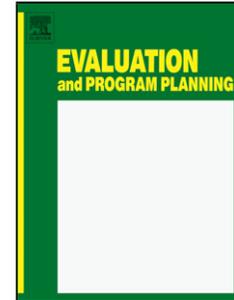


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**Assessing youth policies. A system of indicators for local government.**

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**Assessing youth policies.  
A system of indicators for local government.**

**Abstract**

In the current European climate of economic, financial and political crisis and the questioning of the welfare state, assessing public policies assumes a primary and strategic relevance in clarifying the results and contributions of policy actions. In this article, we aim to present the current situation in relation to youth policy assessment so as to formulate a system of assessment indicators in the sphere of Spanish local government youth policy.

A review is conducted of some of the principal contributions in the field of constructing indicators for evaluating youth policies. We have found that most of these evaluation tools exist on a national or state level and that there is a dearth of local or municipal tools. The article concludes with a concrete proposal for an assessment tool: the SIAPJove (*Sistema d'Indicadors d'Avaluació per a les Polítiques Municipals de Joventut* or System of Assessment Indicators for Local Government Youth Policies) WEB PAGE OMITED FOR REVIWERS. It provides both quantitative and qualitative indicators for local youth policy managers to obtain assessment reports with relative ease in 12 possible areas for assessment within youth policy.

**Keyword:** youth, youth policy, assessment indicators, local government, assessment evaluation.

## 1. Introduction

Youth policies have been on the agenda of most public administrations in recent years. The diversity of levels and competences found among administrations and the different political options facing governments have determined the direction and expanse of these policies, their explicit or implicit presence in government policy as a whole and their prominent or peripheral position within social policies in general (Yrjar 2011; Williamson 2011; Wallance and Bendit 2011). This has meant an important diversity in terms of the organic positioning and structure of these policies within the administrations of different countries. Attention to young people's needs, despite being considered an essential aspect of social policy, often ends up occupying areas and positions not always congruent with the importance and prominence these policies or social policies are deemed to merit as a whole.

The financial crisis that began in the U.S. in August 2007 extended to the rest of the world due to the globalization of capital flows. From 2008 onwards people began to speak of a global recession with reduced consumption, investment, employment, production of goods and services, and business profits, along with inflation in most economies. The financial crisis also gave rise to talk of an economic crisis that would include not only the financial aspect of the economy, but also other phenomena taking place in 2008, such as the rising prices of raw materials, the food crisis and a crisis of confidence in the markets. By 2009 many countries therefore found themselves fully immersed in an economic crisis.

This situation has caused and is causing governments to rethink their priorities in terms of political programmes and policy. Although until recently the lack of competences and own resources in some administrations were in part compensated for by the possibility of reaching agreements or accessing economic support from higher levels of administration, this has become much more difficult due to the austerity plans and cuts all administrations have found themselves subject to, particularly in certain countries. Said situation has ultimately had a significant effect on young people and how youth policies are dealt with and considered. In most cases we can say that the situation has led to a lack of prominence being awarded these policies within social policy as a whole because, while young people have become one of the groups to suffer the effects of the current situation most intensely, public youth policies have been reduced and resources and programmes cut. Estimates by the International Institute for Labour Studies (IILS, 2012) suggest that youth unemployment stood at 12.6% in 2012 and will reach 12.9% by 2017. Today, in developed economies, 35% of young people have not worked for at least six months, and the short-term prospects are no more positive. According to the aforementioned organization, 2013 will see world record unemployment of over 202 million people, with the latest calculations suggesting that the rate of youth unemployment will be maintained over several years while the economy recovers. The situation is therefore a delicate one, which is why these young people are not only referred to as the “angry generation” but also the “lost generation”.

In the light of this situation, evaluating youth policies becomes an urgent necessity and it is more necessary than ever to reflect, justify and prioritize young people’s demands. We therefore asked ourselves whether this need for evaluation in the field of youth

policy calls for specific measures to be carried out at the municipal level. As a result of this research question, this article aims to conduct an in-depth analysis of the current situation with regard to tools for assessing youth policies and present the design of a system of assessment indicators [1] in the field of municipal youth policies [2] within a Spanish context.

## **2. Assessment and evaluation of national youth policies**

Obtaining knowledge and mastery of different evaluation tools in the social sciences may lead to advances in decision-making and improved practices and models for action. Assessment and evaluation tools can contribute data and information that reduce uncertainty and help to clarify the losses and gains different options would offer in the light of a given problem or situation, that is, data can substitute or minimize political favours and negotiations to facilitate more rational decision-making (Weiss 1992). To be useful then, assessment and evaluation must in some way influence decision-making. This influence will be conditioned, however, by the political stances of the agents who have to take decisions. In fact, Thomas and Palfrey (1996: 140) consider that “evaluation is intrinsically a political process in which traditionally those in positions of power – politicians, professionals, managers – have set the agenda for evaluation”. Choices regarding the criteria, values or standards to be taken into account entail an exercising of power that connects evaluation and politics (Karlsson and Conner 2006).

Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (2007) propose a broader definition of evaluation based on that propounded by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation. According to said authors, evaluation is a systematic process of defining, gathering, drafting reports and applying descriptive and evaluative information on the merit, value,

legitimacy, reliability, security, significance and/or equity of an objective. For Vedung (2010), policy evaluation is not limited solely to the effects of interventions and activities on a results level, but also includes implementation processes, content and organization. These elements, which are related to programmes, must therefore be considered in the construction of any policy evaluation process or tool.

From this evaluation perspective, our proposal aims to assess the implementation processes, content and organization of local youth policies.

When we focus our attention on youth policy evaluation, we find a large number of studies that evaluate programmes related to specific areas of youth beyond the scope of this article. Proposals for assessing national and local youth policies like the one we present here are scarce, however. Let us look at some examples.

