



FORUM DI AMMINISTRAZIONE IN CAMMINO

Rivista elettronica di diritto pubblico, diritto amministrativo, diritto dell'economia e scienza dell'amministrazione a cura del Centro di ricerca sulle amministrazioni pubbliche "Vittorio Bachelet"

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Mapping Youth Policies: Designing a new *Youth Governance Index* (YGI)*

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Abstract: This paper examines the methodological foundations and recent innovations in the global mapping of youth policies, an area of governance that has gained increasing prominence in recent years. As governments worldwide prioritize youth development, understanding the structure, implementation, and evaluation of youth policies across diverse contexts is crucial. Conducting a state-of-the-art review, the paper assesses existing indicators related to youth policies, highlighting their reliance on -based indicators. These indices are mostly focused on performance data and do not take into consideration the broader governance frameworks that underpin youth policy. To address this gap, the paper introduces and develops the Youth Governance Index (YGI) designed to capture the institutional, legal, and strategic instruments employed by governments in youth policy. Unlike other indicators, the YGI focuses on the governance architecture that shapes policy design and implementation. This approach enables both comparative mapping and typological classification of youth policy instruments, offering a clearer picture of governance frameworks across countries.

Keywords: Youth policy, Governance, Evaluation indicators, Youth well-being, Social inclusion, Comparative policy analysis

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Introduction

This paper explores the methodological foundations and innovations in the global mapping of youth policies. As youth policy becomes an increasingly prominent area of governance, understanding how it is structured, implemented, and evaluated across different contexts is essential. This study presents a state-of-the-art review of existing approaches to mapping youth policies. While examining the diversity of indicators and indexes used, it shows that most of them focus on performance metrics such as employment rates, education access, and civic participation.

However, current mappings often overlook the broader governance frameworks around youth policy. To address this gap, we introduce a novel Youth Governance Index (YGI). This index goes beyond performance indicators to capture the institutional, legal, and strategic instruments employed by governments.

Our research aims to make a twofold contribution. First, the YGI index enables both comparative mapping and typological classification of youth policy instruments, offering a clearer picture of governance frameworks across several countries. Second, used in combination with performance indexes, the YGI lays the ground for analysing the relationship between the existing policy structures that have been put in place in a country and the outcomes in terms of youth well-being, integration in the labour market and social inclusion.

The paper starts by reviewing the methodologies used in existing studies, before introducing the YGI. It then proceeds with a combined analysis of a selection of countries using the YGI model and the Global Youth Development Index. It does so by focusing on two pairs of countries that have comparable levels of economic development. The rationale for case selection lies in the marked difference in the outcomes as measured by the YGI and the performance index. This contrast paves the way for exploring the reasons for this difference.



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In the first set of countries, Egypt and Morocco, the YGI scores high but the performance index is lower. In the second set of countries, Denmark and Switzerland, the performance index is high while the YGI is lower. The analysis explores the underlying reasons for these discrepancies.

By employing a qualitative approach that complements the quantitative analysis, the paper examines the political and institutional contexts that shape the design of youth policies and their outcomes. By so doing, it contributes to the broader discussion on the conditions that facilitate the development of youth policies and enhance their effectiveness.



1. A review of methodologies and indices

Youth policies may focus on several domains such as education, employment, health, social inclusion, legal frameworks, or the application of the Youth Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) tools. Our study started from the idea of setting out a systematic and comparative analysis of the official policy structures underpinning youth policy at a national scale. This section sets the context of the “Youth Governance Index” (YGI) that was designed by our group in the course of our research. While several indicators have been put in place to measure the *efficiency* of existing policies, the YGI seeks to map youth policies based on the presence or absence of youth-related policies across countries.

The literature review presented in this section draws on the main theoretical frameworks, strategies, analyses and indicators developed at national and international levels to guide or evaluate youth policies. It delves into global evaluation indicators, the frameworks and databases available and evaluations of national policies. These various tools have different objectives: mapping national structures to show how resources are allocated across age groups and assess the fairness of this allocation; measuring young people's well-being; evaluating the effectiveness of schemes; or supporting cooperation between nations. What they have in common, however, is that they help to develop criteria for listing youth policies, and as such, they are key tools for situating the previous work. We begin by analysing scholarly interventions and methodological tools currently employed to evaluate youth policy, with particular attention to cross-national indicators. We then review the various indicators and strategies employed by international organisations, mainly the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU), analysing their main characteristics.

