



**ENGAGING AND
EMPOWERING YOUTH
ACROSS THE OECD**

**A youthful summary of the
2018 Stocktaking Report**

Copyright © 2018 by the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** · www.oecd.org

This leaflet is a summary of the 2018 *Youth Stocktaking Report*, an analysis of what OECD countries do on youth issues, how they involve young people, and how they can best improve their work with and for young people.

Contents and design by the team of youthpolicy.org. Photo credits: Brandon Zack, Diego Hernandez, Jess Waters, Linus Nyland, Matteo Paganelli and Timothy Choy – all on unsplash.com

Printed in Paris by the OECD on 100% FSC-certified recovered paper with EU Ecolabel

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Public Governance Directorate
2, rue André Pascal · 75775 Paris Cedex 16 · oecd.org/gov · twitter.com/oecdgov

4 Introducing the Youth Stocktaking Report

Why this report?

What does the report do?

How was the report produced?

1

8 How governments work on youth issues

How can youth policy cut across different areas?

What role do public institutions play in youth policy?

How can youth perspectives be integrated in policy processes?

2

10 How governments work with young people

How do young people participate across the OECD?

How can youth rights be protected?

How do governments share power and resources?

3

14 Ideas to improve youth policy and youth engagement

How can governments improve youth policy?

How can governments strengthen youth participation?

How can governments empower and involve young people better?

4



Introducing

the Youth

Stocktaking

Report

The OECD Youth Stocktaking Report

Engaging and empowering youth in OECD countries

The *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development*, in short known as the OECD, has looked at how its 36 member countries from across the globe address youth issues in government.

Their analysis couldn't be timelier! Read on to see what they found out and recommend to change and improve.



There are many reasons why the report is useful and timely:

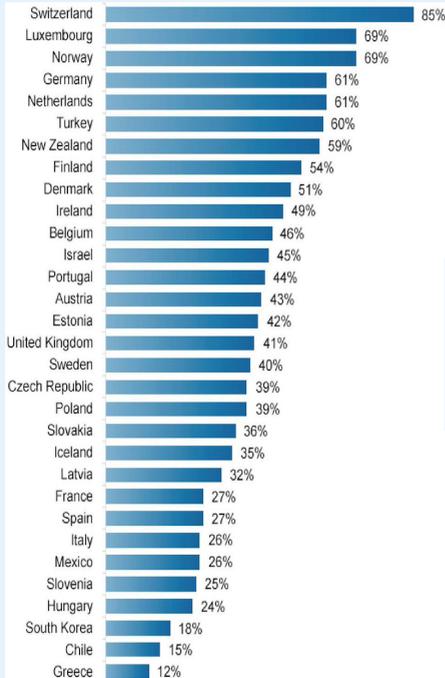
(1) Youth unemployment and insecure jobs for young people are still far too common, despite the fact that many young people are much better educated and more informed than any generation ever before.

(2) Young people have little confidence in their government and are less likely to vote in general elections, which often generates headlines, despite the fact that young people use – and even invent – other forms of participation all the time.

(3) Young people have the least influence on policies that affect them the most. Climate change and rising inequality are two examples of global challenges that will impact young people much more than those who currently decide on how to deal with them.

So it makes sense that we take a close look at what governments do on youth issues, how they involve young people, and how they can best improve their work with and for young people. We have published our results in a Youth Stocktaking Report, which you can download at oe.cd/youth-stocktaking.

LOW CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT AMONG YOUTH



All data refers to 2016, except for Finland and Iceland (2015); Italy and Spain (2017). Source: *Gallup World Poll*.

A draft of this report was published in Spring 2018, followed by a period of public consultations. The development of a youth-friendly summary of the report was a much-appreciated idea during this consultation process. This leaflet is the result of that wish.

In a nutshell, the *Youth Stocktaking Report* provides a detailed picture of how OECD member countries approach youth issues. It showcases good practice, but also identifies key areas for improvement. Most importantly, the report makes clear how important it is to look at youth issues in their entirety – and do so in cooperation and coordination not only across all of government at federal level, but also with authorities at regional and local level.

The report takes five priority areas into focus:

- (1) Youth policy that addresses all of young people's concerns
- (2) The role of public institutions in youth policy
- (3) Integration of youth perspectives in public policy processes
- (4) Youth participation and representation
- (5) Legal frameworks and age restrictions

Read on for a summary of the OECD's main findings by priority area on the following pages.



How governments

work on youth

issues

How governments work on youth issues

Most governments use national youth policies and strategies as their main framework. The hardest part of managing youth affairs is not the development of such a policy or strategy, it is their implementation and coordination between different ministries. Youth policy cuts across many different themes and needs to involve, and coordinate between, the various ministries responsible for these themes.



1. Youth policy that addresses all of young people's concerns

Most governments use national youth policies and strategies as their main framework. Almost 80% of all OECD countries had a multi-year strategy at some point, and 40% have such a policy or strategy currently (April 2018). Youth policies and strategies often express an overall vision of a country on the role and status of young people in social, economic and political life.