The United Nations' WPAY evaluation paved the way for the Youth Guide for Evaluating National Youth Policy (United Nations 2004). This guide was to be used as a starting point to determine what each government and civil society has done to improve the living conditions of young people. It is aimed at young people themselves and includes a simple and well-structured summary of actions to be included in national youth policy. Young people and youth organization reports from different countries can be consulted on the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs website. On an international level, the study conducted by William D. Angel (ed) (2005) is also of interest, providing an overview of how youth policies are integrated at international and national level. It also presents good practices and discusses the problems involved in developing, implementing and evaluating youth policies at a

national level. Of special interest are some indicators that help measure the results of youth policies.

The Council of Europe's Youth Department currently runs a project on the evaluation of national youth policies in member states. There are 17 international evaluation reports available on the Council of Europe Publishing website, including a report on Youth Policy in Spain (2000).

Of the more recent studies conducted, the following stand out: Esengul, C.; Mamaev, B. & Yefimova-Trilling, N. (2012) and Azanjac, T.; Bradic, D.; Krivokapić, D.; Spoerri, M. & Stojic, T. (2012), which form part of the six pilot audit reports reviewing public policies affecting young people (in Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Liberia, Nepal, Serbia, and Uganda), and that evaluating the impact of public policies on young people in Kyrgyzstan and Serbia, analysing not only specific youth policies, but the wider policy dossiers affecting young peoples' lives and rights.

More common, however, are reports and analyses on the real situation of young people, essential for developing policies and, in our view, complementing policy evaluation tools and proposals. Many of these are based on indicator systems, as we shall see in the next point. Such an example is that presented by Muir, K.; Killian Mullan, K.; Powell, A.; Flaxman, S.; Thompson, D. & Griffiths, M. (2009), which provides a picture of the overall state of Australia's young people. It describes who young Australians are, how they fare in key domains of life, the major issues and challenges they face and the broad contributions they make to Australian society. Methodologically, the study included a

literature review, secondary data collection and analysis, and consultations with stakeholders.

### **3. Indicators as tools for assessing national youth policies**

If we turn our attention to systems of indicators, the most common aim has traditionally been to analyse young people's life situations rather than public youth policies. The Lisbon Declaration on youth-related policies and programmes (Lisbon, August 1998) adopted at the World Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth established set periods to meet the objectives of national youth policies and develop indicators to provide common national bases for evaluating them. Some years later, the 60th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, observing the difficulty member states were having measuring the success of youth policies and programmes (a lack of evaluation and data disaggregated by age), decided to establish a broad set of indicators related to youth which would be useful in evaluating the situation of young people in the 15 priority areas of intervention defined in the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY). To this end, in 2005 a group of experts was formed (representatives of youth organizations, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations, academics and political advisors) with the aim of defining a set of indicators to measure youth development, comparing progress between countries, identifying areas that should promote, develop and encourage policies for collecting data on young people and exploring the possibility of creating a youth development index. The experts stated that these should be policy indicators and used as promotional tools or as indicators of results to increase awareness regarding young people and include them and their perspectives, particularly at the local level (United Nations 2007).

In Europe, one of the benchmarks that must be taken into account is the final document produced at the Meeting of Experts on Youth Policy Indicators, held in Strasbourg in March 2003 and commissioned by the Council of Europe. At this meeting, the experts made recommendations on the use of indicators in evaluating youth policies and proposed objectives in relation to this. The document was intended as a framework for implementing national youth policies. The aim of this meeting was to provide guidance for national youth policies of EU member states and establish a minimum consensus on methodology for the design and implementation of these policies. The document resulting from the meeting (Council of Europe 2003) suggested that ideas might be grouped into four key areas: learning, inclusion and social cohesion, citizenship and participation, and health, safety or welfare. It also stated that although youth policies should not only be evaluated through indicators, these are important in helping young people understand reality and contributing to the construction of youth policies. The experts suggested that in the evaluation of youth policies special consideration must be given to the agent who executes said policies (whether public, private or tertiary sector) and any interventions made by government departments with respect to youth; they therefore placed an emphasis on the need for clear tools to measure everything in relation to this.

Approval of the EU Youth Strategy [3] (2010-2018) represents a new step forward in planning and systematizing youth policy, at least in the context of Europe. It consists of a strategic youth policy proposal on an EU level and aims to provide more and more equal opportunities for young people in education and in the labour market and to encourage young people to be active citizens and participate in society. The driving

force behind the idea is that a better understanding of young people's living conditions will facilitate decision-making regarding the measures to be implemented. From this we can conclude that there is a need for evidence on the real situation of young people and specific data on their living conditions. The first EU youth report was published in April 2009, together with the Commission Communication on the new EU Youth Strategy. It was the first comprehensive EU report in a decade to present updated statistical data and analysis regarding the situation of young people. Already, there is an updated version of this study with the new EU Youth Report 2012. On the basis of this report, the ministers responsible for youth in EU member states invited the European Commission to establish a working group to propose a list of youth indicators for the EU. The result of this assignment was a list of 40 indicators covering the eight areas of action included in the EU Youth Strategy (DG Education and Culture, 2011). However, it deals with indicators for young people's reality and not youth policy.

Lopez and Bendit (2001) also propose a list of indicators on state youth policy based on research conducted by Bendit and Wallace within the framework of the Study on the State of Young People and Youth Policy in Europe IARD. This study compared youth policies from the 15 countries of the EU plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. However, they did not develop the indicators or establish a system and guidelines for their application. A common minimum guideline for working with comparable data is therefore still required. In respect of this, Chaaban (2009) considers the need for a Youth Welfare Index to analyse the situation of exclusion and marginalization suffered by many young people in various social contexts and their precarious living situation in relation to the labour market, among other things. The author suggests preparing the index from a multidimensional perspective and applying it to the diverse range of youth

policies. Two basic difficulties are identified with regard to its construction: finding data on some areas not included by all countries (making it difficult to compare across states), and a divergence of objectives between youth policies (which also hinders comparisons). Despite its focus on young people, the proposal was once again more conducive to indicators related to their reality than indicators aimed at evaluating youth policies.

