

ECORYS



Education and Culture DG

Assessing practices for using indicators in fields related to youth

Final Report for the European Commission
DG Education and Culture



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Executive Summary

Introduction

The European Commission's 2009 communication 'An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering: a renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities' invites both the Member States and the Commission to cooperate in the youth field by means of a renewed 'open method of coordination'. It proposes a cross-sectoral approach, which involve all key policy areas that affect Europe's young people and encourages a more research and evidence-based youth policy. To this end, the European Commission ensures that a range of data and statistics on young people is available and accessible, through, for example, a number of reports (published in 2009), including: *Youth in Europe - A Statistical Portrait*; *EU Youth Report*; and *European Research on Youth*.

As part of the new EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018), the Commission has also set up an expert group on youth indicators, which has been given two tasks:

- to propose a dashboard of indicators in the areas of education, employment, social inclusion and health; and
- to provide an overview of possible new indicators in 'core' youth policy areas where they do not yet exist.

In parallel, Ecorys was commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC), to carry out an assessment on how Member States are currently applying indicators at the national level in areas related to youth.

The general objective of the study was to provide inputs, based on experiences from and practices in the Member States, to the design of a system of using indicators that will support the Commission in developing youth policy guided by knowledge and evidence.

Methodology

In addressing the study objective, our research comprised the following principal tasks:

- A focussed, desk-based review of European youth policy with particular reference to recent initiatives to improve the knowledge and understanding of young people; recent academic literature on evidence-based policy-making; and relevant

literature at the national level (e.g. strategic and policy documentation and European Knowledge Centre of Youth Policy (EKCYP) national reports).

- A programme of about 100 consultations undertaken with the national EKCYP correspondents, as well as other key experts and stakeholders, including representatives from relevant ministries, government agencies, research institutions and national youth councils.
- An assessment of the availability of indicators; and their use in policy processes in individual Member States, with the results presented in a series of 22 Country Fiches.
- In-depth assessment of three Member States (Sweden, the Netherlands and Slovenia) that are considered to be at a relatively advanced stage in applying indicators in their policy work and/or are actively taking steps to support the development of youth policy guided by knowledge and evidence.
- Overview of experiences concerning the availability and different uses of indicators in the youth field, based on the material gathered from the individual Member States.

Whilst recognising the wide range of 'good research evidence' that can be used for evidence-based policy-making, this study is primarily concerned with the use of indicators. For the purposes of this study, indicators have been defined more practically as including: descriptive analytical evidence (descriptive surveys and administrative data); public attitudes and understanding; and expert evidence.

Summary of research findings

In terms of the **organisation of youth policy** in Member States:

- Government policies and interventions in relation to young people are implemented across a range of ministries and government agencies in all Member States, although this does not necessarily reflect the focus and content of the national youth policies. Rather, it is likely to reflect prevailing political needs and structures.
- As such, it is important to make a distinction between the organisation of youth policy at the political level versus the operational level: changes in government and re-engineering of government ministries is a feature of democratic processes and does not necessarily prevent continuity of policy delivery within an administration. To this end, having an established youth policy and strategy, together with clear

mechanism and instruments for evidence-based policy making, can, for example, help to ensure a degree of sustainability despite high-level political perturbations.

- There are a range of implementation mechanisms and arrangements that are used to promote coordination (across government) or to 'specialize' delivery (where specific expertise and advice is brought to bear) in the Member States. These measures comprise departments within ministries but also more arms-length advisory bodies, national boards, councils and institutes.
- A key feature of the policy landscape for youth policy is also its multi-layered nature, with responsibilities shared to varying degrees between national, regional, and local actors.

In terms of the **extent of recognition of the need for evidence-based youth policies**:

- Most Member States emphasize the importance of evidence-based policy-making in their respective national youth policies.
- In terms of moving forward the policy signals on evidence-based youth policy, the nature and processes through which indicators and evidence are used to inform and advance youth policy differ across the Member States.
- Similar to many other policy areas, indicators and evidence in most Member States, tend to be used in an ad hoc and reactive way to mobilise support for a particular policy, programme or project through the use of single studies; descriptive analytical evidence; and expert evidence. There is also evidence that indicators (often process and output based) are used to monitor the implementation of action plans and strategies.
- As a complement to such 'conventional' practices, a number of practices for using indicators and evidence in a more systematic and proactive way have been, or are in the process of being, implemented in a number of Member States. These, most notably, include the regular collection and analysis of data on a set of predefined indicators. Notably, the sets of predefined indicators used in these practices tend to cover all policy areas of relevance to youth.
- Other practices for systematically improving the knowledge and understanding of young people include regular youth surveys and national reports.

In terms of **the advantages and added value of using indicators**:

- Indicators provide an unequivocal evidence-base on the situation of young people, including the identification of key issues and challenges, which can be used by policy-makers to guide them in making choices between policy options and/ or adjusting existing policies. On this basis, indicators are also considered helpful in ensuring that interventions that affect young people are relevant and directed at those most in need.
- The use of indicators also provides a basis for developing policy targets which can be monitored on a regular basis. This, in turn, provides a basis for assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies at a broad level.
- Indicators that are systematically collected and made publically available through a database and/ or report, provide a common evidence-base that can be used by a range of audiences, including researchers, practitioners and policy makers across all areas of relevance to youth.
- Practices for using indicators and evidence across all policy areas of relevance to youth in a systematic and coordinated way may help promote coordination and cooperation across all relevant policy areas.
- There are several examples of where indicators have offered key insights into young people which in turn have influenced the focus of youth related policies, programme or projects and/ or led to further research and consultations.

In terms of **the limitations and challenges of using indicators**:

- The main limitations and challenges of using indicators relate to definitional gaps (e.g. youth participation and age) as well as data limitations (e.g. disaggregation of data across several socio-demographic markers and spatial levels).
- It is also widely accepted that it is not possible to formulate, monitor and evaluate policy in fields related to youth solely on the basis of indicators. In particular, in-depth qualitative research, including consultations with key stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, practitioners) and target groups are seen as fundamental complements to indicators in evidence-based policy-making.
- A particular concern with developing and using indicators is that they may encourage comparisons between nations, regions and local areas. Whilst this on the one hand may be useful in terms identifying particular strengths and

weaknesses of nations and sub-areas, there is a danger that it will lead to comparison without consideration of external factors and national/ local contexts. To this end, it is essential that indicators are fully analysed and interpreted, ensuring that the intended users are fully aware of any influencing factors and contexts.

In terms of the **EU role in improving the use of indicators in Member States:**

- The EU could play a key role in improving the use of indicators at the national level, in terms of guiding the choice of indicators and helping to create a common understanding of what data collection is feasible. Such a common framework could subsequently be further developed and built upon by individual Member States to more fully reflect national objectives and policies.
- The EU could also have an important role in terms of disseminating examples of where the use of indicators has been successful and placing more focus on practical arrangements through the introduction of a peer learning programme.
- It can be expected that the forthcoming EU dashboard of indicators will be an important tool for supporting future developments in evidence-based youth policy at the EU, as well as the national level. Indeed, it has been noted that once a common approach has been agreed at the EU level, it is often easier for policy makers at the national level to obtain the attention and resources necessary to implement a similar approach at the national level.

Strategic conclusions

Recognition of the need for, and the benefits of, adopting stronger evidence-based approaches in the youth field is widespread across the Member States, and manifested in several national youth policies. Crucially, progress is also undoubtedly being made in relation to implementing more systematic and proactive evidence-based approaches to youth policy including regular collection and analysis of data on a set of predefined indicators covering all policy areas of relevance to youth, as well as regular youth surveys and national reports. As such there are several examples from which individual Member States may learn.

Importantly, in terms of maximising the advantages and added value of using indicators, the research has identified a number of key principles:

- *Making use of existing information:* data and statistics for the development of indicators are most usefully drawn from existing data sources (e.g. national, international and/ or administrative data sources) in order to avoid unnecessary

duplication and ensure cost effectiveness; although in some cases regular youth surveys may be usefully commissioned to more fully cover areas of relevance to youth, not extensively covered by existing data sources (e.g. participation, volunteering and culture and creativity).

- *Relevance*: indicators need to provide relevant and reliable information in order to inform and advance youth policy; in this regard establishing clear and specific objectives of youth policy will help guide the selection and measurement of indicators.
- *Simplicity*: whilst it may be tempting to select as many indicators as possible, the number of indicators needs to be restricted to the most relevant in order to provide a succinct and simple framework for evidence-based policy.
- *Flexibility (1)*: indicators that provide cross-cutting evidence are particularly helpful and may assist in promoting more coordination and cooperation across all relevant policy areas, by providing an improved understanding of, and different perspectives on, young people.
- *Flexibility (2)*: youth policy tends to be implemented through a multi-layered approach (local, regional, and national) and as such, developing and implementing practices for using indicators requires commitment and alignment at all levels.
- *Continuity*: indicators add value when they are continuously updated and reported upon, taking into account the practicality of data availability and the analytical needs of policy monitoring.
- *Analysis*: practices for using indicators should not just be about collecting data and statistics, it is essential that the data is interpreted and analysed; and that shortcomings and gaps in the data are acknowledged; the need for appropriate interpretation and analysis of indicators is further emphasised by the complexity of multiple influences in youth policy and the very real danger that the indicators are taken out of context and used to produce 'league tables' of Member States.
- *Accessibility*: whilst the data and statistics used to develop relevant indicators tend to be publically available, it may also be useful to collate all the data and statistics on the indicators into a single database and/ or that is publically accessible. This will allow a range of stakeholders, including policy-makers, researchers and practitioners, to query the database for specific as well as more generic evidence needs and requirements.

- *Complementarity*: to the extent that indicators provide a simplification of a relatively complex reality, the collection and analysis of indicators should be complemented by regular in-depth thematic qualitative research, including consultations with key stakeholders and target groups; the themes of such research could be determined by the issues identified by the indicators, in order to provide a strong link between the two elements of evidence; in particular, the in-depth thematic research allows the scope of the evidence-base generated by the indicators to be extended, particularly in those policy areas that are difficult to fully quantify using indicators.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope of the study

Ecorys was commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC), to carry out an assessment on how Member States are currently applying indicators at the national level in areas related to youth. The contract commenced on 26 July 2010 and is scheduled to run for six months.

The general objective of the study was to provide inputs, based on experiences from and practices in the Member States, to the design of a system of using indicators that will support the Commission in developing youth policy guided by knowledge and evidence.

1.2 Structure of the report

The report is structured as follows:

Section 2: Study Context – provides a review of EU youth policy, with particular reference to recent initiatives to improve the knowledge and understanding of youth, together with a review of the academic literature to inform the operational definition of evidence-based policy making for this study.

Section 3: Overview of the Availability and Uses of Indicators in the Member States – provides an overview of the availability and different uses of indicators in fields related to youth, based on experiences from, and practices in, the Member States. In particular, the key research findings and conclusions are based on the Case Studies and Country Fiches presented in Annex 2 and 3.

The study approach for this study is set out in Annex 1.

2.0 Study Context

2.1 Introduction

In order to formulate a working definition of 'evidence-based policy making' to be used during the study, this section provides a broad review of European youth policy, with particular reference to recent initiatives to improve the knowledge and understanding of youth, together with a focussed review of the relevant academic literature on the topic.

2.2 The evolution of EU youth policy

The inclusion of 'youth' as a concept in European policy is a relatively recent phenomenon. Indeed, the scope of EU policies was extended to include the youth field following the **Treaty of Maastricht** in 1993. Article 149 of the Treaty states that Community action shall be aimed at '*...encouraging the development of youth exchanges...*'¹

Notably, until 2001, activities in the youth field were mainly focussed on the consideration and implementation of specific programmes, such as 'Youth for Europe'. However, as the consensus for further action and cooperation in this field developed, a broader EU approach to youth policy was brought forward through the **White Paper on Youth**. The White Paper on Youth was adopted in 2001 and contained a proposal to increase cooperation in four youth priority areas: participation, information, voluntary activities and a **greater understanding and knowledge of youth**. It also proposed that the **youth dimension should be taken into account more when developing policies in other related fields**, including education and training, employment and social inclusion, health and anti-discrimination.

On the basis of the White Paper, the Council of the European Union established a framework for European cooperation in the youth field. In 2005, the framework was updated to take into account the European Youth Pact.

In April 2009, the Commission presented a communication entitled 'An EU Strategy for Youth – Investing and Empowering: a renewed open method of coordination to address youth challenges and opportunities'. The new strategy invites both the Member States and the Commission, in the period 2010–2018, to cooperate in the youth field by means of a renewed 'open method of coordination'. It proposes a cross-sectoral approach, with both

¹¹ Following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, Article 149 was renumbered as Article 165. This states that Union action shall be aimed at "... encouraging the development of youth exchanges...and encouraging the participation of young people in democratic life in Europe".

short and long-term actions, which involve all key policy areas that affect Europe's young people. It emphasises the importance of youth work and defines reinforced measures for a better implementation of youth policies at the EU level. The strategy invites all Member States to organise a permanent and regular dialogue ('structured dialogue') with young people. Furthermore, the Commission in its strategy **encourages a more research and evidence-based youth policy**.

The Resolution on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field for the next decade was adopted by EU Council of Youth Ministers in November 2009. It largely reflects the Commission's communication of April 2009.

The new EU Youth Strategy defines two overall objectives of the new framework:

- more and equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market; and
- active citizenship, social inclusion and solidarity of young people.

More specifically, the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018) identifies eight fields of action in which initiatives should be taken. The table below summarises the main features for each of these fields of action and identifies the related policy interventions.

Table 2.1 The eight fields of action outlined in the EU Youth Strategy

Policy Field	Related Policy Interventions
Education and training Equal access for young people to high quality education and training at all levels and opportunities for lifelong learning should be supported.	Address early school leaving .
	Support youth work and non-formal learning opportunities
	Promote learning mobility of all young people
	Encourage learning in support of young people's innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship .
Employment and entrepreneurship Supporting young people's integration into the labour market, either as employees or as entrepreneurs.	Skills provided matching those required for employment
	Consider the effects of flexicurity on young people
	Provision of career guidance and counselling
	Mobility , free movements of young people
	Entrepreneurship Education
Promoting quality apprenticeship and internships	
Health and well-being Promoting health and well-being of young people	Health and physical activity (EU Physical Activity Guidelines)
	Well-being (physical, mental and social)
	Sexual health
	Health education and raising awareness
	Health and new media (benefits and dangers)
Participation Promoting young people's participation in representative democracy and civil society	Promote the participation of a greater youth diversity in representative democracy
	Civic participation and the new media
	Support political dialogue between youth and policy makers
Voluntary activities Support and recognize the value of youth volunteering	Recognition (certifying) of skills acquired through volunteering
	Promote mobility of volunteers
	Promote quality volunteering and protect volunteers
	Promote intergenerational solidarity through volunteering
Social inclusion Combating youth poverty and social exclusion	Promote youth work and youth centres
	Adopt cross-sectoral approach to address poverty
	Promote openness and intercultural understanding

Policy Field	Related Policy Interventions
	Support young families
Youth and the world Youth involved in policy making processes on global issues (climate change, development cooperation, human rights) outside of the EU.	Raising awareness of global issues among young people
	Youth representatives participation in international meetings (youth international relations)
	Fostering intercultural understanding through exchanges, seminars and training courses
Creativity and culture Supporting youth capacity and opportunities to be creative and youth access to culture	Foster creativity through cultural activities
	Widen access to culture
	Promote creativity through the use of the new media

The continued relevance of youth to EU policy is further underlined by the inclusion of **'Youth on the Move'** as one of the flagship initiatives under the new **EU growth strategy - Europe 2020**. In particular, the 'Youth on the Move' initiative is intended to respond to the challenges young people face and to help them succeed in the knowledge economy.

2.3 Evidence-based EU youth policy

One of the priorities in the White Paper on Youth in 2001 was to increase cooperation in order to gain a **greater understanding and knowledge of youth**. This is further highlighted in the new EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018), which states that: "*Youth policy should be evidence-based. Better knowledge and understanding of the living conditions, values and attitudes of young women and men needs to be gathered and shared with other relevant policy fields as to enable appropriate and timely measures to be taken.*"

To this end, the European Commission ensures that a range of data and statistics on young people is available. For example, a number of reports were published in 2009, including:

- *Youth in Europe - A Statistical Portrait*² – a comprehensive Eurostat publication providing analysis of data across a range of domains, namely demographic aspects; health and living conditions; education and starting out in working life; and participation in cultural and social activities. The publication aims to encourage further interest in, and research on, young people.

² Attached as an annex to the 2009 Council Resolution

- *EU Youth Report*³ - compilation of data and statistics on the situation of young people in Europe. The publication aims to support the Commission's new youth cooperation framework by collecting much of the available statistics and data on the conditions of young people, as well as providing an evidence-base for addressing young people's challenges and improving their situation.
- *European Research on Youth*⁴ - examines the insights which research brings to the question of young peoples' involvement in society and how policymakers can build on research findings in order to enable Member States and the European Commission to harness the significant contribution young people can make as individuals, employees and citizens.

As part of the new EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018), the Commission has also set up an **expert group on youth indicators**. The working group has been given two tasks:

- to propose a dashboard of indicators in the areas of education, employment, social inclusion and health; and
- to provide an overview of possible new indicators in 'core' youth policy areas where they do not yet exist, such as youth participation, volunteering, creativity and culture, youth in the world and for young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

The group will continue to meet on a regular basis and propose updates and revisions of the existing dashboard.

In addition to the provision of data and statistics on young people, the Commission also facilitates knowledge exchange of experiences, through expert meetings, working groups and peer-learning activities. Notably, the Commission has set up a partnership with the Council of Europe in the field of youth, with the promotion of better knowledge in the youth field being a central component of the youth partnership. In particular, the European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCY) has been set up to facilitate the accumulation of knowledge on youth through a network of national correspondents. Moreover, a Pool of European Youth Researchers (PEYR) has been set up to promote better knowledge and understanding of young people in Europe; and support a knowledge-based youth policy.

³ http://ec.europa.eu/youth/pub/pdf/eu-youth-report_en.pdf

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/research/social-sciences/pdf/policy-review-youth_en.pdf

2.4 Defining evidence-based policy making

Although the discourse on **evidence-based policy making** arguably spans a period from Aristotle⁵ to the latest Reith Lecture 2010⁶, there has been an increased focus on it in the last two decades⁷, following attempts by national governments and the European Commission to modernise their policy making apparatus and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of policy decisions. Indeed, as noted above, the 2009 Council Resolution clearly states that *'youth policy should be evidence-based' and 'should produce clear and visible results which should be presented, reviewed and disseminated on a regular basis and in a structured manner, thereby establishing a basis for continuous evaluation. To this end, better knowledge and understanding of the living conditions, values and attitudes of young women and men needs to be gathered and shared with other relevant policy fields as to enable appropriate and timely measures to be taken'*.

An ultimate definition of evidence-based policy making is yet to be developed. However, it has – in sharp contrast to opinion-based policy making – been described as: *'an approach that helps people make well informed decisions about policies, programmes and projects by putting the best available evidence from research at the hearth of policy development and implementation'*⁸.

A key consideration in this respect therefore revolves around the **definition of 'evidence'** (in evidence-based policy making). Whilst defining the term 'evidence' is far from

⁵ As noted by a recent literature review on evidence-based policy making conducted by the Overseas Development Institute, 'The idea of using evidence to inform policy is not new. As far back as ancient Greece, Aristotle put forward the notion that different kinds of knowledge should inform rulemaking. This would ideally involve a combination of scientific knowledge, pragmatic knowledge and value-led knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Ehrenberg, 1999)'. Retrieved from Overseas Development Institute (2005) <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/download/2804.pdf> [page 1, last accessed 21 July 2010]

⁶ In the first of the four 2010 Reith Lectures given by Martin Rees on the topic 'The Scientific Citizen', the Professor and President of the Royal Society, argues – inter alia - that we are increasingly turning to the Government (and the media) to understand the risks and problem we face and to develop appropriate policy responses. But 'in the wake of public confusion over issues like climate change, the swine flu vaccine and, more recently, Iceland's volcanic ash cloud', Prof. Rees calls on scientists to come to the fore and better participating to the policy making process, and to better inform citizens. (Full transcript of the lecture is available here: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00sj9lh>; last accessed 22 July 2010).

⁷ For a non-technical review see, for instance, Overseas Development Institute (2005), Literature Review of Evidence-based policy (EBP) debates, ODI website, http://www.odi.org.uk/rapid/Bibliographies/EBP/docs/EBP_lit_review_web.pdf [last accessed 22 July 2010]

⁸ Davies, P. (1999), 'What is Evidence-Based Education?', *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 47, 2, 108-121.

straightforward, a typology of 'good research evidence' has been presented in a recent study⁹. This is summarised in the table below:

Table 2.2 Summary of different types of evidence

Types of Evidence	Short Description
Descriptive analytical evidence	An important type of research evidence for government comes from descriptive surveys and administrative data about the nature, size and dynamics of a problem, a population, sub-groups, or social activities. Cross sectional, time-series and comparative data on a wide range of variables are regularly collected and used by Governments and National Statistical Agencies using descriptive and analytical methods.
Public attitudes and understanding	Research evidence on the attitudes, values and understanding of citizens is very important for effective government. Citizen's perceptions, experiences and understanding of policy are generally best addressed using qualitative research designs and social survey methods.
Statistical (and econometric) modelling	Such modelling uses linear and logistic regression methods, and assumptions about policy scenarios that need to be manipulated. The more these assumptions, and the variables used in statistical modelling, are based on sound empirical evidence, the greater will be the precision and external validity of such analysis.
Systematic reviews	It can be argued that single studies can provide an unbalanced and unrepresentative view of the total available evidence on a topic or policy issue. This is because they are almost always sample-specific, time-specific, and context-specific. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses of existing evidence may overcome the shortcomings and possible biases of single studies (Cooper and Hedges, 1994; Davies, 2003). Systematic reviews differ from normal literature reviews in that specific analytical procedures and quantitative-based methodologies are in place ¹⁰ .
Single studies, pilot studies and case studies	Single studies, pilot studies and case studies can provide valuable and focussed evidence for particular policies, programmes and projects in specific contexts. However, unlike systematic reviews, they are less able to say much about the variability of populations, contexts and conditions under which policies might work or not work.

⁹ Davies, P. (2004) *Is evidence-based government possible?*, Jerry Lee Lecture, presented at the 4th annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium, Washington DC. Available online at:

<http://www.nationalschool.gov.uk/policyhub/downloads/JerryLeeLecture1202041.pdf> [last accessed on 2 August 2010]

¹⁰ Higgins JPT, Green S (editors). *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* Version 5.0.2 [updated September 2009]. The Cochrane Collaboration, 2009. Available from www.cochrane-handbook.org.

Types of Evidence	Short Description
Impact evidence	Impact evidence is mainly (though not exclusively) concerned with the impact of policy on outcomes, and are generally best served by studies that use experimental and quasi-experimental research designs with good counterfactual measures.
Implementation evidence	Implementation evidence is mainly concerned with the effectiveness of the implementation and delivery of policies, programmes and projects. Experimental and quasi-experimental research designs can greatly help implementation and delivery issues by bringing a degree of comparative rigour to different modes of practice. Effective implementation and delivery, however, also requires high quality qualitative data using in-depth interviews, focus groups, other consultative methods (such as the Delphi and Nominal Group methods), observational methods, participant-observation methods, and social surveys.
Expert evidence	Expert opinion is commonly used to support government policy and practice, either in the form of expert advisory groups or special advisers. However, using experts as a basis for policy making and practice raises problems of selectivity of knowledge and expertise, as well as ensuring that the expertise being provided is up to date and well grounded in the most recent research evidence.

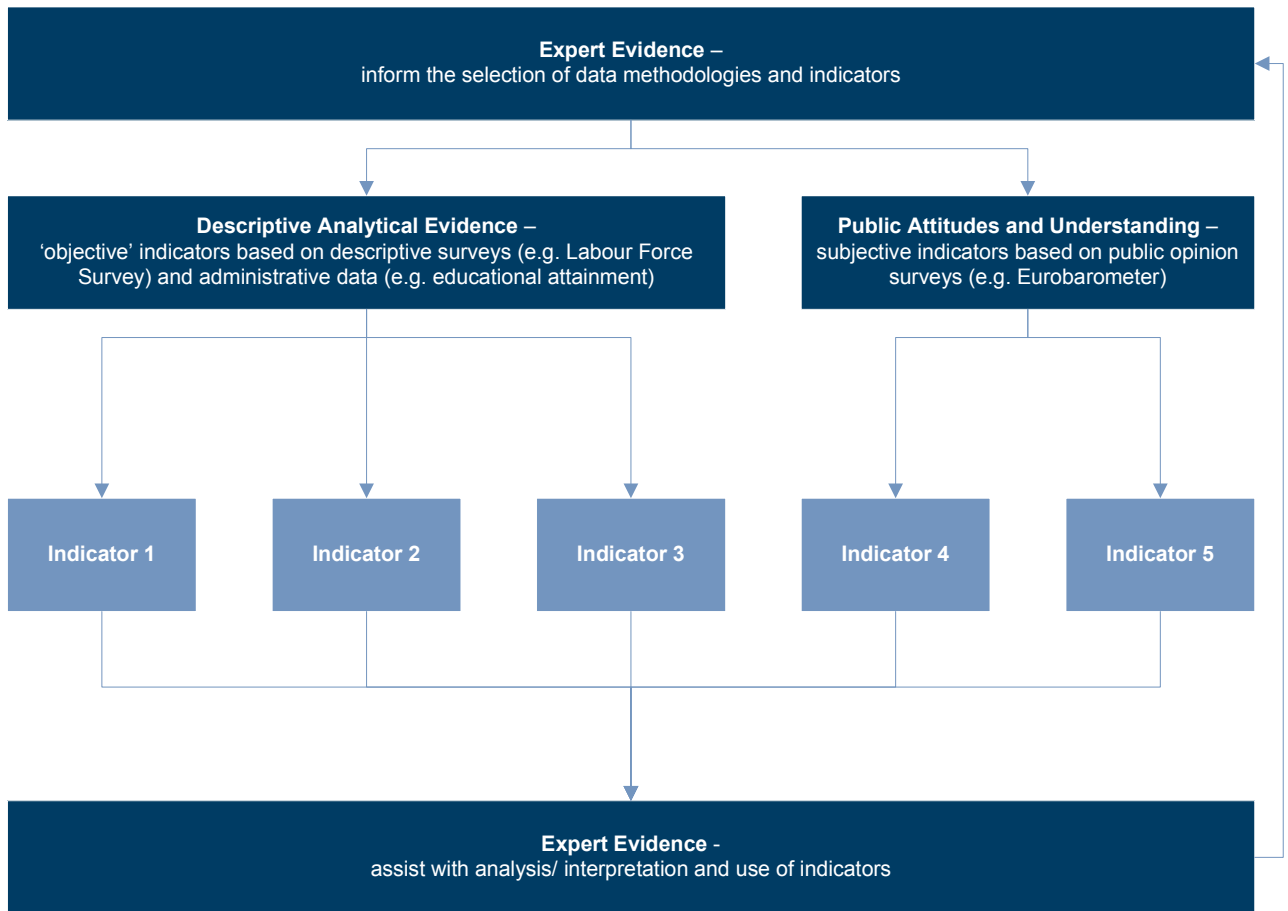
Source: Adapted from Davies, 2004

Importantly, whilst recognising the wide range of 'good research evidence' that can be used for evidence-based policy making, this study is primarily concerned with the use of indicators. Based on the types of evidence presented above, indicators have, for the purposes of this study, been defined more practically as including:

- descriptive analytical evidence (descriptive surveys and administrative data);
- public attitudes and understanding; and
- expert evidence.