In the last 20 years, academic contributions to developing standardised models for youth policy evaluation have been relatively limited. Nonetheless, youth policy evaluation has grown gradually in importance in both academic and policy contexts, reflecting a slow transition from paternalistic to empowerment-focused and active youth participation strategies. An overview of current indicator systems reveals that their general focus has been to “analyse young people's life situations rather than public youth policies” (Planas, Soler, & Vilà 2014). Some other indexes focus on Intergenerational Equity, mainly dealing with resources aimed at people based on their age, whether they are older or young adults (Galasso et al. 2025) and the development of a National Transfer Account (NTA), which measures the economic flows between members of different generations or age groups (Mason & Lee 2011).



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Increasing concerns among young people in education, work, mental health, and civic participation call for an in-depth analysis of youth policies, with a focus on the development of innovative strategies and common indicators.

Lopez & Bendit (2001), in the Study on the State of Young People and Youth Policy in Europe, proposed a list of state youth policy indicators covering 15 EU countries, including Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. However, their work did not extend to developing the indicators or outlining guidelines for their implementation. Similarly, Angel (2005) provided a critical review of national and international integration of youth policy in 12 countries, providing best practices and guidelines on major indicators for a national youth policy. His contribution highlights the importance of defining specific results indicators to enable giving greater attention to youth policies and empowerment.

Other notable efforts include Chaaban's (2009) Youth Welfare Index, which enables cross-country benchmarking by focusing on government performance in improving young people's welfare. This indicator focuses on analysing the exclusion and marginalisation of young people in various social contexts of the labour market. The author identifies two main difficulties regarding the construction of the indicators: finding data and divergence of objectives between Youth policies. Its innovation lies in producing country-specific rankings and tracking progress over time concerning youth and welfare-centred indicators.

Planas, A., Soler, P., & Vilà, M. (2014) developed a tool for assessing youth policies at the local government level, providing both quantitative and qualitative indicators for local youth policies. A similar effort is currently underway in Italy (Monti & Cioffi 2024). They addressed the regional dimension of youth policy assessment, designing a system of evaluation indicators tailored to municipalities in Spain, filling a critical gap left by the largely national focus of previous studies. This study shows the existence of common areas for the context in which youth policy assessment indicators are to be applied, helping to identify and define youth policies: education, employment, housing, health, culture, participation and social cohesion.

Scholars Corrales-Herrero and Rodriguez-Prado (2021) built a synthetic index of 18 EU youth living conditions indicators, focusing on three key domains: education, employment, and social inclusion. The data for analysing youth conditions in the EU are drawn primarily from established EU sources like the European Labour Force Survey (EULFS) and the European Survey on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), with educational performance data coming from the OECD's PISA survey. Youth is typically defined as ages 15–29, although some indicators vary slightly based on expert guidance (Fondazione Bruno Visentini 2018: 102). The education domain focuses on educational performance, early school leaving, and attainment levels (e.g., upper



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secondary and tertiary education). Education is closely linked to employment prospects and living standards. Employment measures difficulties young people face in accessing employment and assesses job quality. Indicators include youth unemployment and long-term unemployment rates, youth unemployment ratios (adjusted for students), youth self-employment rates, temporary employment rates, and involuntary part-time work. Social exclusion assesses poverty and exclusion risks among youth, using indicators like the risk of poverty rate, severe material deprivation, low work intensity households, unmet medical needs, and the NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) rate.

Junussova et Al. (2024) conducted a study on state youth policy in Kazakhstan, emphasising the need to create and apply a comprehensive system for evaluating youth policy outcomes based on clear indicators and regular monitoring. Such a system would assess the results of initiatives undertaken and enable the timely adjustment of strategies to better respond to young people's evolving needs and the demands of global challenges.

A heightened emphasis to creating common frameworks for assessing youth policy emerged primarily from international organisations. At the UN level, the Global Youth Development Index (YDI), developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat, is a key tool for measuring and tracking youth development globally, focusing on six key domains: Education, Employment and Opportunity, Equality and Inclusion, Health and Well-being, Peace and Security, and Political and Civic Participation. The YDI analyses data for 183 countries worldwide, enabling a broad analysis and comparisons of local, regional and international dynamics. This index is designed to measure and track the multidimensional progress of young people around the world. The YDI aims to assess youth development outcomes and does not analyse the structure, presence/absence of policy structures. The index is based on public data from international organisations and government statistics. Each domain is normalised to a score between 0 and 1. The YDI helps assess how well youth are doing, such as the Youth Progress Index.

