



**PEER REVIEW REPORT  
TURKEY**



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SHARING EXPERTISE  
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WORKING PAPER FINAL

# **SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT IN TURKEY**

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*The contents, opinions and recommendations contained in this report are those of the peer review team alone and do not commit the European Union or its agencies in any way.*

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## PREFACE

In 2002 the European Training Foundation (ETF) launched a peer review project in South Eastern European countries that are preparing or already running EU funded CARDS<sup>1</sup> projects in the field of vocational education and training (VET). The project was a follow-up to the thematic reviews of education policy carried out by the OECD during 2000 and 2001, and was funded from the ETF's own budget. In 2002 peer reviews were carried out in Albania, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Kosovo<sup>2</sup>, while peer reviews in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia followed in 2003 when the peer review project was extended to candidate countries, namely, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey.

The focus of this peer review project is to evaluate recent progress in VET/employment policy development and to propose activities that could be undertaken to bring the reform process forward. The ETF's peer reviews aim at both policy advice and capacity building in the region. They are organised in such a way as to:

- contribute to an exchange of policy experience and enhance learning processes among national stakeholders;
- contribute to develop policy analysis capacities in the countries of the region;
- promote, in an effective way, regional cooperation between actors involved in similar activities;
- contribute to the CARDS, Phare and MEDA programming and implementation cycle.

The present peer review cycle contains five phases.

- A specific review topic is agreed with the country in question.
- National background material is prepared by both the host country and the country manager of the ETF, which includes the drafting of a briefing paper.
- A peer review team is set up and pays a visit to the country.
- A review report is drafted and finalised following consultations with the host country.
- The report is disseminated throughout the country.

In addition, the ETF organises specific staff development activities as a follow-up to the national review, as well as regional dissemination events to promote the sharing of experience and mutual learning between experts from different countries.

Where relevant, the ETF peer reviews put a clear focus on assessing where the country stands in terms of its performance against EU benchmarks and policy goals. Experts from old and new EU member states are included in the review teams to enable wider knowledge sharing on good practice in terms both of outcomes (what has been done) and reform processes (how it could be done).

The aim of the final reports is to offer policy advice and to identify short and mid-term actions rather than providing a complete and academic analysis of the VET system and grand reform proposals. The reports contain substantiated and operational conclusions and recommendations, which should allow policy makers in the country in question to design follow-up activities.

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<sup>1</sup> CARDS is the European Union's assistance programme to South Eastern European countries.

<sup>2</sup> Under international administration in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 of 10 June 1999.

The ETF does not see the peer reviews as one-off events but rather as a continuous cycle during which the ETF would provide ongoing assistance to the VET/employment reform processes in the relevant countries. It is, therefore, planned to arrange subsequent review missions with external peers every two to three years. After the completion of the first peer reviews an evaluation will be undertaken to assess the results achieved.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the outcome of the peer review process that took place in Turkey in October 2003. The purpose of the report is not to provide the Turkish authorities with a 'recommended model' of social dialogue in VET and employment. It is rather:

- to take stock of the different initiatives taking place in the country;
- to identify the existing potential and limitations in the process towards an effective social dialogue in VET and employment.
- to identify and suggest further steps to social dialogue improvement with the aim of supporting VET and employment systems' equity, access, quality and internal efficiency enhancement, as well as better coordination of the two systems.

The concept of social dialogue (or social partnership) used in the context of the peer review is the one defined by the ILO to include all types of negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between or among representatives of government, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social development.

Social dialogue is an essential parameter for successful economic and social reform. The EU Lisbon strategy emphasises its role in addressing key challenges facing Europe, such as enhancing skills and qualifications, modernising work organisation, promoting equal opportunities and developing active ageing policies. Negotiation and consultation between social partners is the most suitable way forward on questions related to modernisation and the management of change. International experience shows that all aspects of social dialogue have the potential for promoting the effectiveness of the decision-making process and enhancing good governance.

The Communication of the Commission of 26 June 2002, on 'European Social Dialogue, A Force for Innovation and Change', in regard to candidate countries preparing for accession, underlines its vital role and current weaknesses. The communication states that in spite of the efforts and results so far achieved, much still remains to be done to strengthen the capacities of social partners and to involve them more effectively in the accession process.