The definition of indicators is further elaborated in the figure below:

Figure 2.1 Definition of indicators



Source: Ecorys, 2011

Whilst indicators and research evidence should be considered as a **key input into policy making**, it is widely accepted that it is not possible to develop new policy on the sole basis of these; for two main reasons:

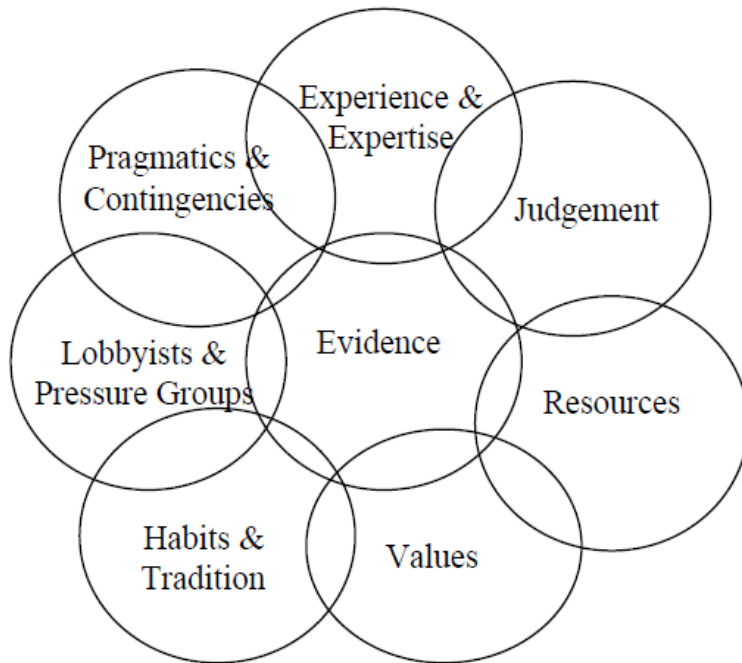
- 1) a lack of quality and/ or quantity of research-based evidence on specific topics;
- 2) even if the latter were available, much of the scientific knowledge is itself uncertain or contested, especially in the social sciences domain¹¹.

Indeed, a **range of factors besides research evidence will inevitably influence policy decisions**. These include: the experience, expertise and judgement of decision makers;

¹¹ Indeed, it now seems to be widely accepted that social sciences – which deal with (not entirely predictable) people and societal behaviours - are not as much of an exact science as formal sciences (mathematics, logics, etc.) or natural sciences (chemistry, biology, etc.) are known to be.

the resources available (time, people, budgets); widespread societal/ cultural values (ideology, culture, political beliefs); pressure exercised by lobbyists, interest groups and consultants; institutional habits, traditions and contingencies (parliamentary terms, timetables, procedure, informal habits, etc). The range of factors influencing policy making is further illustrated in the figure below:

Figure 2.2 Factors influencing policy making



Source: Davies (2004)

3.0 Overview of the Availability and Use of Indicators in the Member States

3.1 Identifying the key dimensions

In drawing upon the experiences from, and practices in, the Member States, we have identified the following key dimensions concerning the application of evidence-based policy making (particularly the use of indicators) in fields related to youth (at the national level):

1. **Organisation of youth policy** – *we know (from a range of policy areas, not just youth policy) that organisations and the structures used to deliver policy and activity often play a critical role in determining effectiveness, in particular the need for leadership, ownership and collaborative approaches between government ministries. The strength of linkages between the producers and users of indicators are therefore significant.*
2. **Recognition of need for, and moving towards, an evidence-based approach to youth policy** – *it is important to gauge the extent to which key actors acknowledge a need for strengthening the use of indicators, making it more likely that they will put in place appropriate and sustainable mechanisms.*
3. **Advantages and added value of using indicators** – *linked to the 'recognition of need' dimension above, there is also a need to articulate and demonstrate clearly the benefits of adopting an evidence-based approach to youth policy. The more policy makers and others recognise significant 'wins,' the more likely it is that an evidence-based approach will attract buy-in, momentum and the degree of sustainability required. In this way, sharing of best practice can promote and support positive change.*
4. **Limitations and challenges of using indicators** – *again in common with many policy areas, there is no 'magic bullet' and it is important to identify and understand the key limitations and challenges faced by those working on the development of new approaches and systems for evidence-based policy making, and perhaps even more crucially, the intended users.*
5. **EU role in improving the use of indicators in Member States** – *to what extent has EU policy and activity in this field had an influence at Member State level and what role might it play in future in terms of setting the agenda for and assisting the development of evidence-based policy making in the youth field?*

It is important to note that these headings do not represent a 'model', but simply a systematic framework that allows us to understand the evidence compiled and focus on the principle dimensions, while recognising that each individual Member State presents a different national context within which these operate.

In the next section we use the key dimensions set out above to present the key research findings from the consultations with contacts in the Member States.

3.2 Organisation of youth policy

Government policies and interventions in relation to young people are implemented across a range of ministries and government agencies in all Member States, although this does not necessarily reflect the focus and content of the youth policy. Rather, it is likely to reflect the prevailing political needs and structures. As such, it is important to make a distinction between organisation of youth policy at the political level, versus the operational level: changes in government and re-engineering of government ministries is a feature of democratic processes and does not necessarily prevent continuity of policy delivery within an administration. To this end, having an established youth policy and strategy, together with clear mechanism and instruments for evidence-based policy making, can help to ensure a degree of sustainability despite high-level political perturbations.

A review of the material collated from the consultations highlights the diversity of approaches to the organisation of youth policy across the Member States.

A significant number of the countries surveyed place responsibility for youth policy within **national ministries focused around families, health and equal opportunities**. For example, in **Ireland** the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) is housed within the Department for Health and Children. Notably, the remit of the OMYCA was expanded to incorporate youth affairs in 2008, which was previously the responsibility of the Department for Education and Science. In **Spain**, youth policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Social Policies and Equality. National youth policy in **Luxembourg** is the responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Integration and at the federal level in **Germany** youth policy is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth. In **Austria**, the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth acts as the main coordinator of youth policy, whilst in **Hungary** the national responsibility of youth policy lies with the Ministry of National Resources.

Another significant grouping of countries places youth policy within the overall responsibility of **ministries with a strong education focus**, combined with other related

policy areas, typically including culture, sport, research and science. In **Slovakia**, for example, the Ministry of Education, through its Department for Children and Youth, has responsibility for youth policy, while in **Finland** the remit lies with the Ministry of Education and Culture, which contains a youth policy division. In the **UK**, the Department for Education is responsible for youth policy and in **Estonia** it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Research (Department of Youth Affairs). In **Latvia**, overall responsibility of youth policy lies within the Ministry of Education and Science, while in the **Czech Republic** youth policy is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and in **Romania** of the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport. Similarly, in **Slovenia** national youth policy is the responsibility of the Office for Youth, which is part of the Ministry of Education and Sport. National youth policy in **Sweden** is implemented across a range of ministries and government agencies, with the Ministry for Education and Science having overall responsibility for the coordination of government policies and interventions in relation to youth. In **Malta**, following a recent reorganisation of government, youth policy now falls within the remit of the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family (previously the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport) which has a designated parliamentary secretariat for youth and sport. In **France**, youth policy is the responsibility of the Department for Youth and Civic Society, under the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Civic Society (as of November 2010).

A small number of Member States assign responsibility for youth policy to **ministries in the fields of employment and labour policies**. For example, ultimate responsibility for youth policy in **Lithuania** lies with the Department of Youth Affairs, within the Ministry of Social Security and Labour.

Interestingly, only one Member State - Italy - assigns responsibility for youth policy to a **Ministry of Youth** (although it is a Ministry without a portfolio). In particular, the Ministry is responsible for policy making functions and the coordination of all initiatives, including legislation and regulation, on matters relating to youth. Youth policy is, however, largely implemented at the local and regional level, in accordance with a centrally established framework ('decreto di riparto').

Our research also highlights a range of implementation mechanisms and arrangements that are used to promote coordination (across government) or to 'specialize' delivery (where specific expertise and advice is brought to bear). These measures comprise departments within ministries but also more arms-length advisory bodies, national boards, councils and institutes.

In the **Czech Republic**, the Youth Department in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has a specialised organisation - the National Institute of Children and Youth (NICY) - at its disposal. In particular, NICY provides support to those involved in leisure learning and non-formal education. Youth policy in the Czech Republic is also influenced by the Chamber of Youth which has a coordinating role and represents non-governmental, not-for-profit organisations, leisure learning school facilities, representatives of central public administration authorities and youth work specialists for work with youth. The Chamber of Youth submits its own initiatives and recommendations to the national government and local authorities while playing the role of an advisory body to the Minister of education, youth and sports.

In **Estonia**, youth policy is implemented by the Estonian Youth Work Centre (a government agency administered by the Ministry of Education and Research).

In **Finland**, the responsible ministry (Education and Culture), contains a Youth Policy Division, which has responsibilities including the drafting of national development programmes, coordinating youth policy across government and supporting research which, in practice, is carried out by the Youth Research Network. The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (Nuora) is an expert body which assists the Ministry and is responsible for reviewing the implementation of the development programme and producing information about young people and their living conditions.

In **France**, all the ministries involved in youth policy can be gathered together at the initiative of the Prime Minister through an inter-ministerial committee, which was established in 1982 (although the committee convened for the first time in 2009).

In **Hungary**, youth policy is supported operationally by Mobilitas National Youth Service (a government agency), which since 2010 has been transferred into the National Institute for Social and Family Affairs.

In **Ireland**, since 2005 the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) has been responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Children's Strategy and bringing greater coherence to policy making for children. As part of the original National Children's Strategy (2000-2010), the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC) was established in May 2001. There is also a National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC) in place which has a specific function in relation to youth work matters. Both the NCAC and the NYWAC provide an advisory role in relation to issues impacting on children and young people. These fora comprise representatives of statutory agencies, voluntary sector, research community, parents and young and

provide an advisory function to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

In **Latvia**, the co-ordination of youth policies in different fields is undertaken through the Youth Consultative Council, which includes representatives from different Ministries, local authorities, NGOs and other key stakeholders. It provides direction and makes the key decisions concerning the development of youth policy.

In **Lithuania**, the Council for Youth Affairs is an advisory body to the Department of Youth Affairs and it includes representatives from youth organisations and state institutions. The Council for Youth Affairs' main task is to consider the main issues of youth policy and submit proposals to the Department of Youth Affairs on the implementation of a youth policy meeting the needs of youth and youth organisations. Youth organisations are represented in the Council for Youth Affairs by the Lithuanian Youth Council (LIJOT).

In **Luxembourg**, implementation of youth policy at the national level is the responsibility of the National Youth Service, which is the main contact point for young people and relevant stakeholder, to whom it should provide information, advice and support. At the local level, the National Youth Service (and the Ministry of Family and Integration) collaborates with municipalities through the Municipal Youth Plan (Plan Communal Jeunesse). The 2008 Youth Act also calls for an inter-ministerial committee to be set up to address the transversal nature of youth policy.

In **Malta**, the recently established national youth agency, Agenzija Zghazagh, represents the Government's arm to implement and mainstream youth policy. In particular, it is intended to undertake and coordinate research into specific issues aimed at assessing the state of play with respect to youth affairs.

In **Slovakia**, the Ministry of Education, through its Department of Children and Youth, chairs the Government Council for Children and Youth, which has an advisory role and is responsible for "the grant-making policy of the ministries focused on children and youth". The Government Council is also the coordination body of the Slovak Government for interdepartmental, conceptual, methodological and legislative activities in the field of children and youth care. The implementation of youth policy is delegated to IUVENTA (the Institute of Youth), an agency of the Department of Children and Youth. IUVENTA is responsible for coordinating and organising activities related to the support and development of youth work, educational and research projects and the creation of mechanisms for the distribution of information on youth.

In **Slovenia**, a Government committee for youth has been set up and is made up of

representatives from youth organisations as well as representatives from all Ministries of relevance to youth.

In **Spain**, specific youth policies are developed and prepared by the Youth Institute (Instituto para la Juventud, INJUVE), a public body attached to the Ministry responsible for youth affairs. INJUVE was created in 1977, and is responsible for a large number of services and initiatives, such as managing the EU 'Youth in Action' programme in Spain, providing information for young people, fostering creativity among young people, and offering entrepreneurship training. The Institute also hosts the Youth Observatory, which is in charge of collecting evidence about youth topics.

In **Sweden**, the National Board for Youth Affairs gathers and disseminates knowledge and information on young people's living conditions; assures that the youth perspective is taken into account in all policy areas of relevance to youth; supports municipalities in the development of local youth policy; and seeks to ensure that whatever activities are carried out are based on a sound knowledge of young people's circumstances and views.

A key feature of the policy landscape for youth policy is also its multi-layered nature, with responsibilities shared to varying degrees between national, regional, and local actors.

In **Austria**, the 'core' areas of youth policy - extracurricular youth work, educational and vocational training institutions, and the work of youth associations and public youth work, such as sports, educational and cultural clubs - are primarily the responsibility of the youth departments of the various federal states (Landesjugendreferate).

In **Germany**, at the federal states (Länder) level there are 16 youth ministries and youth offices responsible for implementation, promotion, and further development of voluntary and statutory youth services; and at the local level there are youth offices located within each administrative area, which are responsible for the planning and funding of youth services.

In **Italy**, framework programme agreements ('Accordi di Programma Quadro' - APQs), in line with the national framework ('decreto di riparto'), have been defined with the regional governments of all the regions, including the two autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano. Collaboration in the youth field also occurs by way of agreements with the Union of Italian Provinces ('Unione delle Province d'Italia' - UPI) and the National Association of Italian Municipalities ('Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani' - ANCI).

In **the Netherlands**, a distinction is made between preventative youth policy – for which

the local authorities are responsible – and the youth care system, which is the responsibility of the provinces. Local preventative youth policy includes education, leisure time and health. It also includes specific preventative tasks, such as access to help and care coordination (with a special focus on parenting support) which are offered by ‘youth and family centres’. The youth care system covers all forms of care available to parents and children in order to provide support where there are cases of serious developmental and parenting problems.

In **Spain**, a very substantial number of policies and interventions affecting young people (health, education, employment, entrepreneurship, culture) are the responsibility of the autonomous communities (regions). For instance, many, if not all, of the regions have their own youth institutes and strategic plans. The regional initiatives are coordinated nationally through the Inter-territorial Council of Youth Directors.

In **Sweden**, municipalities have considerable autonomy on how youth policy is implemented. The national youth policy is compulsory for ministries and central government agencies, but only advisory at the local level.

3.3 **Recognition of need for, and moving towards, an evidence-based approach to youth policy**

To the extent that the vast majority of Member States have a specific youth policy (recognising that some of these have been prepared relatively recently) there is clearly widespread recognition at national government level that youth policy deserves an explicit policy response to define priorities and, in many though not all cases, that a cross-cutting approach is required. The following examples illustrate this:

In **Belgium (NL)**, at the national level, Flemish youth policy is primarily guided by the Flemish Parliament Act of 18 July 2008 on Flemish youth and children’s rights policy, whilst at the local level, youth policy is guided by the Flemish Parliament Act of 14 February 2003 on supporting and stimulating the municipal, inter-municipal and provincial youth policy and youth work policy as modified by the 23 December 2005 and 15 December 2006 Flemish Parliament Acts. A new ‘Flemish Youth Policy Plan’ is currently in the process of being developed and is expected to be adopted by the Flemish parliament in 2011.

In **Belgium (FR)**, the transversal dimension of youth issues has been echoed in recent debates, and the new community government’s programme for the 2009-2014 legislature

includes a pledge to develop a transversal '12-25 plan for youth' that would bring together all strands of policy related to young people at various levels of government. The plan is still in its early stages of preparation, which is foreseen to be complex and lengthy process particularly given the number of actors that the French Community government plans to bring together.

Youth policy in **the Czech Republic** is guided by the Government Policy on Children and Young People for 2007-2013. It was defined based on the findings of experts from several ministries. The priority themes of the policy cover all areas of relevance to youth.

Youth policy and youth work in **Estonia** is primarily based on the National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, which introduces a much wider definition of youth policy and youth work. This reflects an acknowledgement by the Government that the development of young people will be influenced by a range of factors across a number of policy areas, including education, employment, health, culture and crime. Youth policy in Estonia is therefore described by the government as a horizontal and integrated policy that provides 'coordinated and purposeful activities' concerning all aspects of relevance to improve young people's living conditions and development.

In **Finland**, the Youth Act (2006) requires that the Government adopts a youth policy development programme every four years. The current Child and Youth Policy Development Programme covers the period 2007 to 2011; policy areas and actions within the development programme include improvement in the living conditions of children and young people, with a focus on gaining more information on child poverty; early identification of the risk of social exclusion and ill-health; education and employment; and evaluation of decisions and resolutions in terms of their implications for children. Children and youth policy is focused on promoting preventative work, as opposed to remedial work.

In **France**, the revival of the Committee for Youth and the release of the Green Book signalled a renewed interest in youth issues and policies. Also, the 2011 budget includes, for the first time, a Transversal Policy Document on youth policies, which brings together all government policies related to youth across a wide range of governmental bodies, from agriculture to justice.

In **Hungary**, youth policy is guided by the National Youth Strategy (adopted in 2009), together with the National Youth Action Plan for 2010-11.

In **Ireland**, the National Children's Strategy (2000-2010) has three goals: children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in

accordance with their age and maturity; children's lives will be better understood and their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services; and, children will receive quality support and services to promote all aspects of their development. A new National Children's Strategy is currently being developed which will build upon the advances achieved in the National Children's Strategy (2000-2010).

While youth policy in **Italy** is largely implemented at the local and regional level, a centrally established framework ('decreto di riparto'), sets out four priorities: to promote employment and social policies for young people; to promote the mass communication of positive examples of young people as opposed to the often negative examples given by the media; to support citizenship education; and to tackle youth discomfort, etc; to promote youth participation, volunteering and intercultural dialogue; fostering a merit-based rather than a relationship-based socio-economic environment; enhancing creative capacity; and encouraging youth culture; and stimulating youth entrepreneurship.

In **Latvia**, youth is a relatively new policy area. The Youth Law and Youth Policy Guidelines 2009-2018 were adopted in 2008 and 2009 respectively. The main policy goal is to improve the quality of life of young people and the three main areas identified in the guidelines are: youth policy co-ordination; youth participation and provision of leisure time activities; and youth social and economic development, competitiveness and social inclusion.

In **Lithuania**, the main document guiding the implementation of youth policies is the 2003 Law on Youth Policy Framework. In addition, a long-term strategy defining policy priorities up to 2019 was adopted by the Government in December 2010. The main priorities identified in this are: increasing the participation of young people; ensuring that social security, education and health provision meets the needs of young people; entrepreneurship; inter-institutional co-operation among different stakeholders; the establishment of an information and advice system for the young people; and the provision of non-formal and informal learning opportunities.

National youth policy in **Luxembourg** is guided by the 2008 Youth Act, which acknowledges the 'transversal' nature of youth policy. Moreover, it makes a distinction between the transversal and global youth policy on the one hand and the 'specific sectoral dimension' of youth policy with regards to youth organisation on the other.

A revised National Youth Policy was recently published in **Malta** and covers the period 2010-2013. The policy encompasses all of the areas which are directly linked to the well being of young people reflected in five horizontal threads (participation and engagement;

youth information; social inclusion; family; and mobility) and 11 vertical themes (education; employment; health and wellbeing; culture and the arts; community cohesion and volunteering; sport; leisure; environment; information society; youth justice; and transitions and vulnerability).

In **Poland**, the National Youth Strategy, adopted in 2003 and covering the period up to 2012, provides a comprehensive framework for youth policy. Specifically, the objectives are to: create and equalise opportunities of development and self-realisation of young people; create chances for the development of own activities of young people; prevent the marginalisation of young people; develop international youth cooperation; build a system of youth information; and provide educational and vocational training to adults working with young people.

Since 2008 youth policy in **Slovakia** has been guided by 'Key areas and action plans of state policy towards children and youth in Slovak Republic'.

In **Slovenia**, a new Youth Act was adopted in 2010, providing the legal basis for the development of a separate national programme for youth, covering young people aged 15-29 years. The intention is that the new national programme for youth, which is expected to be implemented in 2012, will adopt a horizontal approach to youth policy, incorporating all policy areas of relevance to youth.

In **Sweden**, the current national youth policy has its foundation in the 2004 youth policy bill (The Power to Decide – The Right to Welfare). The overarching aim is to ensure that young people (between the ages of 13 and 25 years) have genuine access to welfare and influence. A distinguishing feature of the 2004 youth policy bill is that interventions regarding young people should be integrated/ mainstreamed into all policy areas of relevance to youth and should be based on existing objectives in these policy areas which are: education and learning; employment and self sufficiency; health and social exclusion; influence and representation; and culture and leisure. National youth policy has been continuously refined through annual Government budget allocations and instructions to Ministries and government agencies. More recently, the Government also set out the future direction of the national youth policy in the 2009 Government strategy for youth policy.

In the devolved administrations in the **UK**, the Welsh Assembly Government has seven core aims in relation to children and young people (parenting and childcare; learning and working; health, child protection and care; play and leisure; participation and equality; safe home and community; and child poverty) which are underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. 'Extending Entitlement' is the flagship policy for

youth support services in Wales and brings together all services, support and opportunities for young people aged 11 to 25. In Scotland, a national youth work strategy was published in 2007, setting out the role of youth work in achieving the broader aims of the Scottish Executive that young people (aged 11 to 25) are nurtured, safe, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible. In Northern Ireland, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister developed a 10 year strategy for children and young people (2006 to 2016). The Department of Education in Northern Ireland is also in the process of developing a new strategy 'Priorities for Youth' which will build upon the current strategy for the delivery of youth work in Northern Ireland.

Developing a national youth policy *per se* can be seen as the first step in strengthening outcomes for interventions. Importantly, the consultations also identify strong policy signals concerning evidence-based policy making (and the use of indicators) in their respective national youth policies, as illustrated by the following examples:

In **Belgium (NL)**, the Act of 23 December 2005 stipulates that each municipality and province must draw up a policy plan on youth (work), including a description of the existing situation of young people and their needs. A new 'Flemish Youth Policy Plan' is currently in the process of being developed and is expected to be adopted by the Flemish parliament in 2011. Notably, it is anticipated that this plan will include clear references to the use of indicators for monitoring and evaluation. In particular, it is anticipated that it will identify and use a range of outcome indicators.

In the **Czech Republic**, one of the priority themes in the Government Policy on Children and Young People for 2007-2013 is to improve the information about and for young people.

In **Estonia**, the National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 states that there is a 'need for the consistent study and analyses of the young people's life style'. More specifically, the strategy notes that the following developments are required: consistent and systematic assessment and analysis to enable comparison; improve the quality and capacity of youth studies; and take into consideration the study results in formulating policies.

In **Finland**, there is strong recognition of the need to use evidence in policymaking and indicators have a clear role. Having access to up-to-date information is stated as being essential for the monitoring and future policy planning of the Child and Youth Policy Programme.

In **France**, there are signs of an increased recognition of the need for evidence and indicators in youth policy, with 74 indicators, relevant to the achievements of youth policy objectives, identified and set out in the Transversal Policy Document.

In **Germany**, at the Federal level, the promotion of structures and activities leading to a better understanding of youth is governed by the Social Code, 8th volume (SGB VIII) Child & Youth Services. In particular, this specifies that the Federal Government must submit a report on the situation of young people; and the efforts and achievements of youth services to the German Bundestag (Parliament) and the Bundesrat (Federal Council) in every legislative period. At the federal state level, there are 'Länderjugendberichte', which are the equivalent of the above instrument at the federal level. The topics covered are designated by the federal states' officials and are completely independent from the federal level.

In **Hungary**, the National Youth Strategy explicitly states that indicators should be developed to assess the developments in youth policy.

In **Ireland**, the youth policy includes the goal better to understand children's lives through evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services.

In **Latvia**, the Youth Law and Youth Policy Guidelines 2009-2018 recognise the importance of the evidence-based youth policy and the necessity of defining the key elements and objectives.

In **Lithuania**, the need to use indicators in youth policy is increasingly recognised and it is taken into account in the recent long-term strategy for youth (2011-2019). This represents the first time that the principle of using indicators in youth policy is foreseen in a strategic document. Significantly, the establishment of a framework for evidence-based policy making at local level is foreseen in the Programme for Youth Policy Development at Local Level 2010-2012.

In **Luxembourg**, the 2008 Youth Act calls for a national report on the situation of youth to be completed every five years and for a Youth Observatory to be established to collect data for the national report and to contribute to European youth policy. The Youth Act also acknowledges the need to base policy on the 'knowledge of the situation of youth' and on the 'active consultation of young people'.

In **Poland**, there is an explicit intention in the National Youth Strategy to create a strong centre for youth research to solve youth issues and challenges.

In **Slovakia**, an evaluation of youth policy has resulted in a national youth report providing a range of statistical information on young people.

In **Slovenia**, a number of carefully selected indicators are expected to be determined once the national programme for youth has been developed, which will relate particularly to the living conditions of young people rather than outputs and processes.

In **Sweden**, the collection, analysis and dissemination of knowledge on young people's living conditions is, according to the Ministry for Education and Science and the National Board for Youth Affairs, fundamental to national youth policy. Indeed, the 2004 youth policy bill states that the development of young people's living conditions should be followed up regularly, through one or more measurable indicators across all the policy areas of relevance to youth. Furthermore, it states that thematic in-depth studies should be regularly undertaken, together with regular attitude and value surveys.

In terms of moving forward the policy signals on evidence-based youth policy, the research highlights that the nature and processes through which indicators and evidence are used to inform and advance youth policy differ across the Member States.

Similar to many other policy areas, indicators and evidence in most Member States, tend to be used in an ad hoc and reactive way to mobilise support for a particular policy, programme or project through the use of single studies; descriptive analytical evidence; and expert evidence. There is also evidence that indicators (often process and output based) are used to monitor the implementation of action plans and strategies.