The ASEAN also developed their own Youth Development Index. The Index is based on national statistical data provided by each Member state, using similar and/or comparable data between countries to ensure that the results are as comparable as possible. Developed to support ASEAN countries in developing public policies for young people, the Index focuses on 7 areas and a total of 30 Indicators: Education & Skills, Health & Well-Being, Employment & Opportunity, Participation & Engagement, Equity & Inclusion, Safety & Security, ASEAN values & Identity. The Index uses a composite score approach: individual indicators within each domain are normalised (typically using a min-max scaling method) and then aggregated to produce domain-specific scores, which are then combined into an overall ASEAN YDI score. The ASEAN YDI



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focuses more on the results of Youth Public Policies and looks at what young people actually experience and do not specifically focus on the structures (i.e. existence or not of policies).

Several strategies, databases and descriptive frameworks on public policies for young people or studies on the living conditions of young people have been developed among European institutions – and several of them building on global datasets. The Youth Progress Index is an index developed by the European Youth Forum and the Social Progress Imperative, two non-profit organisations. The main perspective of this index is to measure the quality of life and social opportunities available to young people, beyond economic metrics, by analysing data from 153 countries over 12 years. This Index is based on 3 main domains, each with 4 sub-areas, covering a total of 60 indicators. The first main domain is “Basic Human Needs”, which covers 18 indicators, answering the following question: “Does a country provide for its people’s most essential needs? The second is the “Foundation of Wellbeing”, which covers 19 indicators, answering the question “Are there building blocks in place for individuals and communities to enhance and sustain wellbeing?”. The last domain is called “Opportunity”, analysing 23 indicators, answering the question “Is there opportunity for all individuals to reach their full potential?”. The methodology used is based solely on social or environmental factors and focuses on outcomes (not on inputs). Their study relies on available statistical data that are comparable and/or similar across countries. This index is based on an analysis of the living conditions of young people and not specifically on the implementation of public policies relating to young people. However, the criteria used⁸ make it possible to identify the areas in which public policies for young people may be relevant to improving their living conditions and, in this respect, are a relevant tool for comparison with our YGI indicator, which we will present in the next section.

Additionally, *Youth Wiki* references national youth policies across 34 European countries to provide a structured overview of those policies and compare them. “The Youth Wiki is an online platform presenting information on European countries' youth policies. The main objective of Youth Wiki is to support evidence-based European cooperation in the field of Youth. Youth Wiki does not provide a scoring or ranking system and does not assess the effectiveness of the policies. However, the criteria and areas on which Youth Wiki bases its mapping enable the indicators to be compared with those of the YGI. Youth Wiki lists the public policies put in place for young people in the following areas: Youth Policy Governance, Education & Training, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Health & Well-Being, Participation, Social Inclusion, Culture and Creativity. Their repertoire includes indicators that are common to those of the YGI.

⁸ Available at: <https://www.youthprogressindex.org/methodology>



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The EU Youth Indicators, produced by the European Commission, aim to monitor the performance of EU Member States across key youth-related domains. These EU Youth Indicators study youth policies through the same domains as the YGI: Education & Training, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Health & Well-Being, Social Inclusion. However, inside those domains, some of the sub-areas are different:

- Education & Training: Early leavers from education and training, Low Achievers, Tertiary Education attainment, Young People (20-24) having completed at least upper secondary education,
- Employment & Entrepreneurship: Youth Unemployment, Youth Unemployment Ratio, Self-Employed Youth, Young people who would like to set up their own business, young people with a temporary contract
- Health & Well-Being: Regular smokers, Obesity, Alcohol use past 30 days, Cause of death of young people - Suicide, psychological distress, Injuries: road traffic, self-reported incidences
- Social Inclusion: At risk of poverty or exclusion rate, Severe Material deprivation rate, Living in households with very low work intensity, self-reported unmet need for medical care, young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Additionally, this study does not set out a framework/definition of young people, recognising that the definition varies from country to country, and includes its analysis within the same framework as the 'Youth in Action' programme, ranging from 13 to 30 years of age.

The EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027 developed eleven "European Youth Goals"⁹. The EU Youth Strategy aims to provide a strategic framework for youth policy development and coordination in the EU, in the following areas: 1) Connecting the EU with Youth, 2) Equality of All Genders, 3) Inclusive Societies, 4) Information & Constructive Dialogue, 5) Mental Health & Wellbeing, 6) Moving Rural Youth Forward, 7) Quality Employment for All, 8) Quality Learning, 9) Space and Participation for All, 10) Sustainable Green Europe, 11) Youth Organisations & European Programmes.

The OECD also developed an analysis of Youth Policies, through the "Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice" report in 2020, or with the "Youth Policy Toolkits". The toolkit aims to help governments design and implement effective youth policies that are evidence-based, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of young people. Structured around five pillars and featuring more than 70 good practice examples from all OECD countries, the OECD

⁹ It was set up by the Resolution of the Council of the European Union and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States meeting within the Council on a framework for European cooperation in the youth field: The European Union Youth Strategy 2019-2027 (2018/C 456/01).



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Youth Policy Toolkit helps policy makers implement the OECD Youth Recommendation adopted in June 2022. The Toolkit reflects diverse characteristics of young people and covers policy areas such as education and skills, employment and entrepreneurship, health and social inclusion, participation and representation in public life, and public governance and intergenerational justice.

Finally, the indicators used by certain countries to study their public policies for young people can be a relevant entry point for situating the indicators used in our YGI. In a review on the evaluation of public policies for young people, the EU and the Council of Europe highlight two studies, carried out in Estonia and Ukraine. The Estonian “Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020” highlights a series of Youth Policy indicators:

- The proportion of young people aged 18-24 with a basic or lower level of education who do not continue their studies
- The youth unemployment rate among young people aged 15-24
 - The involvement of young people in youth work (% of all young people)
 - Regional availability of youth work provision
- The number of young people per hobby school
- The number of young people per youth centre
 - The number of opportunities for organised participation (youth councils)
 - Satisfaction of young people with youth work
 - Proportion of youth workers participating in training programmes per year

A review of existing studies on the evaluation of youth-focused public policies reveals a predominant trend: assessments primarily concentrate on measuring the outcomes of implemented policies. The results of a public policy, its effectiveness and its impact on the younger generation are at the centre of the existing studies and the main indices for evaluating public policies for young people. Studies such as those by the YPI and YDI look at social and economic outcomes and report on the results of public policies for young people. While significant developments have been made toward developing youth policy evaluation frameworks, there remains a need for more coherent and internationally comparable tools. To date, there are no indices similar to the Youth Governance Index that would evaluate the presence or absence of structures or administration dedicated to public policies for young people, and the degree of formalisation of those policies.

2. The YGI and its design



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The Youth Governance Index (YGI) has been designed as a tool to systematically examine and compare the extent to which different countries have established policies and frameworks that address the needs of young people. By employing a quantitative comparative methodology, the Index enables consistent cross-national assessment of the presence of laws, strategies, and institutional mechanisms dedicated to youth. The YGI draws upon international frameworks and comparative standards developed by global organizations such as the United Nations and the OECD, ensuring that the analysis aligns with globally recognized approaches to youth development and policy evaluation.

It is important to note that the YGI focuses exclusively on the existence of youth-related policies and frameworks rather than on their efficiency or effectiveness. A higher score in the Index therefore indicates a broader or more comprehensive policy presence, but it does not necessarily reflect the quality of implementation or the actual impact of those policies in practice. Through this approach, the YGI contributes to a clearer understanding of how institutional arrangements, reflect the commitment of states to youth inclusion and empowerment, while providing a foundation for future research on policy performance.

Conceptual Frameworks

The YGI draws on multiple theories of youth development. In particular, it applies:

Human Capital Theory, this framework emphasizes that investment in education and skill development increases the productivity and employability of young people, thereby strengthening economic growth (Becker 1993). It underpins YGI's focus on education and employment indicators such as school dropout prevention, vocational training, and NEET reduction.

Social Inclusion Theory, which examines how social, economic, and institutional factors foster or hinder the full participation of marginalized groups in society (Levitas 2005; Silver 1994). Applied to the YGI, it informed indicators related to health, social inclusion, and independent living support for youth. Policies that improve access to housing, healthcare, and financial assistance were evaluated as evidence of social inclusion. Rights-Based Approach, which views young people as active rights-holders rather than passive beneficiaries. It requires states to design policies ensuring that youth rights are recognized in legal and institutional frameworks (Uvin 2004). This model shaped YGI's Legal and Constitutional Frameworks and Youth Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) components. These frameworks collectively shaped the choice of domains (education, employment, health, social inclusion, legal rights) and the kinds of indicators used in the YGI.