Unlike the case of the former acceding countries of Central and Eastern Europe, social dialogue in Turkey is in some respects traditional and it is to a certain extent rooted in society. However, as in most new member states and candidate countries, tripartite structures are the privileged platform of social dialogue in Turkey with government having a predominant position within these structures. Bipartite dialogue at the sectoral level and in private companies is marginal, while the proportion of the workforce covered by collective agreements is quite small.

The Economic and Social Council was established in Turkey in 1995 as the principal advisory body at the national level, and legislation was introduced in 2001 in order to raise its status and to make it more functional. The Council is headed by the Prime Minister and comprises related ministries and public organisations as well as employers, employees and other professional organisations. Consultation of social partners within the Council is perceived to be inefficient and irregular. The Council has met 15 times since its establishment.

Social partnership tradition in the field of education and training in Turkey goes back to the founding years of the republic. The National Education Council (SURA), which meets every three years, was established as early as 1926 as the highest advisory body of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) to promote quality in the Turkish national education system.

The Vocational Education Council was established in accordance with Law No 3308 enacted in 1986 as the highest platform for decision-making on the planning, development and evaluation of all types and levels of formal and non-formal VET provided by all schools and institutions (including enterprises) and to provide comments on specific subjects to the MoNE.

In addition, provincial vocational education councils were established in accordance with Law No 3308. The provincial councils have the task of assessing whether VET provision meets local labour market demands and addressing related recommendations to the MoNE, which makes the final decision as regards the introduction or discontinuation of VET programmes. In particular, according to Article 6 of Law No 3308, provincial VET councils were established to make decisions on the planning, development and evaluation of VET schools, institutions and enterprises and to provide the provincial governor with their opinions and advice. The provincial director of National Education chairs them and the members are representatives of the MoNE and of public and non-governmental organisations of the province. The decisions of the Provincial Council of Vocational Education and Training are implemented with the approval of the governor.

A fund was established in 1986 with the aim of pooling together public and private resources to finance formal and non-formal VET. However, following the 2000 economic crisis, the government took the decision to transfer any type of fund to the general budget and, consequently, the VET fund was abolished. Apparently this decision was also influenced by complaints from the social partner organisations concerning their lack of involvement in management decisions related to the fund and a paucity of transparent disbursement procedures.

Available evidence confirms a significant offer of continuing VET (CVET) with the involvement of numerous public, private and non-governmental institutions. However, this CVET supply is not framed or underpinned by a comprehensive policy and a related institutional framework, both of which are currently lacking. This gap also helps to explain the lack of a systematic social partnership in the field of CVET.

In the sphere of employment the Ministry of Labour and Social Security is responsible for policy and administration issues including the coordination of social dialogue in the country. Participation of social partners in labour and employment policies seems to be more systematic and influential. The new Labour Code, which came into force in 2003, provides for the involvement of social partners in the preparation of new legislation in the employment and social affairs field through the setting up of a permanent tripartite structure with a key role in this process.

The Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR) is the sole public employment agency in the country and is responsible for dealing with: (a) employment and unemployment issues; (b) job brokering in both the public and private sectors; (c) active employment measures; and (d) accreditation of private employment services.

The law requires that social partners be represented on both the general and national executive boards of ISKUR. ISKUR has offices in each province, and provincial employment boards (local employment committees) have been created at provincial level as multipartite groups involving social partners and other major stakeholders; they are chaired by the provincial governor.

The fruitful discussions held during the peer review field visits as well as the analysis of existing documentation pinpoint a number of obstacles hindering the development of effective social dialogue. Among them the following can be mentioned:

- the lack of a tradition of cooperation and consultation between government and social partners (the state is not prepared to share power with social partners);
- the centralisation and rigidity in the decision-making process accompanied by a widespread feeling of division and lack of trust between central state authorities and civil society/local communities;
- the agenda of tripartite structures mainly driven by public administrative priorities and interests;

- the focus of discussion within these bodies mainly directed on technical rather than on strategic aspects;
- still limited interest, knowledge and capacities of social partners in contributing to technical aspects related to training and employment issues;
- the lack of a culture of accountability within the system, which impedes the effective monitoring of the impact of various mechanisms.

Against the background of the above barriers, the opinion of the peer review team is that the numerous examples of good practice, which have been identified during the field visits, are meaningful experiences, which deserve to be multiplied or used as reference for building trust as well as enhancing and expanding cooperation with the partners involved, notably:

- the example of a cooperative protocol signed between the Provincial Education Council in Istanbul and some sectoral organisations to boost flexible provision of initial and continuing VET;
- practical training arrangements, an apprenticeship training system and a non-formal education supply based on agreements between training providers and employers;
- initiatives of some employers to provide vocational training to their employees;
- stakeholders' participation in employment issues;
- bipartite partnerships in leading economic sectors such as construction, the steel industry, banking, insurance and textiles.

