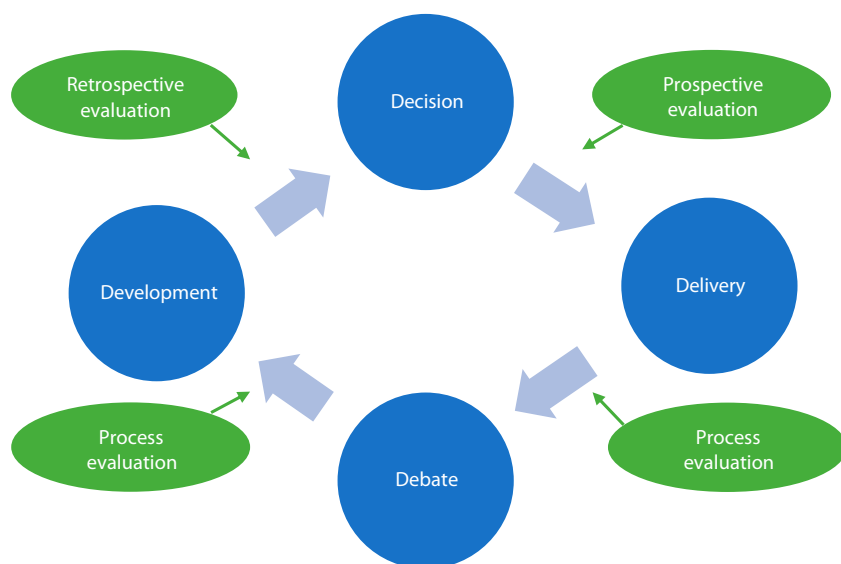
- ▶ higher policy relevance;
- ▶ increased accountability, as beneficiaries can ask directly for proper policy implementation;
- ▶ teaching young people their roles and responsibilities as active citizens, as young beneficiaries involved in youth policy evaluation grow into adults with a greater and better-informed interest in public and civic participation.

## 1.3. Evaluation in the youth policy cycle

There are many models of policy cycles which organise and conceptualise the complex pathways of policy development. To highlight when and what type of evaluation can be applied to the policy cycle, we refer to the dynamics of the Ds model: Decision (or political Drive), Delivery, Debate and Development (Williamson, 2002: 123).

In the policy cycle context, there are three main types of evaluation, depending on their timing and their planned role in different stages.

- ▶ **Prospective evaluation (also called ex ante evaluation)** aims at anticipating the impact of a planned policy. It assesses whether the policy identifies and addresses correctly the needs of its target groups. It also supports planning the necessary resources and structures for the policy implementation and can warn against unintended negative effects.



**Figure 1. Evaluation timing**

- ▶ **Process evaluation (also known as formative or interim evaluation)** aims at informing policy makers and people involved in policy implementation about the progress of the policy implementation, the quality of this process and how implementation can be improved.
- ▶ **Retrospective evaluation (also called summative or *ex post* evaluation)** describes the actual results of an intervention. This does not mean that *ex post* evaluation can be carried out only when an intervention has been finished. Carrying out a summative evaluation is justified when an intervention has been implemented for long enough to enable an assessment of its outcomes and impact.

**Table 1. Evaluation types**

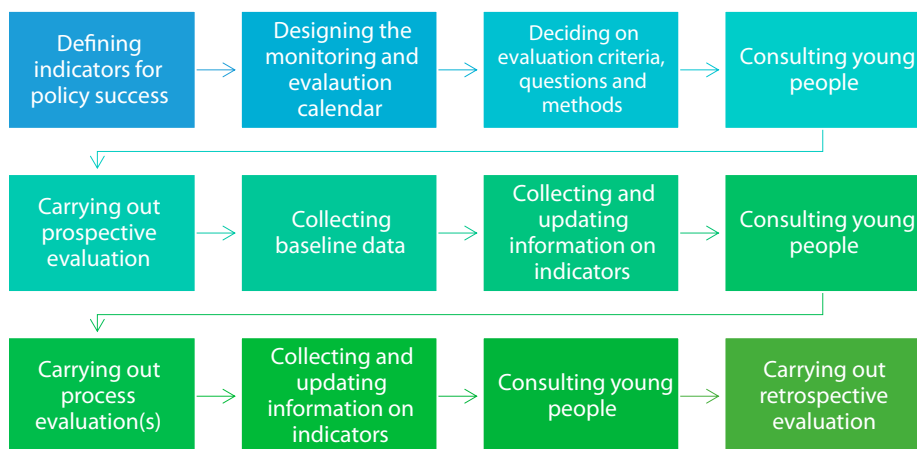
Role \ Timing	Before policy implementation	During policy implementation	After policy implementation
Forecast and assessment of relevance	Prospective or ex ante evaluation		
Feedback on effectiveness and efficiency and policy adjustments		Process or formative or interim evaluation	
Impact and sustainability assessment			Retrospective or summative or ex post evaluation

## 1.4. How can youth policy evaluation be done?

Youth policy evaluation needs to be carefully planned and executed, based on research methods and following clear indicators for each assessment criterion (EC 2013).

Three main stages are important for quality youth policy evaluation.

1. **Planning monitoring and evaluation** during policy design. This includes a. establishing success/performance indicators, b. deciding when evaluation will be conducted during policy development (the policy cycle), c. formulating evaluation criteria and evaluation questions, d. choosing methods for data collection and analysis.
2. **Collecting data**, including baseline data for success/performance indicators. Young people, as key beneficiaries, should be always be included through surveys and other research and data collection methods (interviews, focus groups), thus allowing them to put forward their perspective on youth policy implementation.
3. **Carrying out the evaluations** according to the planned calendar, criteria, questions and methodology. Young people should always be involved through meetings which allow them to give their input on the youth policy implementation and preliminary evaluation findings or through other innovative methods, if possible.



**Figure 2. Steps in youth policy evaluation**

## Chapter 2

# Main steps in youth policy evaluation

### 2.1. Planning and conducting evaluation before policy implementation

#### Defining the goal and objectives of youth policy evaluation

Generally, policy evaluation aims at informing and shaping decisions on future policies or the reform of existing ones, based on evidence and documented experiences. Criteria and questions define the evaluation objectives and guide the evaluation process. Evaluation criteria help focus evaluation objectives by defining the standards needed to assess how valuable or good a public policy is. The most common evaluation criteria are relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. Criteria are formulated into questions which frame the evaluation by specifying what information needs to be collected.