As a complement to such 'conventional' practices, a number of practices for using indicators and evidence in a more systematic and proactive way have been, or are in the process of being, implemented in a number of Member States. These, most notably, include the regular collection and analysis of data on a set of predefined indicators covering all fields of relevance to youth, as well as regular youth surveys and national reports, as illustrated by the following examples:

In **Austria**, the Federal Ministry responsible for youth is legally obliged to provide the Parliament with a report on the situation of young people in Austria each legislative period (every five years). The latest report - 'The situation of youth, youth work and youth policy in Austria' – will be presented to the Parliament in 2011. In addition to the national report, a youth monitoring survey is conducted with approximately 800 young people around three or four times a year. The survey covers different policy areas, linked to the

current key policy areas during the relevant legislative period. At the federal states level, there are 'Länderjugend berichte', which are the equivalent of the national report. The topics covered in these reports are designated by the federal states officials and are independent from the federal level. Moreover, in the federal state of Vorarlberg a pilot project is currently exploring the development of a system of using indicators. However, only 12 out of the 96 municipalities in Vorarlberg have agreed to participate in the project. Moreover, the participating municipalities have only agreed to collect data on 30 out of the 100 'policy relevant' indicators identified at the start of the project.

In **Estonia**, a national youth monitoring system is currently in the process of being developed. The development of the national youth monitoring system is funded through the national programme 'Increasing the Quality of Youth Work', which lasts from 2008-2013 and is largely funded by the ESF. A range of data and research on young people already exists in Estonia to support the development of a national youth monitoring system, particularly in relation to education, employment and delinquencies. However, a particular challenge will be the identification and development of suitable indicators relating to youth participation, informal education and the quality of youth work. It is expected that the national youth monitoring system will also include provisions to support more qualitative in-depth thematic studies and research. Notably, the development of the monitoring system in Estonia largely draws on best practice from the EU and beyond, most notably the Netherlands, Sweden and New Zealand.

In **Finland**, work has recently been undertaken to develop a set of indicators and standards for information about children and young people. In particular, the Ministry has established two working groups – one considering children under 18 and one considering young adults aged 18 to 29. Both the groups have prepared a list of around 50 indicators covering the following themes: health; education; involvement (participation); employment (in the context of young adults); livelihood; safety and support of society. The Finnish Government also has set of indicators for monitoring social progress. 'Findicator' comprises around 100 indicators covering all policy areas. These were developed to reflect the population as a whole but some are relevant to youth policy as well (for example child welfare and educational progression). Indicators comprise both statistics and qualitative research. Relevant statistics are produced by Statistics Finland, as well as the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). Overall, data coverage for the indicators is felt to be very good for education and employment, and health and wellbeing. However, information on participation is less comprehensive.

In **Hungary**, youth surveys, based on a sample of 8,000 young people, have been carried out every four years since 2000, covering young people attitudes towards a range of topics including youth work. National reports on the situation of children and young

people have also been presented to the Parliament on an annual basis since 2000 (although from 2010 these will be published every four years). The national reports contains both qualitative and quantitative information regarding the situation of young people and youth workers, as well as an assessment of the implementation of youth policy. The national report also includes the key findings from the youth survey. Reflecting the multi-layered implementation of youth policy, regional reports on the implementation of youth policy, together with an analysis of the situation of young people and youth workers, are also published. To date, three editions of the regional reports have been published (the most recent one in 2010).

In **Ireland**, indicators are regularly used in the biennial State of the Nation's Children report series, which is split into four areas: socio-demographics, children's relationships, children's outcomes, and formal and informal supports. The evidence used to compile the report consists of a combination of national statistics (including census data) and survey data (sourced for major international studies such as PISE and HBSC). In addition, a national longitudinal study of children (Growing Up in Ireland) was launched in 2006 as part of the National Children's Strategy. The study follows the development of almost 20,000 children: an infant cohort of approximately 11,100 nine-month olds (data collected when children in this cohort are nine-months and three-years old) and a child cohort of approximately 8,500 nine-year olds (data collected when children in this cohort are nine-years and thirteen-years old). This will help to address existing data gaps around the views and opinions of young people and also to provide evidence which charts the development of children over time, examining progress and wellbeing at critical stages and the key factors that may help or hinder this development. The first waves of data collection for both cohorts have been completed. A second wave of data collection for the infant cohort commenced in early December 2010 when the infants reached their third birthday. A second wave of data collection for the nine-year old cohort will commence in mid-2011, when these children reach 13 years old. There will potentially be additional waves of data collection for both cohorts.

In **Italy**, the Ministry of Youth promotes, in cooperation with other ministries, universities and civil society organisations, a number of evidence-based studies and reports that improve the knowledge and understanding of young people, including, most notably, the 2008 and the 2009 National Reports on the Situation of Youth. These reports provide a detailed, overall look at the situation of young people in Italy (at the national, regional and, if possible, provincial and municipal levels), mainly focusing on demographic aspects, labour and economic conditions, mobility, social aspects (housing, lifestyles, participation to civil society and politics), health, immigration and emigration. The data is primarily sourced from the Italian National Institute of Statistics, including administrative

data and sample surveys. Recently, a number of bespoke youth surveys have also been undertaken in Italy, including surveys of young people's attitudes and values in 2008 on behalf of the Italian Agency for the Youth in Action Programme and the Department of Youth; and surveys on youth employment and mobility in 2010 on behalf of the Department of Youth.

In **Latvia**, most youth policy research is ad-hoc and reactive, however, recently there have been attempts to introduce a more systematic approach to the collection of information at national and local level. For example, an initiative to introduce indicators concerning the evaluation of youth policy at the local level is currently being undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Science. More than 100 indicators have been identified which cover quantitative, qualitative and statistical information across a range of policy domains: youth work, participation in decision making, education, health, social welfare, social security and employment. The aim of the initiative is to provide tools that can be used at local level to plan youth policies. The initiative was launched two years ago and so far the set of indicators has been prepared and tested in two municipalities. Currently, using funding from the EU Youth in Action programme, five more municipalities are undertaking research on the situation of young people, based on these indicators.

In **Luxembourg**, the first national report since 2001 was published in 2010. The report is deliberately focused on the situation of young people themselves rather than on the impact of youth policy. By following this approach, the report intends to offer the most realistic description of the difficulties encountered by young people and an open basis for further discussion by policy makers, rather than a narrower description of the impact of existing initiatives. The report also identifies policy fields where there is a lack of data and evidence, in order to encourage further research in these areas. The national youth report is expected to be presented every five years according to the Youth Act. In addition, a Youth Observatory, intended to link Ministry representatives, researchers, a representative of the higher youth council, as well as a representative of youth organisations and a representative from the national youth service, is expected to be set up. More specifically, the Youth Observatory is intended to 'prepare, coordinate and initiate surveys, recommendations, analysis, studies, reports on the different aspects of the situation of young people in Luxembourg' (Article 13 Youth Act 2008). However, in reality, the Youth Observatory is likely to represent a consultative body, whose primary mission is to coordinate initiatives, since it is not endowed with any financial resources.

In **the Netherlands**, the National Youth Monitor was launched out of the desire to have unambiguous information and knowledge about youth, as well as to allow ministries and government agencies to develop a common framework for youth policy and to cooperate on the basis of this framework to tackle existing problems. The National Youth Monitor

was commissioned by the Ministry for Youth and Family and is implemented by the Central Bureau of Statistics. More specifically, the National Youth Monitor provides a summary of information, available in print and online, about the situation of young people (aged 0-24) in the Netherlands. The monitor contains data trends on young people from 2000 and covers the following domains: young people and families; health and welfare; education; employment; and justice. The largest set of data available concerns education and justice, whilst it generally contains less data on health, especially for the youngest group. In total, 60 indicators are collected. The indicators can be broken down by age, gender and ethnic background, and the aim is to also make this breakdown available at the regional and local level in future.

In **Slovenia**, the Office for Youth, in collaboration with the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, is in the process of developing a Youth Observatory. The Youth Observatory is expected to coordinate the collation, analysis and dissemination of indicators and evidence related to young people (aged 15-29 years). Notably, the Social Protection Institute already operates a Child Observatory, developed, on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, as part of the national programme for children and youth and focussing on young people aged 0-19 years. The Child Observatory currently maintains and updates a database with over 1,000 indicators across a range of policy areas of relevance to children and youth. The database is currently not publically available, although much of the data and statistics have been collated from official data sources. With regards to the new Youth Observatory, the intention is to select a more limited number of indicators and to make the database freely available to all stakeholders, including policy makers, researchers and youth organisations. Importantly, the stakeholders consulted advocate that appropriate interpretation and analysis of the indicators is undertaken, in order to make the data more accessible to policy makers.

In **Sweden**, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs regularly produces a number of reports: Youth Today ('Ung idag') – an annual compilation and analysis of 85 indicators organised across five policy areas of relevance to youth (education and learning; employment and self sufficiency; health and social exclusion; influence and representation; and culture and leisure); Focus ('Fokus') – an annual in-depth thematic analysis on specific policy areas of relevance to youth, such as health, work, disadvantaged youth, etc; Young People with Attitude ('Unga med Attityd') – an attitude and value survey carried out by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs in 2007 (previously undertaken in 1997 and 2002). In order to gain better knowledge of young people's situation at the local level and to help develop an effective local youth policy across different policy areas of relevance to youth, the Swedish National Board for Youth

Affairs has also developed a survey that can be used by municipalities - Local Follow-Up of Youth Policy (LUPP). The areas covered in the survey include: leisure; school; politics and influence; safety/ security; health; work; and the future. As of 2010, the survey has been used by approaching half of the 290 municipalities in Sweden and completed by more than 100,000 young people. In 2010, 33 municipalities are undertaking the survey. Based on consultations with municipalities and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs it is understood that the reason why the survey is not used universally across Sweden's municipalities is that some municipalities, particularly the large urban ones, already collate and analyse a range of data and information on young people. Moreover, the National Board for Youth Affairs requires the commitment of time and resources from the municipalities to undertake the survey properly.

In the devolved administrations of the **UK**, the Department for Education in England was, under the previous Government, required to report progress against a target (PSA14) which was made up of five indicators: NEETs, youth crime, teenage pregnancies, substance misuse and positive activities. In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government publishes the Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor which aims to give a holistic picture of the lives of those aged 0 to 18 years (from 2011 the ages covered in the monitor will be extended to 0-25 years). It collates evidence from statistical returns and surveys to provide indicators on a range of themes: early years; health; education; access to play, sport, leisure and culture; rights and entitlements; safe home and community; and ensuring no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty. It also reports on progress against child poverty targets. The first edition was published in 2008 and it is intended that an update will be produced in 2011. The Assembly Government has also commissioned the Demonstrating Success study which runs from 2007 to 2010 and aims to develop and pilot a model for measuring the success of two flagship policies for young people in Wales (Extending Entitlement and 14-19 Learning Pathways). The model will offer a new approach to measuring the progress and outcomes of children and young people, based on the recognition that young people achieve far more through their involvement with programmes than is currently measured by more traditional approaches.

Advantages and added value of using indicators

It is clear from the research that there is widespread recognition that evidence-based policy (including use of indicators) has a number of advantages and added value. In particular, the research identifies that using indicators provides an unequivocal evidence-base on the situation of young people, including the identification of key issues and

challenges, which can be used by policy makers to guide them in making choices between policy options and/ or adjusting existing policies. On this basis, indicators are also considered helpful in ensuring that interventions that affect young people are relevant and directed at those most in need.

The use of indicators also provides a basis for developing policy targets which can be monitored on a regular basis. This, in turn, provides a basis for assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies at a broad level. It is, however, important to note that determining the attribution of specific interventions on particular outcome indicators is rarely possible.

Where data on a selection of pre-defined indicators are systematically collected and made publically available through a database and/ or report, a particular advantage is that the indicators provide a common evidence-base that can be used by a range of audiences, including researchers, practitioners and policy makers across all areas of relevance to youth. Moreover, whilst such practices do not generally provide new data (the data is often available to researchers and policy makers anyway), a major benefit is their ability to synthesise and present a wealth of highly complex data into a readily accessible format.

Given the cross-sectoral nature of youth issues, it is increasingly recognised in the Member States that practices for using indicators and evidence across all policy areas of relevance to youth in a systematic and coordinated way, could provide some additional advantages and added value, including the promotion of coordination and cooperation across all relevant policy areas. Such practices for using indicators and evidence are evident in, for example, Sweden, the Netherlands and Finland; and are in the process of being developed in a range of other Member States, including Estonia, Slovenia and Luxembourg.

Whilst the research has found very few examples where indicators, on their own, have directly led to a specific government policy, programme or project, there are several examples, as illustrated below, where indicators have offered insights into young people which in turn has influenced the focus of youth-related policies, programme or projects and/ or led to further research and consultations.

In **Luxembourg**, a recent study on the transition between school and employment, commissioned by the National Youth Service, highlighted that there was a strong connection between young people not in education, employment and training (NEETs) and single-parent households and non-active households. This, in turn, led to discussions with Ministries and government agencies responsible for social benefits and active labour market policies, in order to tackle the underlying factors influencing NEETs. Moreover,

indicators and research on young people, presented in the National Youth Report, was also used heavily to elaborate the Youth Pact (2011-2014). Indeed, each of the plan's five main objectives ('fields of action') are based on trends highlighted by the report. For example, the report's conclusion that rising youth unemployment was the first cause of poverty among young people led to the first objective: 'Achieve a successful transition from school to work'.

In **Malta**, research in the field of education, which explored drop-out rates, early leavers and absenteeism, helped bring about educational reform. More specifically, the educational reform brought about the idea of organised learning zones/ centres within regions (rather than schools trying to address this separately) and the need for teachers to work in multi-disciplinary teams involving social workers and youth workers. Malta now has three learning zones with multi-disciplinary teams and hopes to increase this number in the future.

In **Slovenia**, indicators and evidence used by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs highlighted that social science graduates find it more difficult to establish themselves on the labour market than other graduates. Consequently, a new national programme to improve the integration of the social science graduates in the labour market was set up in Slovenia. Similarly, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs discovered, through the use of indicators, that young people in rural communities tend to be more excluded from non-formal education activities than young people in urban communities. It has therefore been proposed that family service centres should be set up in rural communities. These family service centres are expected to provide a range of services to families in rural communities, including the provision of non-formal education activities.

In **Sweden**, indicators, presented in the Youth Today report, highlighted a worrying trend regarding young people's situation in the labour market and their socio-economic situation in general. This, among other things, led to in-depth thematic studies on the social exclusion of young people and methods on how this can be addressed (Focus 08 and 09). These have, in turn, guided the identification of Government priorities for 2011, including measures to improve the social inclusion of young people, particularly those not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Limitations and challenges of using indicators

Whilst fully recognising the potential advantages and added value of using indicators to support national youth policy, the research has also highlighted a number of limitations and challenges.

For example, there do not appear to be any commonly used definitions for some of the 'core' youth policy areas, including, most notably, youth participation. As a result, there is a danger that the indicators (albeit few) used in these fields of action may be misrepresentative of the policy objectives.

Similarly, there is no agreement across the Member States, and in some cases within the various ministries of Member States, concerning the age definition of youth. Generally, youth refers to the period between 'dependent childhood' and 'independent adulthood'. This transition period can be represented by, for example, the age limit of child benefits, the end of full-time compulsory schooling, the voting age, the minimum age for standing for elections and so forth. However, increasingly, the transition to adulthood is considered as the time when young people become financially self-sufficient. Notably, the increase in the length of studies (especially through increased participation in higher education), combined with difficulties in getting a first job and access to affordable housing have increased the length of the transition from youth to 'independent adulthood'. On this basis, youth is defined as the population aged 15-29 years in the 2009 EU Youth Report. A further challenge with the age definition of youth is that the existing data and statistics used for the development of indicators are not always aligned to the definition of youth.

A further challenge with using indicators in fields related to youth is that young people represent a relatively heterogeneous group and it is therefore desirable that indicators are disaggregated across several basic socio-demographic markers (i.e. age, gender, disability, ethnic background, sexual preference, etc). This is, however, not without its complications, as in some countries it is illegal to document some of this information in administrative data sets (e.g. ethnic background and sexual preferences). Moreover, sample sizes of national and international surveys are often not large enough to represent the circumstances of young people for different sub-groups and sub-areas. Notably, the limited applicability of indicators at the local level has been a particular barrier to implementing a national youth monitoring system in federal Member States such as Austria, Germany and Belgium.

Whilst indicators and evidence are considered, and used, to a greater or lesser extent, as a key input into policy making in most Member States, it is widely accepted that it is not possible to formulate, monitor and evaluate policy in fields related to youth solely on the basis of indicators. In particular, in-depth qualitative research, including consultations with

key stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, practitioners) and target groups are seen as fundamental complements to the use of indicators in evidence-based policy making. Indeed, whilst indicators and evidence have the potential to provide a crucial feedback loop within the cyclical process of policy making, by providing information on the living conditions of young people and the performance of policy; identifying key future challenges and opportunities; and enabling adjustments and revisions to be made to policy if necessary, they are not able to provide the policy solutions.

A further challenge with using indicators is that they may encourage comparisons between nations, regions and local areas. Whilst this on the one hand may be useful in terms identifying particular strengths and weaknesses of nations and sub-areas, there is a danger that it will lead to comparison without consideration of external factors and national/local contexts. To this end, it is essential that indicators are fully analysed and interpreted, ensuring that the intended users are fully aware of any influencing factors and contexts.

A related challenge is continuously to improve the capacity and capability of policy makers to ensure that they are aware of the potential advantages and added value of using indicators, as well as any methodological issues and shortcomings.

Whilst there is a wealth of data and statistics, including local, national and international descriptive surveys and administrative data, that can be used for the development of indicators, there appears to be some gaps in the 'core' youth policy areas, such as youth participation; volunteering; and creativity and culture. To a considerable extent, this reflects the costs and methodological difficulties in quantifying and measuring many of the aspects related to these policy areas.

EU role in improving the use of indicators in Member States

The consultations have highlighted that the EU has an important role to play in terms of improving the use of indicators at the EU level, as well as the national level. In particular, the research has highlighted that the EU could guide the choice of indicators and help to create a common understanding of what data collection is feasible. Such a common framework could subsequently be further developed and built upon by individual Member States more fully to reflect national objectives and policies. It has also been noted that once a common approach has been agreed at the EU level, it is often easier for policy makers at the national level to obtain the attention and resources necessary to implement a similar approach at the national level. On this basis, it can be expected that the forthcoming dashboard of indicators will be an important tool for supporting future developments in evidence-based youth policy at the EU, as well as the national level.

It was also emphasised that the EU could do more to sell the benefits of evidence-based policy making, perhaps by disseminating examples of where it has been successful and placing more focus on practical arrangements through the introduction of a peer learning programme.

The evidence from the consultations also highlighted that existing EU funding programmes can be used to assist in developing a more research and evidence-based youth policy. For example, the European Social Fund and the Youth in Action programme are currently being used in Estonia and Latvia to develop practices for using indicators in the youth field.

3.4 Summary of research findings

The research findings on each of the five principle dimensions outlined above may be summarised as follows:

In terms of the **organisation of youth policy** in Member States:

- Government policies and interventions in relation to young people are implemented across a range of ministries and government agencies in all Member States, although this does not necessarily reflect the focus and content of the national youth policies. Rather, it is likely to reflect prevailing political needs and structures.
- As such, it is important to make a distinction between the organisation of youth policy at the political level versus the operational level: changes in government and re-engineering of government ministries is a feature of democratic processes and does not necessarily prevent continuity of policy delivery within an administration. To this end, having an established youth policy and strategy, together with clear mechanism and instruments for evidence-based policy making, can, for example, help to ensure a degree of sustainability despite high-level political perturbations.
- There are a range of implementation mechanisms and arrangements that are used to promote coordination (across government) or to 'specialize' delivery (where specific expertise and advice is brought to bear) in the Member States. These measures comprise departments within ministries but also more arms-length advisory bodies, national boards, councils and institutes.
- A key feature of the policy landscape for youth policy is also its multi-layered nature, with responsibilities shared to varying degrees between national, regional, and local actors.

In terms of the **extent of recognition of the need for evidence-based youth policies:**

- Most Member States emphasize the importance of evidence-based policy making in their respective national youth policies.
- In terms of moving forward the policy signals on evidence-based youth policy, the nature and processes through which indicators and evidence are used to inform and advance youth policy differ across the Member States.
- Similar to many other policy areas, indicators and evidence in most Member States, tend to be used in an ad hoc and reactive way to mobilise support for a particular policy, programme or project through the use of single studies; descriptive analytical evidence; and expert evidence. There is also evidence that indicators (often process and output based) are used to monitor the implementation of action plans and strategies.
- As a complement to such ‘conventional’ practices, a number of practices for using indicators and evidence in a more systematic and proactive way have been, or are in the process of being, implemented in a number of Member States. These, most notably, include the regular collection and analysis of data on a set of predefined indicators. Notably, the sets of predefined indicators used in these practices tend to cover all policy areas of relevance to youth.
- Other practices for systematically improving the knowledge and understanding of young people include regular youth surveys and national reports.

In terms of **the advantages and added value of using indicators:**

- Indicators provide an unequivocal evidence-base on the situation of young people, including the identification of key issues and challenges, which can be used by policy makers to guide them in making choices between policy options and/ or adjusting existing policies. On this basis, indicators are also considered helpful in ensuring that interventions that affect young people are relevant and directed at those most in need.
- The use of indicators also provides a basis for developing policy targets which can be monitored on a regular basis. This, in turn, provides a basis for assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies at a broad level.
- Indicators that are systematically collected and made publically available through a database and/ or report, provide a common evidence-base that can be used by a range

of audiences, including researchers, practitioners and policy makers across all areas of relevance to youth.

- Practices for using indicators and evidence across all policy areas of relevance to youth in a systematic and coordinated way may help promote coordination and cooperation across all relevant policy areas.
- There are several examples of where indicators have offered key insights into young people which in turn have influenced the focus of youth related policies, programme or projects and/ or led to further research and consultations.

In terms of **the limitations and challenges of using indicators:**

- The main limitations and challenges of using indicators relate to definitional gaps (e.g. youth participation and age) as well as data limitations (e.g. disaggregation of data across several socio-demographic markers and spatial levels).
- It is also widely accepted that it is not possible to formulate, monitor and evaluate policy in fields related to youth solely on the basis of indicators. In particular, in-depth qualitative research, including consultations with key stakeholders (researchers, policy makers, practitioners) and target groups are seen as fundamental complements to indicators in evidence-based policy making.
- A particular concern with developing and using indicators is that they may encourage comparisons between nations, regions and local areas. Whilst this on the one hand may be useful in terms identifying particular strengths and weaknesses of nations and sub-areas, there is a danger that it will lead to comparison without consideration of external factors and national/ local contexts. To this end, it is essential that indicators are fully analysed and interpreted, ensuring that the intended users are fully aware of any influencing factors and contexts.

In terms of the **EU role in improving the use of indicators in Member States:**

- The EU could play a key role in improving the use of indicators at the national level, in terms of guiding the choice of indicators and helping to create a common understanding of what data collection is feasible. Such a common framework could subsequently be further developed and built upon by individual Member States more fully to reflect national objectives and policies.

- The EU could also have an important role in terms of disseminating examples of where the use of indicators has been successful and placing more focus on practical arrangements through the introduction of a peer learning programme.
- It can be expected that the forthcoming EU dashboard of indicators will be an important tool for supporting future developments in evidence-based youth policy at the EU, as well as the national level. Indeed, it has been noted that once a common approach has been agreed at the EU level, it is often easier for policy makers at the national level to obtain the attention and resources necessary to implement a similar approach at the national level.

4.0 Strategic Conclusions

Recognition of the need for, and the benefits of, adopting stronger evidence-based approaches in the youth field is widespread across the Member States, and manifested in several national youth policies. Crucially, progress is also undoubtedly being made in relation to implementing more systematic and proactive evidence-based approaches to youth policy including regular collection and analysis of data on a set of predefined indicators covering all policy areas of relevance to youth, as well as regular youth surveys and national reports. As such there are several examples from which individual Member States may learn.

Importantly, in terms of maximising the advantages and added value of using indicators, the research has identified a number of key principles:

- *Making use of existing information*: data and statistics for the development of indicators are most usefully drawn from existing data sources (e.g. national, international and/ or administrative data sources) in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure cost effectiveness; although in some cases regular youth surveys may be usefully commissioned to cover more fully areas of relevance to youth, not extensively covered by existing data sources (e.g. participation, volunteering and culture and creativity).
- *Relevance*: indicators need to provide relevant and reliable information in order to inform and advance youth policy; in this regard establishing clear and specific objectives of youth policy will help guide the selection and measurement of indicators.
- *Simplicity*: whilst it may be tempting to select as many indicators as possible, the number of indicators needs to be restricted to the most relevant in order to provide a succinct and simple framework for evidence-based policy.
- *Flexibility (1)*: indicators that provide cross-cutting evidence are particularly helpful and may assist in promoting more coordination and cooperation across all relevant policy areas, by providing an improved understanding of, and different perspectives on, young people.
- *Flexibility (2)*: youth policy tends to be implemented through a multi-layered approach (local, regional, and national) and as such, developing and implementing practices for using indicators requires commitment and alignment at all levels.

- *Continuity*: indicators add value when they are continuously updated and reported upon, taking into account the practicality of data availability and the analytical needs of policy monitoring.
- *Analysis*: practices for using indicators should not just be about collecting data and statistics, it is essential that the data is interpreted and analysed; and that shortcomings and gaps in the data are acknowledged; the need for appropriate interpretation and analysis of indicators is further emphasised by the complexity of multiple influences in youth policy and the very real danger that the indicators are taken out of context and used to produce 'league tables' of Member States.
- *Accessibility*: whilst the data and statistics used to develop relevant indicators tend to be publically available, it may also be useful to collate all the data and statistics on the indicators into a single database and/ or reports which are publically accessible. This will allow a range of stakeholders, including policy makers, researchers and practitioners, to query the database for specific as well as more generic evidence needs and requirements.
- *Complementarity*: to the extent that indicators provide a simplification of a relatively complex reality, the collection and analysis of indicators should be complemented by regular in-depth thematic qualitative research, including consultations with key stakeholders and target groups; the themes of such research could be determined by the issues identified by the indicators, in order to provide a strong link between the two elements of evidence; in particular, the in-depth thematic research allows the scope of the evidence-base generated by the indicators to be extended, particularly in those policy areas that are difficult to fully quantify using indicators.

Annex One: Methodology

Study approach

In addressing the study objective, our research comprised the following principal tasks:

- Inception and interim meetings held with representatives of European Commission DG EAC (E-1 Youth Policy Unit).
- A focussed, desk-based review of European youth policy with particular reference to recent initiatives to improve the knowledge and understanding of young people; recent academic literature on evidence-based policy making; and relevant literature at the national level (e.g. strategic and policy documentation and European Knowledge Centre of Youth Policy (EKCYP) national reports).
- A programme of over 100 consultations undertaken with a range of key experts and stakeholders, including the national EKCYP correspondents, representatives from relevant ministries, government agencies, research institutions and national youth councils.
- An assessment of the availability of indicators; and their use in policy processes in individual Member States, with the results presented in a series of 22 Country Fiches.
- In-depth assessment of three Member States (Sweden, the Netherlands and Slovenia) that are considered to be at a relatively advanced stage in applying indicators in their policy work and/or are actively taking steps to support the development of youth policy guided by knowledge and evidence.
- Assessment of the material gathered from the individual Member States, distilled into an overview of the experiences concerning the availability and different uses of indicators in the youth field.