Indicator Domains and Selection:



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Guided by above theories and existing literature such as youth policy reviews and the EU Youth Wiki the YGI defines six key policy domains for the index:

(1) Education and Training, (2) Employment and Entrepreneurship, (3) Health and Well-Being, (4) Social Inclusion, (5) Legal/Constitutional Frameworks¹⁰, and (6) Youth Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA). These domains reflect common youth priorities such as preventing school dropout, reducing NEET rates, ensuring healthcare access, securing housing/support. Within each domain, specific indicators were derived from policy documents. The methodology then applied clear criteria to evaluate the completeness of each policy area, to refine indicators. For example, the presence of a dedicated youth ministry or national youth strategy, explicit youth provisions in constitutions, and formal youth impact assessments were tracked. Each country's policies were systematically assessed against these criteria.

Data Sources:

The analysis relied on primary sources (official government and legal documents, national youth strategies, laws, constitutions) and secondary sources (academic studies, NGO reports, policy databases). The data was collected from government and intergovernmental websites and databases like constitutions, national youth plans, OECD and World Bank reports and the EU *Youth Wiki* portal. Relevant literature such as youth policy analyses, OECD governance reviews were also reviewed to contextualize findings. A diverse set of 38 countries was chosen, covering different regions, income levels, and political systems to enable international comparison. This cross-national selection itself served as a benchmark: by applying the same indicators to all countries, the YGI provides a comparative score of "policy presence" across nations.

Scoring and Evaluation:

Within each domain, policies were coded and scored according to the established criteria. Each indicator was typically given a numerical score reflecting its presence and depth: e.g. **1 = fully present**, **0.5 = partly present**, **0 = absent**, and in some cases **-1** for restrictive policies such as unusually high age limits on youth voting/candidacy. The scores across sub-indicators were summed or averaged to produce a domain score and then aggregated into an overall Youth Governance Index score for each country¹¹.

Country Examples:

¹⁰ Such as youth rights in law, age limits on voting/candidacy.

¹¹ In our study of 32 countries, the final YGI ranged roughly from -1 to +5.



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The YGI report illustrates the indicators with country cases¹². For instance, Germany exemplifies the Human Capital focus: it has an integrated NEET-prevention program that co-ordinates schools, training, and employment services, reflecting a high score under education/employment. Estonia provides a social inclusion example, it offers a “Substitute Home Service” (housing and support) to help at-risk youth transition to adulthood. In the legal domain, Morocco scores highly by enshrining youth rights in its constitution¹³.

¹² See the details on the 32 countries in Monti, Cioffi, Ghazi Zarshoi & Lutringer (2025).

¹³ Article 33 mandates youth access to education, jobs, and political participation.



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The YGI table

Countries	Ministry	Constitution	Strategies	Age Restriction to Candidacy and Voting	Law	Youth Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)	Policy	overall
Germany	1	0.5	1	0	0.5	1	1	5
New Zealand	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	4
Montenegro	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	4
Spain	0.5	1	1	0	0.5	0	0.9	3.9
Slovenia	0.5	0.5	1	0	1	0	0.9	3.9
United Kingdom	1	0	1	0.5	0.5	0	0.9	3.9
South Africa	1	0	1	0	1	0	0.9	3.9
Egypt	1	1	1	-1	1	0	0.9	3.9
Morocco	1	1	1	-1	1	0	0.9	3.9
Belgium	1	0	1	0	0.5	0.5	0.8	3.8
Finland	0.5	0	1	0	1	0	1	3.5
Russia	1	0.5	1	-1	1	0	0.9	3.4
China	1	0.5	1	-1	1	0	0.9	3.4
Sweden	0.5	0.5	1	0	0.5	0	0.8	3.3
Canada	1	0.5	1	0	0	0	0.8	3.3
Estonia	0.5	0.5	1	-1	1	0	1	3
France	1	0	1	-1	0	1	1	3
Austria	1	0.5	1	-1	0	1	0.5	3
Albania	1	0	1	-1	1	0	1	3
Serbia	1	0	1	-1	1	0	1	3
North Macedonia	1	0	1	-1	1	0	1	3
Kosova	1	0	1	-1	1	0	1	3
Jordan	1	1	1	-1	0	0	0.9	2.9
Brazil	0.5	0.5	1	-1	1	0	0.8	2.8
Tunisia	1	1	1	-1	0	0	0.8	2.8
Australia	1	0	1	-1	0.5	0	1	2.5
Italy	1	0.5	1	-1	0	0	0.9	2.4
India	1	0	1	-1	0	0	1	2
Ireland	1	0	1	-1	0	0	1	2
Lebanon	1	0	1	-1	0	0	0.8	1.8
Libiya	1	0	0.5	-1	0	0	1	1.5