The EU funded programmes<sup>3</sup>, which started recently in the field of vocational education, training and employment, could represent an additional unique opportunity for strengthening the culture of working together on specific issues. The peer review team is therefore recommending to take advantage of the participation of social partners in these programmes with a view to strengthening their capacities and impact on policy development and implementation, namely, through:

- the full application of the current legal framework through the elaboration of a short-term work plan by the various councils, committees and bodies, identifying priorities, responsibilities, working methodology and indicators of achievement;
- the establishment of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, including impact assessment of decisions taken (feedback mechanisms and corrective action to be developed to improve efficient application of legislation);
- the active involvement of social partners in the design of the key aspects to be included in the policies and related legal framework, such as funding, testing, assessment, certification of VET provision.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Strengthening of Vocational Education and Training', 'Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training', 'Active Labour Market Strategy'.



# 1. INTRODUCTION

## THE PEER REVIEW APPROACH

The ETF peer review concept and methodology aim at empowering national stakeholders and increasing their capacity to design clear national policies as a platform on which to meet with various donors. It thus contributes to increasing quality and relevance and in particular ways in which externally financed projects can be embedded in the country concerned.

This report is the result of a peer review specifically addressing the social dialogue in VET and employment policies in Turkey. International experts from Romania, Greece, and Bosnia and Herzegovina visited the country from 6 to 16 October 2003 in order to carry out the review, which included intensive meetings with central and local stakeholders and organisations to achieve a broad understanding of the key issues.

The ETF has funded the peer review exercise and the National Observatory of Turkey, which is hosted by ISKUR, provided logistic support, including background literature research and initial intelligence. ETF staff were full members of the peer review team, actively taking part in the field visit and in the elaboration of the report.

This report builds on available research results, trends, practices, analysis and findings of documents elaborated by the Turkish National Observatory.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The report is divided into seven chapters including an Introduction. Chapter 2 presents a brief overview of some key features of the overall socio-economic context of the country. Chapters 3–6 set out the framework of social dialogue in VET (both initial and continuing) and employment. Finally Chapter 7 presents the main findings and recommendations emerging from the analysis undertaken by the peer review team. Examples of good practice in social dialogue in Turkey are enclosed as an annex at the end of the report.



## 2. IMPORTANT SOCIO-ECONOMIC FEATURES

The principal challenge for Turkey is its demographic composition, which accounts for almost 70 million people out of which 20 million are in the 0–14 age cohort. The Turkish State Institute of Statistics has made some projections up to the year 2020. The results reveal that around 70% of the population will be of working age: 40 million in the 14–44 age cohort and 10 million in the 45–64 age cohort.

These trends present not only a challenge but also a unique opportunity for Turkey for both economic and social development, if the average human resource base is developed through adequate investment in education and training with policies and strategies shared by the main stakeholders. The current situation is described below.

- There is a limited tradition of human capital development: compulsory education was only extended to eight years in 1997.
- Some 12.5% of the total population are illiterate: 4.7% of males and 20.1% of females, which means that 7.5 million people are illiterate<sup>4</sup>.
- The highest illiteracy rate is in the South Eastern and Eastern regions.
- Inequality in education due to social class, region and gender is very apparent; for instance, according to the 2000 Census, the illiteracy rate among women in Ankara is 7.5% in general, and the ratio increases to 18.5% in the poorest areas.
- Some 10% of young girls and boys are not enrolled in primary education.
- The average education is 6.8 years for males and 5.3 years for females.
- Unemployment threatens in particular the younger element of the population (26% are in the 15–24 age group).
- According to the government, the informal sector represents 50%<sup>5</sup> of the GDP of the formal sector, though other sources estimate that the proportion is significantly higher.
- The participation ratio of the labour force is 50.5%<sup>6</sup> of the total population.
- The incidence of child labour is 948,000 of the 12–17 age cohort, 58.9% of whom are employed in agriculture, while 35% live in urban areas, 55.6% of them being males<sup>7</sup>.
- Of those employed, 35% work in the agricultural sector while 40% work in the service sector.
- Women's participation in employment, which is only 25%, is particularly low when compared with the 54.7% EU average<sup>8</sup>.
- Some 90% of those employed are high-school or lower education-level graduates or have no education.
- Approximately 60% of the labour force consists of those with only a basic education and those who are illiterate.
- Significant disparities exist between urban and rural areas, as well as between western and Eastern parts of the country.