Evidence base

The evidence base for this study consists primarily of a series of Case Studies and Country Fiches (presented in Annex 2 and 3, respectively), compiled for the following countries¹:

Austria	Lithuania
Belgium ²	Luxembourg
Czech Republic	Poland
Estonia	Malta
Finland	The Netherlands

¹ All 27 Member States have been contacted and asked to participate in the study.

² Separate profiles have been completed for the Flemish and French Communities.

France	Romania
Germany	Slovak Republic
Greece	Slovenia
Hungary	Spain
Ireland	Sweden
Italy	United Kingdom
Latvia	

This material has been prepared on the basis of a combination of documentary evidence and consultations with key national experts and stakeholders, including representatives from relevant ministries, government agencies, research institutions and the national youth council. A full list of consultees is presented in the table below:

Table A.1 List of consultees

Member State	Name	Organisation
Austria	Manfred Zentner	Institute for Youth Culture Research
	Jutta Petz	Regional Director of Youth Policy, Styria
	Thomas Mueller	Regional Director of Youth Policy, Vorarlberg
	Marina Hahn-Bleibtreu	Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth
Belgium (Flemish Community)	Nicolette Vettenburg	Prof at Ghent University - Department of Social Welfare Studies
	Trees De Bruycker	Division of Youth, Agency for Socio-Cultural Work Youth and Adults
	Guy Pauwels	Deputy Director, Flemish Government's Research Department (SVR)
Belgium (French Community)	Michel Vandekerke	OEJAJ - Childhood and Youth Observatory
	Veronique Degraef	Project Manager in charge of Youth Transition at the Consultative Commission for education, training and employment
	Donat Carlier	Coordinator - Secretary of the Consultative Commission for education, training and employment
	Bernard Mathieu	Youth Coordinator at the cabinet of the Ministry for Youth of the French Community
Czech Republic	Hana Marikova	National Institute for Youth and Children
	Josef Bocek	Institute for Information on Education
	Vladimir Hulik	Institute for Information on Education
	Jiri Veverka	National Institute for Youth and Children

	Tomas Machalik	National Institute for Youth and Children
	Diana Grosslova	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
Estonia	Marti Taru	Tallinn University
	Anne Kivimae	Head of Youth Affairs Department, Ministry of Education and Research
	Rena Selliov	Analyst, Ministry of Education and Research
	Martti Martinson	Estonian National Youth Council
	Ragnar Siil	Ministry of Culture
	Einar Vara	Chief-expert of the curriculum development division, Ministry of Education and Research
	Kerstin Peterson	Labour Market Department, Ministry of Social Affairs of Estonia
Finland	Laura Kestila	National Institute for Health and Welfare
	Georg Henrik Wrede	Ministry of Education
	Liisa Sahi	Advisory Council for Youth Affairs
France	Jean-Claude Richez	Head of Research, Studies and Training Unit at the National Institute of Youth and Popular Education (INJEP)
	Sylvie Martinez	Head of the Department of Territorial and Inter-ministerial actions; Ministry of Youth and Active Solidarities
	Pierre Montaudon	Deputy Head of the Mission for European and International Cooperation Youth and Associative Life; Ministry of Youth and Active Solidarities
Germany	Susanne Klinzing	IJAB - International Youth Service of the Federal Republic of Germany
	Dr. Wolfgang Gaiser	German Youth Institute (DJI)
	Friederike Kirner	Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
Greece	Yannos Livanos	Secretary General for Youth
Hungary	Peter Wootsch	Youth Policy Expert (freelance)
	Laszlo Foldi	Formerly Director at Mobilitas National Youth Service
Ireland	Maurice Devlin	National University of Ireland
	Conor Rowley	Department of Health and Children
	Mary Cunningham	National Youth Council of Ireland
Italy	Dr Stefania Rota	Ministry of Youth (national EKCYP correspondent)
	Dr Lorenzo Spizzichino	Ministry of Health
	Lucia Scarpitti	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs

	Tiziana Lang	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
Latvia	Edgars Bajaruns	Ministry of Education and Science
	Diana Simansone	Ministry of Education and Science
	Valda Vilcane	Department of Labour, Ministry of Welfare
	Jolanta Treile	Ministry of Culture
Lithuania	Aurelija Kazlauskiene	Department of Youth Affairs
	Rimante Ribaciauskaite	National Youth Organisations Council
	Jolita Buzaityte-Kasalyniene	Vilnius University
	Mantas Simanavicius	Jonava Youth Centre
	Justina Alsyte	Ministry of Social Security and Labour
	Steponas Kulbauskas	Ministry of Social Security and Labour (Deputy Director of the Department of Family Welfare)
Luxembourg	Marianne Milmeister	CESIJE - Youth Research Centre, University of Luxembourg
	Charles Berg	CESIJE - Youth Research Centre, University of Luxembourg
	Ralph Schroeder	Department of Children, Youth and Family, Ministry of Family and Integration
	Georges Metz	National Youth Service
	Yolande Wagner	Ministry of Health
Malta	Miriam Teuma	Department of Youth and Community Studies, University of Malta
	Marilyn Clark	Department of Youth and Community Studies, University of Malta
	Josef Debono	ZAK (National Catholic Youth Organisation)
	Marvic Ann Debono	Assistant Programme Manager, Youth in Action and Euro-Med Youth Platform
	Karsten Xuereb	Culture and Audiovisual Attache, Permanent Representation of Malta to the European Union
The Netherlands	Caroline Vink	Dutch Youth Institute
	Francis van de Mooren	Central Bureau of Statistics
	Ivonne Coppens	Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport
	Erik Jan de Wilde	Dutch Youth Institute
Poland	Maceij Lasota	Ministry of National Education
	Joanna Mazur	Institute of Mother and Child
Romania	Sorin Mitulescu	Institute for Educational Sciences
Slovak Republic	Jana Miháliková	Slovak Youth Institute

	Tomas Pesek	International trainer (freelance), responsible for parts of the Youth Report 2011
	Peter Lenco	Slovak National Youth Council
Slovenia	Andraz Zgonc	Office for Youth, Ministry of Education and Sport
	Miran Lavric	University of Maribor
	Urban Boljka	Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia
	Damjana Kosir	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
	Lea Javornik-Novak	Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs
	Natasa Bucik	Ministry of Culture
	Brigita Lipovsek	Ministry of Culture
	Vesna-Kerstin Petric	Ministry of Health
	Barbara Zupan	DG EAC, European Commission
Spain	Maite Benavides	Chief of the EU Programmes services at the Institute for Youth (INJUVE)
	Julio Camacho Muñoz	Director of the Youth Observatory at the Institute for Youth (INJUVE)
Sweden	Idah Klint	Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs
	Tiina Ekman	Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs
	Petra Marselius	Ministry of Integration and Equality
	Imse Nilsson	Swedish National Youth Council
	Mia Norberg and Hala Mohammed	Malmö City Council
	Ulla Kihlblom	Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research
United Kingdom	Steve Leman	Department for Education
	Tony Moody	Department for Education
	John Doherty	Department for Education
	David Guilfoyle	Youth Council for Northern Ireland
	Suzanne Chisholm	Welsh Assembly Government
	Richard Thurston	Welsh Assembly Government
	Richard White	Department for Education
European	Magdalena Kurz	European Youth Forum

Annex Two: Case Studies

The Netherlands

Summary of key points

- The coordination of youth policy was until recently the responsibility of the Ministry for Youth and Families. However, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment are also actively involved in implementing youth policy.
- A National Youth Monitor was launched in 2004 out of the desire to have unambiguous information about youth, so that more data links can be made.
- In some cases, the use of indicators has also led to specific action. For example, an increase in child obesity (especially in the four large cities), identified through the data, led to special action plans in schools. The data was subsequently used to check if these measures had worked.
- Indicators are particularly useful in terms of helping to provide a general picture of a certain area or issue. Once an issue has been identified, further research to expand the information and knowledge obtained through the indicators is often commissioned by the relevant ministries or Government agencies.

Policy context¹

Since the late 1980s, a large number of tasks related to youth work and youth policy have been transferred from central government to local and provincial authorities. This decentralisation is intended to facilitate local and provincial authorities to find solutions to local issues, needs and demands. As such, there is a significant degree of autonomy at the regional and local level.

A distinction is made between preventative youth policy – for which the local authorities are responsible – and the youth care system, which is the responsibility of the provinces. Local preventative youth policy includes education, leisure time and health. It also includes specific preventative tasks, such as access to help and care coordination (with a special focus on parenting support) which are offered by ‘youth and family centres’. The youth care system covers all forms of care available to parents and children in order to provide support where there are cases of serious developmental and parenting problems.

¹ The majority of section 1.1 and 1.2 is taken the factsheet ‘Youht Policy’ from the ‘Nederlands Jeugd Instituut’ (NJI, the Dutch Youth Institute, the national knowledge center on youth and upbringing)

The coordination of youth policy was until recently the responsibility of the Ministry for Youth and Families. However, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports; the Ministry of Justice; the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment are also actively involved in implementing youth policy.

Following the general election in June 2010, the new Government decided to abolish the Ministry of Youth and Families. Consequently, since October 2010, youth policy falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports. It is widely anticipated that the decentralisation of youth work and youth policy will continue under the new government.

The National Youth Monitor

The National Youth Monitor was launched out of the desire to have unambiguous information about youth, so that more data links can be made. Through this, the general idea is to make it possible for ministries and government agencies to develop a common framework for youth policy and to cooperate on the basis of this framework to tackle existing problems. To achieve this, Operation Youth was launched in 2004 with the aim to ensure a strong, results-oriented youth policy. The National Youth Monitor is a product from Operation Youth.

The National Youth Monitor was commissioned by the Ministry for Youth and Family, but the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport (VWS), Ministry of Education Culture and Science (OCW), Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW) are also actively involved. The implementation of the National Youth Monitor is undertaken by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

The National Youth Monitor is a summary of information, available in print and online, about the situation of young people (aged 0-24) in the Netherlands. It aims to only include information that is relevant for policy. No outcome indicators are included as yet, but this is planned for the future. The monitor contains trend figures starting in 2000.

The data derives from a wide range of sources, including:

- Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS);
- Centre for Work and Income (CWI);
- Juveniles Judicial Service (DJI);
- Municipal Personal Records Database (GBA);

- Intomart GfK;
- National Police (National Police Agency);
- Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations;
- Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science;
- Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport;
- Ministry for Youth and Family;
- National Institute of Public Health and Environment (RIVM);
- STIVORO;
- TNO;
- Trimbos institute; and
- Research and Documentation Centre (WODC).

Reflecting the wide range of data sources, the National Youth Monitor contains the following domains: young people and families; health and welfare; education; employment; and justice. The largest set of data available concerns education and justice, whilst it generally contains less data on health, especially for the youngest group. In total, 60 indicators are collected. The indicators can be broken down by age, gender and ethnic background, and the aim is to also make this breakdown available at the regional and local level in future.

Other initiatives

In addition to the National Youth Monitor, a number of other initiatives provide information and knowledge on young people's living conditions, including:

- Youth Monitor Rotterdam –to collect data on the (mental) health of young people, identify target groups for interventions, provide feedback on individual and aggregated results to those involved in youth policy, including parents, children and young people, schools, local authorities, and supporting all those involved in starting, designing, executing and maintaining actions. One of the main strengths of this initiative is the involvement of key stakeholders in the local system of youth health policy development.

- '*Kinderen in Tel*' (Children in Counting) – an initiative supported by several private companies and foundations (such as Unicef and '*Jantje Beton*'). Since 2006, it reports on the living conditions of children and young people (by municipality, province and district) on the basis of twelve indicators (juvenile crime, child abuse, disadvantaged students, youth unemployment, youth care, teenage mothers, dropouts, children-in-benefit families, infant mortality, outdoor play areas, children in deprived areas). The indicators and monitor reflect the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of the features of the monitor is a ranking of municipalities based on the improvement experienced on each indicator between 2000 and 2008.

Use of indicators

Although a significant body of information is being collected and aggregated in the Netherlands, the systematic use of this evidence base, across the policy cycle, does not appear to be as extensive as might be expected. Notwithstanding this, evidence from the stakeholders suggests that the indicators are useful in terms of helping to provide a general picture of a certain area or problem. Once a problem has been identified, further research to expand the information and knowledge obtained through the indicators is often commissioned by the relevant ministries or Government agencies. In some cases, the use of indicators has also led to specific action. For example, an increase in child obesity (especially in the four large cities), identified through the data, led to special action plans in schools. The data was subsequently used to check if these measures had worked.

The use of the National Youth Monitor is also limited by the fact that an increasing number of youth services are provided by municipalities. Notably, in this regard, the Dutch Youth Institute is planning to introduce a similar system to that in Sweden (LUPP). As in Sweden, the Dutch Youth Institute foresees that the smaller municipalities will join but the larger cities will not, since they have their own system in place.

The benefits of using indicators appear to be widely accepted in the Netherlands. The benefits include the creation of awareness of certain issues; provision of direction for making choices in policy options; stimulating action; and enabling evaluation of youth policy. There is little questioning of whether or not to use indicators, rather it is about identifying practices that allow the best use to be made of them.

Risk factors concerning the use of indicators (in monitoring systems)

Based on the Netherlands stakeholder consultations, a number of risks have been identified concerning the use of indicators in policy making. Firstly, there is a risk that all the available data is collected and analysed, without keeping in mind the function and ultimate goal of the data, namely the development and implementation of effective and

efficient youth policy. Secondly, there is a trend in the Netherlands to have monitoring systems at the local level¹. Whilst this is very useful in principle, the consistency of the data is likely to be limited, particularly if the data is based on local surveys². This is a particular problem when the circumstances of youth in several municipalities are compared and ranked on the basis of the indicators used in the local monitoring systems. Finally, there is a danger that the data is not analysed and interpreted with consideration to external factors that may have an influence on the issues at hand and thus the actual situation of youth. It is therefore important that policymakers are aware of the global, national and local context.

¹ These are also used as input for the National Youth Monitor

² The National Institute of Public Health and Environment plans to coordinate separate initiatives, to bring about greater consistency.

Slovenia

Summary of key points

- Currently no national programme for youth, however, the adoption of new Youth Act in 2010 has provided the legal basis for the development of a national programme for youth, covering young people aged 15-29 years.
- The intention is that the new national programme for youth, which is expected to be implemented in 2012, will adopt a horizontal approach to youth policy, incorporating all policy areas of relevance to youth. A number of carefully selected indicators are also expected to be determined once the national programme has been developed. These indicators will particularly relate to the living conditions of young people rather than outputs and processes.
- Linked to the decision to develop a national programme for youth in Slovenia, the Office for Youth and other stakeholders have taken action to strengthen the availability of indicators and evidence in the field of youth, including a national youth survey and the development of a youth observatory.
- Whilst indicators and evidence are not yet systematically collated and analysed in a coordinated way for all areas of relevance to youth, it is the case that all policies in relation to youth have to be supported by available and appropriate indicators and evidence.

Policy context

National youth policy in Slovenia is the responsibility of the Office (of the Republic of Slovenia) for Youth, which is part of the Ministry of Education and Sport. The main responsibilities and activities of the Office for Youth particularly relate to the monitoring of the situation of the young people and the implementation of measures in the field of non-formal education, leisure time and participation of young people in society. Implementation of measures in other policy areas of relevance to youth is currently the responsibility of other Ministries, including the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Culture.

A national programme for children and youth has been in place since 2006 and runs until 2016. The programme covers children and youth aged 0-19 years and covers a range of policy areas including health, family, education, social care, protection from neglect, violence and abuse, illegal drugs protection, leisure time activities and culture.

Following the 2008 election in Slovenia, youth policy has gained increased recognition within the Government and there is an intention to set up a governmental office for youth with direct responsibility under the Prime Minister. Notably, a Government committee for youth has already been set up and is made up of representatives from youth organisations as well as representatives from all Ministries of relevance to youth.

In 2010 a new Youth Act was also adopted providing the legal basis for the development of a separate national programme for youth, covering young people aged 15-29 years. The intention is that the new national programme for youth, which is expected to be implemented in 2012, will adopt a horizontal approach to youth policy, incorporating all policy areas of relevance to youth. A number of carefully selected indicators are expected to be determined once the national programme has been developed. These indicators will particularly relate to the living conditions of young people rather than outputs and processes.

Availability of indicators

Linked to the decision to develop a new national programme for youth in Slovenia, the Office for Youth and other stakeholders have taken action to strengthen the availability of indicators and evidence in the field of youth. For example, since 2009 a number of research assignments have been completed to improve the knowledge and understanding of young people, including:

- *'Between childhood and adulthood – the situation of youth in Slovenia 2009'* – prepared by the Institute for Social Protection of Slovenia, this study seeks to strengthen research evidence related to the youth field in Slovenia. The publication covers youth issues in relation to the demographic characteristics, educational problems, employment and the flexibility of labour market, the social and economic situation, housing, health and participation.
- *'Young People in Slovenia – a compilation of data, statistics and short analyses of the situation of young people in Slovenia published by the Statistical Office of Slovenia.* The data and statistics included in the report relate to demography, education, housing, employment, health and poverty/ social exclusion. Notably, this report represents a first attempt at a horizontal statistical overview of youth in Slovenia.
- *Youth2010* - a youth survey, commissioned by the Office for Youth and conducted by the University of Maribor. The survey, due to be completed early 2011, represents an update of a similar survey completed in 2000 and is expected to provide essential primary data and evidence on young people that will be used to inform the national programme for youth. The youth survey covers a range of policy areas of relevance to

youth including demographic changes and intergenerational cooperation; education and training; creativity, culture and leisure time; 'virtuality' of everyday life; employment and entrepreneurship; sustainable development; housing conditions; participation and social inclusion; health; voluntary activities; youth mobility and globalisation. Due to financial restrictions, there are currently no specific plans to repeat this survey in the near future (i.e. the next 3-5 years).

In addition to the above research, the Office for Youth, in collaboration with the Social Protection Institute of the Republic of Slovenia, is also in the process of developing a Youth Observatory. The Youth Observatory is expected to coordinate the collation, analysis and dissemination of indicators and evidence related to young people (aged 15-29 years). Notably, the Social Protection Institute already operates a Child Observatory, developed, on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, as part of the national programme for children and youth and focussing on young people aged 0-19 years. The Child Observatory currently maintains and updates a database with over 1,000 indicators across a range of policy areas of relevance to children and youth. The database is currently not publically available, although much of the data and statistics have been collated from official data sources.

With regards to the new Youth Observatory, the intention is to select a more limited number of indicators and to make the database freely available to all stakeholders, including policy makers, researchers and youth organisations. Some stakeholders also appear to advocate that more analysis is undertaken in relation to the indicators, in order to make the data more useful to policy makers.

In addition to the above developments and plans, indicators and evidence are also collected separately across all the various ministries and government agencies of relevance to youth on an ad hoc basis. According to the stakeholder consultations, the availability of indicators and evidence are particularly strong in the areas employment, health and education. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the availability of indicators and evidence in relation to leisure time activities, culture and youth participation appears to be relatively weaker.

Use of indicators

Whilst indicators and evidence are not yet systematically collated and analysed in a coordinated way for all areas of relevance to youth, it is the case that all policies in relation to youth have to be supported by available and appropriate indicators and evidence. For example, at the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs indicators and evidence highlighted that social science graduates find it more difficult to establish themselves on the labour market than other graduates. Consequently, a new national programme to

improve the integration of the social science graduates on the labour market was set up in Slovenia. Similarly, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs discovered, through the use of indicators, that young people in rural communities tend to be more excluded from non-formal education activities than young people in urban communities. It has therefore been proposed that family service centres should be set up in rural communities. These family service centres are expected to provide a range of services to families in rural communities, including the provision of non-formal education activities.

The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Anton Trstenjak Institute, have undertaken qualitative research on young people's health, which identified a range of risk and protective factors. According to the Ministry of Health, this research has subsequently allowed the Ministry and other relevant organisations better to plan and organise activities.

The advantages and added value of using indicators and evidence are that they often offer an objective and official 'picture' of the situation of young people and that they allow trends to be discovered (both positive and negative).

Consultees believe that a more systematic and comprehensive system of collection, analysis and dissemination of indicators across the policy areas of relevance to youth would further highlight trends among young people and apply pressure on politicians to implement measures to tackle any challenges that are identified. Moreover, improved availability and coordination of indicators and evidence would allow policy makers to discover trends more easily (positive and negative), and define appropriate interventions and financial plans for youth policy.

It is also felt by those interviewed that in order for indicators and evidence to be of use to policy makers, they need to be consolidated and made relevant. Indicators need to reflect and relate to specific policy objectives.

In the future the Office for Youth is keen to cooperate with other ministries and government agencies. However, at the moment it is felt that a coordinated approach to youth policy is not a priority among the various ministries and government agencies of relevance to youth. Whilst cross-ministerial meetings on youth are currently taking place in Slovenia, these tend to be used to discuss specific Acts (working documents) rather than youth issues and collaboration in general. It is also felt that the cross-ministerial Government committee meetings tend to focus on education (upper secondary education and higher education).

Sweden

Summary of key points

- National youth policy is implemented across a range of ministries and government agencies, with the Ministry for Education and Science and the National Board for Youth Affairs (a government agency) having overall responsibility for the coordination of government policies and interventions in relation to youth.
- The collection, analysis and dissemination of knowledge on young people's living conditions is fundamental to national youth policy in Sweden. In particular, indicators are used systematically to monitor the situation of young people; offer new insights; and to encourage further interest in, and research on, young people.
- Information and knowledge of young people's living conditions is gathered and shared across all relevant policy fields.
- Whilst indicators rarely lead directly to specific interventions they often contribute to the underlying evidence-base that informs and advances youth policy.

Policy context

National youth policy in Sweden is cross-sectoral and covers a wide range of policy areas of relevance to youth. As such, national youth policy is implemented across a range of ministries and government agencies, with the Ministry for Education and Science; and the National Board for Youth Affairs (a government agency) having overall responsibility for the coordination of government policies and interventions in relation to youth. More specifically, the objective of the National Board for Youth Affairs is to gather and disseminate knowledge and information on young people's living conditions; assure that the youth perspective is taken into account in all policy areas of relevance to youth; support municipalities in the development of local youth policy; and seek to ensure that whatever activities are carried out are based on a sound knowledge of young people's circumstances and views.

The current national youth policy has its foundation in the 2004 youth policy bill (*The Power to Decide – The Right to Welfare*). The overarching aim is to ensure that young people (between the ages of 13 and 25 years) have genuine access to welfare and influence. A distinguishing feature of the 2004 youth policy bill is that interventions regarding young people should be integrated/ mainstreamed into all policy areas of relevance to youth and should be based on existing objectives in these policy areas.

The policy areas of relevance to youth are defined as follows:

- Education and Learning
- Employment and Self Sufficiency
- Health and Social Exclusion
- Influence and Representation
- Culture and Leisure

These policy areas, to a considerable extent, mirror the eight fields of action in the EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018).

Following the 2004 youth policy bill, the national youth policy has been continuously refined through annual Government budget allocations and instructions to ministries and Government agencies. More recently, the Government also set out the future direction of the national youth policy in the 2009 Government strategy for youth policy.

Notably, whilst national youth policy is compulsory for ministries and central government agencies, it is only advisory at the local level (municipalities). As such, municipalities have considerable autonomy on how youth policy is implemented. The focus of this case study has therefore not been solely on national level youth policy.

Evidence-based youth policy and systematic cross-sectoral follow up

The collection, analysis and dissemination of knowledge on young people's living conditions is, according to the Ministry for Education and Science; and the National Board for Youth Affairs, fundamental to national youth policy in Sweden. Indeed, the 2004 youth policy bill states that the development of young people's living conditions should be followed up regularly, through one or more measurable indicators across all the policy areas of relevance to youth. Furthermore, it states that thematic in-depth studies should be regularly undertaken, together with regular attitude and value surveys.

In response to this, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs regularly produces a number of reports¹:

- Youth Today (*'Ung idag'*) – an annual compilation and analysis of 85 indicators organised across the five policy areas of relevance to youth.

¹ In addition to the reports set out in the main text, the national youth policy is also evaluated every four years.

- Focus ('*Fokus*') – annual in-depth thematic analysis on specific policy areas of relevance to youth, such as health, work, disadvantaged youth, etc.
- Young People with Attitude ('*Unga med Attityd*') – latest attitude and values survey carried out by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs in 2007 (previously undertaken in 1997 and 2002).

In addition to the knowledge collated, analysed and disseminated by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs, the Government has also assigned the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS) the responsibility for the coordination of Swedish child and youth research. The Council supports research by providing grants for relevant research projects, creating research positions at Swedish universities and providing grants for visiting researchers and scholarships for post-PhD studies abroad. Notably, child and youth research accounts for the highest share of research funding distributed through the Council.

In order to gain better knowledge of young people's situation at the local level and to help develop an effective local youth policy across different policy areas of relevance to youth, the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs has also developed a survey that can be used by municipalities - Local Follow-Up of Youth Policy (LUPP). The areas covered in the survey include: leisure; school; politics and influence; safety/ security; health; work; and the future. As of 2010, the survey has been used by approaching half of the 290 municipalities in Sweden and completed by more than 100,000 young people¹. In 2010, 33 municipalities are undertaking the survey. Based on consultations with municipalities and the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs it is understood that the reason why the survey is not used universally across Sweden's municipalities is that some municipalities, particularly the large urban ones, already collate and analyse a range of data and information on young people. Moreover, the National Board for Youth Affairs requires the commitment of time and resources from the municipalities to undertake the survey properly.

In order to improve the evidence-base further at the local level, the National Board for Youth Affairs, in the latest Youth Today report, recommends that the information and knowledge gathered by municipalities is extended more widely and made more uniform, particularly in order to identify young people that are not in education, employment or training (NEETs). In addition, it recommends a national initiative to support municipalities in developing local databases that would assist municipalities identifying, monitoring and supporting young people.

¹ Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs (2010) Lupp pa allas lapp – utvardering av projektet Lupp

Availability of indicators

The basic conditions for using indicators and evidence across the various policy areas vary significantly. For example, a recent study¹ by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs concludes that indicators are more readily available in areas such as education and learning; employment and self sufficiency; and health and social exclusion. In comparison, areas such as influence and representation; and culture and leisure can at the moment be less meaningfully represented by existing indicators. This is, to a considerable extent, reflected in the number of indicators included under each policy area in the 2010 Youth Today report (see table below).

Indicators used in Youth Today 2010

Policy area	Number of indicators
Education and Learning	14
Health and Social Exclusion	31
Employment and Self Sufficiency	23
Influence and Representation	12
Culture and Leisure	5
Total	85

Notwithstanding the relatively strong coverage of indicators across some of the policy areas, it is important to note that the indicators used are often restricted to the more 'traditional' dimensions of the policy areas. For example, in relation to education and learning, indicators relate primarily to formal education as opposed to informal education and personal development. Similarly, in relation to culture and leisure, indicators highlight membership and participation in cultural and leisure activities, as opposed to intercultural exchanges and diversity. In recognition of these limitations of the indicators, in-depth thematic studies and research (*Fokus*) are also commissioned every year in order to complement the information and knowledge gained through the annual reporting of indicators.