As for the Spanish state, we can highlight the contribution of objectives and indicators for evaluating youth policies proposed by Comas (2008), which includes 4 areas of evaluation: participation, living conditions, emancipation and research. The indicators proposed for each dimension allow a range of aspects to be evaluated, from policies and plans to areas or groups of activities, all united by common objectives. They can be used at various stages of intervention: from analysing reality to evaluating outcomes or impact. It is also worth mentioning the Basque Government's proposal for national indicators to evaluate the 2nd Youth Plan of the Basque Autonomous Region (Basque Government 2004), which includes a range of indicators applicable to different stages of evaluation and divided into different areas: labour and employment, education and job training, housing, health and social action, leisure and youth culture, values and youth violence, and mechanisms for promoting and developing the Youth Plan.

International guidelines recommend moving forward and establishing specific feasible proposals applicable to the field of youth policies, and most states and countries have openly expressed or advanced in the establishment of more or less elaborate proposals in this direction. It may be noted, however, that there is a lack of systems using indicators for the evaluation of youth policies on a local level. Jackson (2005) and

Bevan and Hood (2006) consider that national evaluation indicator systems lead to demotivation when it comes to innovation, constituting an obstacle to ambition, the concealment of problems, loss of efficiency and inadequate evaluation. Given these limitations and dangers, Coulson (2009) proposes a model of indicator systems in which control and feedback are performed locally. We are convinced of the usefulness of these evaluation tools for local policies, provided they are adapted to regional needs and used as a real measure of self-evaluation and learning. It is therefore advisable that they be applied and interpreted by local agents themselves. We are referring, then, to evaluation indicators that serve local policies and act as a benchmark for improving them and genuinely transforming communities and regions.

If we focus specifically on young people, local policies have been deprived of resources and tools for evaluating municipal actions, and yet local authorities often have been and are great promoters of youth policies and programmes. It is on this basis that we deem it useful and timely to design a tool to help assess local government youth policies. The proposal presented is a system of assessment indicators. However, with youth policies, as happens with all social policies, systems of indicators are usually insufficient for evaluation due to their complexity. We must therefore be aware that it remains essential to combine various hard and soft methodologies within assessment and evaluation processes (Subirats 2005).

If we leave the specific field of youth policy to one side, in local terms interesting indicator systems appeared from the second half of the nineties onwards in areas such as sustainability, education, health, and so on, which are also of relevance to work on local youth policy evaluation. Solely by way of example, it is worth highlighting some

proposals made in recent years. In the field of culture, we find the Silicon Valley proposal (Walesh and Henton 2001), considered a benchmark for community cultural indicators in the United States and Canada, the Arts and Culture Indicators in Community Building Project (Kingsley 1999), a project aimed at developing indicators and providing tools for creating policies, local planning and community building, and the work done in 2007 by the Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities by the Creative City Network (a Canadian association of cities and managers in culture, arts and local heritage) in collaboration with Simon Fraser University. Important references also exist in the UK. It is worth mentioning the Local Performance Indicators for the Arts, Arts Council England (2003), with an interesting proposal for qualitative indicators, the result of a long process of debate involving over two hundred local administrations. As for Spain, in the cultural field we can highlight the proposals by Carrasco (1999), the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (2007), Planas and Soler (2011), and Barbieri, Partal and Merino (2011).

On the local level it is worth considering the National Indicators for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships: Handbook of Definitions (2008) promoted by the UK government's Communities and Local Government. Of the 198 indicators included in the document, 66 are aimed at children and young people. Also, within the framework of New Public Management, the 1980s and 1990s saw an increase in proposals for public administration performance indicators, of such a broad scope that we will not list them in this article.

#### **4. Designing a tool for assessing local government youth policies**

With the aim of contributing to the evaluation of municipal youth policies, we decided to design a system of assessment indicators for use by local administrations working closely with young people [4]. The tool was constructed after analysing the status of these policies and their assessment in different contexts, and reviewing the most recent indicator systems in the field of local policies. The system is based on the reality of youth policies in the Catalan and Spanish context.

The assessment tool we wished to design had to allow users to look forward with a training mentality and look back with a summative mentality (Stake 2006: 63). It is intended as a fundamentally summative assessment tool. The proposal is designed in such a way that local youth managers and politicians themselves lead the assessment process as part of their regular work developing programmes and projects. Its principal contribution must include helping reflect on the scope of actions, on whether the more disadvantaged and invisible sectors are able to access public facilities, services and activities, on the quantity and quality of these, and on the involvement of different actors in developing youth policies, among other factors. A proposal, then, that contributes to examining inputs, processes and outputs. Like any system of indicators it can provide useful, although limited, information for the evaluation of public affairs (Thomas and Palfrey 1996). The system does not include the evaluation of outcomes, that is, the effects these policies have on young people in the region. Outcomes can be measured in the long term via youth reality indicator systems. In this regard, it would also be interesting to link SIAPJove indicators with youth reality indicators.

Assessment can be performed once a year. It can also be considered an educational assessment tool within any work plan being implemented, in that it will allow the scheduled plan to be redirected and modified.

#### *4.1. Preparing and validating assessment indicators*

This tool was based on the definition of 32 assessment objectives, which were ordered and classified into 12 areas on the basis of an analysis of prior experiences, dialogue with managers and politicians responsible for youth policies, and bibliographical and documentary research. Of the principal documents taken into account, the following are worth highlighting:

- The PNJCat 2000-2010, in force at the time this study was carried out. This plan focuses on 11 areas: policies regarding access to housing, employment policies, educational policies, health promotion policies, cultural policies, social cohesion and territorial balance, dialogue and execution of youth policies, support for youth associations, fostering a culture of participation, social cohesion and territorial balance.
- The 2020 Catalonia National Youth Plan. This is the new plan currently in force, with 7 goals expressed in the form of 26 strategies, 34 strategic aims and 179 operational aims. The 7 goals established by the current plan may be incorporated into the areas of education, employment, housing, health, participation, culture and social cohesion [5].
- Spanish Interministry Youth Plan (2005-2008). This is the latest youth plan to be introduced in Spain. It is structured in six sections: 1. Emancipation: employment

and housing; 2. Participation; 3. Coexistence and Diversity; 4. Healthy living and environment; 5. Leisure, culture and free time; 6. Training.