**Table 2. Evaluation criteria and questions**

EVALUATION CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Are youth policy objectives in line with young people's needs?</li><li>– Are the activities appropriate to meet the planned objectives and to achieve the expected results?</li><li>– Is youth policy consistent and coherent with other policies targeting young people?</li></ul>
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Is the evaluated youth policy achieving its objectives?</li><li>– What have been the successes and difficulties of the youth policy in question?</li><li>– How appropriate were the solutions chosen?</li><li>– What internal and external factors influence the results?</li></ul>
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Is the policy providing value for money?</li><li>– Could the outputs be produced with fewer resources or do they cost more than initially foreseen? Why?</li><li>– Is the policy implemented in a timely manner?</li><li>– How efficient is the institutional system in place for the implementation of the youth policy (structure, procedures, process)?</li></ul>

EVALUATION CRITERIA	EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Are the outcomes achieved sustainable?</li> <li>– Are there any risks that may hinder sustainability (institutional, legislative, environmental, societal, etc.)?</li> <li>– What measures could mitigate the identified risks?</li> </ul>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– How is the policy changing (directly or indirectly) the lives of young people?</li> <li>– To what extent have the results contributed to immediate or wider change?</li> <li>– What worked? Why and how? Which are the policy elements with more impact?</li> <li>– What are the factors affecting, positively or negatively, the impact?</li> </ul>

Not all youth policy evaluations done in Europe and analysed in 2019 had clear and explicit criteria and questions to guide the research and assessments. Although it is possible to carry out evaluation without establishing clear questions, questions are very helpful to ensure that all the necessary data are gathered and analysed.

**Structuring an evaluation following the evaluation criteria and questions ensures clear, transparent information for all those involved and clarity on what is needed in the future.**

### Armenia

In Armenia, the 2013-2017 Strategy for the State Youth Policy of the Republic of Armenia was evaluated in 2016. The evaluation was conducted from the perspectives of:

- ▶ compliance with youth needs (external relevance);
- ▶ logical structure (internal relevance);
- ▶ measurability of the implementation effects (effectiveness);
- ▶ sustainability of non-formal education;
- ▶ progress (impact) due to the implementation of the strategy in the following areas: 1. youth participation, 2. youth employment and socio-economic issues, 3. youth well-being and health, 4. spiritual and cultural values among youth, 5. recognition of non-formal education.

There are two main challenges in establishing the evaluation goals and objectives expressed in the evaluation criteria and questions:

- ▶ deciding on relevant questions, without overloading the process with unnecessary questions generating information that is not needed for policy making. Asking too many evaluation questions makes the evaluation process difficult and costly without great benefits and in the long term can discourage decision makers from paying attention to evaluations;

- ▶ asking all the relevant questions, without ignoring elements. Most often than not, evaluations are focused on assessing the effectiveness or the impact of a policy using quantitative methods, answering questions like: “How many young people have benefited from a policy or programme?” or “Who are the young people who benefit most from a policy or programme?” Adding questions on the factors affecting positively and negatively the measurable results is very useful for future policy planning.

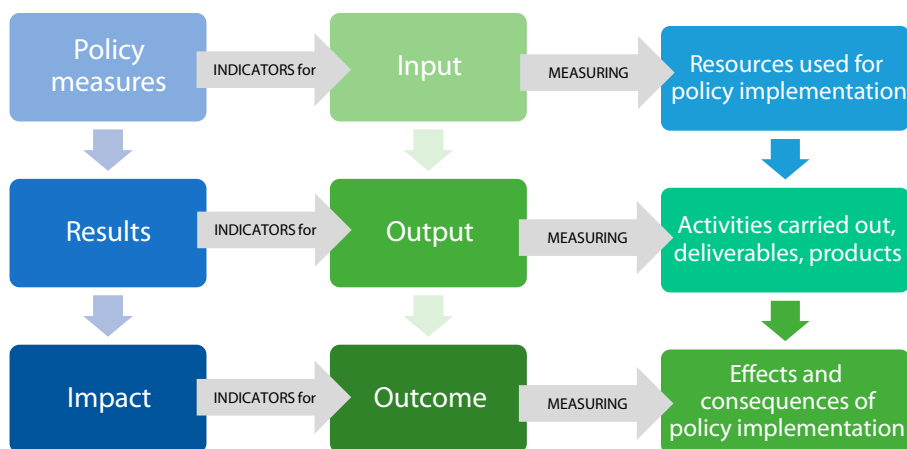
### Reflection points

- ▶ If your community or country has a youth policy or youth programme, is it being evaluated and are the results available?
- ▶ What are the questions that the evaluation answers?
- ▶ Where there are evaluation results, are the data and information useful for planning other measures, services or interventions for young people?

## Defining indicators and data collection systems for youth policy evaluation

Once objectives and criteria are set, it is important to define the indicators which will show how the objectives are to be achieved as well as the evaluation plan for the policy. This ensures that important information and data sources are clear when starting the evaluation.

There are three levels of indicators that follow from the policy logic framework: input, output and outcome. Indicators relating to inputs reflect financial resources and the infrastructure used (such as the number of youth centres), the output indicators reflect results (such as the number of young people participating in activities in youth centres) and the outcome indicators reflect the impact (such as the number of young people employed after a traineeship programme in the youth centres).



**Figure 3. Indicators within the policy framework**

**Policy makers should define policy objectives, as well as the indicators to evaluate the policy in consultation with stakeholders, including all the service providers, national and local public authorities involved in policy implementation, parliament or local self-governing bodies, young people and their organisations, and other relevant stakeholders.**

In order to ensure data availability when needed, the following issues should be decided as soon as possible:

- ▶ who is responsible for data collection and reporting;
- ▶ which methodologies will be used for indicators;
- ▶ what data sources and tools should be used;
- ▶ how often data should be collected and analysed.

### **Example of indicators in a national programme**

The Youth Field Programme 2019-2022, in Estonia, aims to ensure that young people have ample opportunities for self-development and self-realisation, which supports the formation of a cohesive and creative society. The indicators for monitoring and evaluation are:

- ▶ the proportion of young people aged 18-22 with a lower level of education who are not studying;
- ▶ the satisfaction of young people involved in youth work (%);
- ▶ the involvement of young people in youth work (% of all young people);
- ▶ the involvement of young people in youth work in municipalities where the population consists mostly of non-Estonian speaking people compared to the Estonian average (% of all young people);
- ▶ the number of young people per “hobby school”;
- ▶ the number of young people per youth centre;
- ▶ the number of opportunities for organised participation (youth councils);
- ▶ the proportion of youth workers who have increased their competences after participating in youth work training over the period of a year.

According to the survey conducted in 2019, only a small number of European countries have a detailed list of quantitative youth policy evaluation and monitoring indicators. The following trends can be clearly distinguished:

- ▶ there are countries with a precise list of indicators that are linked to different youth strategic documents and their implementation plans, for example, the Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Youth Field Programme 2019-2022 (Estonia), and the National Youth Strategy Action Plan 2018-2020 (Serbia);
- ▶ there are countries where a comprehensive list or overview of the main objectives and indicators for youth policy monitoring and evaluation does not exist because of the cross-sectoral approach of youth policy and the involvement of many different ministries and public administrations in the design and implementation of youth policy.

The lack of a comprehensive list of indicators to reflect the resources needed for policy delivery, as well as the short, medium and long-term achievements of the policy can be explained by the challenges associated with cross-sectoral youth policy. However, making the effort to establish indicators early on (when deciding on sectoral policy features) guarantees enough data will be available to assess and evaluate the policy.

### Reflection points

- ▶ If your community or country has a youth policy or programme, how well is youth policy evaluation reflected in it? Is it easy to find the objectives?
- ▶ Who was involved in the planning process of the evaluation?
- ▶ What methods were used for the evaluation? What indicators have been agreed?
- ▶ What do you think can be improved in the policy evaluation process in your community/country?