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Japan	0	0.5	0	-1	1	0	0.8	1.3
Switzerland	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
United States of America	0.5	0	0.5	-1	0.5	0	0.5	1
Denmark	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.7	0.7
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	1
Poland	0.5	0	0	-1	0	0	0.5	0
Israel	0.5	0	0	-1	0	0	0	-0.5

In the YGI, countries are therefore ranked based on the composite average. The areas covered by the YGI are in line with other existing studies: analyses and recommendations in the areas of education, employment, health and well-being, and social inclusion. The uniqueness of the YGI is that it takes stock of the existence or absence of public policies, institutions, and strategies. It evaluates nations according to this criterion, offering a precise and useful standard by which to compare. Crafting such indices enables a greater standardisation in youth policy evaluation. It also serves as a foundation for designing policies and mechanisms, particularly in countries where youth empowerment is a top policy priority.

3. A comparison between the YGI and the YDI

This section explores the relationship between youth governance and youth development. It examines whether strong institutional commitments to youth are reflected in better living standards, education, health, and civic participation for young people. It aims to do so by comparing the Youth Governance Index (YGI), which measures the presence of youth-oriented policies and institutions, with the Youth Development Index (YDI), where high scores demonstrate positive youth development outcomes. Using a bivariate, mean-based four-quadrant model, countries are clustered in relation to their performance in both YGI and YDI. Clusters offer insights into different governance-outcome dynamics, highlighting countries where implementation gaps or structural strengths are most evident.

The YGI provides a foundation for examining how a country's existing policy frameworks influence outcomes related to youth well-being, labour market integration, and social inclusion. The YDI is a composite tool designed to assess and compare the progress of youth development across countries. Inspired by the Human Development Index (HDI), it incorporates youth-specific dimensions such as health, knowledge, a decent standard of living, and participation. Its strengths lie in its ability to track youth development over time, highlight areas requiring policy attention,



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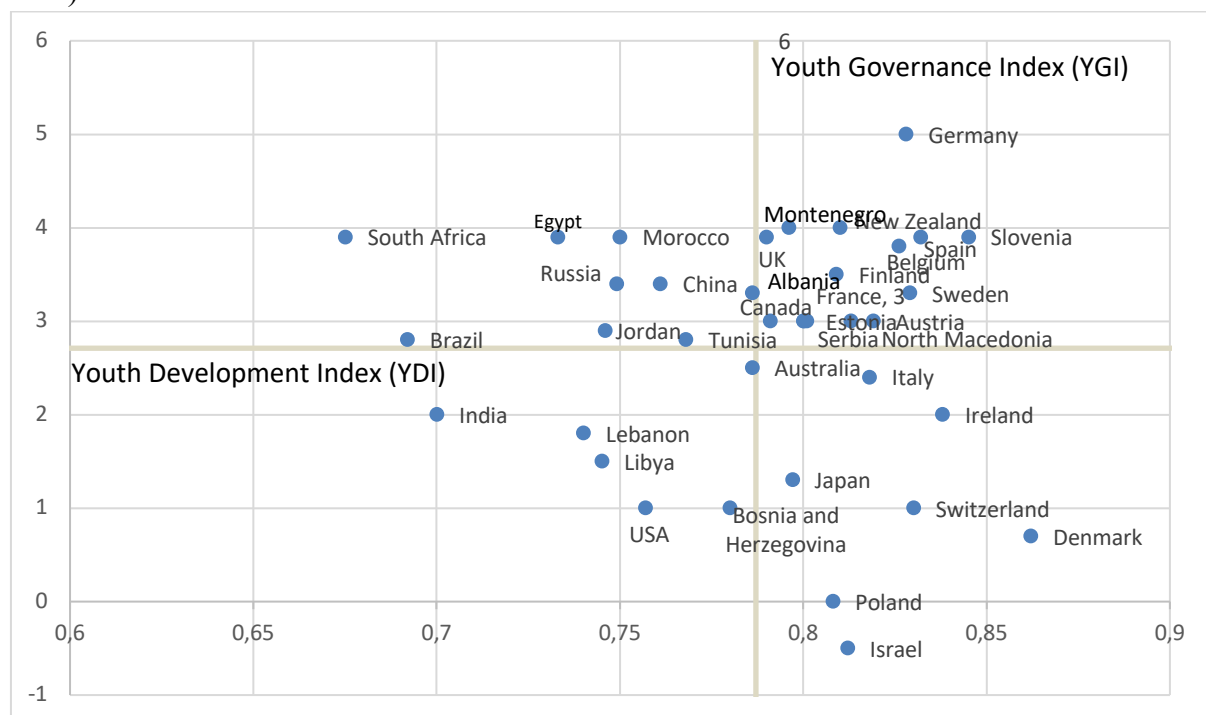
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and support advocacy efforts by providing data-driven insights. Additionally, it encourages the systematic collection of youth-related data and fosters international comparison. However, constructing a meaningful index presents challenges: selecting relevant indicators, capturing the evolving social realities of youth, ensuring reliable data collection, and navigating politically sensitive contexts. Despite these complexities, the YDI remains a valuable instrument for shaping inclusive and evidence-based youth policies.