- The EU Youth Strategy (2010-2018), which consists of eight action areas: Education & Training, Employment & Entrepreneurship, Health & Well-Being, Social Inclusion, Culture & Creativity, Youth Participation, Volunteering, Youth & the World.

These and other analysed proposals show that common areas already exist for the context in which our proposal for youth policy assessment indicators is to be applied, helping to identify and define policies developed in relation to young people: education, employment, housing, health, culture, participation and social cohesion. Our system is completed with three additional aspects, which may be included in some of the above areas, but we wish to give an organization and visibility of their own due to their strategic importance in youth policy development. These are the areas of sport, youth information and guidance, and mobility. Finally, two further areas are also included: an analysis of methodological aspects and an analysis of resources dedicated to the implementation of youth policies. This gives us our 12 areas for assessment, which include the 32 assessment objectives and all the proposed indicators. Table 1 shows the areas for assessment and objectives established in each case.

Insert Supplementary Table 1 here. Table 1: Areas and objectives of assessment for local government youth policies

Quantitative and qualitative assessment indicators were considered for each objective. In addition, fact sheets were designed detailing the main aspects of each to aid understanding and interpretation. This initial material was subjected to validation via the following phases. The validation process was carried out at a Spanish national level, with validation by Spanish experts and applying the system in three Spanish local authority areas.

**Phase 1: Validation by experts:** The selection of experts took into account their expertise in different areas, a gender balance, and the type of agents. The initial proposal was to send the indicators to 19 experts: youth workers or managers in any youth field (10), young people (2), researchers (4) and politicians (5). 12 were male and 7 female. We asked them to review and assess the comprehensibility, relevance and coherence of each indicator, as well as the suitability of the system overall. The experts were also asked to assess whether the quantitative indicators were measurable and comparable. The dossier sent to experts included, in addition to the lists of indicators and tables for their validation, a definition of the attributes assessed in this validation (Table 2).

Insert Supplementary Table 2 here. Table 2: Definition of attributes

Validation was ultimately conducted by 16 experts: 10 validated all aspects of the proposed indicators, while the remaining 6 validated the specific aspects in which they are specialists. They conducted the validation process during the second semester of 2010.

According to this first validation, more than half of the indicators (59.18%) required some modification, while 32.6% of all indicators in the system were accepted without modification. The experts considered that 86% of the indicators were comprehensible, 85.5% consistent, and 79.12% relevant. Measurability and comparability cannot be assessed globally because qualitative indicators were not considered for these aspects. Modifications and amendments mainly related to calculating and formulating the indicator, leaving the proposed number of indicators at 95 after this review.

**Phase 2: Testing 10 key indicators:** The assessment tool was tested by applying 10 of the key indicators. The aim here was to determine the time and difficulties involved in implementing the system. It was applied in a local authority area, and data were obtained for 2008, 2009 and 2010. The validation took place in January 2011. The result was satisfactory. Data were obtained for all indicators, although weaknesses were detected in the scope of some and certain intuitions were confirmed, such as the need for systematic data collection by means of a guided data collection form.

Having a set of indicators for three consecutive years allows us to observe their evolution over this period and is a further element to be taken into account when evaluating the effectiveness of municipal services and planning of local youth policies. This validation also demonstrated that quantitative indicators alone do not give a true reading of reality regarding youth policy development in a specific local area. The system of indicators proposed, which combines quantitative and qualitative indicators, corrects these misalignments.

**Phase 3: Case study in three local authority areas:** To validate applicability, interest and effectiveness, the system of indicators resulting from the previous stages of

validation was applied to three local areas of different sizes. One with fewer than 10,000 inhabitants, one between 10,000 and 50,000, and a third with over 50,000 inhabitants. In addition to size, selection also took into account the political party in power in the municipal government and the willingness of the relevant politicians and managers to implement the system of indicators. The system was applied by using different support materials provided by and worked on with youth managers responsible for the process. The indicators were applied between February and June 2011, based on the 2010 data. Applying the tool in these local authority areas allowed us to eliminate 11 indicators and modify a further 27, particularly in the field of social cohesion, leaving the final number of assessment indicators in the system at 83. There were changes in both how to present the descriptive fact sheets and their contents.

#### *4.2. The final SIAPJove system*

The result of the above validation process is our System of Indicators for Assessing Municipal Youth Policies (SIAPJove) in the Catalan and Spanish context. It is viewed as a tool that aims to contribute to the analysis and self-administered assessment of local government youth policies. It is also intended as a practical tool for detecting deficiencies and defining guidelines for people with political responsibilities and municipal officers in the field of youth policies. In summary, it is seen as:

- A tool for self-administered assessment and analysis of local government actions in youth policies. It is intended to help describe the current situation regarding local government youth policies, detect trends, help set goals and measure the effectiveness of local government policies and youth programmes.

- A resource for assessing what is being done for young people not only by the youth department or services, but by all departments in local government. It is therefore about understanding and assessing the transversal work local government does for young people.
- A system in which local government managers and youth officers themselves direct this assessment process, as a function that forms part of their everyday work as youth development officers. It is recommended that, wherever possible, the local government manager responsible for youth participates in this assessment process, and that the interpretation and reflection process at the end of each level of assessment be as open and participatory as possible, to both other municipal bodies and youth organizations and groups.
- A useful tool for opening up a debate with young people and other experts on youth and/or youth policies in order to interpret said policies and draw subsequent conclusions.
- A tool for annual and periodic implementation. It can also be used on an individual basis to focus on specific interests and specific areas for assessment. We recommend its periodic application, however, in order to provide reference data on the evolution of the system.
- An assessment tool that does not exclude other evaluation processes. Quite the opposite, in fact. This assessment system should be implemented alongside other evaluative processes developed using other methodologies.