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<sup>4</sup> Unicef, *Kız Çocuklarının Okullasma Kampanyası*. var, Ankara, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit: *Views Wire Turkey*, May 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Household Labour Force Survey, third quarter 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Eurostat, Employment structural indicators for EU (25 countries) and Turkey in 2002.





### 3. THE OVERALL FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Two laws that have been enacted since 1983 provide the main regulatory framework for industrial relations and social dialogue in Turkey, namely, the Unions Law No 2821 and the Law on Labour Agreement Strike and Lockout No 2822<sup>9</sup>.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security authorises collective bargaining, which by law should take 15 days, but in reality takes up to four to five months. Solidarity strikes, general strikes and go-slows are banned. The law allows the government to suspend a strike for up to 60 days for reasons of national security, health or public safety. Union representatives have a say on matters such as annual leave, discipline, health and safety.

There is a plurality of employers' and workers' organisations in Turkey.

As regards **employers' representation**, the following can be mentioned.

- The Confederation of Employers' Associations (TISK) is the main employers' organisation including, as members, 21 employers' unions and approximately 8,300 companies. TISK is a member of UNICE.
- The Turkish Union of Chambers of Commerce and Bourses (TOBB) represents 363 Chambers of Industry and Commerce and approximately 1,250,000 companies. TOBB takes part in a wide range of social dialogue committees.
- The Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen (TESK) is considered to be the main representative of the SMEs in the country. There are 3,483 guilds, 82 chambers and 13 federations under TESK. As of May 2004, TESK has 2,814,002 members.
- The Turkish Union of Chambers of Agriculture (TOZB) has been active since 1963. Nearly 4 million farmers are registered at 400 Chambers of Agriculture.

On the **workers' side**, there are three principal organisations.

- TURK-IS, which was established in 1952, is the largest confederation of trade unions with a total membership of 199,300. It is organised throughout Turkey with 680 local offices. TURK-IS is a member of ICFTU and ETUC.
- The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions (DISK), which was established in 1967, represents 15 trade unions<sup>10</sup> with a total of 377,000 members<sup>11</sup>.
- HAK-IS, which was established in 1976, represents nine trade unions<sup>12</sup> with around 350,000 members<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> According to Article 14 of Law No 2821 trade union officials need to have worked for at least 10 years in the sector represented by the union before taking up office. If they wish to join a union's executive body they need to be Turkish citizens. A trade union confederation can only be formed if it represents more than half of the employees in a company and 10% of all employees in the sector. Only one union per company is authorised to conduct collective bargaining. In accordance with the Law on Labour Agreement Strike and Lockout No 2822, a union must have both sectoral (at least 10% of workers in the specific field) and company membership (50%+1 of the total number of workers). Upon fulfilling these criteria the union is authorised to conduct collective bargaining.

<sup>10</sup> See the DISK website.

<sup>11</sup> See the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's website.

<sup>12</sup> See the HAK-IS website.

<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Labour and Social Security's website, July 2003.

Various institutions/bodies functioning at the national or local level have been established to enhance social dialogue. Some of the most important ones<sup>14</sup> are listed below.

- The Economic and Social Council (ESC) was established as an advisory body in 1995 to address economic and social issues at the highest level. Legislation came into force in 2001 on 'the establishment and working principles and procedures of economic and social dialogue' to raise the Council's status and render it more functional. The Council is chaired by the Prime Minister(s), and consists of government and social partners' representatives. Those taking part on the government side are the Ministry of Finance, Labour and Social Security, Industry and Trade, Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources, and related ministers without portfolio, plus under-secretaries of the State Planning Organisation, the Treasury and Foreign Trade and the Confederation of State Officials' Unions. Social partners are represented through TOBB, TISK, TESK and TOZB from the business side, DISK, HAK-IS and TURK-IS from the workers' side.

The main responsibilities of the ESC cover the provision of opinions on draft legislation in the economic and social fields. The Ministry of National Education is not a member of the ESC, but can be invited to attend specific working groups organised by the Council. Since its establishment the ESC has met 15 times.