## Conducting prospective or ex ante youth policy evaluation

Prospective evaluation attempts to predict the effects of a concrete intervention, including its costs and also possible unintended effects. Because it is conducted before the policy intervention, prospective evaluation is also called *ex ante* evaluation. It aims to optimise the structure of a policy, the sequence of priorities, and the external and internal coherence of the policy. Prospective evaluation assesses whether objectives are clear, coherent and adjusted to the problems, needs and aspirations of young people. This type of evaluation also helps set up clear objectives (including by setting targets) and helps to define indicators that enable the monitoring of implementation, as well as reporting on the results achieved. Indicators planned in the previous step of the evaluation are tested and improved by the prospective evaluation.

A specific type of prospective evaluation is Regulatory Impact Analysis (RIA), used to assess planned legislation. RIA is currently the most widespread form of evaluation in public administration, and the European Commission (EC 2017a)<sup>3</sup> and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) are actively promoting it (Deighton-Smith, Erbacci, Kauffmann 2016: 10). RIA includes quantifying the expected costs and benefits of a law, assessment of its planned effectiveness and determining whether there are alternative approaches available to solve the same problem and answer the same needs.

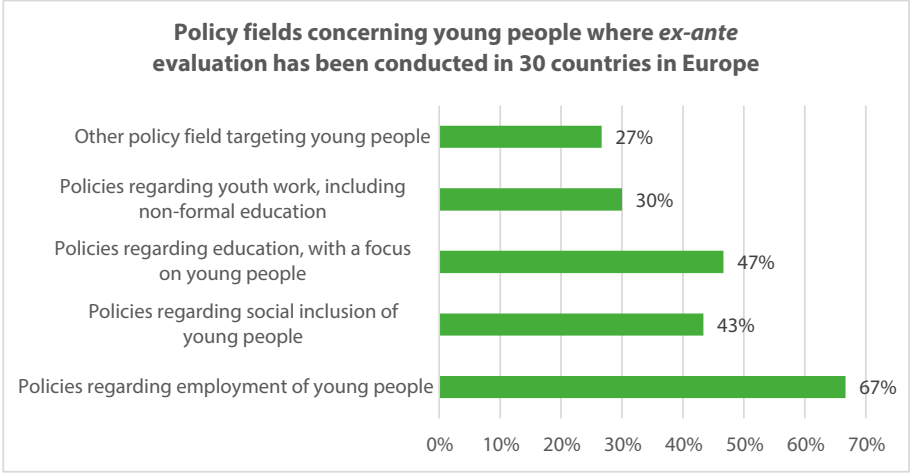
The OECD review shows most of the EU member states (except Malta for primary legislation and Bulgaria and Croatia for subordinate regulations) embedded *ex ante* regulatory impact assessment in their rules and framework. However, in practice prospective evaluations are not conducted for all laws (OECD 2019: 70-71).

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3. European Commission, REFIT – making EU law simpler, less costly and future-proof, [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/evaluating-and-improving-existing-laws/refit-making-eu-laws-simpler-and-less-costly\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-making-process/evaluating-and-improving-existing-laws/refit-making-eu-laws-simpler-and-less-costly_en), accessed on 12 August 2020.



Looking at youth policies, prospective or *ex ante* evaluation has been carried out at least once in only 11 countries out of the 30 participating in the 2019 *Youth policy evaluation review*. Policies regarding the employment of young people are most often evaluated *ex ante* in the countries participating in the survey – in over 66.7% of cases. This is followed by *ex ante* evaluation of policies regarding education and social inclusion, carried out in about half of the participating countries. On the other hand, policies regarding youth work are evaluated *ex ante* in only 31% of the countries participating in the survey.



**Figure 4. Prospective or *ex ante* evaluations by the youth policy sectors, based on responses on 30 countries**

Prospective evaluation, including RIA, should complement public consultations (OECD 2009). Unfortunately, the transparency of RIA is assessed by OECD as relatively low. Most of the *ex ante* evaluations are not published for consultation at an early stage of the policy development. Therefore, in practice, participation in policy decision making and debate is not supported by evidence from these evaluations. Moreover, in many cases RIA reports are not published after the regulatory decisions have been made (OECD 2019: 73), which compromises the informed participation of citizens, including young people, in other stages of the policy cycle and evaluations. When these documents are published, they are often not translated into other languages, making it difficult for policy makers in other countries to learn from the research already done and to improve their own prospective evaluation.

## European Solidarity Corps

In 2017, when planning the European Solidarity Corps,<sup>4</sup> the European Commission prepared an *ex ante* evaluation for the policy (EC 2017b). The evaluation analysis focused on:

- ▶ the problems: challenges and opportunities related to solidarity activities (volunteering activities that benefit communities and people in need), challenges and opportunities for young people and the limits of instruments supporting the engagement of young people. The most important instruments available at the moment of the evaluation were: the European Voluntary Service and other mobility opportunities within the Erasmus+ programme and in national programmes;
- ▶ the identified causes of the problems have been: a. the complexity of supporting structures and institutions organising volunteering programmes and lack of co-ordination among them; b. various obstacles deterring young people from getting engaged; c. the lack of validation of the solidarity activity in a manner that helps overpass the obstacles;
- ▶ different policy options: two policy options were analysed, one of them being the creation of programme with the main aim to support volunteering activities that benefit communities and people in need: the European Solidarity Corps. This option was eventually adopted. The other policy option analysed was the so-called “baseline scenario”, in which nothing needed to be changed in the current European youth policy framework. The baseline scenario involved continuing the implementation of several different, unco-ordinated programmes when addressing the problem related to lack of opportunities and limited involvement of young people in solidarity activities;
- ▶ the comparison of the policy options regarding their anticipated impact on accessibility, quality, inclusiveness, synergy and efficiency;
- ▶ the delivery mechanism of the preferred policy option, including a comparison of the effectiveness and costs of different delivery mechanisms (direct and indirect management by the Commission);
- ▶ the expected social, economic and environmental impact of the preferred option;
- ▶ a monitoring and evaluation plan to check whether the expected impact was achieved;
- ▶ the presentation of the analysis methodology and public consultation process for the proposed policy on the European Solidarity Corps.

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4. The European Solidarity Corps is the European Union programme which provides opportunities for young people to volunteer or work in projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe.

Prospective evaluation is extremely valuable for policy planning and starting policy implementation on the right track, ensuring relevance, efficient use of resources and all the necessary conditions for success. However, prospective evaluation is a costly process and demands specialised expertise in economics and social science. This usually makes prospective evaluation reports or regulatory impact assessments difficult to read.

Therefore, more efforts are needed to make prospective evaluation visible and accessible to youth policy stakeholders. This will help them to participate in the debates on the best solutions, the most efficient policy measures and the programmes and activities with the highest chances of generating a positive change in young people's lives. Using the information contained in this type of evaluation helps to prevent investment in costly and less effective initiatives and justifies the resources needed for the *ex ante* evaluation of youth policies.

### Reflection points

- ▶ If your community or country has a youth policy or programme, do you know whether an *ex ante*/prospective evaluation has been conducted and published?
- ▶ What information was used when planning the youth policy or programme?
- ▶ Was the information used for debates and decision making generated by research?
- ▶ If prospective/*ex ante* evaluation has been conducted, is it available in another language to help others in policy planning in other countries?
- ▶ What do you think can be improved about planning policy and using evaluations for policy planning in your community/country?