Given the Government's ambition to integrate/ mainstream youth interventions across the policy areas of relevance to youth, the indicators used to monitor young people's living conditions are, wherever possible, directly linked to the objectives of the relevant Government agencies. As such, there is no clear direct link between the indicators and the overall objectives of the overarching national youth policy. In the recent evaluation of the national youth monitoring system in Sweden, it is suggested that this is a result of the fact

¹ National Board for Youth Affairs, 2005, Indicators for follow up of young people's living conditions

that most of the indicators are based on existing data sources and hence cannot be tailored to fit the overarching objectives directly. Nonetheless, to the extent that indicators in relation to, for example, education, employment and health can be seen to highlight young people's access to welfare, the indicators can still be seen to be relevant to the overall objectives of the national youth policy. Similarly, indicators in relation to participation in leisure and cultural activities, influence and representation can be seen to highlight young people's access to influence.

Use of indicators

In Sweden it is recognised that detailed knowledge of young people's living conditions is necessary to ensure that interventions that affect young people are relevant and directed at those in most of need. For example, indicators and knowledge of young people's living conditions were used recently in the 2009 Government strategy for national youth policy to set priorities and identify future challenges for young people. Notably, the strategy notes that the future challenges for young men and women are in many cases likely to be very different. For example, young women are more likely to be affected by mental health problems and work-related illnesses; and generally have lower average earnings. Young men, on the other hand, generally have lower educational attainment and are generally more affected by violence and crime. Moreover, on average they have more debt than young women, are more likely to be evicted from their home and to be long-term unemployed. Importantly, challenges among young people also differ according to disability, ethnic background, sexual preference, etc.

The indicators presented in the Youth Today reports have also led 'indirectly' to Government interventions in relation to, for example, homo-, bi-, transsexual friendly meeting places; and virtual youth clinics. More specifically, the indicators in the Youth Today reports showed increasing health (physical and mental) issues among young people, which led to the commissioning of a more in-depth thematic analysis of young people's health and vulnerability (Focus 07). The report highlighted that the sexual preferences of young people was an important factor in terms of the health and well-being, particularly among girls and young women. This in turn led to the commissioning of a further in-depth study, which examined the health situation of homo-, bi-, and transsexual young people in more detail. The National Board for Youth Affairs was subsequently commissioned to develop methods for practitioners in the field of leisure activities to attract and involve more homo-, bi-, and transsexual young people in order to improve their mental and physical health. Similarly, the Youth Today and Focus reports provided knowledge and understanding of young people, which guided the development of virtual youth clinics.

The indicators in the Youth Today also highlighted a worrying trend regarding young people's situation in the labour market and their economic situation in general. This, among other things, led to in-depth thematic studies on the social exclusion of young people and methods on how this can be addressed (Focus 08 and 09). These have in turn guided the identification of Government priorities for 2011, including measures to improve the social inclusion of young people, particularly those not in education, employment or training (NEETs).

Evidence from the stakeholder consultations also reveals that the information contained in the reports produced by the Swedish National Board for Youth Affairs is regularly referenced in the Government's budget proposals to support interventions, as well as during speeches in the Parliament. Moreover, whilst it is not the primary function, the indicators and evidence are also used in some instances to provide an indication of policy outcomes/ impacts, although determining the attribution of a specific intervention is rarely possible.

In addition to its uses in shaping national policy making, the annual reporting of indicators, together with the in-depth thematic studies, also provides information and knowledge that can be used by a range of other stakeholders, including the National Youth Council and its members; and other youth organisations. Indeed, evidence from the recent evaluation of the national youth monitoring system in Sweden suggest that there are three principle uses of the reports produced by the National Board of Youth Affairs;

- to provide a contextual overview of the situation of young people in order to anticipate potential developments in youth policy;
- to provide information and knowledge to influence their own perceptions of the situation of young people; and
- to provide a basis for offering more targeted and relevant services.

Notably, such uses would not be possible in a more reactive and ad hoc system for using indicators and knowledge (i.e. indicators and evidence developed primarily to support specific policies, programmes or projects).

In addition to national youth monitoring system, the use of LUPP at the local level also has a number of advantages. Indeed, a recent evaluation of LUPP shows that:

- 39% of municipalities state that LUPP contributed to the development of a youth policy action plan or other strategic documentation (based on a survey of 85 municipalities);

- 26% of municipalities state that it has led to the development of targets for local youth policy;
- 22% of municipalities have dedicated more resources to support young people;
- 54% of municipalities state that LUPP has resulted in more cooperation between areas of relevance to youth;
- 13% of municipalities state that LUPP has not contributed to anything.

As identified by the stakeholder consultations and the desk-based research, an important success factor for using indicators in fields related to youth is that national youth policy is cross-sectoral and implemented across different ministries and Government agencies, but coordinated by a single Government agency. The National Board for Youth Affairs has in a number of reports highlighted that there has to be coordination of resources to combat the exclusion and vulnerability of young people.

Challenges and limitations of using indicators

Notwithstanding the potential added value and benefits of using a system of indicators in fields related to youth, it is also important to understand the potential challenges and limitations.

For example, in general we know that the use of indicators can be restricted by the availability and quality of data. With restrictions on budgets there are often limitations on the possibilities for extending existing surveys and/ or commissioning new surveys. As such, the indicators most suited for annual reporting tend to be those that are already readily available from official data sources and administrative data sources. This presents an important challenge in terms of ensuring that the selected indicators are policy relevant, whilst at the same time maximising the use of existing data sources. Indeed, if the indicators are not relevant there is a considerable danger that the information and knowledge obtained from the indicators will be misleading.

Whilst it is recognised in Sweden that surveys concerning young people's attitudes and values can usefully be used to highlight young people's living conditions, particularly if they are undertaken on a regular basis, it is also recognised that such surveys are very sensitive to external factors. As such, attitude and value surveys require far more analysis and interpretation in order to determine the 'actual' living conditions of young people.

Given the heterogeneity of young people as a group, and as illustrated above, it is recognised in Sweden that an evidence-based national youth policy needs to be built on indicators and knowledge that allow for differences between sub-groups of young people

to be highlighted. Indeed, evidence from the stakeholder consultations highlights that if data cannot be disaggregated across various socio-demographic markers (i.e. across gender, age, disability, ethnic background, sexual preference, social class etc), there is a considerable danger that interventions based on the data are misdirected and inefficient. This in turn is likely adversely to affect vulnerable young people the most. The disaggregation of data is, however, not without its complications, as it is illegal to document some of this information in administrative data (e.g. ethnic background and sexual preferences). Moreover, sample sizes of national surveys are often not large enough to allow analysis for different sub-groups in society, particularly within individual age groups.

Another challenge with the work and development of indicators at the national level in Sweden (or at the EU level for that matter) is that many interventions that affect young people are implemented at the local level. Whilst some indicators in the Swedish national youth monitoring system are provided on the basis of sub-national geographical areas (municipalities, city regions, etc), most are presented for the nation as a whole. This, in theory would suggest that the results of the national system of follow up would be limited at the local level. However, paradoxically, a recent evaluation of the national youth monitoring system in Sweden found that the use of the reports produced by the National Board of Youth Affairs appear to add more value to municipalities than Government ministries and agencies. Indeed, a survey of municipalities, as part of the evaluation, found that 65% of municipalities had used the reports. Out of these, more than 90% used to them to find out facts about young people. More importantly, more than 60% used them as an evidence-base for formulating policies and interventions.

Future recommendations

The recent evaluation of the Swedish national youth monitoring system raised some concerns about the use of indicators to inform and advance national youth policy in Sweden and set out a number of recommendations. These are to improve and develop:

- the policy relevance of the indicators;
- the link between the trends highlighted by the indicators and the in-depth thematic research;
- the effectiveness of collecting data for the indicators; and
- the presentation and dissemination of the indicator findings.

The evaluation also propose to give the National Board for Youth Affairs more autonomy in terms of the content of the national youth monitoring system and to limit the data collection responsibilities of individual government agencies by involving the National Statistics Office (Statistics Sweden) substantially more in the collection of data.

Annex Three: Country Fiches

Austria

Summary of key points

- The federal structure appears to have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the use of indicators to inform youth policy in Austria.
- Recognition of evidence-based youth policy is very strong in Austria, but the collection of information and evidence is reactive rather than systematic.
- Awareness among all experts and stakeholders consulted that a system of using indicators can be useful in terms of informing and advancing youth policy, as long as it is based on consistent definitions of indicators and data collection methods and that local/ national contexts are appropriately considered.

Policy context

In Austria responsibility for youth policy is shared between the Federal Government and the States. The 'core' areas of youth policy - extracurricular youth work, educational and vocational training institutions, and the work of youth associations and public youth work, such as sports, educational and cultural clubs - are primarily the responsibility of the youth departments of the various federal states (*Landesjugendreferate*).

At the national level, youth policy is implemented by all Federal Ministries in line with their own youth campaigns and initiatives, although the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth acts as a coordinator and supervisor on various working committees.

Availability of indicators

Funding, quality assurance and research activities in relation to youth are managed by the Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth under the Federal Act on the promotion of youth (*Bundesjugendfoerderungsgesetz*). According to this Act, research activities are undertaken by the Federal Ministry to '*inform the development of diverse and open youth policies*'. The Federal Ministry is also legally obliged to provide the Parliament with a report on the situation of young people in Austria each legislative period (every five years). The latest report - 'The situation of youth, youth work and youth policy in Austria' – will be presented to the Parliament in 2011. Generally, the emphasis is on ensuring that youth policies and research are transversal.

In addition to the national report, a youth monitoring survey is conducted with approximately 800 young people around three or four times a year. The survey covers

different policy areas, linked to the current key policy areas during the relevant legislative period.

According to the stakeholder consultations, data and statistics for the development of indicators at the national level are most readily available in areas such as education and learning; employment and self sufficiency; and health and social exclusion. Indeed, according to the Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth, the topics of education and training; and vocations and employment are particularly well covered in youth research. Similarly, value orientation, identities and participation are identified as key strengths in Austria's overall youth research profile. Health and risk behaviour are also prominent, above all due to the research continuity assured by the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute (LBIMGS).

At the federal states level, there are '*Länderjugend berichte*', which are the equivalent of the national report at the federal level. The topics covered in these reports are designated by the federal states' officials and are independent from the federal level.

Notably, in the federal state of Vorarlberg a pilot project is currently exploring the development of a system of using indicators. However, only 12 out of the 96 municipalities in Vorarlberg have agreed to participate in the project. Moreover, the participating municipalities have only agreed to collect data on 30 out of the 100 'policy relevant' indicators identified at the start of the project.

Use of indicators

On the basis of the expert and stakeholder consultations, indicators and research are primarily used during the problem definition and policy formulation stages; to show that there is a need for policies and interventions (gap analysis). For example, in the federal state of Styria, research was commissioned to examine the qualifications needed by Styria's youth in order to succeed (personally and economically).

Generally, the interviews reflected a certain degree of scepticism regarding the use of indicators in Austrian youth policy making. This appears to stem primarily from a perception amongst some key actors that the complex and transversal characteristic of youth policy cannot be easily expressed through quantitative assessment.

Another factor that appears to contribute to this general scepticism is that there is a fear, mainly among policy makers, that nations and local areas will be compared with other areas without considering specific national/ local contexts. Moreover, the definitions of indicators and methods for collecting data may differ at different spatial levels.

Given the federal structure and the relative autonomy of municipalities in Austria, the implementation of a system of using indicators can also be very challenging as different political views and personal perceptions have to be reconciled. Moreover, participative structures have to be in place to ensure everybody's contribution and agreement.

There is however awareness among all experts and stakeholders consulted that a system of using indicators can be useful in terms of informing and advancing youth policy, as long as it is based on consistent definitions of indicators and data collection methods and that local/ national contexts are appropriately considered.

Belgium (Flemish Community)

Summary of key points

- There are several initiatives for gathering information and data on youth policy.
- A list of indicators has been selected to assist with the drafting of a 'context analysis' for the Local Youth Policy Plan (for the Flemish Youth Policy Plan).
- There is a growing recognition in Flanders that indicators can be very useful in the shaping, monitoring and evaluating youth policy and it is anticipated that the application of indicators will be formalised through the forthcoming Youth Policy Plan.

Policy context

Belgium is a federal state, consisting of three communities (Flemish Community, French Community and German-speaking Community) and three regions (Flemish Region, Walloon Region and Brussels Capital Region). There is no hierarchy between the federal, the community and the regional levels.

'Youth' belongs only partly to the federal 'Belgian' level of government (e.g. some aspects of judicial youth protection) but mostly to the community level. As such, the communities have the most explicit tools for implementing youth policy¹.

Since 2004 the Flemish Minister for Education, Youth, Equal Opportunities and Brussels Affairs, is responsible for youth work (including the coordination of the children rights policy), although the implementation and follow up (monitoring and evaluation) of youth policy is the responsibility of the Division of Youth (Agency for Socio-Cultural Work for Youth and Adults, Flemish Ministry of Culture, Youth, Sport and Media).

At the national level, Flemish youth policy is primarily guided by the Flemish Parliament Act of 18 July 2008 on Flemish youth and children's rights policy, whilst at the local level, youth policy is guided by the Flemish Parliament Act of 14 February 2003 on supporting and stimulating the municipal, inter-municipal and provincial youth policy and youth work policy as modified by the 23 December 2005 and 15 December 2006 Flemish Parliament Acts. In particular, the Act of 23 December 2005 stipulates that each municipality and province must draw up a policy plan on youth (work), including a description of the existing

¹ EKCY (2008) Country sheet on youth policy – Belgium (Flemish Community)

situation of young people and their needs. Depending on local implementation, this can contribute to a better knowledge and understanding of young people¹.

A new 'Flemish Youth Policy Plan' is currently in the process of being developed is, according to the stakeholder consultations likely to be adopted by the Flemish parliament in 2011. Notably, it is anticipated by the stakeholder consultees that this plan will include clear reference to the use of indicators for monitoring and evaluation. In particular, it is anticipated that it will identify and use a range of outcome indicators (such as youth unemployment and school dropout). The data for these indicators will be gathered by the relevant ministries and department and by the Flemish Governments' Research Department. To date, the monitoring and evaluation of youth policy has largely been undertaken in a qualitative way.

Availability of indicators

Historically, there have generally been limited systematic and coordinated efforts in relation to youth research in Flanders. Policy makers, as well as practitioners and researchers saw this as an obstacle, and therefore established the Youth Research Platform (JOP) in 2003. The Youth Research Platform is an interdisciplinary interuniversity cooperation between the Youth and Prevention Research Group (K.U.Leuven), the Department of Social Welfare Studies (UGent), and the Tempus Omnia Revelat Research Group (VU Brussels). Since 2007, the JOP has been integrated into the Policy Research Centre Programme, which was set up in 2001 to provide a scientific basis for policy in Flanders.

Another source of information and knowledge of young people is the 'Figures Book', which gathers information and knowledge about local youth (work) policy. The 'Figures Book' has been published on a regular basis since the implementation of the decree to the local youth in 1994. The data is obtained using a questionnaire to all Flemish and Brussels municipalities and includes questions in relation to local youth work (number and types of initiatives), local youth policy (youth councils, staff working in a youth service, types of support) and demographics.

Another initiative to improve the information and knowledge of youth policies at the local level is the development of a website which includes a range of figures and statistics of relevance to youth that can be accessed by municipalities. Notably, in consultation with the Division of Youth, a list of indicators has been selected to assist with the drafting of a 'context analysis' for the Local Youth Policy Plan (for the Flemish Youth Policy Plan).

¹ Ibid.

Use of indicators

There is a growing recognition in Flanders that indicators can be very useful in the shaping, monitoring and evaluating youth policy and it is anticipated that the application of indicators will be formalised through the forthcoming Youth Policy Plan.

The perceived added value and benefits of using indicators are that politicians can more easily get a grip of certain areas (unlike the use of large reports with much qualitative information). However, the risk of misinterpretation exists. The information therefore has to be interpreted in a larger context. Through the consultations it was also noted that policy makers should guard against an overemphasis of using indicators. Simply having all the data and figures on the situation of young people is not synonymous to solving the problems. Everyone involved should be aware of these risks. However, the consistent use of indicators should lead to 'maturity' in the application of indicators in the longer term.

Belgium (French Community)

Summary of key points

- There is a growing recognition in the French Community of Belgium of the benefits of using indicators in the field of youth policy, as acknowledged by the current government programme and by the missions of the Youth Observatory.
- However, the current state of play is one where indicators are collected and analysed on an ad-hoc basis, whenever the need to deepen knowledge on a particular issue is felt.
- The Belgian example also illustrates the difficulties and costs of collecting indicators at the relevant level of policy making in federal or highly-decentralised countries.

Policy context

Belgium is a federal state, consisting of three communities (Flemish Community, French Community and German-speaking Community) and three regions (Flemish Region, Walloon Region and Brussels Capital Region).¹ All levels of government in Belgium play a role in building and delivering youth policy, given the transversal nature of this area. Among them, the Community is a prominent actor in youth policy fields such as education and culture, particularly through the Ministry of Youth and Youth Protection under the current government.

The Ministry is mainly concerned with the traditional fields of youth policy, as reflected by its mission: "The Youth Service is in charge of implementing the *cultural* policy of the French community, the main aim of which is to promote the individual and collective participation of youth by learning to be an active, critical and responsible citizen."² As such, and although it claims to be concerned with "all the issues relating to young people", the Ministry focuses mainly on leisure and participation. Its main partners are third-sector youth organisations.

The transversal dimension of youth issues has however been echoed in recent debates, and the new community government's programme for the 2009-2014 legislature includes a pledge to develop a transversal "12-25 plan for youth" that would bring together all strands of policy related to young people (which would include all fields identified in the EU Youth Strategy) at various levels of government (federal, communitarian, regional and sub-

¹ The French Community is competent over the Walloon Region (except its German-speaking part) and Brussels.

² Source: <http://www.servicejeunesse.cfwb.be>

regional in some instances).¹ As of early 2011, the plan is still in its early stages of preparation, which is foreseen to be a complex and lengthy process given the number of actors that the French Community government plans to bring together.

The main provider of research and evidence in youth policy in the French Community is the Childhood and Youth Observatory (OEJAJ²), a service attached to the Ministry's Secretariat General. The Observatory has existed since 1999, and its missions include compiling permanent inventory of policies, institutions and research relevant to youth; developing indicators; providing opinions and recommendations; and disseminating any initiative in favour of youth in the Community.³

Availability of indicators

The Childhood and Youth Observatory (OEJAJ) is the main source of youth indicators. Its traditional focus is on childhood, youth, youth protection, health, leisure and leisure time, expression and participation, school dropout and adoption (these are the fields enumerated in the decree regulating the organisation).

The fields covered by the Observatory match in part the EU Youth Strategy, although it leaves out employment and entrepreneurship, as well as health. However, there is a wealth of data and evidence in these fields, which is collected and analysed by other relevant departments. Furthermore, the Observatory may from time to time use indicators in these other fields, whenever it identifies the need for further coordination between two or more strands of policies. This was the case, for example, when the Observatory looked into the detail of support to disabled young people, which brought together education and health evidence.

The Observatory relies primarily on external existing data, including national (e.g. national statistics institute), international (e.g. Labour force survey) and administrative sources (different ministries and public sector organisations). The available data from these sources are brought together in an annual "Memento of Childhood and Youth". The Memento is one of the main regular publications of the Observatory. Occasionally, the Observatory also produces its own data, for example, the 2007 survey on participation and the 2008 survey on well-being.

A very valuable experience from the Observatory is that it also encountered some success in making use of existing but underused data: it is the case for example of the valorisation

¹ The Community policy declaration is available at

http://www.cfwb.be/fileadmin/sites/portail/upload/portail_super_editor/Docs/declaration_politique_communautaire.pdf

² Full title in French: Observatoire de l'Enfance, de la Jeunesse et de l'Aide à l'Enfance.

³ As defined by the 12 May 2004 Decree.

of the Panel Survey of Belgian Households (1992-2002) from a youth perspective. The resulting publication, released in 2004 and entitled "A portrait of childhood in Belgium"¹ was a very cost-effective solution since there was no need to collect primary data. At a more micro-level, stakeholders note that there exists a variety of indicators collected by organisations who deal with young people, but that often these organisations are very reluctant to share this data (and sometimes to analyse this data, even internally) because of fears that it could be used against them.

The Walloon Statistics Institute also recently released a study entitled "The Situation of young people in French-speaking Belgium – A statistical photography".² The study's aim is to promote a better knowledge of young people and the difficulties they faced, in the fields of education, employment, poverty, health, culture and leisure as well as gender violence within young couples. The territory covered by the indicators is a clear illustration of the complexity of youth policy in Belgium: depending upon each field, the indicators will either cover the Walloon region or the whole French Community (i.e. adding Brussels region).

Use of indicators

Based on consultation with the OEJAJ and other stakeholders, it is felt that indicators have a limited influence on policies in Belgium (French community), where the culture of evidence policy making and evaluation is not currently that highly developed. When evidence does inform policy in the field of youth, it tends to be on an ad-hoc basis. The indicators are collected and analysed to inform policy initiatives which are rooted in political perceptions, rather than having policy makers responding to needs which emerge from the indicators.

Stakeholders also note the over-emphasis on *administrative* indicators, which focus on the outputs of the actions undertaken, compared to wider indicators which would really describe the situation of young people, as recipients of youth policies.

The OEJAJ observes that the value of indicators and evidence is best appreciated at the early stages of the policy cycle (problem definition and policy formulation), and that it has a greater impact when there is no existing policy. In other words, ex-ante evaluation is paid more attention than ongoing or ex-post evaluation.

¹ *Portrait de l'enfance en Belgique*, available at http://www.oejaj.cfwb.be/fileadmin/sites/oejaj/upload/oejaj_super_editor/oejaj_editor/pdf/portrait_de_lenfance_en_Belgique.pdf

² IWEPS, 2010. *La Situation des jeunes en Belgique Francophone – Une photographie statistique*. Available at <http://statistiques.wallonie.be/dyn/14/fichiers/jeun2010.pdf>

In particular, indicators and evidence can help to identify underlying problems and the need for coordination between different type of actors, for example, education and health professionals in the case of the education of mentally disabled people.

In Belgium, which is a country where central government is relatively weak, most issues identified in the EU Youth Strategy are dealt with at the local or regional/ community level. This in turn makes the collection of indicators very expensive (or nearly impossible in some cases) at the right level of government. This is an important consideration for federal countries.

Czech Republic

Summary of key points

- Responsibility for youth policy primarily lies with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, although other ministries are involved.
- There is a general recognition of the need for indicators and evidence, but it is also felt there is a lack of relevant data for further planning and evaluation.
- Evidence and indicators are mostly used during the 'problem definition' and 'policy formulation' stages.
- Further development of the system of cooperation between policy makers, researchers and practitioners is necessary.

Policy context

Youth policy is primarily the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport. The main tasks of the Youth Department in the Ministry include legislative and policy issues, the organisation and support of international co-operation, support for non-formal education, and NGO subsidy policy. Other ministries who are directly involved in youth policies are the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry for Regional Development, Ministry of Culture.

The Youth department has a specialised organisation - the National Institute of Children and Youth (NICY) - at its disposal. NICY focuses mainly on leisure learning and non-formal education and provides support to those involved in this type of learning and education.

Youth policy in the Czech Republic is also influenced by the Youth Chamber whose structure is interdisciplinary and interdepartmental. The Chamber of Youth is a coordinating youth policy authority that represents nongovernmental, not-for-profit organisations, leisure learning school facilities, representatives of central public administration authorities and youth work specialists for work with youth. The Chamber of Youth submits its own initiatives and recommendations to the national government and local authorities while playing the role of an advisory body to the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports.

Youth policy in the Czech Republic is guided by the Government Policy on Children and Young People for 2007-2013. It was defined based on the findings of experts from several

ministries. The priority themes of the policy cover all areas of relevance to youth. Notably, one of the priority themes is to improve the information about and for young people.

Availability of indicators

The need for indicators and evidence is recognised, but it is also felt that there is a lack of relevant data for further planning and evaluation. The greatest interest, need and experience exists at the national level (national public authorities) and, to a lesser extent, at the regional level (although there are significant differences between different regions) and in large cities. It was reported there is limited interest in this issue at the lower local level.

Indicators and evidence exist mainly in the fields of education, employment, health and social inclusion (partly). Data is also collected in other areas (such as participation and volunteering), but not systematically, nationwide and long-term.

Use of indicators

The extent to which evidence is used to inform policy varies across the policy cycle. The evidence and indicators are mostly used during the problem definition and policy formulation stages. Use of the indicators at the evaluation stage is not yet common. According to one interviewee, *'the weakest link is still the continuity between the implementation and evaluation. The process of implementation is not generally systematic and connected enough'*. However there are relevant projects such, as "The Keys for Life - Building up Key Competencies in Non-formal Education", (which is co-financed by the ESF and carried out by the ministerial Youth Department in cooperation with the National Institute of Children and Youth), where all the stages are interconnected and based on relevant evidence.

The perceived advantages of using indicators are that they provide an overview of young people's living conditions and enable policy makers better to respond to the needs of target groups.

To improve the role of evidence and indicators consultees felt it was necessary to develop a system of cooperation between policy makers, researchers and practitioners. Emphasis should be placed on cooperation between the different actors, and enhancing reciprocal communication and exchange of knowledge. Evidence and indicators should also be comprehensive and applicable at the local level.

Estonia

Summary of key points

- Recently adopted a much wider definition of youth policy and youth work, covering all areas of relevance to youth.
- National Youth Work Strategy recognises the need for consistent study and analysis of young people's living conditions.
- Currently, in the process of developing a national youth monitoring system, based on a set of predefined indicators and complementary in-depth thematic studies and research.

Policy context

Youth policy and youth work in Estonia is primarily based on the National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013 and is implemented by the Ministry of Education and Research (Department of Youth Affairs), together with the Estonian Youth Work Centre (a government agency administered by the Ministry of Education and Research)¹. The youth work strategy draws together two previously separate areas – youth policy and youth work.

A distinguishing feature of the 2006-2013 National Youth Work Strategy is that it introduces a much wider definition of youth policy and youth work. This reflects an acknowledgement by the government that the development of young people (aged 7 to 26 years) will be influenced by a range of factors across a number of policy areas, including education, employment, health, culture and crime. Youth policy in Estonia is therefore described by the government as a horizontal and integrated policy that provides '*coordinated and purposeful activities*' concerning all aspects of relevance to improve young people's living conditions and development. The strategy also states that the implementation of (youth policy) development directions is to be undertaken at all administrative levels and in all areas of relevance through existing development plans and updating of strategies as well as through formulating and implementing new ones.