- The Minimum Wage Determination Commission is convened with representatives from the government, trade union confederation and employers' associations taking part.
- The Supreme Arbitration Board has broad powers over collective bargaining. In particular, it resolves conflicts arising from the government's exercise of its power to postpone or ban strikes. There is no appeal against its decisions. The board includes representatives from trade unions' confederations and employers' associations plus an impartial third party, usually from universities.
- The Small and Medium Industry Development Organisation (KOSGEB) is a non-profit, semi-autonomous organisation linked to the Ministry of Industry and Trade. It was established for the purpose of supporting SME development. It offers consultancy and training services to contribute to the creation of self-employment through business start-up training for SMEs to increase their competitiveness both on the domestic and the international market. The KOSGEB general assembly and executive board have a tripartite structure.
- The MEKSA Foundation is an independent body working closely with public and private national and international organisations to promote the development of vocational and technical education within small and medium-sized companies. MEKSA has been operational since 1985 and has supported a number of initiatives to improve the delivery and regulation of education in this sector. In addition MEKSA also provides enterprise training in 18 vocational areas in 25 centres across 12 provinces. MEKSA has received bilateral assistance from Germany and Switzerland, but it has now become self-financed. The executive board has a tripartite structure and is currently chaired by a TOBB representative.

As regards progress in the field of the *acquis*, Turkey has ratified all eight core standards of the ILO. However, trade-union rights and collective bargaining are still not in line with the commitment undertaken on this issue. In fact, despite some modifications in the field of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the exercise of these rights is still restricted. As an example, the right to organise and form a union is recognised by law; however there are several restrictions on that. At present there are over 100 trade unions in the private sector and over 50 in the public sector.

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<sup>14</sup> *Background Study on the Labour Market and Employment in Turkey*, ETF, June 2003.

The 2003 CEC Regular Report on Turkey's progress towards accession makes the following comments<sup>15</sup>:

- Progress still needs to be made as a matter of priority to create the conditions for free and genuine bipartite as well as tripartite social dialogue at all levels in line with the *acquis* as already noted in 2002. Turkey should progress towards establishing full trade-union rights including the elimination of the requirement of the 10% threshold before a trade union is eligible for collective bargaining at company level. In addition, there are restrictive provisions relating to the right to strike and to collective bargaining, in particular for public sector employees. The percentage of the labour force covered by collective agreements is extremely low; it is estimated to be below 15%, which implies that in most private companies there is no social dialogue.
- The ECS still shows that there is not enough consultation between social partners at the national level. Structural deficiencies, such as the predominant position of the government, undermine the value of the ECS and should be reviewed together with all social partners. The private sector and public bodies need to show their commitment to social dialogue and take necessary measures to remove obstacles.
- Turkey needs to strengthen its administrative capacities in terms of staff and resources, secretarial facilities for national tripartite and multipartite processes and the registration and analysis of collective agreements.

A preliminary National Development Plan covering the period 2004–06 was submitted by the Turkish authorities in December 2003 as a planning document for the assistance that is to be provided by the European Union towards economic and social cohesion. This plan has been prepared in consultation with key local stakeholders and NGOs, while the involvement of social partners' institutions has been very modest and it seems unlikely that they will play much of a role in the future implementation of the plan.

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<sup>15</sup> See [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report\\_2003/#paper2003](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/report_2003/#paper2003).



## 4. SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN INITIAL VET (IVET)

The tradition of social dialogue in the area of education in Turkey goes back to the founding years of the Republic. A National Education Council (SURA) was established in 1926 as the highest advisory body of the MoNE aimed at ensuring the quality of Turkish national education. The first National Education Council meeting took place in 1939, and 16 meetings have been organised since. The Board of Education acts as the secretariat of the Council.

The National VET Council was established in 1986 by law No 3308. Meetings take place once a year and, if necessary, extraordinary meetings may be organised to discuss ad hoc issues. It is made up of 21 members: 16 representatives from the government, three from employers, one from employees and another from banking associations<sup>16</sup>. The structure shows clearly that an imbalance exists between public and social partners' representation on the Council.

Social partners' involvement in VET began during the 1980s with the aim of ensuring an improved adaptation of the system to the requirements of the labour market. Law No 3308 enacted in 1986 and amended in 2001 regulates the involvement and contribution of social partners' representatives through the following:

- the preparation of legal documents after consultation with related parties and primarily with professional organisations;
- the organisation by TESK of the Central Vocational Education and Training Symposium, which meets every three years (or when deemed necessary) with the participation of public bodies and social partner organisations;
- consultation on the Five-year Development Plan, which is prepared by the State Planning authority;
- the participation in the National VET Council, which is responsible for all activities undertaken for the planning, development and evaluation of VET throughout the country in accordance with the legal framework;
- the participation in provincial vocational training councils, which have been established in each of the 81 provinces.