In summary, the Youth Governance Index reflects the extent to which a country commits to youth-related policies and institutional frameworks. A high YGI score typically indicates that the State implements many youth policies actively in place. That could be mainly a matter of efficiency. In contrast, the Youth Development Index measures actual outcomes in young people's lives, such as their level of education, health, and civic participation. A high YDI score suggests that youth enjoy good living conditions and are well integrated into society. That's a matter of impact.

To explore the relationship between youth governance and youth development across countries, using the two composite indicators mentioned above, the data is presented on a scatter graph, with the YDI positioned on the X-axis and the YGI on the Y-axis. The mean values of both indices were used as the intersection point, dividing the graph into four quadrants. This visualisation allows the classification of countries into various groups, revealing alignment or divergence between policy efforts (shown by the YGI) and developmental outcomes (shown by the YDI).





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In the first quadrant (left on the top), countries with numerous youth policies (high youth governance indicators, YGI) exhibit low youth development outcomes (low youth development indicators, YDI). This suggests a gap between policy commitment and/or implementation and real impact. For example, Egypt and Morocco fall into this category: both have above-average scores on youth policy presence but below-average outcomes for youth development. Methodologically, this pattern suggests problems after policy adoption, such as weak implementation capacity, insufficient funding, poor coordination across ministries, lack of real commitment, wrong governance or target mismatch.

We will now focus on a brief analysis of Morocco and Egypt, two countries that both fall within the same cluster, characterised by a low level of youth development outcomes despite the presence of numerous policies aimed at supporting young people and a predominantly young population, with a median age of 30 in Morocco and 25 in Egypt.¹⁴ Morocco presents a high Youth Governance Index (YGI) due to its strong constitutional and institutional commitment to youth inclusion. In 2011, the country's constitution formally acknowledged the role of young people and civil society by institutionalising youth participation and associational engagement. Article 33 explicitly mandates youth involvement in Morocco's social, economic, cultural, and political development, while also encouraging the creation of youth-led organisations to address key challenges. In alignment with these principles, the establishment of an Advisory Council on Youth and Community Action was proposed to support this mission. To operationalise these commitments, Morocco launched its first national Integrated Youth Strategy in 2014, reinforcing its dedication to structured and inclusive youth governance.¹⁵

However, survey-based quantitative data indicate a nuanced picture of youth political engagement. While a considerable segment of young people demonstrates awareness and interest in political issues, their involvement in formal structures, such as political parties and trade unions, remains limited. Instead, informal channels of expression, including participation in protests and activity on social media platforms, are more commonly preferred. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that more than half of the respondents report no political interest or engagement whatsoever, highlighting a significant gap between potential and actual participation.¹⁶

Although Egypt is also in the first cluster, it exhibits a low outcome for development but a high number of policies. To address this situation and advance the well-being of youth and adolescents, the Ministry of Youth and Sports is launching the National Youth Strategy 2025-2032. The primary objective of this strategy is to mobilise all national efforts to advance the well-being of youth and adolescents. Furthermore, it aims to promote sports as a cultural cornerstone and

¹⁴ <https://georank.org/demographics/egypt/morocco>

¹⁵ <https://www.isdb.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/2020-09/Morocco%20Country%20Youth.pdf>