## 2.2. Collecting data for evaluation

Data collection is defined as the process of gathering information on indicators of interest, in a systematic fashion.

Quantitative data are information on elements that can be expressed in numbers or using other values that express quantity. Quantitative data are most likely to provide answers to questions such as "who?", "when?", "where?", "what?" and "how many?" Qualitative data are descriptive in nature, not easily measurable but valuable, providing answers to questions such as "why?" and "how?"

Collecting data needed for evaluation includes:

- ▶ collecting baseline data for the evaluation of the relevance and impact of a policy;
- ▶ conducting regular research on the situation of young people;
- ▶ monitoring implementation and collecting basic data on inputs/resources used and outputs generated;
- ▶ collecting data during the evaluation processes themselves.

## Collecting baseline data

The situation of young people, youth workers and other target groups of the policy should be measured before and after policy delivery, in order to assess the relevance and impact of a youth policy. Baseline data describe the “starting point” for a youth policy and are needed to establish the needs and problems of the target groups at the beginning of policy implementation, thereby informing the evaluation of the policy.

Baseline data provide policy makers and stakeholders with information to use as a point of comparison as the situation of young people and target groups progresses and improves over time. Establishing indicators early, during policy planning, ensures that they know exactly what to measure before starting policy implementation. The same indicators are then measured during *ex post* evaluation. The result of comparing these measurements – before and after – is the information needed to assess the impact of a policy.

Collecting baseline data is often done together with the prospective evaluation, but it can be done separately and independently of a prospective evaluation.

## Conducting regular research on the situation of young people

In many European countries, regular research on young people or youth barometers is carried out. The data collected show how young people’s situation changes and can be used for policy evaluation. If baseline data have not been collected for specific policy plans or programmes, the results of youth barometers are a starting point to assess the changes in young people’s lives during the policy implementation. How these changes can be attributed to the policy implementation itself is the objective of the impact evaluation presented below.

### Luxembourg

The Luxembourg youth report is a good example of continuous data collection on the situation of young people. The aim of this report is to systematically review knowledge about the living conditions of young people in the country and to consolidate it into a report. The youth report is aimed at various addressees in the fields of politics, praxis and science and can fulfil specific functions and goals for those groups.

At the University of Luxembourg, the main youth research group is entitled “Youth research: context and structures of growing-up”. From an interdisciplinary perspective, this group investigates the situation of young people through a mix of research methodologies. A substantial share of the research projects is jointly funded by the state and the University of Luxembourg.

## Monitoring policy implementation

It is important to collect data during policy implementation as part of the monitoring process. Therefore, a simple and basic monitoring system needs to be put in place for the purpose of tracking the progress against set goals and objectives.

Policy monitoring tools include keeping organised administrative records for budget spending, filling in logs on activities (such as the number of activities in youth centres and hours of activities in youth centres), keeping the record of outputs (for example, the number of young people participating in activities in youth centres). Detailed monitoring data can be very helpful in evaluation, but a good balance should be established between the effort and resources needed for monitoring and the effort and resources needed for the actual implementation of the youth policy.

## Methods for data collection

Methods used for data collection for evaluation are the same as those used on other types of youth or social research, including:

- ▶ surveys and questionnaires with closed and open questions, generating both quantitative and qualitative data;
- ▶ one-to-one or group interviews (including focus groups) with key stakeholders, young people and other policy beneficiaries, generating qualitative data;
- ▶ tracking monitoring data in administrative records, generating both quantitative and qualitative data;
- ▶ gathering and computing statistical data provided by the national statistics agencies/offices, generating mainly quantitative data;
- ▶ observation, during activities carried out and services delivered as part of the policy implementation plan, generating mainly qualitative data.

### Czech Republic

The National Youth Strategy in the Czech Republic was implemented for the periods 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 and evaluation was conducted mid-term (in 2017 for the strategy covering the period 2014-2016) and at the end of the implementation using available administrative and statistical data. The project Youth in Numbers (*Mladez v cislech*) analyses the achievement of target levels of the 13 strategic goals in the National Youth Strategy for the period 2014-2020 through quantitative indicators.

In 2018, the Supreme Audit Office of the Czech Republic underlined the challenges related to evaluation of the youth strategy, including lack of indicators in the strategy and the fact that the Ministry for Education, Youth and Sports did not have data on the delivery tools used by other institutions to implement the National Youth Strategy. As a result, the Ministry for Education, Youth and Sports set up a new cross-sectoral group on the evaluation of the National Youth Strategy in 2018 and started to plan the impact evaluation, establish indicators and collect data during implementation.

Data collection should be planned when deciding on the policy design. Moreover, data collection should be carried out before, during and after policy implementation. Because the situation of young people changes rapidly and many times in a given period, missing baseline data makes a “before and after” comparison, needed for

the impact evaluation, almost impossible. Without baseline data, any data collected lack a way to gauge whether or not progress has been made or whether an intervention or form of support resulted in improvement. Therefore, the impact evaluation at the end of policy implementation is very much affected by what is done when planning policies.

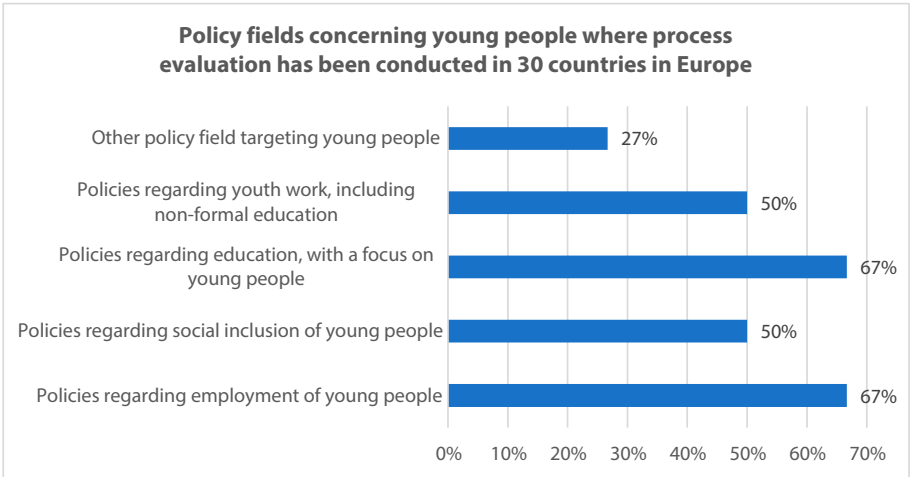
It is very difficult and expensive to reconstitute data on resources used during policy delivery, as well as basic outputs (number of hours of training courses, number of young people visiting a youth centre etc.) if they have not been collected at the right moment.

**Reflection points**

- ▶ In your community or country, are data on youth collected regularly? If yes, what methods are used and how often?
- ▶ If your community or country has a youth policy or programme, what was the “starting point” of implementation?
- ▶ Are baseline data available on the situation of young people before the policy or programme started?
- ▶ What data are collected by the institutions and organisations in charge of the policy or programme delivery? Are the data available?
- ▶ Have you been participating in data collection, answered surveys, participated in interviews or focus groups? Have young people been involved in data collection?