The principal duties of the National VET Council include:

- following up the implementation of the regulations related to VET Law No 3308;
- determining the VET needs of different sectors and fields;
- providing the ministry with information on the principles and length of training;
- preparing the draft regulations for establishing and working on the principles of examination commissions;
- determining the fields of training to be provided under the VET system and related geographical distribution countrywide;
- analysing the impact on VET of technological developments and changes in the labour market;

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<sup>16</sup> Members of the National VET Council are: the Deputy Under-secretaries of the MoNE responsible for VET, the Deputy Under-secretary of the Ministry of the Interior, the Deputy Under-secretary of Finance, the Deputy Under-secretary of the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement, the Deputy Under-secretary of the Ministry of Health, the Deputy Under-secretary of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Deputy Under-secretary of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, the Deputy Under-secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the State Planning Organisation, general directorates responsible for VET (MoNE), Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen's Confederation, Turkish Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Maritime Trade, and the Union of Commercial Exchange, the Worker's Confederation with the highest number of members, the Union of Banks, the Representative of the Higher Education Council, and the Union of Chambers for Certified Public Accountants.

- preparing standard contracts for apprentices, apprenticeship candidates and students and submitting these models to the Ministry.

The secretariat of the Council, which meets annually, is established within the MoNE, which is also in charge of managing it. During its mission, the peer review team was able to take part in the annual meeting of the Council. The impression the team received was that the Council is too large to be really effective; in any case, social partners play only a consultative role, all decisions being taken by the MoNE.

Provincial vocational training councils provide recommendations to the MoNE as regards the planning, development and evaluation of vocational training to be delivered in schools, vocational education institutions and enterprises at provincial level. The peer review team had the opportunity to take part in the meeting of the Council at Diyarbakir and to ask questions to the participants. Apparently, important recommendations were made in the past by the Council, such as ending the provision of VET in certain fields not in demand by the labour market and opening new ones. However, the effectiveness of the Council seems to be hampered by the unclear definitions of the tasks and responsibilities of its members in follow-up actions, checking achievements against deadlines, identifying constraints. There is a need for improvement in these areas.

As regards participation of companies in providing training, the existing legal framework makes provision for practical training of students attending VET schools on the basis of their field of specialisation. The time allocated for practical training in the final year at VET schools is generally 24 hours per week. Students taking part in this type of training receive two days' theoretical training and three days' practical training per week in the workplace. Theoretical training (at least 12 hours per week) may be provided by schools or by enterprise training units. All the costs of practical training are covered by the companies, which also have to provide an examination venue as well as the necessary tools and equipment.

Apprenticeship training involves theoretical (either at school or in the company) and practical training in the company in order to learn a vocation after completing compulsory education. The minimum age for enrolment in an apprenticeship course is 15. Access to apprenticeship training has recently been offered to adults also, since the previously existing upper age limit of 18 years was removed by the amendment to Law No 3308 in 2001.

Apprenticeship training is carried out in two different ways: either in accordance with Law No 3308 in the provinces and occupations regulated by the MoNE or in accordance with Law No 507, the latter being organised by chambers of trade and craftsmen under the auspices of TESK for those occupations not recognised by the MoNE. In the first case, examination commissions are set up with representatives from schools and professional organisations, both of whom are required to sign mastership and journeymanship certificates. In the second case, TESK is responsible for setting up the commissions and for organising examinations. All certificates must be signed by the MoNE.

The organisations involved in the theoretical and practical training of candidate apprentices include: companies, vocational training centres (linked to the Directorate General of Apprenticeship and Non-formal Training of the MoNE) and SUPRA training centres (established and run by the Turkish Confederation of Trades and Craftsmen).

The peer review team had the opportunity to visit one company at Diyarbakir where some trainees receive practical training in the textile trade. These trainees appeared to be working at the same pace and in the same way as the other sewing-machine operatives whilst earning less than 50% of those employees' salary.

New standards were established in 2001 for the creation of practical training opportunities. Small companies with fewer than 20 employees may provide skills training to vocational students if they wish. Larger ones with 20 or more employees, which operate in fields covered by Law No 3308, have to provide practical training at the ratio of 5–10% of the total number of employees. In addition, companies employing more than 200 are required to establish a unit for practical training and appoint training personnel to the unit for this purpose.