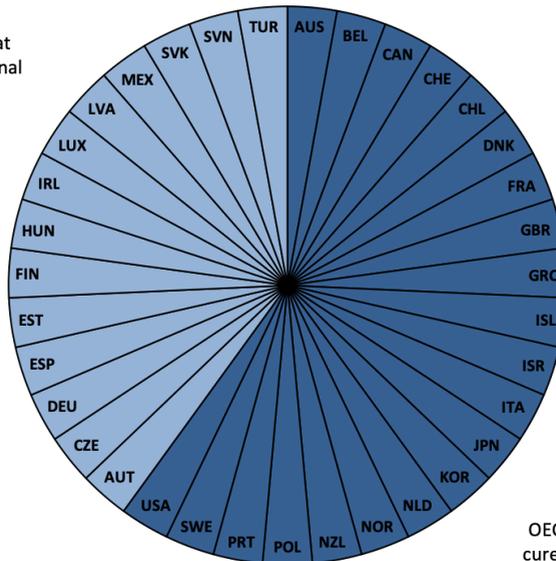
Beyond that overall vision, some strategies and policies emphasise youth autonomy, some high-light political participation, and others focus on youth rights. All of them touch upon key issues

for young people that cut across several sections of government – which is why youth policy is called a cross-sectional, or transversal, policy area.

Any governmental strategy, whether on youth or other issues, needs a transparent way to be monitored. How can you otherwise know whether the strategy is implemented at all? The good news: Almost 70% of all current youth policies and strategies in the OECD come with a concrete way to monitor their implementation, for example through indicators.

OECD countries with operational youth strategies (as of April 2018)

OECD countries that currently have national youth strategies

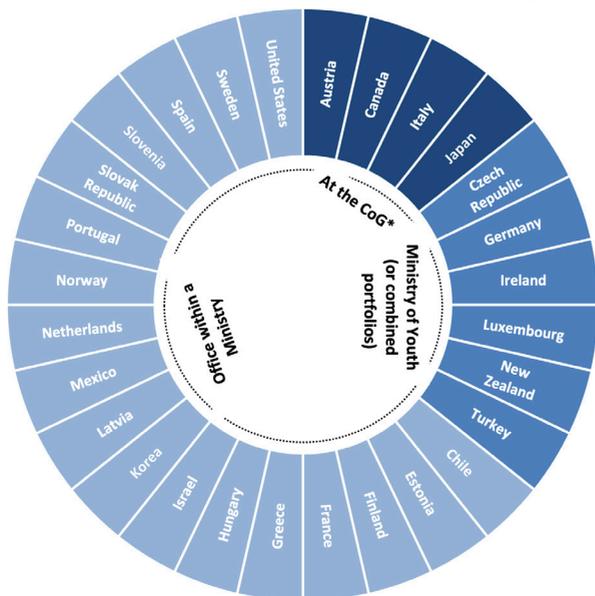


OECD countries that do not currently have national youth strategies

The national youth policy of Turkey does not foresee an expiry date but it mentions that the document will be reviewed and updated in periods of four years.

2. The role of public institutions in youth policy

The institution that is responsible for youth affairs varies quite a lot across the OECD. Some countries organise youth right at the centre of their government*, others have a Youth Ministry; some have a department for youth affairs within another Ministry. In most countries, the responsibility for youth affairs changes quite frequently, and seven OECD countries currently have no institution for youth affairs at all. Overall, youth issues do not yet enjoy the priority they deserve and require.



The hardest part of managing youth affairs is the coordination between different ministries. Health, education, economy, employment are all key aspects of youth policy, but they are typically organised in separate ministries. Youth policy is transversal and needs to involve, and coordinate, all of these thematic ministries.

There are many different approaches in place to manage this tricky coordination task, including inter-ministerial coordination committees, inter-departmental round tables, thematic working groups and youth-specific focal points. These mechanisms do change quite frequently, and there is very little evidence on how effective they are.

Youth Affairs at the Centre of Government*

* Centre of Government (CoG): The administrative structure that serves the Head of Government such as the general secretariat, cabinet office, chancellor, office/ministry of the presidency, council of ministers office.

Source: OECD's work based on available information on Youth Wiki of the European Commission, Youth Department of the Council of Europe and Youthpolicy

3. Integration of youth perspectives in public policy processes

Integrating youth perspectives into public policy processes – including legislation, policies and programmes – is often called youth mainstreaming. Youth mainstreaming is a process that tries to assess the implications for young people of any planned policy action: the impact of a new law on health, the effects of a new policy on housing, the consequences of a new programme on education.

OECD countries have only recently started to look into youth mainstreaming. Not many tools exist at the moment, and they are not yet consistently used either, but first experiences are encouraging. Youth checks, for example, assess the impact of proposed new laws on young people before these laws are adopted. Such a check helps to improve these laws – and better laws help to improve the well-being of young people.

Youth checks

Currently, Austria, Flanders in Belgium, France, Germany and Ireland apply youth checks in practice. New Zealand has issued best practices guidelines to help ministries assess the impact of new legislation on children and young people.