The final SIAPJove system is presented here: <http://siapjove.udg.edu/> (see annex 1). It is currently available in Catalan and Spanish. Users fill out the forms before the programme calculates the results and presents them in graph form. The 12 assessment

areas contain a total of 31 quantitative (37.3%) and 52 qualitative indicators (62.7%).

Each assessment area includes:

- A list of indicator fact sheets (both quantitative and qualitative) inspired in the proposal formulated by OMITED FOR PEER REVIEW (2011). Each file contains all the information necessary for its correct interpretation and application of the indicator (see Tables 3 and 4).

Insert Supplementary Table 3 here. Table 3: Example of a quantitative indicator

Insert Supplementary Table 4 here. Table 4: Example of a qualitative indicator

- Forms for collecting data for each of these indicators. In the case of quantitative indicators, these are used to obtain the formula for calculating the indicators. For qualitative indicators, the assessment is based on identifying different scenarios. Each scenario (with the exception of absent) has three possible scores (one initial, one central and one higher) to reflect the degree to which it corresponds with the situation described.
- The final reflection form. This section presents a summary of the results obtained. A table shows the results of the quantitative indicators. For the qualitative indicators, a radial graph allows strengths and weaknesses to be easily identified for each area of assessment. The aim of this section is to display the results in the form of a summary and provide useful conclusions for planning future actions. The summary is divided into three sections: a) questions for reflection: we propose some initial questions that invite reflection so as to facilitate and encourage interpretation of the results and

draw conclusions from them, b) strengths and challenges: the aim here is to list the main strengths identified in the area assessed while also considering the most significant challenges to improving results in the future, c) priorities: this final guideline is proposed to help prioritize the challenges faced, considering the urgency and importance of each.

- A glossary to facilitate the interpretation of some specific concepts that can be confusing and lead to doubts. In these cases, we propose a definition aimed at unifying criteria for data collection.

Systematic application of the SIAPJove tool will accumulate results and display trends within the same local government area over time. The programme provides for annual data input, so that results can be retained and reports and indicators compared over years.

### **5. Lessons learned from the experience of applying this tool**

Application of the SIAPJove to date shows that it is a useful tool. It provides information on issues that are otherwise ignored on a day-to-day basis. At the same time, it also requires all other local government departments to become aware of the existence and importance of youth policies and the need to take into account the youth sector and the disaggregated data of this group in order to study and assess them.

The study conducted here and initial application of the SIAPJove lead us to draw the following characteristics.

The tool provides comprehensive information on and documentation of youth policies, improving their social and political visibility. It provides a more reliable basis and greater guarantees for policy and management decision-making. The volume of data and analysis provided facilitates and simplifies decision-making.

It is an effective resource for systematizing documentation and data. There is no tradition of this when it comes to youth policies, so the application of this tool can help establish guidelines and procedures for the collection and systematization of information. The simple fact of not having data for a given indicator may be useful in itself, raising awareness of a possible shortage and the need to work on this in the future.

Application of the tool in more local authority areas, and especially its repeated application over time in the same local area, would highlight how youth policies evolve and some of their effects by providing parameters for interpretation. Its application in more local authority areas would also provide reference points, from which it would be easy to establish trends and patterns. This assumes that the reality of each local area is unique and assessment should always be based on each particular situation and the contextual factors that may have affected the evolution and deployment of policies.

The diversity found in the variables used for different local authority areas, particularly the rural-urban variable, is essential for a correct and fair assessment of the resources and possibilities of each local area. The SIPAJove has been specifically designed to address this issue. Several indicators demonstrate these differences, which are compensated for by various qualitative indicators.

Quantitative indicators alone do not provide a realistic depiction of how youth policies evolve in a specific local area. They are necessary, however, in ensuring that part of the information is completely independent of own evaluations and only subject to real numerical data (Pfenniger, 2004). The system of indicators proposed here, which combines quantitative and qualitative indicators, goes some way to providing the required balance.

A certain inferiority is detected in the organizational chart of municipal institutions when it comes to youth departments, with regard to both their relative spending power and the role and degree of leadership awarded them in interdepartmental work within the administration.

Some very interesting trends have already been identified with the initial application of these assessment indicators. For example, it has been found that those indicators which provide better results and more uniform assessment match the areas and functions traditionally attributed to youth policies: youth information, leisure programmes and services, youth associations, youth tourism and youth participation. These would coincide with the areas closest to the so-called peripheral policies and the new affirmative policies that reflect the current status awarded young people. It is in these cases that the SIAPJove evidences the need for improved youth policies in areas which are more distanced from standard practices, as well as significant changes in areas such as housing, employment, education and health, among others. It is clear that the areas of intervention that may have most effect on changes in young people's living conditions are those where youth policies have most difficulties implementing actions and obtaining results. Precisely for this reason it is important to have assessment tools that visualize and demonstrate the degree of action, successes, shortfalls and failures in these policies and their programmes.

Finally, we would like to highlight some limitations of the proposal:

The general policy and legislative context and culture of each region is essential to the successful implementation of the proposed tool. The SIAPJove was designed for the Catalan and Spanish context. Application of the tool in another region would require revision and adaptation of the indicators, especially their description and explanation.

The proposal does not evaluate the impacts of youth policy, so a comprehensive evaluation of youth policies would be necessary to complement the implementation of this instrument with other instruments or methodologies (implementing participatory assessment and evaluation methodologies with young people themselves, for example). In this respect, it would be interesting to link the various indicators in our proposal with the indicators of youth reality already in existence in each region. Neither does our proposal seek or aim to evaluate or assess youth policy as a whole. *Indicators, which are one form of information, can only be a piece in a larger puzzle* (Cobb and Rixford, 1998: 25).

The changing dynamics of social and political reality inevitably demand the periodic review and adjustment of the system to keep it updated.