¹⁶ https://www.iai.it/sites/default/files/p2y_36.pdf



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a foundation for a physically healthy society. The strategy concluded with a clear vision and mission for youth and sports, and established four strategic dimensions, such as Comprehensive Development for Youth and Adolescents, Sports Practice for All Egyptians, Competitiveness and Sports Excellence, and Governance of the Youth and Sports Sectors. In conclusion, Egypt is promoting this high-policy strategy to channel national efforts and overcome the historical low development outcome, focusing both on the holistic well-being of youth and on institutionalising sports as a key element of public health and economic growth.¹⁷

The second quadrant (right on the top) represents the most favourable scenario, where both youth development and governance indicators are high. This indicates effective policy frameworks that translate into positive outcomes in Germany, France and most of the Balkans

In the third quadrant (left on the bottom), both indices are low, revealing limited youth development and a weak youth policy framework. This often points to structural neglect. India and Lebanon are below the mean on both indices, indicating limited targeted youth policies and poor youth developmental outcomes. This combination is often due to structural constraints like weak state capacity (India), competing fiscal priorities, political instability (Libya), or widespread socioeconomic inequalities that may affect youth policy interventions (USA).

As the first cluster, the fourth cluster (right on the bottom) presents another interesting case: countries with high youth development but low governance scores. This suggests that youth well-being may be driven by broader socio-economic factors rather than targeted youth policies. Switzerland and Denmark are included in this last cluster. Despite having a below-average YGI, their above-average YDI indicates that wider socio-economic factors, such as generous welfare systems, high-quality universal education and health services, strong labour markets, and active civil society, produce good youth outcomes without the need for a large set of youth-specific policies. Methodologically, this highlights the limits of solely focusing on specialised youth policies to measure youth wellbeing.

Denmark and Switzerland exemplify countries that achieve high levels of youth development despite comparatively low scores in youth governance indicators. This apparent paradox highlights the structural characteristics of their policy frameworks rather than an absence of youth engagement. In Denmark, the absence of a dedicated Ministry of Youth or a national youth law doesn't indicate weak governance. Instead, it reflects a decentralised, cross-sectoral approach integrated across ministries like Education, Social Affairs, and Health. Danish youth policy is formulated through sectoral coordination and municipal implementation, emphasising inclusiveness, early intervention, and the reduction of NEET rates.¹⁸ Similarly, Switzerland's governance structure is characterised by high federal decentralisation, with responsibility for youth

¹⁷ <https://apps.emys.gov.eg/youth/national-youth-and-sports-strategy-en.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2023-04/Denmark%202021.pdf>



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policy largely resting with the 26 cantons. While this decentralised model results in a lower Youth Governance Index (YGI) score, which measures national-level policy presence, it doesn't imply a lack of policy.¹⁹

4 Conclusions

The YGI enables both comparative mapping and typological classification of youth policy instruments, providing a clearer understanding of governance frameworks across multiple countries. Additionally, when used in conjunction with performance indices, the YGI establishes a foundation for analysing the relationship between a country's existing policy structures and outcomes related to youth well-being, labour market integration, and social inclusion. In this perspective, the paper has combined the YGI with the Global Youth Development Index to analyse the relationship between policy structures and youth outcomes, such as well-being, labor market integration, and social inclusion. Through a comparative analysis of two pairs of countries – Egypt and Morocco, and Denmark and Switzerland – the paper explored discrepancies between YGI scores and performance outcomes. In Egypt and Morocco, high YGI scores contrast with lower performance outcomes, while Denmark and Switzerland show the opposite pattern. These case studies provide insights into the political and institutional contexts that influence policy design and effectiveness.

By integrating qualitative analysis with quantitative data, the paper analysed the underlying reasons for these discrepancies, contributing to the broader discussion on the conditions that facilitate effective youth policy development. Our findings highlight the importance of governance frameworks in shaping policy outcomes and offer recommendations for enhancing the design and impact of youth policies globally.

List of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
EU	European Union

¹⁹ <https://www.reiso.org/articles/themes/enfance-et-jeunesse/12011-focus-sur-les-politiques-enfance-et-jeunessevv>



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EULFS	European Labour Force Survey
EU-SILC	European Survey on Income and Living Conditions
HDI	Human Development Index
NTA	National Transfer Account
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
UN	United Nations
YDI	Youth Development Index
YGI	Youth Governance Index



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