Youth policy in Estonia is grounded on the basis that young people are a diverse and heterogeneous group. Three age groups have been identified, however the government

¹ A range of other programmes, operated by other Ministries, are also directed at influencing the conditions of youth in Estonia. Initiatives and activities of other ministries are coordinated by the Department of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research.

also recognises that there will be several sub-groups within each age group based on cultural, ethnic, gender, health factors. As such, it is recognised, in the National Youth Work Strategy 2006-2013, that there is a '*need for the consistent study and analyses of the young people's life style*' in order to highlight these differences. More specifically, the strategy notes that the following developments are required:

- consistent and systematic assessment and analysing possibilities that enable comparison;
- increase in the quality and capacity of youth studies; and
- taking into consideration the study results in formulating policies.

Availability of indicators

In response to this, a national youth monitoring system is currently in the process of being developed. The development of the national youth monitoring system is funded through the national programme 'Increasing the Quality of Youth Work', which lasts from 2008-2013 and is largely funded by the ESF. The national youth monitoring system is expected to contribute to a better understanding and knowledge of young people, as well as integrate data and evidence concerning all areas of relevance to youth (including demographics, education, employment, health, crime, leisure, etc) into a single overview/framework.

A range of data and research on young people already exists in Estonia, particularly in relation to education, employment and delinquencies. However, a particular challenge with the development of the national youth monitoring system will be the identification and development of suitable indicators relating to youth participation, informal education and the quality of youth work. In this regard, the identification and development of indicators at the EU level may prove particularly useful, providing that they are also presented at the national level.

Recognising the limitations of using indicators, it is expected that the national youth monitoring system will also include provision to support more qualitative in-depth thematic studies and research. Notably, the development of the monitoring system in Estonia largely draws on best practice from the EU and beyond, most notably the Netherlands, Sweden and New Zealand.

Use of indicators

There are a number of examples of how indicators have been used to influence policy. For example, indicators in relation to early school leavers, the school environment and the

number of engineers were used by the Ministry of Education and Research to inform and guide the curriculum development at ISCED Level 1-3.

On balance though, evidence from stakeholder consultations suggests that the link between research evidence and policy making and policy evaluation could be further improved – not only in relation to youth policy but across all policy areas. In fact, the Government has recently commissioned the University of Tartu to undertake a study on how research can be more easily applied in policy making.

Importantly, the stakeholders consulted expect that the new national youth monitoring system will help guide and focus activities directed at young people, by highlighting trends (positive and negative) among young people. Furthermore, it is expected to offer an opportunity to compare the situation of young people in Estonia with other countries (Member States).

In addition to the development of a national youth monitoring system, there have also been initiatives to set up a youth research network and cooperation platform between researchers, policy makers and youth work practitioners. If developed and setup, stakeholder consultations reveal that this would provide an important platform to improve evidence-based youth policy in Estonia.

Finland

Summary of key points

- The Ministry of Education and Culture has responsibility for youth affairs and is required to develop a development programme for youth policy every four years. The Ministry is assisted by the Advisory Council for Youth Affairs and also supports the Youth Research Network.
- Strong recognition of the need to use evidence in policymaking. Both statistical data and qualitative research is used, including a number of regular surveys of young people. Work is underway to develop indicator sets for both children and young adults covering a range of policy areas.
- Evidence used for policy formulation and evaluation, particularly to inform development and targeting of interventions.
- Collection of evidence also provides a basis for comparisons to be drawn at international level and also locally between municipalities.

Policy context

Responsibility for youth affairs lies with the Ministry of Education and Culture, which contains a youth policy division. The responsibilities of this division include drafting national development programmes, coordinating youth policy across government and supporting research which, in practice, is carried out by the Youth Research Network.

The Youth Act (2006) defines a young person as being under 29 years of age. The Act also requires that the Government adopts a youth policy development programme every 4 years. The current Child and Youth Policy Development Programme covers the period 2007 to 2011; policy areas and actions within the development programme are derived from the list of objectives and priorities in the Government's Children, Youth and Families Policy Programme which includes improvement in the living conditions of children and young people, with a focus on gaining more information on child poverty; early identification of the risk of social exclusion and ill-health; education and employment; and evaluation of decisions and resolutions in terms of their implications for children. Children and youth policy is focused on promoting preventative work, as opposed to remedial work.

The Advisory Council for Youth Affairs (Nuora) is an expert body which assists the Ministry and is responsible for reviewing the implementation of the development programme and

producing information about young people and their living conditions. There is also a National Youth Council, which supports civic participation amongst young people.

There is strong recognition of the need to use evidence in policymaking and indicators have a clear role. Having access to up-to-date information is stated as being essential for the monitoring and future policy planning of the Child and Youth Policy Programme.

Availability of indicators

Recently, work has been undertaken to develop a set of indicators and standards for information about children and young people. In particular, the Ministry has established two working groups – one considering children under 18 and one considering young adults aged 18 to 29. Both the groups prepared a list of around 50 indicators covering the following themes: health; education; involvement (participation); employment (in the context of young adults); livelihood; safety and support of society.

The Finnish Government also has set of indicators for monitoring social progress. 'Indicator' comprises around 100 indicators covering all policy areas. These were developed to reflect the population as a whole but some are relevant to youth policy as well (for example child welfare and educational progression).

Indicators comprise both statistics and qualitative research. Relevant statistics are produced by Statistics Finland and also the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL). Finland also has a number of regular nationwide surveys:

- School Health Promotion Study - launched in 1995 to strengthen planning and evaluation of health promotion activities. Data is gathered biannually by an anonymous classroom questionnaire in all 8th and 9th grades of secondary schools and 1st and 2nd grades of upper secondary and vocational schools.
- Adolescent Health and Lifestyle Survey - started in 1977 with the purpose of following the health and health behaviours of 12-18 year olds using biennial postal questionnaires.
- Youth Barometer – produced annually since 1994, based on around 1,000 telephone interviews which explore young people's attitudes and values.
- Youth Living Conditions – established in 2001 as an annual survey but since 2008 has been produced every two years. Each survey is based around a new topic each year; in 2008 the topic was "Polarized youth?"

- Leisure Time Survey – survey undertaken every three years to explore leisure time activity.

Overall, data coverage is felt to be very good for education and employment, and health and wellbeing. However, information on participation is less comprehensive.

Use of indicators

The current development programme highlights that 'youth research plays a key role in development of youth policy and youth work.' This research is generally carried out by the multi-disciplinary Youth Research Network, which is supported by the Ministry.

Policymakers generally use evidence for policy formulation or evaluation. There is a focus on evaluating implementation and monitoring the actions taken in order to inform development of future actions and targeting (by highlighting those groups which are most at risk). The ongoing discussions on social exclusion and child welfare have been very dependent on the evidence which has been collected on these subjects.

However, it is recognised that policy making is sometimes about political values not just facts. This political dimension can influence the direction of policy in parallel to the use of evidence.

Recent work on indicators has considered the need for international comparisons but also the need to allow for information collection and comparison at local level between municipalities. It was felt that the EU could take a role in guiding the choices made by Member States when developing indicator sets and helping to create a common understanding of what data collection is feasible. The importance of ensuring that information is reliable and can be updated was emphasised along with the need to allow access to evidence so that it can be put to practical use (for example by creating an online database as with the 'Findicator' dataset).

Despite the high level of evidence available and its apparent use in the policymaking process, there was also awareness that although indicators are useful in highlighting issues and raising questions, they sometimes do not give the full picture. Therefore, interpretation is key, and care must be taken to acknowledge any shortcomings or gaps in data.

It was felt that there is a strong argument to increase the use of indicators both at national and EU level as the more that policymakers know about the effectiveness of their policies the better. Use of indicators is one way of trying to assess effectiveness but it is important that indicator sets go beyond statistical data and also incorporate qualitative evidence (for example from surveys or focus groups) in order to provide a more detailed evidence base.

When selecting indicators it is easy to be confined to those which already exist for some other purpose, but these may not be most relevant or appropriate so it is important to consider alternative measures.

France

Summary of Key Points

- Existing evidence on youth and youth policies is very rich, but is produced on an ad-hoc basis, with no systematic collection of indicators.
- Stakeholders acknowledge that the wealth of research expertise is under-used in the policy making process, with an evaluation culture that could be improved in France.
- However, a renewed political interest in youth issues and increased pressure to evaluate public policies could trigger a shift towards evidence-based policy making in the field of Youth.
- In particular, the Transversal Policy Document on policies in favour of Youth (an inter-ministerial strategy introduced in 2010) lists 74 indicators across all topics identified in the EU Youth Strategy, and sets target for each of them with a 2-3 year horizon.

Policy Context

Youth policy in France is conducted by different public authorities: central government, regional, departmental and local authorities are financially autonomous. The following Fiche focuses on the national youth policy, which is primarily dealt with by the Ministry of Youth ('Ministry of Youth and Active Solidarities' as of October 2010). The French Ministry of Youth has traditionally been responsible for information, participation, volunteering, and overseeing leisure time activities (such as summer camps etc.) while other ministries deal with youth education, health, etc.

All the ministries involved in youth policy can be gathered together at the initiative of the Prime Minister through an inter-ministerial committee, which was established in 1982. In January 2009, this committee was convened for the first time in 18 years, to establish the basis of the Commission on Youth Policy, which published a Green Book¹ entitled "Recognise the value of Youth" in July of the same year.

The revival of the Committee for Youth and the release of the Green Book appears to signal a renewed interest in youth issues and policies. In parallel, there are also signs of an increased recognition of the need for evidence and indicators in youth policy: for instance the intention is that newly created Civic Service will be thoroughly evaluated on a long-term basis. Also, the 2011 budget includes, for the first time, a Transversal Policy

¹ http://lesrapports.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/cgi-bin/brp/telestats.cgi?brp_ref=094000308&brp_file=0000.pdf
[Accessed October 2010]

Document¹ on youth policies, which brings together in one document all government policies related to youth across a wide range of governmental bodies, from agriculture to justice.

Availability of Indicators

To gather and analyse evidence and indicators, the Ministry of Youth relies upon two principal sources, besides its own services:

- The National Statistics Institute (INSEE, which has almost 6,000 employees and a budget of €420m in 2009), established more than 60 years ago, collects a significant amount of information with respect to demographics, employment, education, health and poverty. The INSEE produces evidence on youth across a wide range of topics, through the age breakdown available on many indicators. However, youth is not in itself treated as a "theme" by the Institute. However, since 2008 the Ministry of Youth uses INSEE data alongside its own to feed into the *Key figures of youth* annual brochure², which was started in 2008. The brochure presents 33 indicators, covering the following themes: demographics, education, health, economic activity, and alternatively justice and leisure or housing and participation.
- The National Institute for Youth and Community Education (INJEP) is a public autonomous research institution attached to the Minister in charge of youth policies. After restructuring in 2010, the Institute's mission is the *observation, analysis* and *evaluation* of youth practices and expectations, as well as of youth policies. The INJEP does not produce a systematic body of evidence, but it does nonetheless publish a substantial amount of research work in its periodical reviews, articles and monographs. The INJEP also publishes the European reviews *Forum 21* and *Forum 21 – Research*, in partnership with the German and British Youth Agencies. The body of ad-hoc research carried out by the INJEP focuses on the following themes: youth policies, culture and society, participation and voluntary activities, health and sports, and the international dimension.

The Transversal Policy Document, the first of its kind in France, was produced in 2010 and appears to represent a breakthrough in terms of evidence-based policy making in youth policies. It is a budgetary document annexed to the yearly financial programming law (in a predefined format). The document, coordinated by the Ministry of Youth, has four components: (i) strategy, (ii) objectives, (iii) indicators, and (iv) budget. The indicators, presented in the document are related to the central government policies aimed at young people (from 3 to 30, depending on the department).

¹ Document de Politique Transversale in French

² *Chiffres clés de la Jeunesse*, available from 2008 to 2010 at <http://www.jeunesse-vie-associative.gouv.fr/00-Accueil/Publications/Statistiques,803/Chiffres-cles,824> [Accessed January 2010].

The strategy is said to be genuinely transversal, since it includes 43 budgetary programmes across 19 budgetary lines, including culture, housing, employment, sport, education, health, and justice. Notably, all the themes identified in the EU Youth strategy are covered to some extent by the Transversal Policy Document, except for entrepreneurship and creativity.

The French Strategy's five priority axes are:

- Piloting *youth policies* (policy experimentation and coordination);
- Access to *education and training* (from primary to higher education);
- A protective *living environment* for young people (health, housing, road safety and participation);
- *Personal development* (culture, sport);
- *Youth autonomy* (*employment social and professional inclusion of young people and young people with less opportunities, participation*)

The five axes are then sub-divided into 18 objectives which are each associated with one or more pre existing indicators. For each indicator, and sub-indicator where applicable, the document provides the source and the values for 2008 and 2009 (where available), as well as a target for 2012 or 2013. The document therefore provides a list of 74 indicators relevant to the achievements of youth policy objectives across a wide range of topics and ministries, with targets at a 2 - 3-year horizon and is intended to be updated each year, on the occasion of the preparation of the budget.

Use of Indicators

Traditionally, the relationship between research and policy in France is quite loose. This is often considered a paradox, because a significant amount of effort and public resources are applied to the production of research and studies on youth topics, and on the impact of youth policies. The challenge therefore lies with the coordination of research and policy: the research outputs are not sufficiently integrated into the policy making process. The Youth Green Paper ("Livre vert sur la jeunesse"), released in 2009, could be an exception to this, as it is said to have a stronger link with research than hitherto.

As Chantal de Linares¹, the former chief editor of INJEP's quarterly research magazine *Agora débats/jeunesse* pointed out: "*Specialists use the raw material generated by studies and research for their audits and advisory missions, whereas political decision-makers too often know nothing about them. It's as if the work done had an impact almost by accident, via some strategic analyses or recommendation memos or audits, whereas elsewhere,*

¹ INJEP, "A quoi sert la recherche?", *INJEP en direct*, n. 53, July 2007.

and more particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, the overlapping of research, expertise and political decision-making would appear to be more visible and much more closely linked.”

In this model, research is used to inform policy on an ad-hoc basis, when decision-makers deem it necessary.

However, recent developments in youth policy seem to contradict these trends. We have already noted the creation of the Transversal Policy Document, which sets out medium-term targets for youth policies across different ministries. This document was introduced for the first time in October 2010, so its impact on different stakeholders has still to be observed. Two other initiatives developed recently by the Ministry of Youth also show a clear aspiration better to scrutinise and evaluate policies.

The first of these is the *Experimentation Fund for Youth*, which was created in 2008 to design and implement experimental programmes aimed at improving the social and professional inclusion of young people (aged 16-25). Experimental programmes are first implemented in a small geographical area, before the evaluation assesses whether the experience can and should be replicated and implemented on a larger scale. The Fund's budget for 2010 is €90m, plus contributions from public and private partners. The other initiative of note is the *Civic Service*, introduced in 2010 for people aged 16 to 25 in order for them to work in community projects for a duration up to a year¹. The *Civic Service* is subject to an evaluation, which includes a cohort study to measure long-term impacts on young beneficiaries and participant institutions.

¹ The Civic Service gives the opportunity for young people (16-25) to become involved in a community project (with an NGO or a public organisation) for a period of six to 12 months while receiving state benefits (€442 a month). The objective is to have 10,000 participants in 2010 and 75,000 by 2014.

Germany

Summary of key points

- The Federal structure allows for local issues to be addressed at a local level.
- This also however has consequences on policy and strategy formulation and evidence-based approaches insofar as it is not seen as practical to implement a common system across the different federal structures.
- A national report on the situation of young people in Germany is published each legislative period.

Policy context

In line with Germany's federal structure, youth policy is not only a matter for the Federal Government, but also for the Länder, municipal authorities and voluntary child and youth service organisations in the framework of their partnership with public agencies¹.

Specifically, this means that at the federal level youth policy is the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth, whilst at the federal states (Länder) level there are 16 youth ministries and youth offices responsible for implementation, promotion, and further development of voluntary and statutory youth services. Finally, at the local level there are youth offices located within each administrative area, which are responsible for the planning and funding of youth services.

At the Federal level, the promotion of structures and activities leading to a better understanding of youth is governed by the Social Code, 8th volume (SGB VIII) Child & Youth Services. In particular, this specifies that the Federal Government must submit a report on the situation of young people; and the efforts and achievements of youth services to the German *Bundestag* (Parliament) and the *Bundesrat* (Federal Council) in every legislative period.

At the federal states level, there are '*Länderjugendberichte*', which are the equivalent of the above instrument at the federal level. The topics covered are designated by the federal states officials and are completely independent from the federal level.

Availability of indicators

¹ The Council of the Baltic Sea States (2010) Evidence Based Youth Policy in the Baltic Sea States

Evidence at the federal level is collected through 'Child and Youth Plans', which cover specific key themes under each legislative period.

There is a variety of empirical research undertaken in Germany (e.g. the 'Growing-up in Germany - Everyday Worlds' survey and the 'Youth services and social change' survey of youth offices,) but these are not positioned within a strategic implementation cycle.

Use of indicators

In Germany there is no legal or formal definition of the term "evidence-based youth policy" the rationale being that because it implies sophisticated methodological requirements and criteria, and there is no system of using indicators that could satisfy these expectations; because of the political structure but also because the effectiveness of the approach is not widely accepted. Critically this is because in Germany, the "subsidiarity" principle allows relative independence at the local level of youth policy making, in order to be responsive and effective to local issues. This does not however allow for the generalisation of youth policy formulation, nor research.

During the consultations with the German Youth Institute they emphasised that there is a recognition that indicators can be usefully be used to inform and advance youth policy, as long as advanced statistical methodologies are applied to allow for a comparison across different regions and countries. In 2005, an EU funded project, EUYOUNG, aimed at developing a measurement instrument for comparative research on youth political participation in eight Member States. The lesson learned from the project was that the development of indicators across countries can be a challenging process, but is far from impossible.

Greece

Summary of key points

- National youth policy in Greece is the responsibility of the General Secretariat for Youth, under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.
- The General Secretariat for Youth is currently in the process of setting up two working groups, in order to help the collection and the elaboration of data and statistics.
- The General Secretariat for Youth believes that the recent steps taken towards a more evidence-based approach to youth policy will greatly help the development of relevant and targeted policies for young people.

Policy context

National youth policy in Greece is the responsibility of the General Secretariat for Youth, under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs.

The General Secretariat for Youth, being the only state organisation responsible for the development of youth policy, works towards the mainstreaming of the youth dimension in other governmental policies, given that all governmental organisations may develop policies that ultimately touch upon some needs of the younger generation. In this respect, the General Secretariat for Youth promote a cross-sectoral youth policy, including in areas such as employment and economic development, culture and leisure, education and social participation, international co-operation and information.

At the operational level, the General Secretariat for Youth is supported by the Institute for Youth, which is responsible for:

- the technological and scientific support of the programmes of the General Secretariat for Youth;
- studying, diffusing information, elaborating and implementing actions and scientific or other programmes that the General Secretariat for Youth, in its frame of responsible, assigns to the Institute for Youth;
- undertaking the responsibility for running the EU Youth in Action programme in Greece, as well as Youth card EURO <26 and EURODESK;
- the elaboration of specific studies that the General Secretariat for Youth assigns to the Institute for Youth¹.

¹ Country sheet on youth policy Greece (2009) EKCYF

Availability of indicators

The General Secretariat for Youth and the Institute for Youth finance the elaboration of studies in the youth field and more specifically, the Secretariat cooperates continuously with the Historical Youth Archive which it also finances. Evidence and statistical data can also be found in research and studies focusing on policy areas beyond the 'core' youth policy areas, such as employment and unemployment, health, environment etc, where there is a classification by age. Notably, the Hellenic Statistical Authority has recently provided data relating to the proposed indicators on youth in existing policy domains, covering 2009 and most of 2010.

Moreover, the General Secretariat for Youth is currently in the process of setting up two working groups, in order to help the collection and the elaboration of data and statistics. The first working group will consist of representatives of the Hellenic Statistical Authority as well as government representatives from all policy areas of relevance to youth. Their role will be consultative and they will collect and elaborate evidence and indicators from the different policy areas as well as making suggestions to the Secretary General for Youth. The second working group will consist of researchers, who will be responsible for suggesting which research and studies should be carried out annually. Whilst the working groups have not convened yet, most ministries of relevance to youth have provided positive responses on their participation.

Use of indicators

The General Secretariat for Youth believes that the recent steps taken towards a more evidence-based approach to youth policy will greatly help the development of relevant and targeted policies for young people. It also states that indicators and evidence in the youth field is important for all stages of the policy cycle.

Hungary

Summary of key points

- Hungarian youth policy has been characterised by a lack of continuity since the early 1990s. The result has been a lack of reliable mechanisms for policy development and delivery.
- Since 2010, national responsibility for youth policy lies with the Ministry of Human Resources, which is also responsible for health, social affairs, education and culture.
- Whilst there appears to be a reasonable body of evidence in relation to youth policy in Hungary, the impression is that indicators and evidence are not used systematically for youth policy development.
- This is in contrast to other social policy areas of relevance to youth, including employment, where the practices for using indicators appear to be more advanced and embedded.

Policy context

The overall picture of Hungarian youth policy is one of discontinuity. Over the last 20 years there have been several changes made in relation to youth policy, including in relation to the existence of a youth ministry or the location of specialised units or departments in different ministries, but also in relation to the content and meaning of youth policy. In fact, every new government rebuilt the youth policy structure, including the cross-sectoral co-ordination of youth policies at national government level, the changing role of Mobilitas (the main official service for youth affairs) and the involvement of youth organisations. The result has been a lack of reliable mechanisms for policy development and delivery¹.

Since 2010, national responsibility for youth policy lies with the Ministry of National Resources, which is also responsible for health, social affairs, education and culture. At the national and regional level, youth policy is also supported operationally by Mobilitas, which since 2010 has been transferred into the National Institute for Social and Family Affairs.

Whereas the authorities at national level provide a framework of policy and professional development, the main responsibility lies with local government, for whom youth policy

¹ Youth Policy in Hungary (2008) Council of Europe

however is only a voluntary task. Almost all services are delivered by actors in civil society, including, most notably, NGOs¹.

As regards youth legislation, there is no legal act that specifies public services related to youth. This has resulted in a lack of stability within the youth policy field, in terms of resources, structures and institutions.

The National Youth Strategy for 2010-2025 was adopted in 2009, although it is not clear what the latest position of the current government is on this. Notably, the National Youth Strategy explicitly states that indicators should be developed to assess the developments in youth policy.

As part of the National Youth Strategy, a National Youth Action Plan for 2010-11 has also been developed and adopted. The action plan includes a range of indicators to assess and monitor the implementation of the specified actions. Notably, the actions relate to all areas of relevance to youth, including education, employment, health, etc. More specifically, it also includes an action to set up an inter-ministerial committee on youth.

Availability of indicators

Since the establishment of the National Youth Research Unit within Mobilitas in 2000, youth surveys have been carried out every four years. The youth survey is based on a sample of 8,000 young people and covers young people's attitudes towards a range of topics including youth work.

National reports on the situation of children and young people have also been presented to the Parliament on an annual basis since 2000, although as stated in the National Youth Strategy the national reports will be published every four years from 2010. The national reports contains both qualitative and quantitative information regarding the situation of young people and youth workers, as well as an assessment of the implementation of youth policy. The national report also includes the key findings from the youth survey.

Following the regionalisation of Mobilitas in 2000, the National Research Unit within Mobilitas has also published regional reports on the implementation of youth policy at the sub-national level, together with an analysis of the situation of young people and youth workers. To date, three editions of the regional reports have been published (the most recent one in 2010).

Use of indicators

¹ Ibid

Whilst there appears to be a reasonable body of evidence in relation to youth policy in Hungary, as outlined above, the impression received from the consultees is that indicators and evidence are not used systematically for youth policy development. This is in contrast to other social policy areas of relevance to youth, including employment, where the practices for using indicators appear to be more advanced and embedded.

In terms of the potential advantages and added value of using indicators the consultees mention that it helps to ensure that policies are based on the 'real' situation of young people and allows interventions to be specialised and targeted at those most in need.

Whilst recognising the benefits of using indicators, the consultees also note that indicators will not provide all the answers, particularly in relation to the development of suitable projects and programmes. As such, there is a need to complement the use of indicators with qualitative research, including consultations with key stakeholders and target groups.

The consultees note that the EU can play an important role in setting up a common system for supporting an evidence-based approach in the youth policy field.

Ireland

Summary of key points

- The Office for the Minister of Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) is responsible for overseeing implementation of the National Children's Strategy and coordinating policy in this area.
- A strong commitment to the use of evidence was articulated in the strategy which has led to the development of a set of wellbeing indicators and the establishment of a national longitudinal survey of children.
- Evidence gathering is focused on health, demographics and education, but gaps exist in relation to more qualitative aspects such as beliefs and values (although the longitudinal study will help to address these over time).
- The OMCYA are currently developing a Youth Policy Framework which will focus on outcomes and quality-based policy and provision for young people.
- The implementation of the National Quality Standards Framework (NQS) for youth work is expected to further assist in developing an enhanced evidence base for youth work.

Policy context

Since 2005 the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA), which is housed within the Department of Health and Children, has been responsible for overseeing the implementation of the National Children's Strategy and bringing greater coherence to policy making for children. In 2008 the remit of the Office was expanded to incorporate the Youth Affairs section which was relocated from the Department of Education and Science as part of a Government reorganisation. Following the incorporation of youth affairs in the OMCYA it can be expected that policies on children and young people will be more closely aligned. This is significant given that indicators in relation to children have been used on a systematic basis since 2005 (through, for example, the State of the Nation's Children reports).

The OMCYA works closely with the Research Division within the Department of Health and Children to facilitate a better understanding of how children grow up in Ireland.

The National Children's Strategy (2000-2010) defines children as those aged under 18 and has three goals: children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will

be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity; children's lives will be better understood and their lives will benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services; and, children will receive quality support and services to promote all aspects of their development. A new National Children's Strategy is currently being developed which will build upon the advances achieved in the National Children's Strategy (2000-2010).

Alongside this, the OMCYA are currently developing a Youth Policy Framework. This framework will cater for young people aged 10-21 years who are engaged in youth service provision outside of the formal education sector. The aim is to establish a general framework to accommodate the identified areas and issues pertinent to young people within this age range; developing the policy objectives of the OMCYA in this area; reconfiguring existing provision related to such objectives; and ensuring that the resultant service provision for young people in this age range is both quality- and outcome-focussed. The development of the policy framework will be predicated on an international review of best practice under the key policy themes. This review will then inform the development of clear, relevant objectives, associated indicators and realisable outcomes in relation to these areas.