Application of the proposal requires comprehensive data collection, which is not always systematized in local government. This, in turn, requires dedication and time, not always available to municipal managers.

## **6. Conclusions**

In this paper we have presented a system of indicators for assessing local government youth policies which promotes better decision-making via data information. Generally speaking, the paper has demonstrated that indicator systems may be useful tools in assessing public administration policies and programmes. That said, they do have important limitations which must also be taken into account (Thomas and Palfrey 1996; Jackson 2005; and Bevan and Hood 2006).

In the area of public administration it is common to encounter difficulties when it comes to learning from assessment and evaluation processes and their having a truly direct effect on subsequent decision-making. Evaluation processes are often not correctly positioned within periods of decision-making (Subirats and Blasco 2009). It is therefore important to seek out appropriate times and periods for assessment and evaluation so that it has the impact on decision-making it deserves.

At a time when resources are scarce, especially for local governments, it is more necessary than ever to develop effective evaluation systems that can identify those areas which are most neglected and require a prioritized investment of efforts and resources, as well as means of achieving this. The alternative, to blur youth policies and distort their meaning and orientation, would be to regress several decades in the field. This would also be at the risk of huge political and social cost, given the hopeless outlook the economic crisis has left young people with today. Budget constraints cannot be an excuse for ignoring an entire generation. Collaboration between institutions, methodological innovation and evaluation focused on continuous improvement and efficiency may be key to surviving this period of great uncertainty and difficulty.

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[1] We refer to assessment rather than evaluation, as our proposal is not designed to evaluate outcomes, but rather assess whether certain youth policies are in place

[2] This project has been carried out with the help of the XXXXXX Youth Agency, by means of call XXXXXX. In addition to the authors of this article, the following researchers also participated in this study: XXXXXXXX

[3] COUNCIL RESOLUTION of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) (2009/C 311/01)

[4] The study was conducted during 2009 and 2010 with the participation of over forty people, including youth managers and politicians, youth and evaluation experts, university researchers and youth organizations.

[5] The seven goals are defined in these specific terms: 1. Young people achieving success in their educational career; 2. Young people achieving success in their professional career; 3. Young people achieving success in the transition from home; 4. Promoting a healthy lifestyle among young people; 5. Moving towards the autonomy, personal development and participation of young people; 6. Attaining a universal culture among young people: work towards cultural opportunities corresponding to educational objectives and social cohesion; 7. Moving towards a new model of country and cohesive society, geographically structured, sustainable, inclusive and innovative in its forms of collective organization.

The seven goals are defined in these specific terms: 1. Young people achieving success in their educational career; 2. Young people achieving success in their professional career; 3. Young people achieving success in the transition from home; 4. Promoting a healthy lifestyle among young people; 5. Moving towards the autonomy, personal development and participation of young people; 6. Attaining a universal culture among young people: work towards cultural opportunities corresponding to educational objectives and social cohesion; 7. Moving towards a new model of country and cohesive society, geographically structured, sustainable, inclusive and innovative in its forms of collective organization.

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Table 1: Areas and objectives of assessment for local government youth policies

<b>1. EDUCATION</b>
1.1. Identify programmes and activities developed by the local government to improve educational equality among young people.
1.2. Determine actions implemented by the local government for young people in conjunction with state secondary schools, partially-funded secondary schools and universities.
1.3. Determine coordination existing between social education agents and local government.
1.4. Identify academic guidance actions organized by the local government and aimed at secondary schools.
<b>2. EMPLOYMENT</b>
2.1. Determine local government actions related to information and guidance on employment.
2.2. Determine local government actions with regard to youth employment training.
2.3. Identify labour market integration actions for young people organized by the local government.
2.4. Identify local government actions promoting youth self-employment and entrepreneurship.
<b>3. HOUSING</b>
3.1. Identify local government actions addressing information and guidance on access to housing.
3.2. Study measures adopted by the local government to promote young people's access to housing.
3.3. Identify alternative housing experiences for young people organized by or with the support of local government..
<b>4. HEALTH</b>
4.1 Study local government actions directly addressing health problems that affect young people.
4.2. Study actions in the field of health promotion aimed specifically at young people.
<b>5. CULTURE (youth leisure, educational recreation, promotion and creation)</b>
5.1. Study youth cultural services offered or supported by the local government and local government strategies for organizing and promoting them.
5.2. Identify policies for young people's access to cultural activities organized or supported by the local government.
<b>6. SPORT</b>
6.1. Study the range of sports activities on offer to young people organized or supported by the local government.
6.2. Identify policies for accessing sports activities organized or supported by the local government.
<b>7. PARTICIPATION AND ASSOCIATIONS</b>
7.1. Identify local government support in promoting youth associations.
7.2. Study local government support in youth participation.
<b>8. SOCIAL COHESION</b>
8.1. Study local government actions addressing cultural diversity.
8.2. Study local government actions aimed at eliminating inequalities among young people due to disability.
8.3. Study local government actions aimed at eliminating inequalities due to socioeconomic disparities.
8.4. Study local government actions aimed at eliminating inequalities due to gender disparities.
8.5. Study local government actions aimed at promoting intergenerational relations.
<b>9. YOUTH INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE</b>
9.1. Analyze resources and activities provided or supported by the local government to promote information and guidance in all areas related to youth policies.
<b>10. MOBILITY</b>
10.1. Study local government proposals attending to the specific needs of youth mobility.
<b>11. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF YOUTH POLICIES</b>
11.1. Identify local government actions aimed at coordinated and transversal work with regard to youth policies.
11.2. Study local youth policy planning and evaluation tools.
11.3. Study local government strategies to support the planning and evaluation of youth activities supported by local government and organized by third parties.
<b>12. RESOURCES DEDICATED TO YOUTH POLICIES</b>

12.1. Study the number and characteristics of local youth facilities.
12.2. Study the number of staff dedicated to youth policies.
12.3. Study local government economic resources dedicated to youth policies.