Information was provided during the peer review mission by different schools/training institutions on the recent MoNE regulations for establishing school boards with the participation of local authorities, parents and social partners, in order to improve school governance. However, the peer review team was unable to gain access to these regulations and could not obtain the confirmation that these boards had been widely established or that they were effective.

As regards the financing of VET, a fund was established in 1986 with the aim of collecting public (through the MoNE) and private (including companies' contributions) resources to finance formal and non-formal VET.

However, following the economic crisis in 2000 the government decided to transfer all types of fund to the general budget and, consequently, the VET fund was also abolished. Apparently this decision was also influenced by complaints from the social partners' organisations concerning their lack of involvement in managerial decisions of the fund and the lack of transparent disbursement procedures.

Schools may generate their own income (via so-called revolving funds). Such income is raised through the use of internal workshops for commercial production; teachers who have worked under these revolving funds are given extra payment for their efforts. Net profits resulting from these commercial activities have to be transferred to the Treasury with the exception of a portion, to be used for procuring equipment subject to prior permission by the MoNE. Trainees also receive part of the revenue.





## 5. SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN CONTINUING VET (CVET)<sup>17</sup>

The absence of a comprehensive policy and institutional framework for promoting CVET combined with the structural deficiencies of bilateral social dialogue is a major barrier preventing systematic involvement of social partners in this area.

The setting up in 2001 of a special working group within the MoNE in order to develop proposals based on 'lifelong learning' principles, signalled the possibility of some positive development.

As a result, in 2002 the MoNE introduced by Law No 4702 new regulations aimed at improving the quality of the labour force. In accordance with these regulations, each employer should ensure that his/her workers can attest their educational level with one of the following state-recognised certificates: (a) a secondary vocational and technical education diploma; (b) a course-completion certificate; and (c) a journeyman or mastership certificate. Workers have the right to leave of absence, to be counted as working time, in order to attend the necessary training courses to obtain such certification. However, the social partners were not consulted on this matter nor were they in agreement with this particular measure because it did not contain any financial incentive. The result is that, for the time being, this regulation has not been applied.

Despite the lack of an integrated policy, there are indications of a wide range of CVET activities taking place, the most significant of which are described below.

Among state agencies, as described in Section 6 related to employment, ISKUR is responsible for organising active employment measures, including training. Through its local branches, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs provides training in agriculture and home economics to villages. The MoNE provides general and vocational non-formal education in various fields to those who have not received compulsory education. In this regard illiterate women in the 14–44 age group form a priority group. These courses are organised in a flexible way as regards length, location and level in order to accommodate the needs of those who are working. Many private NGOs are also involved in these adult literacy courses. Almost all professional organisations organise training to meet the specific needs of their members and non-members.

Universities also play a role in the provision of continuing training, usually in cooperation with public and private organisations and institutions. By law, municipalities are responsible for organising courses aimed at assisting individuals in acquiring skills and finding employment.

A number of NGOs offer continuing training activities. Some of the most visible among these are the foundations established by affiliates of TISK, namely the MESS Training Foundation established by the Metal Industry Employers' Union, or the Turkish Textile Foundation established by the Turkish Textile Industries Employers' Union and the Turkish Construction and Plumbers' Training Foundation (INISEV) established by the Turkish Construction and Plumbing Contractors Employers' Union (INTES). The information available suggests that larger companies organise training activities for their staff, but since this is done under their own responsibility and funding, it is largely undocumented and therefore, it is not reflected in the official statistics.

KOSGEB, through its 25 enterprise development centres, 12 technology development centres and 10 laboratories spread throughout the country is one of the major providers of consultancy and training services to SMEs and potential entrepreneurs. It is also implementing the Developing Young Entrepreneurs programme (DYEOP) under the World Bank Privatisation/Social Support project. The object of this programme is to promote entrepreneurship culture at university level by presenting it as an option for young people in planning their future career. Candidate entrepreneurs, who complete this programme, may get financial support to start up their own businesses.

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<sup>17</sup> In the context of this report, CVET is perceived as any type of formal and non-formal vocational education and training activity addressed to the adult population (both active and inactive). It should however be noted that the common classification used by Turkish stakeholders includes apprenticeship as a form of CVET.

In conclusion it should be stressed that data available were not sufficient to allow the peer review team to come up with firm statements as regards the quantity and quality of the CVET offer, its relevance to the needs of the labour market and individuals as well as the crucial aspects of access for the various groups of the population.