As part of the original National Children's Strategy (2000-2010), the National Children's Advisory Council (NCAC) was established in May 2001. There is also a National Youth Work Advisory Committee (NYWAC) in place which has a specific function in relation to youth work matters. Both the NCAC and the NYWAC provide an advisory role in relation to issues impacting on children and young people. These fora comprise representatives of statutory agencies, voluntary sector, research community, parents and young and provide an advisory function to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

Availability of indicators

There is a very strong commitment to the use of evidence, influenced by EU's use of indicators but also a national review of public services which placed emphasis on evidence-based policymaking. This is reflected in the National Children's Strategy which identified the development of a national set of child well-being indicators as a key action. Research was undertaken and the results published in 2005. The resulting indicators are used in the biennial State of the Nation's Children report series and split into four areas: socio-demographics, children's relationships, children's outcomes, and formal and informal supports. The evidence used to compile the report is a combination of national statistics (including census data) and survey data (sourced for major international studies such as PISE and HBSC). These four themes cut across the eight areas identified by the EU as of relevance to youth policy but in general evidence gathering is focused on health,

demographics and education. Data is lacking in relation to values, beliefs and attitudes of young people. There is also a lack of qualitative evidence but this is often for practical reasons such as the need to obtain consent.

A national longitudinal study of children (Growing Up in Ireland) was launched in 2006 as part of the National Children's Strategy. The study follows the development of almost 20,000 children: an infant cohort of approximately 11,100 nine month olds (data collected when children in this cohort are nine months and three years old) and a child cohort of approximately 8,500 nine year olds (data collected when children in this cohort are nine years and thirteen years old). This will help to address existing data gaps around the views and opinions of young people and also to provide evidence which charts the development of children over time, examining progress and wellbeing at critical stages and the key factors that may help or hinder this development.

The first waves of data collection for both cohorts have been completed. A second wave of data collection for the infant cohort commenced in early December 2010 when the infants reached their third birthday. A second wave of data collection for the nine-year old cohort will commence in mid-2011, when these children reach 13 years old. There will potentially be additional waves of data collection for both cohorts.

Use of indicators

In the area of Youth the importance of research has been underscored in the Youth Work Act 2001 and the National Youth Work Plan 2003 - 2007. In the past, evidence has mostly been used at the problem definition¹ and policy formulation stages of the policy cycle but there is a move towards placing more emphasis on gathering evidence as part of policy evaluation, particularly with regard to outcome evidence.

Use of evidence benefits policy making and contributes to efficiency and effectiveness, and therefore accountability. An additional benefit is that demonstrating that policy is grounded in evidence can help to ensure stakeholder buy-in.

The establishment of a research unit in OMCYA has been a positive development as it has helped to create a closer relationship between research and policymaking. With respect to youth work (informal education) there is an emphasis on building relationships with young people and this creates a challenge in terms of what evidence can be gathered to best demonstrate effectiveness. Evidence relating to formal education is more clear-cut and includes indicators on factors such as attainment and progression.

¹ This represents a general term for the start of the policy cycle. However, it should be emphasised that the OMCYA seeks to ensure that the rationale for youth service provision is not problematised.

At a European level it is suggested that further development of existing networks and initiatives would be beneficial, particularly if it encouraged a more common approach to setting indicators and gathering data.

Italy

Summary of key points

- The Department of Youth promotes, in cooperation with other ministries, universities and civil society organisations, a number of evidence-based studies and reports that improve the knowledge and understanding of young people, including, most notably, the 2008 and 2009 National Reports on the Situation of Youth.
- The range of reports and studies on the situation of young people that are published in Italy 'arrive at the desk' of ministries and government agencies in charge of designing and implementing youth policy, but the channels and mechanisms through which they have an impact on policy is not institutionally formalised (e.g. through an official statement and/ or a national system) and therefore difficult to detect or report.
- The Department of Youth believes that indicators are useful to understand historic trends and the current situation from a more objective, 'harder' perspective and in some cases to make forecasts that can be useful to design forward-looking policy.
- The Department of Youth believes that the EU can play a leading role in pushing forward the identification of the right mix of indicators to be used to deal with youth policy.

Policy context

In Italy the policy making functions and the coordination of all initiatives, including legislation and regulation, on matters relating to youth are the direct responsibility of the Minister of Youth. Youth policy is nonetheless largely implemented at the local and regional level, in accordance with a centrally established framework ('decreto di riparto'), which at the moment is centred on four priorities:

- Youth's 'right to the future' ('Diritto al Futuro' - to promote employment and social policies for young people)
- 'The Best of Youth' ('La meglio gioventu' - to promote the mass communication of positive examples of young people as opposed to the often negative examples given by the media; to support citizenship education; and to tackle youth discomfort, etc.)
- 'Generational Protagonism' ('Il protagonismo generazionale' - to promote youth participation, volunteering and intercultural dialogue)

- 'The merit-based revolution' ('La rivoluzione del merito' - fostering a merit-based rather than a relationship-based socio-economic environment; enhancing creative capacity; encouraging youth culture; and stimulating youth entrepreneurship)

In line with the above, Framework Programme Agreements ('Accordi di Programma Quadro' - APQs) have also been defined with the regional governments of all the regions, including the two autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano. The APQs aim at promoting initiatives that increase the participation of young people in public life and facilitate their self fulfillment as active, responsible citizens and develop the structured dialogue; promote the inter-culture dialogue and the development of cultural, creative, and entrepreneurial activities. Collaboration across the country also occurs by way of agreements with the Union of Italian Provinces ('Unione delle Province d'Italia' - UPI) and the National Association of Italian Municipalities ('Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani' - ANCI).

Availability of indicators

The Department of Youth promotes, in cooperation with other ministries, universities and civil society organisations, a number of evidence-based studies and reports that improve the knowledge and understanding of young people, including, most notably, the 2008 and the 2009 National Reports on the Situation of Youth. This report provides a detailed, overall look at the situation of young people in Italy (at the national, regional and, if possible, provincial and municipal levels), mainly focusing on demographic aspects, labour and economic conditions, mobility, social aspects (housing, lifestyles, participation to civil society and politics), health, immigration and emigration. The data is primarily sourced from the Italian National Institute of Statistics, including administrative data and sample surveys.

Recently, a number of bespoke youth surveys have been undertaken in Italy, including surveys of young people's attitudes and values in 2008 on behalf of the Italian Agency for the Youth in Action Programme and the Department of Youth; and surveys on youth employment and mobility in 2010 on behalf of the Department of Youth.

Generally speaking, two categories of evidence and indicators are used for youth policy in Italy - *ad hoc* empirical studies and collection/analysis of existing statistics/ surveys on specific topics like youth participation, employment and health; and data collected through the monitoring, audit and evaluation of the implementation of the APQs.

The former of these types of data aims to portray the conditions of young people in the country, therefore contributing to the identification of needs and hence providing a rationale for policy intervention. The latter focus on the interim and ex-post measurement of the outputs and processes generated by the policy interventions themselves, and are used to ensure that the interventions are on track and inform successive adjustment to youth policy.

Use of indicators

The range of reports and studies on the situation of young people that are published in Italy 'arrive at the desk' of ministries and government agencies in charge of designing and implementing youth policy, but the channels and mechanisms through which they have an impact on policy is not institutionally formalised (e.g. through an official statement and/ or a report) and therefore difficult to detect or report. There is, however, anecdotal evidence that policies are informed by the large amount of research sponsored by the Ministry, or independently produced by research institutes and stakeholders. For example, the recent Italia 2020 - an action plan for young people's employability through the integration of learning and work – has comprehensive annex with a range of relevant statistics and analysis attached to it. The information and knowledge generated through the statistics and data has influenced the priorities identified in the action plan and also provides a baseline for the continuous monitoring of the action plan. Interestingly, the action plan is implemented jointly by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Universities and Research and the Department of Youth.

According to the Department of Youth, the main disadvantages of using indicators is that it can be expensive in terms of resources and demanding in terms of time needed to develop new indicators. However, the Department of Youth does not really see any disadvantage of using indicators per se as they represent only an ingredient, albeit a very necessary one, of the policy cycle which inevitably relies on a range of factors.

Another challenge with using indicators at the national level is that there is considerable autonomy for regions to implement interventions and policies that affect young people. As a result, the collection of relevant datasets is not always the same in all regions. As a response to this challenge, a working group has been set up to deal with these matters in the field of vocational training.

The Department of Youth believes that indicators are useful to understand historic trends and the current situation from a more objective, '*harder*' perspective and in some cases to make forecasts that can be useful to design forward-looking policy. The Department of Youth believes that the experiences from some countries, in particular Nordic countries like Sweden and Finland, are very positive.

The Department of Youth believes that the EU can play a leading role in pushing forward the identification of the right mix of indicators to be used to deal with youth policy. The 'working group on youth indicators' recently put in place by the European Commission, is regarded as a very useful initiative. In fact, once there is a benchmark at the EU level, it becomes easier for policy officers at the national level to obtain the attention and resources necessary to move forward towards that policy benchmark. Another good reason to adopt an EU approach is that there is much to learn from each other initially. Indeed, it is important that not only what is already available through centralised statistical systems at the EU level is reviewed, but also other indicators that might be currently missing from a Community perspective but have proved helpful from a national perspective. For instance, it is not enough to rely on the various indicators of unemployment to inform youth policy encouraging employment. Data on employed people, including the type and duration of employment (now not systematically collected at the EU level and in many cases at the national level), also need to be used to provide a comprehensive overview of the issue of youth unemployment.

Latvia

Summary of key points

- The Ministry of Education and Science is the key institution responsible for the co-ordination and implementation of youth policies.
- Youth is a relatively new policy area in Latvia.
- Indicators are used mainly for policy planning and to a limited extent for policy evaluation.

Policy context

Overall responsibility for the implementation of youth policies in Latvia lies within the Ministry of Education and Science. However, several other Ministries also implement youth-related policy in their respective areas. The co-ordination of youth policies in different fields is undertaken through the Youth Consultative Council, which includes representatives from different Ministries, local authorities, NGOs and other key stakeholders. It provides direction and makes the key decisions concerning the development of youth policy.

Youth is a relatively new policy area in Latvia. The Youth Law and Youth Policy Guidelines 2009-2018 were adopted in 2008 and 2009 respectively. The latter document is the key strategic document which defines the priorities for youth policies in Latvia. The main policy goal is to improve the quality of life of young people. The three main areas identified in the Guidelines are:

- youth policy co-ordination;
- youth participation and provision of leisure time activities; and
- youth social and economic development, competitiveness and social inclusion.¹

The Guidelines recognise the importance of the evidence-based youth policy and the necessity of defining the key elements and objectives. The main elements set out to ensure better knowledge about the situation of young people are²:

¹ Youth Partnership (2009), *Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Latvia*. Available at: <http://youth-partnership-eu.coe.int/youth-partnership/documents/Questionnaires/Country/2008-09/Latvia.pdf>

² The Council of the Baltic Sea States (2010), *Evidence-based Youth Policy in the Baltic Sea States 2010*.

- annual monitoring of the situation of young people;
- research on the quality of life of young people – carried out every other year according to a youth policy index, which will be established in 2010-2011; and
- analysis of local youth work.

Availability of indicators

As described above, an annual survey to monitor the situation of young people is being undertaken on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Science. The themes included in the survey are: views on leisure time, availability of information and education. The findings of this monitoring exercise will be provided to the Youth Consultative Council and Youth Organisation Consultative Council, which will then have the opportunity to present a case to decision-makers on the need to introduce changes to existing policies or introduce new measures. In addition to annual monitoring, a series of larger research projects is initiated every two years. These projects include not only quantitative information but also cover the gathering of qualitative data.

An initiative to introduce overall indicators for the evaluation of youth policy at local level is being undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Science. Ten areas have been identified in fields such as youth work, participation in decision making, education, health, social welfare, social security and employment. More than 100 indicators have been identified which cover quantitative, qualitative and statistical information. The aim of the initiative is to provide tools that can be used at local level to plan youth policies. The initiative was launched two years ago and so far the set of indicators has been prepared and tested in two municipalities. Currently, using funding from the EU Youth in Action programme, five more municipalities are undertaking research on the situation of young people, based on these indicators.

Significantly, the Youth Policy Guidelines 2009-2018 adopted were based on research undertaken by the Council of Europe. In addition, different Ministries also initiate their own research from time to time, including data collection relevant to the situation of young people. However, information relevant to young people is not always extracted and compared across different policy areas.

In some cases requirements attached to some funding from international sources might include the need for contextual analysis concerning young people. For example, the Swiss financial instrument "Youth initiatives in peripheral or disadvantaged regions" supports the

establishment of multifunctional youth centres. In order to present the case to receive support for one of these centres, municipalities will have to present a research-based overview of the prevailing situation at local level regarding young people.

Universities are also carrying out research in the field of youth. For example a support programme for students to facilitate this type of research is being developed by the Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry suggests a list of research themes and supports students in information gathering and expertise.¹

In the employment field, data for the development of indicators of relevance to youth tend to be sourced from the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, as well as from the State Employment Agency (SEA) and the social services of local authorities (administrative data).

Use of indicators

As highlighted in the Council of the Baltic Sea States report, most youth policy research is undertaken on a project by project basis.² Recently however there have been attempts to introduce a more systematic approach for the collection of information at national and local level. For example, methodological documents are being developed to support the evaluation of youth policies at local level. However, it is still too early to gauge how this will work in practice.

Indicators are used mainly for policy planning and to a certain extent for policy evaluation. According to the stakeholder consultations the main advantages of evidence-based youth policy are that it ensures that policies address the real needs of young people, direct available resources to those most in need and allows monitoring of policies and initiatives.

By comparison, the use of indicators in the employment field appear to be more advanced and embedded in policy making, partly reflecting established frameworks for using indicators and the availability of relevant and reliable data sources.

One of the challenges identified relates to the cost and lack of expertise in terms of collecting and analysing data. It was also highlighted that in order to evaluate youth policies successfully at local level, engaging with and encouraging local authorities to use the new methodological guidance to collect and analyse data is critical.

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

Lithuania

Summary of key points

- The need to use indicators in youth policy is increasingly being recognised and a framework for establishing a system for their use is included in recent strategic policy documents.
- The indicators are used mainly to define problems, and during the policy planning phase.
- Key limitations to greater use of indicators include the lack of a comprehensive set of data and of widespread knowledge of how to apply the indicators.

Policy context

Youth policy in Lithuania is implemented across a range of state and municipal institutions and agencies, although ultimate responsibility for the implementation of youth policy lies with the Department of Youth Affairs, under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. In particular, this government department prepares and implements youth policy programmes, analyses issues relevant to young people and youth organisations, and manages state support for youth organisations. It also works with other ministries and state institutions to ensure inter-institutional co-operation among various stakeholders involved in the process of implementing youth policy.

The Council for Youth Affairs is an advisory body to the Department of Youth Affairs and it includes representatives from youth organisations and state institutions. The Council for Youth Affairs' main task is to consider the main issues of youth policy and submit proposals to the Department of Youth Affairs on the implementation of a youth policy meeting the needs of youth and youth organisations. Youth organisations are represented in the Council for Youth Affairs by the Lithuanian Youth Council (LiJOT), in order to provide an opportunity for the interests of youth organisations to be represented in the policy process¹.

The main document guiding the implementation of youth policies is the Law on Youth Policy Framework, which was adopted in 2003. In addition, a long-term strategy defining policy priorities up to 2019 has been developed recently and was adopted by the Government in December 2010. The main priorities identified in this strategy are:

¹ This overview of the institutional structure of the youth policy in Lithuania was prepared on the basis of information on the Department of Youth Affairs website: <http://www.jrd.lt/index.php?1987382772>

increasing the participation of young people; ensuring that social security, education and health provision meets the needs of young people; entrepreneurship; inter-institutional co-operation among different stakeholders; the establishment of an information and advice system for the young people; and the provision of non-formal and informal learning opportunities¹.

The need to use indicators in youth policy is increasingly recognised and it is being taken into account in recently published strategic documents e.g. the long-term strategy 2011-2019. This represents the first time that the principle of using indicators in youth policy is foreseen in a strategic document. Significantly, the establishment of a framework for evidence-based policy making at local level is foreseen in the Programme for Youth Policy Development at Local Level 2010-2012.

Availability of indicators

The following indicators are used in youth policy in Lithuania:

- General statistical information collected by the Department of Statistics includes the statistical data relevant to young people e.g. number of young people, employment, family situation, education etc.
- The data on the situation of young people regarding specific fields such as employment, health, education are gathered and analysed by relevant Ministries and other state institutions working in the area. For example, the Lithuanian Labour Exchange Office is collecting statistical information and quantitative data on the employment situation of young people. The reasons behind the changes over time are also analysed.
- Bi-annual surveys on the situation of young people. The last survey was undertaken in 2007 and a new survey is currently being prepared.²
- In 2009, the Department of Youth Affairs established a group of youth researchers, which exchanges information and ideas concerning the situation of young people in Lithuania.
- Workshops and consultations with the youth organisations also take place in order to discuss specific issues e.g. entrepreneurship.³

¹ <http://www.socmin.lt/index.php?-393338399>

² <http://www.jrd.lt/index.php?-1363309801>

³ The Council of the Baltic Sea States (2010), *Evidence-Based Youth Policy in the Baltic Sea States 2010*.

- A research and methodological framework governs the evaluation of youth policy development at local level. The methodological framework was adopted in 2008 and further developed in 2010. Research on youth policy development in a selected number of local authorities has also been undertaken.¹
- A methodology for research on the problems faced by young people at local level has been developed recently. This encompasses a wide range of areas, including education, employment, environment, participation, leisure, health, lifestyle and family. To date, this type of research has been undertaken in seven municipalities.

In addition to the measures and activities outlined above, the National Youth Organisations Council is undertaking surveys and consultations of its member organisations, focusing mainly on the needs of young people and the organisations themselves.

Use of indicators

The indicators collected are used mainly to define problems which are identified either as part of the political agenda or at the policy planning stage. The indicators are used to a lesser extent in policy implementation and rarely in evaluation.

Among the main challenges identified is the lack of comprehensive data. The main body of information collected is general statistical information and less attention is given to qualitative data.

Importantly, different institutions and Ministries define young people differently. For example, in the field of education, interior affairs information is gathered on minors (aged 14-18 years), whilst in the field of employment data is gathered on young people under the age of 25. General statistical data is being gathered for those between 15-29 years old. The legal acts in Lithuania define young people as those between 14 and 29 years old. Therefore, the data on the situation of young people is often not complete.

The current economic crisis and reductions in public spending have also had a negative effect on capacity to collect and use indicators. The main barriers highlighted by interviewees were a lack of knowledge about how to use indicators, together with limited recognition of the value added that could be realised by using indicators. In addition, the lack of scientists specialising in the field of young people was identified as a challenge by the stakeholders interviewed.

However the feedback from interviews suggests that the system for using indicators in the youth policy in Lithuania is currently undergoing a phase of development and

¹ <http://www.jrd.lt/index.php?1608143337>

improvement. As already mentioned, the need to undertake more regular research and data collection is embedded in the long-term strategy and the necessary methodological tools are in place for the analysis of the situation of young people at local level. However, it remains to be seen how these changes will be implemented in practice and how and to what extent the data collected will be used in the decision making process. The first example of research at local level based on the newly developed methodology has recently been implemented and the results are being presented to local stakeholders.

The increased demand for indicators is partly linked to the changes in the strategic planning methodology. The activities of the European Commission also contribute for increased demand and use of the indicators in the field of youth. The structural dialogue was mentioned as a good example, especially regarding inter-institutional cooperation.

Luxembourg

Summary of key points

- National youth policy in Luxembourg is the responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Integration, although the actual implementation of youth policy at the national level is the responsibility of the National Youth Service.
- Following the 2008 Youth Act, a number of new instruments have been, or are in the process of being, introduced in Luxembourg to improve the knowledge and understanding of young people, including, most notably, the National Report on the Situation of Youth and the Youth Pact (2011-2014). In particular, the Youth Pact (2011-2014) calls for an improvement in the knowledge and understanding of young people through more research and use of indicators.
- The national report intends to offer an objective description of the issues encountered by young people and an open basis for further discussion by policy makers, rather than a narrower description of the impact of existing initiatives. The report also identifies policy fields where there is a lack of data and evidence, in order to encourage further research in these areas.
- Data availability is considered to be particularly good in terms of education (formal but less so for non-formal education) and employment. In contrast, data availability is considered to be weaker in terms of creativity and culture; and participation. Consequently, qualitative research and studies are currently being used to improve the understanding and knowledge of young people in these areas (e.g. young people and new media).

Policy context

National youth policy in Luxembourg is the responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Integration, although the actual implementation of youth policy at the national level is the responsibility of the National Youth Service. The National Youth Service is placed under the authority of the Ministry; and is the main contact point for young people and relevant stakeholder, to whom it should provide information, advice and support.

At the local level, the National Youth Service (and the Ministry of Family and Integration) collaborates with municipalities through the Municipal Youth Plan (*Plan Communal Jeunesse*). The Municipal Youth Plan is intended to give municipalities an instrument for

local youth policy planning and is drawn up in consultation with young people. The Plan has been implemented in about a fifth (22 out of 116) of municipalities in Luxembourg.

National youth policy in Luxembourg is guided by 2008 Youth Act, which, in particular, calls for:

- an interdepartmental committee to be set up to address the transversal nature of youth policy;
- a national report on the situation of youth to be completed every five years; and
- a Youth Observatory to be established to collect data for the national report and to contribute to European youth policy.

The Youth Act also acknowledges the 'transversal' nature of youth policy and the need to base policy on the '*knowledge of the situation of youth*' and on the '*active consultation of young people*'. Moreover, it makes a distinction between the transversal and global youth policy on the one hand and the 'specific sectoral dimension' of youth policy with regards to youth organisation on the other.

On the basis of the stakeholder consultations, it is understood that the 2008 Youth Act has been partly influenced by the 2001 EU White Paper, in terms of evidence-based policy making and the transversal nature of national policy.

Availability of indicators

Following the 2008 Youth Act, a number of new instruments have been introduced in Luxembourg to improve the knowledge and understanding of young people, including:

National Report on the Situation of Youth¹

The first national report since 2001 was published in 2010. The report is deliberately focused on the situation of young people themselves rather than on the impact of youth policy. By following this approach, the report intends to offer the most realistic description of the difficulties encountered by young people and an open basis for further discussion by policy makers, rather than a narrower description of the impact of existing initiatives. The report also identifies policy fields where there is a lack of data and evidence, in order to encourage further research in these areas. The national youth report is expected to be presented every five years according to the Youth Act.

Inter-departmental committee

¹ <http://www.mfi.public.lu/publications/RapportNationalSituationJeunesse/RapportIntegral.pdf>

The inter-departmental committee is composed of representatives of ministries of relevance to youth, although these may also seek advice from other experts and stakeholders, especially the higher youth council and the youth observatory. The committee has been set up to cope with the transversal nature of youth policy and is intended to advise the government on all projects related to youth policy; to put forward measures promoting the transversal approach of youth policy; and to coordinate these measures within other governmental strategies. Based on consultation with members on the inter-departmental committee, an important advantage of the committee is that allowing different perspectives of young people's living conditions to be put forward and discussed, which in turn is expected to improve cross-sectoral cooperation and collaboration on projects and programmes.

Youth Observatory

The Youth Observatory, which is yet to hold its first meeting, is intended to link Ministry representatives, researchers, a representative of the higher youth council, as well as a representative of youth organisations and a representative from the national youth service. More specifically, the Youth Observatory is intended to 'prepare, coordinate and initiate surveys, recommendations, analysis, studies, reports on the different aspects of the situation of young people in Luxembourg' (Article 13 Youth Act 2008). However, in reality, the Youth Observatory is likely to represent a consultative body, whose primary mission is to coordinate initiatives, since it is not endowed with any financial resources.

National assembly of young people

The national assembly of young people links representatives of youth organisations and of organisations active in favour of youth with politics. Young people can also be invited to participate as individuals on specific occasions. The assembly meets in plenary at least once a year, and gives participants the opportunity to react on national and European youth policies and actions. The assembly is the main mechanism set up by the Youth Act to ensure the '*active consultation of young people on issues which concerns them*', although additional ad-hoc consultation structures may also be set up with specific purposes. The national assembly of young people is currently being evaluated by the youth research centre at the University of Luxembourg (CESIJE), which is co-funded by the University of Luxembourg and the Ministry of Family and Integration.

In addition to the above developments, the CESIJE also represents a key actor in gaining a better understanding and knowledge of young people. Knowledge of youth is created and maintained by CESIJE through:

- Documentation (e.g. gathering of relevant research literature);

- Youth research projects - both quantitative and qualitative (e.g. young people and new media); and
- Evaluation projects (e.g. recent evaluations of the National Assembly of Youth; the quality control in open youth centres; and the Youth in Action programme).

Based on the consultations, data availability is considered to be particularly good in terms of education (formal but less so for non-formal education) and employment. In contrast, data availability is considered to be weaker in terms of creativity and culture; and participation. Consequently, qualitative research and studies are currently being used to improve the understanding and knowledge of young people in these areas. For example, the CESIJE are currently undertaking research to improve the understanding and knowledge of young people and new media. The development of EU indicators in some of the areas where policy relevant indicators are currently not readily available nationally is seen as very positive.

Use of indicators

In the National Youth Report 2010, the Government – in a dedicated section called 'government opinion' – describes a new approach to youth policy as the result of a twofold ambition of producing evidence-based policy making and policy relevant research, with each one feeding the other in what could be described as a virtuous circle. The CESIJE recognises the need to produce policy relevant research but is also mindful that the scientific objectivity, independence and neutrality of the research need to be safeguarded.

On the basis of the stakeholder consultations, research on young people is consistently used by policy makers to inform and advance interventions in relation to youth. In some cases, research on young people has also led to better cooperation between ministries and government agencies. For example, a recent study on the transition between school and employment, commissioned by the National Youth Service, highlighted that there was a strong connection between young people not in education, employment and training (NEETs) and single parent households and non-active households. This in turn led to discussions with Ministries and Government agencies responsible for social benefits and active labour market policies, in order to tackle the underlying factors influencing NEETs.

Research on young people was also used heavily to elaborate the Youth Pact (2011-2014)¹, a document which drew heavily on the findings emerging from the National Youth Report. Each of the plan's five main objectives ('fields of action') is based on trends

¹ The Final version of the Youth Pact had not yet been released as of January 2011, but Ecorys has gained access to a draft version of the document.

highlighted by the report. For example, the report's conclusion that rising youth unemployment was the first cause of poverty among young people led to the first objective: 'Achieve a successful transition from school to work'.

The Youth Pact's fifth field of action is particularly relevant for youth research: it is entitled "Analysis of the effectiveness of measures", and it is aimed at a better knowledge and understanding of young people in Luxembourg. In particular, this field of action relate to the National Youth Report, which identified a lack of information and harmonised data about young people. It contains a number of actions aimed at deepening existing research on young people, such as the realisation of a longitudinal study on NEETs¹. The draft Pact also calls for a second report that evaluates public policies oriented towards young people, to be published in 2014. To that objective, a number of actions are identified in the draft Youth Pact²:

- define the themes and orientations of the second National Youth Report;
- improve data availability;
- define indicators to describe Luxembourg's young people and establish a system to publish data;
- develop legal mechanisms that ease the use of data available in the public sector; and
- evaluate the Youth Pact's implementation.

The Youth Observatory is at the core of the implementation of these measures, together with the Ministry's youth service.