### 2.3. Conducting evaluation during and after policy implementation

#### Process or formative evaluation of youth policy



**Figure 5. Process evaluation of policy interventions by the youth policy sectors, based on responses on 30 countries**

Process evaluation focuses on how a policy is implemented. The main goal of process evaluation is to give feedback so the quality of the implementation of the intervention can be assessed and amended when deemed necessary. Therefore, this type of evaluation is also called formative evaluation (Stetler et al. 2006).

Youth policies are evaluated during their implementation in almost half (14) of the 30 European countries participating in the 2019 survey. Policies regarding employment and education are evaluated during implementation in 66.7% of the countries. Policies regarding youth work are the subject of process evaluations in half of the participating countries.

When carried out well, process evaluation contributes to:

- ▶ measuring the results produced by a public intervention and assessing whether it is on track to reach its goal and objectives;
- ▶ providing unique information about the performance of public interventions at different levels (national, regional, local), and about performance of the entities involved (government, individual ministries and agencies, managers and their staff);
- ▶ accounting for material, financial and human resources and supporting the decision for necessary adjustments to those resources as needed;
- ▶ supporting inter-sectoral co-operation, ensuring that all stakeholders from different sectors know and understand how they collectively contribute to the policy results;
- ▶ providing opportunities for beneficiaries and other stakeholders to participate in the evaluation process.

### **Romania**

In 2016, the Romanian Ministry of Youth and Sports evaluated the national funding programmes for youth projects. The evaluation looked at the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the activities. The methodology included a survey among NGOs implementing youth projects with the support of the ministry, thorough desk research using the database of projects funded by the ministry over five years (2010-2015), interviews, focus groups, case studies of selected projects and an expert panel. The evaluation has shown that these programmes are relevant to the needs of young people, but that the effectiveness, efficiency, usefulness and sustainability of the projects depend mainly on three factors: 1. staff available for youth activities, 2. the budget allocated by the Ministry of Youth and Sports and 3. successful promotion of youth projects and the services available.

The evaluation report recommended that more attention be paid to studies and research to strengthen the relevance of the youth programmes implemented by the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It also recommended investing in human resources in the youth field for more effectiveness of the planned projects, an online platform for project application and more efficient management.

Process evaluation is important for motivating stakeholders involved in policy implementation to continue their work, to ensure accountability of responsible

institutions for the effectiveness and efficiency of a policy up to a given moment and to allow policy makers to take the necessary decisions to improve the policy design and delivery in order to achieve the planned results and impact.

The quality of process or formative evaluation depends on data collected during policy implementation and the availability of stakeholders to provide additional data needed. The success of the evaluation depends on how policy makers use evaluation conclusions and recommendations to improve their policy.

### Reflection points

- ▶ If your community or country has a youth policy or programme, has it ever been evaluated?
- ▶ What data and information have been used when deciding to change elements of the youth policy or programme? Was systematic research of evaluation taken into account?
- ▶ What do you think can be improved about youth policy implementation and using the evaluations to improve youth policy implementation in your community/country?

## Retrospective/summative or ex post evaluation of youth policy

Retrospective evaluation describes the actual results of implementing an intervention, policy or programme. In general, it is conducted after the intervention, policy or programme has been finished or has been implemented long enough so that outcomes and impact have had sufficient time to occur. Retrospective evaluation is also known as *ex post* evaluation. Its goal is to sum up the impact of an intervention, therefore it is also known as summative evaluation.

Among the evaluation criteria, impact is the most difficult to define and assess. Often, impact is defined as the meaningful and lasting (short or long-term) change generated by a policy or other type of intervention. When speaking about youth policies, impact is generally seen as the change generated (directly or indirectly) by the policy in the life of young people.

In order to determine a positive change in the life of young people, youth policies generate results concerning:

- ▶ personal and professional development of young people;
- ▶ personal and professional development of youth workers or other service providers;
- ▶ quality development within the participating youth organisations;
- ▶ local communities in which the youth organisations work.

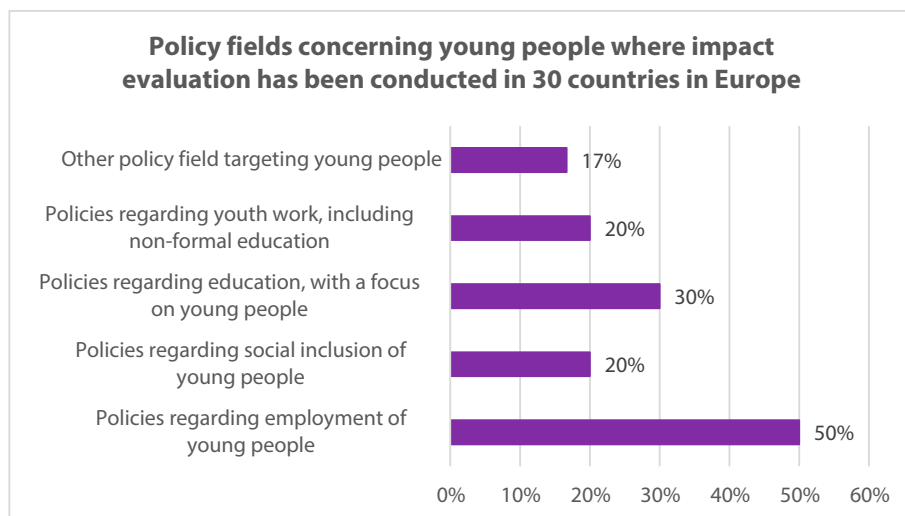
Impact evaluation of youth policies has been conducted in less than half of the 30 countries surveyed. Important conditions for impact evaluation are:

- ▶ availability of data on impact indicators describing the differences between the situation before and after policy implementation;



- ▶ baseline data for the outcome indicators;
- ▶ data collection must be organised before starting policy implementation or delivery of services (EC 2014).

Considering all policy fields targeting young people, retrospective evaluation of youth unemployment is not conducted as frequently as evaluation of other fields. The survey indicates that due to the difficulty of establishing impact indicators for youth work and social inclusion initiatives targeting young people, these policy fields have so far been the subject of fewer impact evaluations in participating countries.



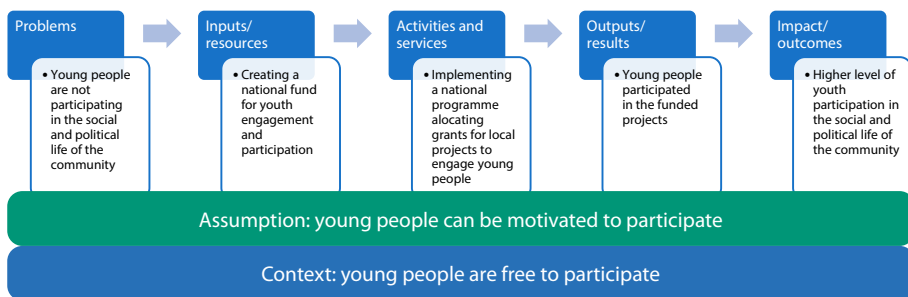
**Figure 6. Impact evaluations of policy interventions by the youth policy sectors, based on responses on 30 countries**

Two approaches are used in order to evaluate the impact of any intervention: the theory-based evaluation or the counterfactual impact evaluation.