Youth participatory budgeting

The City of Boston was among the first to give young people a say in how public expenditures should be allocated through the initiative “Youth lead the Change”. Several cities, regions and schools have used youth participatory budgeting for quite some time, and in 2017 Portugal has become the first OECD country to try the approach at national level.



Participatory budgeting is another tool to mainstream youth issues by giving young people a say in how the money available to government should be spent.

3

How

governments

work with

young people

How governments work with young people

The participation of young people in policy processes is very diverse across the OECD.

Voting in elections and volunteering in organisations are well-known, but not always well-used, forms of participation of young people.

Youth participation in formal institutional politics is dropping, but at the same time new forms of youth participation emerge.



4. Youth participation and representation

More than 25% of young people aged 15-29 across the OECD say they are “not at all interested in politics” – a number that is higher than in the overall population, where 20% say the same.

But while youth participation in formal institutional politics is shrinking, many different forms of youth participation – in new social movements, online as well as offline – have quickly grown in many OECD countries.

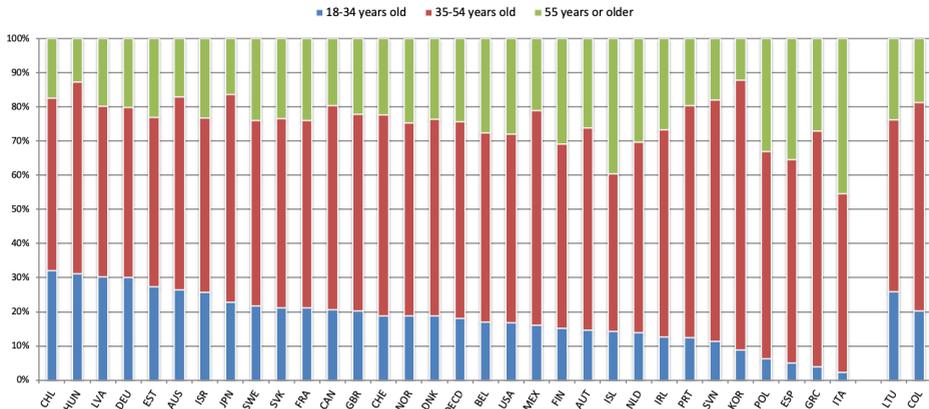
The reason for low levels of voting is not always, and often not even primarily, a lack of interest. Young people are regularly excluded from policy processes due to their age, which is generally associated with a lack of experience, and they often struggle to challenge these stereotypes.

Voting age

In most OECD countries, the minimum age to vote is 18 years. However, a few countries have decided to lower the voting age for elections at subnational and, in the case of Austria (16 years) and Greece (17 years), the national level. Some studies show that young people who start voting at a younger age are also more likely to vote in the future.

Young people should also be fairly represented in state institutions. Most often, they are not though. For instance, young people, aged 18-34, make up for the lowest share of employees in the central government, as the graph on the next page shows.

Share of people employed in the Central Government by age group, 2015



5. Legal frameworks and age restrictions

Many laws affect young people and their rights, but a dedicated youth law or youth act exists only in a few OECD countries. These laws typically cover who is responsible for youth affairs, how young people can participate in policy-making, and how the representation of young people is handled, which is most often through a national youth council.

Youth policy is a policy area that has many sides to it, so youth laws cover a number of different areas. The potential overlaps with other laws are though rarely addressed, which usually results in all sorts of different age-limits.

Age-limits can be a source for age-based discrimination. Minimum ages define as of when young people can vote and stand as candidates in elections, when they can speak to a doctor alone and in confidence, or when they can be heard in judicial proceedings.

Setting a minimum age directly impacts on the lives of young people and limits how they can apply their rights, take decisions, and access services.

At the moment, age-limits are applied quite inconsistently across the OECD.

4

Ideas

to improve

youth policy

and youth

engagement

Ideas for governments to improve youth policy and youth engagement

The Youth Stocktaking Report has a number of recommendations. We have collected and summarised the most important ones for you below.

If you would like to know more, you can download the full report at oe.cd/youth-stocktaking – and we will always have an open ear and mind for your ideas and suggestions!



Identify the needs and hopes of young people regularly. How can you develop good policies if you do not know what young people need?

Strengthen the implementation and coordination of youth policies. Apply mainstreaming tools better to integrate youth perspectives into the development of laws and policies, and publish information on the resources spent on public youth policies.

Ensure young people are fairly represented in parliaments, governments and public administrations.

Encourage, recognise and support new forms of youth participation, including social movements and online spaces for youth participation.

Support civic and citizenship education in and beyond schools, so that young people always have access to a learning environment that is empowering and fosters participation.

Review age limits and restrictions, as these often create problems for young people's access to public services.

**For any additional information,
suggestions and feedback:**

Contact us: GOVYouth@oecd.org

Visit us: <http://www.oecd.org/governance/>

And follow us: [#OECD4Youth](https://twitter.com/OECD4Youth)



GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

READ THE FULL REPORT AT [OE.CD/YOUTH-STOCKTAKING](https://oe.cd/youth-stocktaking).