Table 2: Definition of attributes

ATTRIBUTE	DEFINITION
<b>Comprehensible</b>	It has a clear and intelligible definition that allows easy interpretation. It is understandable to anyone who has to use it, especially managers and politicians.
<b>Relevant</b>	It provides data related to the aim of the study. It has the ability to capture and represent aspects of what we aim to study. It captures the essence of the issue and is therefore consistent with the purpose.
<b>Coherent</b>	It is coherent with the aim and purpose of the study: the assessment of local youth policies.
<b>Comparable</b>	It allows comparison of data over time for the same local area. It allows data to be compared between local areas (even though this is not the purpose of our study).
<b>Measurable</b>	It can be quantified by both availability and type of data.

Table 3: Example of a quantitative indicator

AREA 12	Resources dedicated to youth policies
OBJECTIVE 12.1	To study the number and characteristics of local youth facilities
INDICATOR 12.1.1	Percentage of area dedicated to local youth facilities with respect to the total youth population in the local government area.
Formula	$(\text{Total m}^2 \text{ dedicated to local government youth facilities} / \text{Total youth population}) \times 100$
Structure and technical data	<p>This indicator is designed to determine the amount of space allocated to local youth facilities compared to the number of young people in the area. Specialized facilities can encourage, stimulate and affect specific areas becoming spaces of identity for young people. We therefore understand youth facilities to be those buildings or facilities owned by the local authority which are designed to fulfil functions or provide services that meet the specific needs of young people in the area. They may be general facilities that host a service or resource designed specifically and explicitly for young people (a sports hall or civic centre, for example). They are usually accompanied by material, human and economic resources for carrying out their functions. Youth facilities may be quite diverse, from more general to more specialized installations. Some youth facilities that local governments may promote are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth Information Points</li> <li>- Youth clubs</li> <li>- Music rehearsal spaces for young people</li> <li>- Specific places for youth activities located in multipurpose centres (for example: a civic centre, a sports centre, etc.)</li> <li>- Youth health centres</li> <li>- Spaces for youth creativity</li> <li>- Youth sports facilities, designed for use by young people, due to the type of sport they are dedicated to (for example, climbing walls or skate parks)</li> <li>- Etc.</li> </ul> <p>To avoid too small a figure, the data for this indicator are provided in square metres for every 100 young people. If possible, the useable surface area of the facility is used, not the constructed surface area.</p>
Glossary	Youth facilities
Interpretation	In Barcelona in 2006: 4.5 m <sup>2</sup> for every 100 young people. Instead of square metres, Montes (2008) compares the maximum capacity to the number of young people and says that a given area would be adequately equipped with youth facilities when at maximum occupancy they provide for 7% of the young people in the local area.
Limitations	Excluded from the indicator are those facilities which, although used by young people, do not have young people as their principal user. This includes civic centres, sports centres, art schools, etc.
Related indicators	6.2.1 Local government strategies for promoting and supporting youth creativity

Table 4: Example of a qualitative indicator

AREA 6	Culture
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<b>OBJECTIVE 6.1</b>	To study the range of cultural activities on offer to young people organized or supported by the local government and its strategies in organizing and promoting these activities								
<b>INDICATOR 6.1.3</b>	Local government strategies for promoting and supporting cultural activities organized by third parties								
<b>Description</b>	<p>The local government should not be the sole agent providing cultural activities in the area. This indicator is designed to determine what support measures the local government offers to enable third parties and the private sector to develop proposals for youth culture.</p> <p>The PNJCat 2010-2020 programme aims to promote the use of public space via an inclusive community perspective, as a fundamental tool for social inclusion. It is therefore necessary that local governments favours and facilitates cultural activities organized by third parties, as citizens involved in generating said activities stop being mere consumers and begin to take part in cultural policies.</p> <p>Some local government actions that can enable third parties and the private sector to develop proposals for youth culture might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing collaboration agreements with organizations and/or private bodies.</li> <li>Assignment of municipal space for actions organized by third parties.</li> <li>Grants aimed at municipal associations.</li> <li>Technical support.</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>								
<b>Glossary</b>	Youth cultural activities								
<b>Related indicators</b>	<p>5.1.1 Local government support actions for youth associations</p> <p>5.1.2 Attention and support for actions by youth groups with no legal status</p> <p>11.1.5 Inter-institutional work strategies related to youth policies on a municipal level between different local governments</p> <p>11.1.6 Inter-institutional work strategies between organizations and the local government in relation to youth policies</p>								
<b>Absent</b>	<b>Emerging</b>			<b>Established</b>			<b>Advanced</b>		
<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
The local government does not provide support or have a programme to promote youth cultural actions organized by third parties.	The local government has occasional support strategies for youth cultural actions organized by third parties.  There is no explicit dissemination of information regarding procedures and conditions for accessing this support.			The local government has stable support strategies for youth cultural actions organized by third parties and publicizes procedures and conditions for accessing them.			The local government has support and promotion strategies for youth cultural actions organized by third parties.  The strategies are explicit and generally known. Most support and promotion strategies are taken into account and some are long-term.		

Annex 1: SIAPJove website frontpage

**SIAPjove**  
Sistema de Indicadores para evaluar las políticas municipales de juventud

PRESENTACIÓN ESTRUCTURA ANEXOS GLOSARIO REGISTRO AYUDAS

Castell. Español

INICIO

**Las fichas SIAPjove**

1. Educación
2. Empleo
3. Vivienda
4. Salud
5. Participación y asociacionismo
6. Cultura
7. Cohesión social
8. Deportes
9. Voluntariado y voluntariado juvenil
10. Movilidad
11. Aspectos metodológicos de las políticas de juventud
12. Recursos dedicados a las políticas de juventud

**Presentación**

El SIAPjove es un sistema de indicadores que quiere contribuir al análisis y la autoevaluación de las políticas municipales de juventud. Quiere también convertirse en una herramienta práctica para detectar carencias y definir líneas de acción para las personas que ocupan cargos políticos y para los técnicos municipales del ámbito de la juventud.