## Theory-based evaluation

The theory-based evaluation starts from the idea that any planned intervention is determined by a theory of change. It describes how, in a given context, the planned activities and services contribute to addressing needs or problems and, after delivery, produce results and a lasting impact. Policy documents can refer explicitly to the theory of change of a given policy or the policy theory can be implicit in these documents (the expression “theory of change” is not necessary used, but there is always a logic connecting objectives, activities and expected results).

In this context, theory-based evaluation tests the logical and practical links between the elements of the theory of change: needs, resources, activities, supportive and disruptive factors from the context of the policy, results and impact. Qualitative and quantitative data and evaluation methods are used for this approach, and their combination in a methodological mix is recommended.



**Figure 7. A theory of change representation for youth policy**

Complex methods such as cost-benefit assessment, cost-effectiveness assessment, realistic assessment and multicriteria analysis are ways in which theory-based assessment can be performed.

Realistic evaluation is a type of theory-based evaluation attempting to understand and outline how causal mechanisms and environmental circumstances have brought about a change in society as a result of implementing an intervention. The questions that an evaluator working in a realistic evaluation framework seeks to answer are: “What works, for whom, in what context and to what extent?” Realistic evaluation not only focuses on “what works”, but also seeks to describe the circumstances.

Realistic evaluation has perhaps the strongest potential to support policy learning across borders, as well as from other sectors, because it provides the fullest account of why a concrete intervention “works”. Being aware of the circumstances and mechanisms responsible for success (best practice examples) helps to predict whether the intervention will also deliver superior results under different circumstances, and/or what needs to be taken into account and what adjustments need to be undertaken.

## France

In France, the Youth Experimentation Fund (FEJ) provides a large number of evaluations for innovative policy proposals piloted by different stakeholders. Information and recommendations from evaluations of policy experiments targeting young people and supported by the FEJ are relevant and used in policy making in the fields of justice, education and culture.

The French strategy is to provide funds for policy experimentation. These policies are closely evaluated using quantitative data (statistical secondary analysis and survey) and qualitative research (interviews, focus groups, observation). Methods used for data collection and analysis are adapted to the piloted policy and the capacity of the policy promoter.

The FEJ results and the 78 statistical indicators on youth and the Youth Barometer show the effectiveness and impact of innovative ways to fight discrimination and harassment among young people in the school environment; the best tools for information provision in schools, school orientation and school counselling; the most effective measures for better professional integration of young people; the

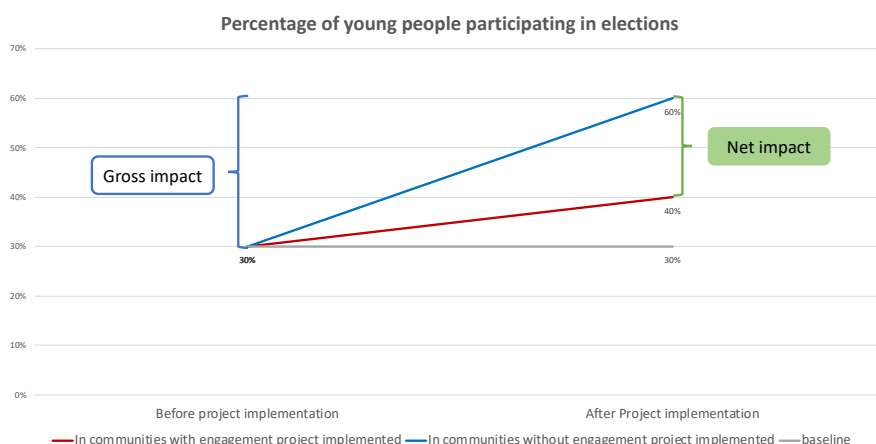
results of policy experimentation in the field of young people's health; best practices in supporting young entrepreneurs; and the importance of the professionalisation of stakeholders working with young criminals for their future reintegration into society (Institut national de la jeunesse et de l'éducation Populaire (INJEP), 2018).

Additionally, INJEP presents synthesis reports on specific fields where the funded policy experiments showed results and impact, including [a report on the impact of the piloted policies on employment \(in 2014\)](#), or the effectiveness of [initiatives against youth discrimination \(in 2019\)](#).

The lessons of the experiments funded by the FEJ and evaluated according to standard methodology will guide the choice of new public policies. Thus, these lessons have substantially encouraged the work of the Joint Ministerial Committee of Youth (Comité interministériel de la jeunesse – CIJ).

## Counterfactual evaluation

Counterfactual evaluation is a way of evaluating impact by applying experimental or (most often) quasi-experimental research methods and using econometric and statistical tools. This approach is often applied in health care or in social experimentation and measures the impact of proposed intervention for their intended beneficiaries (not for unintended beneficiaries or for the environment). Once data on the impact of a policy on beneficiaries are collected (the impact result integrates both the results of the intervention and the effects of the contextual factors, whether positive or negative) and it is called "gross impact". In order to determine the exclusive impact of the evaluated intervention, or how much of the "gross impact" can be attributed to the intervention, the beneficiaries are compared to a group of non-beneficiaries (a control group). The variables measured at the level of beneficiaries are also measured at the level of the control group, and the results are compared between the two groups and over time. The entities in the two groups may be, for example, individuals, organisations, companies, institutions or cities, depending on the type of intervention evaluated.



*Figure 8. Example of a counterfactual evaluation result*

The difference between the values of the impact variables recorded in the beneficiaries group and those recorded in the control group represents the “net impact” of the evaluated intervention, which can be attributed exclusively and directly to it.

### **Serbia**

The Youth Service Package, implemented between 2013 and 2015 in Serbia and the youth programmes and measures funded from Serbia’s budget were evaluated in 2016. The evaluations aimed at answering questions related to the effectiveness, sustainability and impact of all interventions targeting youth in Serbia, and especially the interventions for youth employment in the evaluation from 2016. The coverage, results and the gross and net impact of the Youth Service Package were included in the evaluation, comparing the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of services in a counterfactual evaluation design. In addition, the analysis included the net impact of the labour market measures targeting youth – the Professional Practice and Acquisition of Practical Knowledge – implemented by the National Employment Service, as well as the evaluation of other relevant targeted programmes and measures aimed at youth employment and funded from the national budget, but implemented by other institutions and supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sport (such as youth office services or civil society organisations’ programmes contributing to youth employment and employability enhancement).

To better understand how net impact occurs, and whether positive or negative factors generate differences between net and gross impact, qualitative data can be used to complete a counterfactual assessment.

### **Reflection points**

- ▶ If your community or country has had a youth policy or programme, has its impact been evaluated?
- ▶ If yes, how was the evaluation conducted? What data and methods were used?
- ▶ What evidence is available to prove that the progress in the situation of young people has been determined by the youth policy or programme implemented?
- ▶ How have young people been involved in the impact evaluation?