The experts and stakeholders consulted are generally positive towards the use of indicators to guide policy making, as it would help encourage a debate on trends identified through the indicators. However, it is also recognised that indicators on their own will not be sufficient for the practical development of projects and programmes.

¹ Not in Education, Employment or Training.

² Actions 5.6 to 5.10, pp. 25-26.

Malta

Summary of key points

- Malta has a designated parliamentary secretariat for youth and sport, which sits within the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family. Recently, Malta has also established a national youth agency, Agenzija Zghazagh, which aims to engage in mainstreaming youth policy issues and to provide further services to the Government.
- New National Youth Policy (2010-2013) represents a shift in focus from the problems associated with youth to more positive aspects such as the contribution they can make to society.
- The evidence base is mostly focused on quantitative data relating to education and employment; data on other areas of youth policy is less developed. At the moment, Malta has no regular surveys of young people.
- Evidence is mostly used for policy formulation and in some cases research findings have directly contributed to specific policy reforms. Evidence is not widely used for policy evaluation.
- Availability of funding was felt to be a key barrier to collecting more evidence of relevance to youth policy. Also, there was felt to be a need for a more strategic and coordinated approach to gathering information and it is hoped that the newly established national youth agency will provide the required direction.

Policy context

Following a recent reorganisation of government, youth policy now falls within the remit of the Ministry of Education, Employment and the Family (previously the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport) which has a designated parliamentary secretariat for youth and sport.

A revised National Youth Policy was recently published and covers the period 2010-2013. It represents a shift in thinking 'from a focus on youth problems to an understanding of young people as partners in the development of society.' Development of the document involved consultation with experts, policymakers, youth organisations and young people themselves. It is a statement of intent (rather than an action plan), related to improving the quality of life of young people by promoting relevant initiatives, participation in decision making and social life, and supporting easier transition from youth to adult status.

The policy encompasses all of the areas which are directly linked to the wellbeing of young people reflected in five horizontal threads (participation and engagement; youth information; social inclusion; family; and mobility) and 11 vertical themes (education; employment; health and wellbeing; culture and the arts; community cohesion and volunteering; sport; leisure; environment; information society; youth justice; and transitions and vulnerability). The Ministry is responsible for the overall policy and for mobilising the resources necessary for policy implementation.

The recently established national youth agency, Aġenzija Żgħażaġh, represents the Government's arm to implement and mainstream youth policy. In particular, it is intended to undertake and co-ordinate research into specific issues aimed at assessing the state of play with respect to youth affairs.

There is felt to be growing recognition amongst policymakers of the need to use evidence although this is not explicitly set out in current policy documents.

Availability of indicators

Evidence is used by policymakers but is seen to be lacking in a number of areas. Policymakers and politicians are seen as having a preference for quantitative data. Qualitative research has not been valued in the same way and there is a perceived reluctance to engage with more qualitative issues or to rely on this type of evidence, although this situation is beginning to change. Ministers consult with the research community and commission ad-hoc work; no analysts are directly employed by the Ministry.

In the past, available evidence has tended to focus on the negative aspects of youth, such as the number who are unemployed or absent from school. Historically these are issues which the Government has prioritised. The new youth policy emphasises the positive aspects relating to young people but evidence on this is lacking. One of the first tasks of the new youth agency is to develop indicators which will allow monitoring across all of the themes in the National Youth Policy.

Malta does not currently collect evidence across the eight policy areas identified by the EU. There is a focus on education and employment, areas which are most easily measurable. The Government also collects a lot of data on health and wellbeing but without a specific focus on youth meaning that the data may not always be broken down into relevant age groupings. There are no indicators on participation and only limited data on youth volunteering and young people's participation in cultural activities. The Government collects some data on poverty but the topic of vulnerability or social inclusion is much wider than this and they have yet to come up with suitable indicators in this area.

Availability of data largely mirrors government priorities so gaps are often not perceived to be a problem.

Statistical data is collected by the national statistics office which also issues reports and data updates. In addition, there is a growing body of research undertaken by students and academics. ZAK (the national catholic youth organisation) has been collecting data on attendance at youth groups since late 2009 and undertakes informal collection of evidence in order to evaluate its activity and help them determine what young people want. There is a desire to explore young people's views more widely but the organisation does not currently have the funds to do this.

There are no major surveys of youth behaviour in Malta. However, the Ministry has recently commissioned a study on youth volunteering and has plans to commission a further study which will use interviews and focus groups to provide a comprehensive picture of youth in Malta. This forthcoming study will represent a completely different approach for the Ministry given its reliance on qualitative methods.

Use of indicators

It is felt that policy is now much more informed by evidence than in the past although not all policy areas are equally well-informed due to availability of evidence. The Ministry uses evidence when formulating policy and also to inform implementation (by using evidence to monitor progress). However, stakeholder consultations reveal that evidence is not generally used in problem definition as the agenda has often already been set and/or the existence of the problem has already been assumed by policy makers (without the engagement of young people). There is also no culture of using indicators and evidence when evaluating and it is perceived that the value of such work is not yet recognised.

As noted, extensive consultation and information gathering was undertaken as part of the development of the current National Youth Policy and the evidence collected (including the views of young people and people working in the youth work sector) is felt to have influenced the resulting policy.

Systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of indicators and evidence provide a way to demonstrate a need for change, showing what the problems are and how change could be brought about. An example is research in the field of education which explored drop-out rates, early leavers and absenteeism. The findings helped bring about education reforms, more specifically the idea of organised learning zones/centres within regions (rather than schools trying to address this separately) and the need for teachers to work in multi-disciplinary teams involving social workers and youth workers. Malta now has three

learning zones with multi-disciplinary teams and hopes to increase this number in the future.

The cost of gathering evidence is felt to be the biggest barrier to increasing the evidence base in Malta. The lack of evidence relating to youth policy is mainly due to insufficient funding. It was felt that the culture of gathering evidence has still not become embedded in policymakers although change is beginning to take place. Further coordination with the national statistics office is also required in order to make sure that the right questions are being asked in the relevant surveys. In addition, wider evidence gathering is currently sporadic, perhaps exacerbated by the relatively informal structure of youth work practice (which is generally provided by the voluntary sector), and there was a view that policy making would benefit from a more structured approach to research. It is hoped that the new national youth agency will address this by directing and organising research efforts, and also ensuring that findings are used effectively for the implementation of policy that meets the needs of young people.

A way of improving the current situation would be to encourage partnership working at national and European level in order to pool resources and commission larger research projects which serve a range of purposes. Research should be undertaken with comparability in mind and more discussion and networking would be beneficial. At the national level, involving more youth organisations in gathering data would tap into their work at grassroots level and the trust they have built up with young people. Moving away from a reliance on existing groups and networks would allow collection of evidence from a wider spectrum of people to ensure a more representative sample.

Poland

Summary of key points

- The implementation of policy in fields related to youth is organised across a range of ministries and government agencies in Poland.
- In the National Youth Strategy a strong centre for youth research is identified as being a key prerequisite for solving youth issues and challenges.
- Systematically using indicators allows problem areas to be identified, highlights strengths and weaknesses and allows the effectiveness of policy to be assessed over time.

Policy context

The implementation of policy in fields related to youth is organised across a range of ministries and government agencies in Poland.

Whilst there is no overriding strategic document on youth policy in Poland, the National Youth Strategy, adopted in 2003 and covering the period up to 2012, provides the most comprehensive framework for youth policy in Poland. More specifically, the objectives of the National Youth Strategy are to:

- create and equalise opportunities of development and self-realisation of the young people;
- create chances for the development of own activities of the young people;
- prevent the marginalisation of young people;
- develop international youth cooperation;
- build a system of youth information; and
- provide educational and vocational training of adults working with young people.

Notably, in the National Youth Strategy, there is an explicit intention to create a strong centre for youth research to solve youth issues and challenges.

Availability of indicators

With regards to the Ministry of National Education, the most prominent source of data for evidence-based policy making is administrative data on educational outcomes. Although the Ministry also places a significant value on international data and research, such as the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS), as it allows comparisons between countries.

A range of data is collected on a regular basis in the health field, although the data tend to be fragmented across different publications and databases. There is currently no overall summary of the situation of young people in relation to health.

Use of indicators

According to the Ministry of National Education, policy makers in Poland are particularly interested in outcome indicators, as well as understanding the socio-economic drivers of these outcomes. In the Ministry of Health, indicators are particularly used for the evaluation and monitoring of the National Health Programme for 2007-2015, in which one of the operational objectives concerns children and adolescents. Although in some cases the baseline position and the data source has not been clearly defined.

Indicators are primarily used for policy formulation, implementation and evaluation once a particular issue or challenge has been identified through other sources of evidence.

The main advantages of systematically using indicators, as identified by the Ministry of National Education, are that it allows problem areas to be identified, highlights strengths and weaknesses and allows the effectiveness of policy to be assessed over time. However, the Ministry also warns against the dangers of using indicators without other qualitative research and evidence. In particular, the Ministry notes that indicators provide a simplification of a complex reality which will need to be complemented with other sources of evidence.

The Ministry of National Education notes that the development of indicators at the EU level will be of great value to the implementation of youth policy in Poland. The Ministry of National Education is also notes that it is important to ensure that the indicators selected for systematic monitoring are restricted to a manageable number.

Romania

Summary of key points

- National youth policy in Romania is the responsibility of the National Authority for Youth (NAY), which reports to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport.
- Governing Programme for 2005-2008 states that youth policies should be developed 'on the basis of social research results'.
- In Romania, a number of methods and approaches are used to gain a greater understanding and knowledge of youth. In particular, a national survey (Diagnosis of the Youth Situation) of the population aged 14-35 was, until recently, undertaken on a regular basis (last national survey and report was commissioned in 2008).

Policy context

National youth policy in Romania is the responsibility of the National Authority for Youth (NAY), which reports to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sport. The responsibilities and activities of the National Authority for Youth relate to the implementation of Government policy in the youth field and the production of studies, research and analysis on youth issues.

Availability of indicators

In Romania, a number of methods and approaches are used to gain a greater understanding and knowledge of youth. In particular, a national survey (Diagnosis of the Youth Situation) of the population aged 14-35 was, until recently, undertaken on a regular basis (last national survey and report was commissioned in 2008).

Use of indicators

The link between youth research and youth policy appear to be relatively weak in Romania (particularly in terms of policy evaluation), although the Governing Programme for 2005-2008 states that youth policies should be developed '*on the basis of social research results*'.

Currently, youth research tends to be undertaken on an ad hoc basis on the initiative of the Institute of Educational Sciences, which reports to the National Authority for Youth; and other research institutions. Consultations suggest that access to funding is a particular constraint for ministries in terms of commissioning research assignments to inform and

advance youth policy. In the absence of formal requests for research by the National Authority for Youth, youth research tends to be fragmented and based on particular areas of interest of research institutions.

There is therefore a desire in Romania, particularly from the Institute of Educational Sciences, to develop a stronger link between research institutions and policy makers, as well as a system of using indicators and research evidence to inform and advance youth policies. Notwithstanding any potential funding issues, the Institute of Educational Sciences is particularly keen to resume the national survey of young people and possibly extend it to the local level. This would allow better knowledge and understanding of particular needs and attitudes among young people to support policy making.

Slovak Republic

Summary of key points

- Main decision making body in youth policy field is Ministry of Education, but implementation is delegated to the Institute of Youth (IUVENTA).
- No systematic collection of indicators
- Use of indicators in youth policy is in its infancy

Policy context

The Ministry of Education, through its Department of Children and Youth, has the 'reins' and is the start and end point of youth policy. The Ministry chairs the Government Council for Children and Youth, which has an advisory role and is responsible for "the grant making policy of the ministries focused on children and youth". The Government Council is also the coordination body of the Slovak Government for interdepartmental, conceptual, methodological and legislative activities in the field of children and youth care.

The implementation of youth policy is delegated to IUVENTA (the Institute of Youth), an agency of the Department of Children and Youth of the Ministry of Education). IUVENTA plays an important role in co-ordinating and organising activities related to the support and development of youth work, educational and research projects and the creation of mechanisms for the distribution of information on youth. Moreover, IUVENTA is responsible for meeting the EU requirements to report on developments in youth policy.

Recently, there have been efforts to establish a cross-sectoral/ government cooperation working group. To date, youth policy has mainly been focused on leisure time activities, non-formal education, volunteering, participation and information. Recently, there has also been a realisation that there is a need for the use of indicators to inform youth policy. However, at the moment, the definition of youth (age) differs across the relevant ministries and indicators that are specific for the youth group are limited.

Since 2008 youth policy in the Slovak Republic has been guided by 'Key areas and action plans of state policy towards children and youth in Slovak Republic'. In 2010, there was an evaluation of youth policy since 2008, which resulted in a national youth report. This report provides a range of statistical information on young people.

Availability of indicators

Whilst regular reports and data collection on the basis of predefined indicators on youth are not common in the Slovak Republic, there are various bodies collecting different evidence on the living conditions of Slovaks (with specific reference to young people), including the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (demography, predefined indicators by policy/decision makers, surveys); and institutions under the ministries (e.g. education, employment, culture, health, etc.). For example, the Ministry of Education has established the Institute of Information and Prognosis in Education, which provides data and research in the fields of schooling, youth and sport. Some NGOs, universities and private agencies also produce data and research.

There is a desire from IUVENTA to collect data corresponding with the main topics of the European youth policy (e.g. youth civic and political participation, volunteering, children rights, tolerance, etc).

Use of indicators

The extent to which indicators are used to inform policy in the fields related to youth is limited and relates mainly to the problem definition and policy formulation stages of the policy cycle. Sometimes they are also used to guide priorities in grant programmes. Indicators used for policy monitoring and evaluation tend to be based on outputs rather than on outcomes.

The perceived advantages of using indicators in youth policy are that it provides actual information about young people's living conditions and gives direction to issues that are particularly important.

A particular challenge in the Slovak Republic will be to improve policy/ decision makers' understanding statistical information and research. The process of transforming evidence into policy action is still in its infancy.

Spain

Summary of key points

- Spanish policy makers have access to a large evidence base on youth topics, some of it in the form of long historic series
- However this resource seems only to be exploited on a reactive basis, rather than using the available indicators throughout the whole policy making process.
- Inter-ministerial mechanisms do exist to coordinate and plan policies that affect young people, but may not be used to their full potential.

Policy context

As of November 2010, youth affairs are dealt with by the equality area of the Ministry of Health, Social Policies and Equality. Youth policies are more specifically developed and prepared by the Youth Institute (*Instituto para la Juventud, INJUVE*), a public body attached to the Ministry.

The Youth Institute was created in 1977 and its current objectives are to promote actions that benefit young people. The Institute is responsible for a large number of services and initiatives, such as managing the EU 'Youth in Action' programme in Spain, providing information for young people, foster creativity among young people, or offer entrepreneurship training. The Institute also hosts the Youth Observatory, which is in charge of collecting evidence about youth topics.

Reflecting the fact that most issues affecting young people are transversal in nature, the Spanish government has set-up an Inter-ministerial Commission for Youth more than 20 years ago. As of 2010, the Commission is placed under the Ministry in charge of youth affairs, and is due to meet twice a year in plenary, which means including representatives of every government ministry.

The Inter-ministerial Commission has produced a number of medium-term strategic documents (with objectives in a 3-4 year time-frame) called Youth Plans (*planes de juventud*), the latest one having been released in 2005. The plan only mentions indicators as far as the monitoring and evaluation of the plan itself is concerned.

An accurate picture of the Spanish policy context has to take into account the reality of decentralisation in that country: a very substantial number of policies affecting young people (health, education, employment, entrepreneurship, culture) are the competences of

the Autonomous Communities (regions), although these may have to comply with the requirements of national guidelines. For instance, many, if not all, of the regions have their own youth institute and strategic plans. All these initiatives are coordinated nationally through the Inter-territorial Council of Youth Directors, formally created in 2007 and which gathers together representatives of all the regions and the central administration twice a year. As an example of what can be achieved through this council, in 2009 all participants agreed to focus their actions (and funding received from central administration, however modest) on employment and housing policies, to make sure young people are supported through the economic and financial crisis.

Availability of indicators

The Youth Observatory at the Youth Institute is the principal source of indicators and evidence on youth topics. The data produced by the Observatory naturally reflects its institutional objectives, which are to:

- relay young people's opinions on issues that affect them;
- inform the reality of young people's lives and their transformations;
- contribute to the orientation and actualisation of youth policies and other measures taken by the central administration; and
- analyse the young people's image in the media and suggest ways to improve it.

Focusing on the 15-29 age group, the Observatory relies on both secondary and primary data. It works in partnership with the National Statistics Institute (the INE), for example using the latter's quarterly active population survey. The Observatory can also ask the INE to carry out specific research. These data sources provide information on topics such as education, employment situation, poverty, health and leisure. The Observatory also carries out its own quarterly surveys (1,500 interviews), which focus on youth perceptions and attitudes.

Some of the surveys carried out or used by the Youth Institute have been implemented over a significant time period (some started in the 1960s) and therefore provide a valuable historical source of information. In addition, the Institute has published the Youth in Spain report every four years since 1984, providing historical series in the fields of demography, economy, health, culture and more recently gender inequalities and immigration.

Use of indicators

Although there is an increasing recognition of the need to use indicators and evidence to inform policy making in the youth and other fields in Spain, the link to date between research and policy has been weak. Where it exists, it tends to be very ad-hoc and reactive.

The Youth Observatory, which is the organisation that holds the richest collection of evidence at the national level, reports that the queries that are addressed to them tend to be very specific and isolated. Key stakeholders see this as a missed opportunity, given the wealth of evidence available.

The media do play a role in relaying the evidence from the sources (the Statistics Institute, the Youth Observatory) to the political debate, through the intermediary of public opinion. But again, evidence is used through this channel on an ad-hoc basis, focusing on a limited number of headline figures or facts.

The lack of evaluation of the achievements against the multi-annual Youth plans is also a source of the sub-optimal use of the statistical and research resources available. The formulation of such plans could provide an opportunity for a comprehensive review of the evidence available and an assessment of the achievements of past policies. Instead, in the plan indicators are only used to assess the programme (i.e. programmes outputs etc), rather than to identify issues affecting youth.

United Kingdom

Summary of key points

- Youth is a devolved policy area therefore separate policy is developed in each of the four nations.
- The introduction of new policy priorities, associated with a new government, combined with austerity measures has reduced spending on youth programmes at national level in England implying increased delegation to local level.
- Use of data and indicators has also been reduced, including the discontinuation of a major survey of young people.
- Evidence is mostly used for monitoring and evaluation in order to inform changes and decisions about future intervention.

Policy context

In the UK, the Department for Education (previously the Department for Children, Schools and Families; changed in May 2010 following the introduction of a new Coalition Government) is responsible for youth policy. In the UK, youth is one of the policy areas which are devolved to the administrations in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and as a result all four nations have developed their own youth work strategies. The four administrations employ statisticians, economists and social researchers to provide analysis and evidence to support policy.

The Every Child Matters agenda, developed by the previous Government, sets out the aspiration that every child and young person (up to the age of 19) in England should be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing. These five themes underpinned all aspects of the previous Government's policy relating to children and young people. The Children's Plan, published in December 2007, set out the previous government's vision for children, young people and families and includes measures relating to youth provision, children and young people's health, youth justice, and a focus on schools working in partnership with other agencies to deliver integrated services.

As a result of the UK Government's Comprehensive Spending Review the Department for Education is required to make significant savings which will be achieved by, amongst other things, rationalising and ending centrally directed programmes for children, young people

and families in England. This is thought to imply more delegation of youth work to the local authority level.

The Coalition Government has set out its desire for 'all young people to be self-confident, motivated and equipped with the skills they need to succeed in life.'¹ It has also stated its intention to improve support for vulnerable groups (with better intervention to prevent issues such as substance misuse, teenage pregnancy and youth crime) and to 'help local partners look for better ways to empower young people, creating more opportunities for them to engage in local decision making and democracy in their communities.' In June 2010 the Deputy Prime Minister announced the creation of a Childhood and Families Task Force which is expected to examine a range of issues, such as support for disabled children.

In Wales, the Assembly Government has seven core aims for children and young people (parenting and childcare; learning and working; health, child protection and care; play and leisure; participation and equality; safe home and community; and child poverty) which are underpinned by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. 'Extending Entitlement' is the flagship policy for youth support services in Wales and brings together all services, support and opportunities for young people aged 11 to 25. 'Developing Evidence' a document produced in 2009 sets out a general commitment to the use of evidence in policymaking regarding children, education, lifelong learning and skills, and presents the strategy for gathering and developing this evidence base.

In Scotland, a national youth work strategy was published in 2007, setting out the role of youth work in achieving the broader aims of the Scottish Executive that young people (aged 11 to 25) are nurtured, safe, active, healthy, achieving, included, respected and responsible.

In Northern Ireland, the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister developed a 10 year strategy for children and young people (2006 to 2016) which contains a pledge to employ 'needs-driven and evidence-based practice.' The Department of Education in Northern Ireland is in the process of developing a new strategy 'Priorities for Youth' which will build upon the current strategy for the delivery of youth work in Northern Ireland. The youth service exists to promote the development, well-being, rights, and participation of young people (aged 4-25).

Each of the four nations has a commissioner for children and young people. In Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland their function is to safeguard and promote the rights and interests of children while in England the commissioner exists to promote awareness on

¹ <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople> (accessed 20/12/10).

the views and interests of children. An independent review of the Office of the Children's Commissioner for England published in December 2010 recommended legislative changes to strengthen its remit, powers and independence and a stronger role to promote children's rights.

The British Youth Council promotes the active citizenship of young people under the age of 26 in the UK and works with them to develop their skills and abilities to participate in decision making.

Availability of indicators

The Department for Education has seen rapid change since the general election. Previously there has been significant use of data and indicators in relation to youth policy but some of this has now been rationalised reflecting new policy priorities and a shift in the approach to policy development and evaluation. The new government has indicated that it wishes to see a more pared down approach with a focus on a smaller number of indicators. However, if more activity is delegated to local level, it is possible that data collection will not be prescribed creating a risk of gaps in the future evidence base.

Evidence is comprised mainly of statistical datasets (such as educational attainment) and survey findings. Education is particularly well covered by existing data collection arrangements.

Under the previous Government, the Department was required to report progress against a target (PSA14) which was made up of five indicators: NEETs, youth crime, teenage pregnancies, substance misuse and positive activities. Evidence in relation to the last two indicators was provided by the Tell Us survey (which covered England and Wales, although this has recently been discontinued and was last undertaken in 2009).

Although the Department for Education is focused on policy for England, its international evidence team provides figures for the whole of the UK compiled from source. However, interpretation is complicated by differences in policy in each of the nations which make up the UK.

The Welsh Assembly Government publishes the Children and Young People's Wellbeing Monitor which aims to give a holistic picture of the lives of those aged 0 to 18 years (from 2011 the ages covered in the monitor will be extended to 0-25 years). It collates evidence from statistical returns and surveys to provide indicators on a range of themes: early years; health; education; access to play, sport, leisure and culture; rights and entitlements; safe home and community; and ensuring no child or young person is disadvantaged by poverty. It also reports on progress against child poverty targets. The first edition was published in

2008 and it is intended that an update will be produced in 2011. The evidence base is considered to be most comprehensive regarding health and education. Administrative data availability is limited by what existing systems collect and there is a need to minimise further burdens on data gatherers. There is recognition of a need for more qualitative research and in 2010 a study was commissioned to capture children and young people's views on wellbeing.

The Assembly Government also commissioned the Demonstrating Success study which runs from 2007 to 2010 and aims to develop and pilot a model for measuring the success of two flagship policies for young people in Wales (Extending Entitlement and 14-19 Learning Pathways). The model will offer a new approach to measuring the progress and outcomes of children and young people, based on a recognition that young people achieve far more through their involvement with programmes than is currently measured by more traditional approaches.

In Northern Ireland, relevant statistical data is collated from a range of different sources, with education, employment and health being most comprehensive. The Youth Council for Northern Ireland receives and processes information from every youth service in the country which provides data on participation. In addition, Queen's University Belfast undertakes an annual survey of 16 years olds (Young Life and Times Survey) which covers a range of topics (in 2009 the survey focused on volunteering, mental and emotional health, and community relations).

Use of indicators

There is high level support in the UK Government for evidence-based policymaking but this is balanced against the pressure to develop policy and new ideas within an often fast-moving policy environment.

In recent years it is felt that evidence has been very influential, if used appropriately, and forms an important 'piece in the jigsaw;' also that investment in analysis has offered good value for money. For example, evaluation of the Activity and Learning Agreements pilot in 12 areas of England showed that they were not effective nor did they provide value for money and as a result they were not rolled out more widely. Indicators on their own cannot provide this level of details; a combination of quantitative and qualitative research is required fully to investigate the issues.

The Government is thought to be keen to develop more evidence-literate policymakers but this requires time for analysts to undertake internal dissemination to familiarise policy colleagues with the evidence base.

In Wales, evidence is used at all steps in the policy cycle, for example the development of a new child poverty strategy has involved a multi-disciplinary team of analysts working together to inform the problem definition and policy formulation stages. There is a tendency to focus on the review of existing policies in order to inform their future direction and evaluation considers both process/delivery aspects and achievements. There is recognition of the importance of building in evaluation from the outset. One way of increasing the cost effectiveness of evaluation would be to cluster projects with similar aims or activity to share the cost of developing the evidence base.

In Northern Ireland, equalities legislation (Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act) requires policymakers to consider, actively seek views and monitor the impact of policy on a number of specific groups, including young people. In developing Priorities for Youth, the department began a process of evidence gathering and information collection in 2008 including distribution of questionnaires to children and young people; youth workers, leaders and volunteers; and managers in relevant youth settings. In addition, Youthnet (an umbrella organisation for the voluntary youth sector) also collected views from these groups within voluntary youth organisations.

The Youth Council of Northern Ireland is working on a project to develop measurement tools to evidence softer outcomes in order to provide a robust way to demonstrate the impact of youth work.

Indicators are an important step but evaluation is needed to provide a deeper understanding of policy effectiveness. Evidence needs to be both robust and produced in a timely manner in order to gain the confidence of policymakers. However, it was felt that there are a number of challenges regarding use of evidence in youth policy. Cost can be prohibitive and there is a need not to over-burden data providers (such as schools). Often there can be a timing issue for interventions where there is likely to be a lag before outcomes are realised and the nature of interventions can also limit the ability to develop the counterfactual scenario. For qualitative research, including surveys, data quality can be an issue as a result of the ability of young people to respond to questions on complex issues or the fact that the policy focus is often on hard-to-reach groups which can be difficult to engage in the research process. It was thought that the need to use evidence as the basis for policymaking will become increasingly important given the financial constraints being experienced.

At a European level it can be difficult to get collective agreement on indicators and definitions and sometimes, given the nature of the policy area, indicators do not work in terms of cross-border transferability. However, the EC could do more to sell the benefits of evidence-based policymaking perhaps by disseminating examples of where it has been

successful and placing more focus on practical arrangements through the introduction of a peer learning programme. The EC could also support the development of a more systematic approach to evaluation perhaps by introducing levers or incentives to encourage this behaviour.