A través de esta web puedes consultar la estructura y los contenidos principales del sistema de evaluación que proponemos. Si te interesa tener acceso a cada una de las fichas de indicadores y a la entrada de datos, es preciso que te registres.

Una vez registrado, podrás acceder a la totalidad del sistema, ver cada una de las fichas de indicadores y acceder a los formularios de entrada de datos. Podrás entrar datos y guardarlos tantas veces como quieras, hasta generar el informe de síntesis de cada ámbito de evaluación.

Te invitamos a visitar la web y, si lo crees oportuno, hacernos llegar propuestas de mejora.

Regístrate y entra en el sistema    Ayúdanos a mejorar el SIAPjove

Universitat de Girona  
Institut de Recerca Educativa

Table 2: Definition of attributes

ATTRIBUTE	DEFINITION
<b>Comprehensible</b>	It has a clear and intelligible definition that allows easy interpretation. It is understandable to anyone who has to use it, especially managers and politicians.
<b>Relevant</b>	It provides data related to the aim of the study. It has the ability to capture and represent aspects of what we aim to study. It captures the essence of the issue and is therefore consistent with the purpose.
<b>Coherent</b>	It is coherent with the aim and purpose of the study: the assessment of local youth policies.
<b>Comparable</b>	It allows comparison of data over time for the same local area. It allows data to be compared between local areas (even though this is not the purpose of our study).
<b>Measurable</b>	It can be quantified by both availability and type of data.

Table 3: Example of a quantitative indicator

AREA 12	Resources dedicated to youth policies
OBJECTIVE 12.1	To study the number and characteristics of local youth facilities
INDICATOR 12.1.1	Percentage of area dedicated to local youth facilities with respect to the total youth population in the local government area.
Formula	$(\text{Total m}^2 \text{ dedicated to local government youth facilities} / \text{Total youth population}) \times 100$
Structure and technical data	<p>This indicator is designed to determine the amount of space allocated to local youth facilities compared to the number of young people in the area. Specialized facilities can encourage, stimulate and affect specific areas becoming spaces of identity for young people. We therefore understand youth facilities to be those buildings or facilities owned by the local authority which are designed to fulfil functions or provide services that meet the specific needs of young people in the area. They may be general facilities that host a service or resource designed specifically and explicitly for young people (a sports hall or civic centre, for example). They are usually accompanied by material, human and economic resources for carrying out their functions. Youth facilities may be quite diverse, from more general to more specialized installations. Some youth facilities that local governments may promote are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Youth Information Points</li> <li>- Youth clubs</li> <li>- Music rehearsal spaces for young people</li> <li>- Specific places for youth activities located in multipurpose centres (for example: a civic centre, a sports centre, etc.)</li> <li>- Youth health centres</li> <li>- Spaces for youth creativity</li> <li>- Youth sports facilities, designed for use by young people, due to the type of sport they are dedicated to (for example, climbing walls or skate parks)</li> <li>- Etc.</li> </ul> <p>To avoid too small a figure, the data for this indicator are provided in square metres for every 100 young people. If possible, the useable surface area of the facility is used, not the constructed surface area.</p>
Glossary	Youth facilities
Interpretation	In Barcelona in 2006: 4.5 m <sup>2</sup> for every 100 young people. Instead of square metres, Montes (2008) compares the maximum capacity to the number of young people and says that a given area would be adequately equipped with youth facilities when at maximum occupancy they provide for 7% of the young people in the local area.
Limitations	Excluded from the indicator are those facilities which, although used by young people, do not have young people as their principal user. This includes civic centres, sports centres, art schools, etc.
Related indicators	6.2.1 Local government strategies for promoting and supporting youth creativity

Table 4: Example of a qualitative indicator

AREA 6	Culture								
OBJECTIVE 6.1	To study the range of cultural activities on offer to young people organized or supported by the local government and its strategies in organizing and promoting these activities								
INDICATOR 6.1.3	Local government strategies for promoting and supporting cultural activities organized by third parties								
Description	<p>The local government should not be the sole agent providing cultural activities in the area. This indicator is designed to determine what support measures the local government offers to enable third parties and the private sector to develop proposals for youth culture.</p> <p>The PNJCat 2010-2020 programme aims to promote the use of public space via an inclusive community perspective, as a fundamental tool for social inclusion. It is therefore necessary that local governments favours and facilitates cultural activities organized by third parties, as citizens involved in generating said activities stop being mere consumers and begin to take part in cultural policies.</p> <p>Some local government actions that can enable third parties and the private sector to develop proposals for youth culture might be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing collaboration agreements with organizations and/or private bodies.</li> <li>Assignment of municipal space for actions organized by third parties.</li> <li>Grants aimed at municipal associations.</li> <li>Technical support.</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul>								
Glossary	Youth cultural activities								
Related indicators	5.1.1 Local government support actions for youth associations 5.1.2 Attention and support for actions by youth groups with no legal status 11.1.5 Inter-institutional work strategies related to youth policies on a municipal level between different local governments 11.1.6 Inter-institutional work strategies between organizations and the local government in relation to youth policies								
Absent	Emerging			Established			Advanced		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
The local government does not provide support or have a programme to promote youth cultural actions organized by third parties.	The local government has occasional support strategies for youth cultural actions organized by third parties.  There is no explicit dissemination of information regarding procedures and conditions for accessing this support.			The local government has stable support strategies for youth cultural actions organized by third parties and publicizes procedures and conditions for accessing them.			The local government has support and promotion strategies for youth cultural actions organized by third parties.  The strategies are explicit and generally known. Most support and promotion strategies are taken into account and some are long-term.		

**Highlights**

- 1- Our tool helps to reflect, justify and prioritize young people's demands.
- 2- Assessment indicators as a benchmark for improving local youth policies.
- 3- We want to contribute to the analysis and self-assessment of local youth policies.
- 4- SIAPJove provides information on issues that are ignored on a day-to-day basis.
- 5- Assessment systems can identify areas which are neglected.