## Chapter 3

# Evaluation of other policies targeting young people in Europe

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### 3.1. Evaluation of employment policies targeting young people

Policies regarding youth employment are evaluated in most European countries. Two thirds of the countries surveyed carry out prospective evaluation of youth employment policies, and half of them carry out impact evaluation of these policies. They are considerably better assessed, both *ex ante* and *ex post*, compared to other policy fields targeting young people (culture, sport, non-formal education, housing). In 20 out of 30 countries participating in the survey in 2019, employment policies targeting young people were assessed during their implementation, and in 15 of the countries the impact of youth employment policies was evaluated.

#### Finland

In Finland, extensive research on young people is conducted through both the evaluation of the youth policy and the assessment of the youth situation. Youth policy and all policies targeting young people are supported by the annual Youth Barometer and other surveys. They study the values, well-being and everyday life of young people aged 15-29 who live in Finland and they are useful for policy planning and any *ex ante* evaluation of new policies.

Other studies conducted by experienced researchers at the State Youth Council are relevant and valuable sources of data and information for policy making. The one-stop guidance centre ([Ohjaamo](#)) model for providing information to young people in “NEET” (not in education, employment or training) has been systematically evaluated several times. Policies for employment, including the Youth Guarantee, which targets vulnerable young people, and the programme dedicated to young people who are in “NEET”, are also evaluated systematically.

The continuous evaluation approach for the one-stop guidance centre ([Ohjaamo](#)) model for providing information to young people in “NEET” is relevant for the “adaptive programming” model of public intervention development (Valters C., Cummings C. and Nixon H., 2016).

Youth policy makers could learn how employment policies carry out and use evaluation before, during and after implementation. Evaluation is important not only for policy making, it is an important basis for communicating about policies and interventions. In this sense, more evaluation of youth policy could help the youth sector explain better to policy and decision makers, activists and young people what youth policies are, what they focus on, what results they bring and how they complement other policy fields in improving young people's lives as well as what is their unique value. For example, the evaluation can be used to take informed decisions on the implementation of employment policies that treat all unemployed people equally or specially designed policies for unemployed young people, taking into account their specific needs.

### Reflection points

- ▶ If your community or country has a programme for youth employment, has it been evaluated?
- ▶ If yes, how was the evaluation conducted? What data and methods were used?
- ▶ Were the costs and impact of the programme evaluated before its implementation started? If yes, is this evaluation publicly available?
- ▶ Are existing data and evidence enough to prove that the youth employment programme works?
- ▶ How do young people (beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of the employment initiative) evaluate the programme for youth employment?

## 3.2. Evaluation of social inclusion policies targeting young people

Policies regarding the social inclusion of young people are, according to the survey in 2019, evaluated as much as the policies regarding youth work and non-formal education for young people. Given that neither youth policy nor social inclusion policies can successfully improve young people's lives alone, it is useful to learn what social inclusion policies targeting youth focus on, how they are being evaluated and what they tell us about their impact on young people.

### Malta

Malta provides a good example of formative evaluation of a policy targeting young people (among other groups) in order to inform youth policy development. The evaluation of the National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion was published by the Ministry for Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity in 2017. The policy is planned for the period 2014-2024 and the evaluation has been carried out for the first two years of the strategy's implementation.

A large number of specific interventions have been integrated into the strategic framework, including the Youth Guarantee scheme,<sup>5</sup> measures to engage youth in education and training, and youth work initiatives such as the Youth Village project and the Outreach and Detached Work with Youth scheme.

A major strength of the Maltese strategy is a national structure of indicators to benchmark, monitor and evaluate progress towards poverty reduction and the social inclusion of different target groups, including young people.

For the social inclusion measures targeting youth, based on the results of the strategy evaluation and additional peer review, the Maltese delegation participated in the peer review on Social Inclusion, Health and the Equalisation of Opportunities for Young People with Disabilities.<sup>6</sup> The peer review showed that more should be done for young people with disability issues.

*Ex ante* evaluations are generally conducted more frequently with regard to social inclusion policies targeting youth, as their impact on public administration and the budget is generally bigger. However, these evaluations are not publicly available.

### Reflection points

- ▶ If your community or country has a programme for social inclusion of young people, has it been evaluated?
- ▶ If yes, how was the evaluation conducted? What data and methods were used?
- ▶ Were the costs and impact of the programme evaluated before its implementation started? If yes, is this evaluation publicly available?
- ▶ Is existent data and evidence enough to prove that the programme for social inclusion of young people works?
- ▶ How have young people been involved in the evaluation process?

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5. The report states that: "Jobsplus has a number of programmes which specifically focus on young people. These range from personal action plans, advisory services, employability programmes and work exposure schemes to traineeships and training courses. Through the initiatives listed in the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, launched in 2014, the Maltese Government is committed to provide a second chance education to individuals with a low level of education and to help them enter the labour market with the aim of retaining their employment and progressing in their career."

6. This peer review process took place in Zagreb (Croatia), on 13 and 14 September 2018, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9178&furtherNews=yes>.

## Chapter 4

# Using youth policy evaluation results for policy planning

### 4.1. Building support for youth policy from different stakeholders

Youth policy is closely related to other sectoral policies in education, social inclusion, employment, health, sport, housing, etc. In this context, evaluation is useful in determining the needs and recommended strategies for co-ordination between national policies and international policies and initiatives targeting youth. Evaluation results are the basis for communicating the effectiveness of youth policy and for strengthening co-operation and support from other actors (institutions, organisations) and sectors. They can be used to convince policy makers in other fields to allocate resources for young people. Participatory evaluation can be used to build public support from young people and practitioners in the field of youth. Participatory evaluation is a relatively new method for carrying out evaluation. It involves different stakeholder groups in the generation and interpretation of data on the intervention being evaluated. The distinctive feature of participatory evaluation includes the belief that the participation of stakeholder groups brings benefits to the evaluation and the active involvement of groups that are usually not engaged in the evaluation process.

#### European Union Youth Strategy 2010-2018

The interim evaluation of the European Union Youth Strategy 2010-2018 (EU Youth Strategy), conducted in 2016, was the first external evaluation of the EU Youth Strategy since it was launched in 2010. It covered the period 2010-2015 and represented a formative evaluation of the strategy. The purpose of the evaluation was twofold:

- ▶ to evaluate the EU Youth Strategy, “in order to provide an assessment of its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, EU added value, efficiency and sustainability; and
- ▶ to identify ways of improving the implementation and governance of the EU Youth co-operation framework”. (EC 2016: 1-2)

The evaluation used mixed methods of data collection with a distinctive focus on inclusion and participation of young people. Two online surveys were carried out: 1. of young Europeans aged 15-30, with 719 respondents; and 2. of 250 youth organisations. Moreover, 162 national stakeholders in 28 EU countries were interviewed.

The evaluation found that the EU Youth Strategy was successful in triggering concrete changes at national and organisational level and in the adoption of common approaches and principles across the member states (EC, 2016: Executive Summary).



Benefits of participatory evaluation of youth policy include:

- ▶ practical aspects, such as access to hard-to-reach groups;
- ▶ mass data collection;
- ▶ building trust between researchers, policy makers, youth workers and young people;
- ▶ value-based aspects, such as empowering young people, respecting different forms of expertise and democratising youth research and evaluation.

Because participatory evaluation is a set of rather general principles, not a specific type of data or a specific method, it can be used within any of the evaluation paradigms and for any evaluation purposes (Richardson 2017).

The EU Youth Dialogue is the method proposed by the EU for organising the dialogue on youth policy between young people, youth organisations, policy makers and decision makers, as well as experts, researchers and other relevant civil society actors, as appropriate. According to the EU Youth Strategy, the youth dialogue “serves as a forum for continuous joint reflection and consultation on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European co-operation in the field of youth.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore the EU Youth Dialogue can be useful not only for participatory policy planning, but also for policy evaluation.

### Reflection points

- ▶ If your community or country has a youth policy or programme, how well is it known by young people?
- ▶ How well is the youth policy or programme known by other relevant stakeholders (other public institutions beside the main responsible one, youth organisations and other civil society organisations, etc.)? Is there evidence that shows these stakeholders support the youth policy or programme?
- ▶ Have young people been participating in any youth policy evaluation by completing surveys or participating in interviews or focus groups?

## 4.2. Planning youth policy based on evaluation results

Nowadays there is a general consensus that policy making is a messy, not always smooth process. Policy makers are subjected to a permanent flow of information, requests from stakeholders, institutional limitations and uncertainties about the financial future (take the example of the impact of the quarantine measures taken during the Covid-19 pandemic).

In most of the countries surveyed in 2019, youth policy evaluation results are not always used to directly support the decision-making process. Only one fifth of the respondents indicated that existing systematic and regular research on the situation of young people are used to support the decision-making process.

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7. [https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy/euyouthdialogue\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy/euyouthdialogue_en)

**Table 6. Integration of youth research and policy evaluation in youth policy making, based on responses from 30 countries.**

Integration of youth research and policy evaluation in youth policy making	
Existing research results are sporadically used to support the decision-making process	23.3%
Existing systematic and regular research on the situation of young people are used to support the decision-making process	26.7%
Evaluation is conducted in order to document the implementation of the youth policy or most of the youth policies	16.7%
Evaluation of former policies is conducted before planning a new one, in order to support the choice of a policy option	10.0%
Other ways of integrating research and policy evaluation into youth policy making are used	6.7%
No integration of youth research and policy evaluation into youth policy making	3.3%
No answer given	13.3%

The general agreement among policy stakeholders is that political championship is critical for policy development. However, political will and championship do not develop in isolation. Youth policy evaluation and research on young people can inform policy makers and help them influence their decisions, therefore, their role cannot be downplayed.

**Council of Europe**

The international reviews of national youth policies conducted by the Council of Europe represent an important source of information and inspiration for European governments on the definitions, aims and measures designed specifically for youth policies across Europe. They allow for a comparative view over time of the definitions and approaches of youth policies and their observed outcomes, impact and in some cases, sustainability. They offer, to decision makers and practitioners in the field of youth policy evaluation, an in-depth perspective on the indicators and descriptors that can be used to review a youth policy in accordance with its content and objectives.

According to the [Council of Europe website](#): “An international review of national youth policy is the most complex and comprehensive of measures fostering youth policy evaluation and development. This process involves wide-ranging commitment, from political to financial, from both the requesting country and the Council of Europe.”

Each review has been summarised in a report. Following the first seven reviews, a synthesis report was drafted. It “endeavoured to construct, from the material available, a framework for assisting the understanding of ‘youth policy’” by different stakeholders across Europe and in different related fields.<sup>8</sup> Two further synthesis reports have been published based on the subsequent rounds of individual country reviews of national youth policy. All country reviews and synthesis reports are available on the Council of Europe youth website.

8. [www.coe.int/en/web/youth/national-youth-policy-reviews](http://www.coe.int/en/web/youth/national-youth-policy-reviews).

At the Council of Europe, a programme of support measures has been developed for ministries, public administrations and policy makers in the member states and states parties to the European Cultural Convention (ETS No. 18) to help them adopt the Council of Europe's youth policy standards when designing their youth policies. The programme offers multilateral support measures, bilateral support measures and standing resources. Youth policy reviews, peer learning and exchange on youth policy evaluation can help the institutions in charge of designing and delivering youth policies to better plan how to document them and measure their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact.

### **Reflection points**

- ▶ If your community or country has a youth policy or programme, how well is youth policy evaluation reflected in it?
- ▶ Is it easy to understand what data and information influenced the decisions on the respective youth policy or programme?
- ▶ What do you think can be improved about using evaluation when planning a youth policy or programme in your community/country?
- ▶ How can young people participate in the programme or policy planning?

# Conclusions

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In the framework of a policy cycle, different types of evaluation are used for different phases: in the policy planning phase, prospective evaluation seeks to predict the resources needed for implementation of a policy and its possible outcomes. In the implementation phase, formative evaluation seeks to describe whether implementation of a policy goes according to plan and, if necessary, what needs to be done to ensure that it follows that plan. In the evaluation phase, summative evaluation seeks to document the societal impacts of the policy.

In the youth field, participatory evaluation holds a special place because participation of young people is among the core principles of the field. Different viewpoints held by different stakeholders' groups are presented and evaluated.

However, evaluation of youth policies is not a general practice in Europe. The case studies and the survey show that there are fewer impact evaluations than evaluations of policy implementation. This situation can explain why youth policy makers need to make significant efforts to initiate and motivate cross-sectoral co-operation for policies targeting young people and to secure budgets for youth policies.

Youth policy evaluation is confronted with the paradox of youth policy data and the lack of their use. Almost all countries in Europe collect data on young people and monitor their policies. Yet, learning for youth policy and using these data for future policy planning in the field of youth are limited. Only a small number of countries have a detailed list of quantitative youth policy evaluation and monitoring indicators.

Even when evaluation is carried out, timing is not always well synchronised with policy-making agendas. In many cases, data are underused and evaluation results are not very well disseminated. For example, in most countries, evaluation of national youth policies is only available in national languages and policy transfers are less likely to happen.

EU initiatives, like the EU Youth Guarantee, can be a supportive factor in putting in place monitoring and evaluation frameworks, indicators and plans. The outputs of these monitoring and evaluation exercises represent a fertile base for policy learning and transfer to other policies affecting young people.

This volume of *Insights* shares the summary of the first youth policy evaluation survey in Europe, collecting promising examples and raising important questions on the role evaluation plays in the youth field. It can also be a useful guide for embedding evaluation in youth policy and programme design, and implementation in different contexts.

For the full study and for other thematic *Insights*, please visit the youth partnership website.

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Policy monitoring and evaluation are complex aspects of policy making, and there are many myths that make them difficult to understand. This volume of *Insights* explains these concepts, presents the reality across Europe, gives examples of good approaches and tips for how to integrate monitoring and evaluation in youth policy making.

It looks at the following questions.

- ▶ How can evaluation bring forward learning in youth policy?
- ▶ How can it lead to more agile, flexible and adequate policy making in the youth field?
- ▶ What are the benefits of good policy monitoring and evaluation?
- ▶ How can young people contribute?

The publication is addressed to all those initiating, implementing or participating in youth policy evaluation. Drawing on the results of the Youth Policy Evaluation Review, a study carried out in 2019 by the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership with the correspondents of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy across more than 30 countries in Europe, this *Insights* presents concepts, methods, steps and case studies in youth policy monitoring and evaluation.

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