## REFORM IN VET (BOTH INITIAL AND CONTINUING)

Since 1996 the European Union has provided substantial financial assistance to Turkey in the sphere of education and VET, which actually represents the most significant support to one specific sector.

The programmes mentioned below are the most relevant in contributing to VET reform in the country and are a unique opportunity for social partners to take part in the process.

- The Strengthening of Vocational Education and Training programme started in September 2002 with the aim of assisting the Turkish government, through the MoNE, in the modernisation and adaptation of the VET system to the socio-economic needs of the country and to the principles of lifelong learning. The programme is due to end in September 2007. Among its main objectives is the strengthening of the institutional capacity at the national, regional and local levels of public administration, social partners' representatives and companies. This is expected to lead to the establishment of an effective partnership agreement among all institutions as well as social and economic partners involved in VET and to define their role and contribution to the process of reform. To this end, the programme also includes an innovation fund for projects aimed at stimulating the participation of social partners in VET reform and development. Social partners are involved in the implementation of the programme through taking part in:
  - monthly management meetings chaired by the MoNE, to monitor the regular progress of the activities;
  - six working groups dealing with the development of a policy and strategy for VET development, training standards, curricula, labour market needs analysis, etc.;
  - six regional advisory councils to monitor and provide guidance to the programme's activities at the regional level;
  - the National Coordination Committee, which meets twice a year, providing advice and technical guidance for carrying out of the programme.
- The Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training programme started in July 2003 and is due to end in September 2007. The object of this programme, which is complementary to the above-mentioned one, is to strengthen the capacity of the Turkish authorities in organising and delivering a modern and efficient system of teacher training. Social partners are also involved in this programme through taking part in related committees such as: (a) the National Co-ordination Committee (NCC); (b) monthly management meetings; (c) regional advisory councils (RACs); (d) the National Standards and Curriculum Development Group; (e) technical working groups for standards and curriculum development; and (f) the VET TT Institutional Capacity Building Group (at present under development).
- Other EU projects are being orientated towards the organisation of training and consultation services related to a specific field, such as the ready-made clothing and shoe manufacturing sector, where KOSGEB is the beneficiary institution. TESK is its counterpart in a project aimed at promoting female entrepreneurship in certain provinces through the establishment of five centres (Ankara, Bursa, Corum, Denizli and Mersin).
- Finally, TOBB takes part in a project for the provision of training and consulting services to SMEs (Gaziantep, Kocaeli and Izmir).

## 6. SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security is the principal government institution responsible for policy and administrative issues related to employment and the labour market. There have been recent efforts to involve social partners in employment policy development and implementation. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that the Labour Law enacted in 2003 provides for the establishment of a permanent tripartite structure, including employers' and employees' representatives, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, to draft legislation in the sphere of social affairs and employment.

The development of an occupational standards and certification system in Turkey has been another area in which we may observe convergence and serious attention by both government and social partners. This convergence is reflected in the establishment of the Occupational Standards Commission (MSK), a tripartite body comprising representatives from the government, employees and employers.

The Research and Technical Service Unit (ATHB) has developed 250 occupational standards, in close cooperation with occupational experts from companies (small, medium-sized and large). Relevant institutions proposed by the MSK have then reviewed these standards. Upon endorsement by the MSK, occupational standards should become available to all parties interested. The occupational standards reflect the real requirements of the Turkish economy, but they also pay due attention to international developments.

The activities of the MSK were funded through a programme financed by the World Bank between 1995 and 2000. The MSK was intended to become a legally-recognised body during the project's lifetime, but unfortunately this could not be achieved. Work is underway to pass the National Occupational Standards Law under the auspices of the General Secretariat of the European Union in cooperation primarily with the MLSS, ISKUR and other related organisations. The draft law has been recently updated and will be submitted to related organisations for their comments.

In order to address the structural problems (such as rising unemployment, low employment rates, low educational attainment levels of the workforce) aggravated by the recent financial crisis, the government has endorsed a number of general policy priorities, which are set out in the eighth Five-year Development Plan (2001–05). The following objectives can be noted:

- lowering unemployment by increasing productive investments and achieving sustainable economic growth;
- changing the sectoral composition of employment in favour of non-agricultural labour, increasing the average skills of the labour force to meet the needs of the economy and the information society;
- supporting the growth of SMEs through grants, projects and support services in the field of finance, marketing and technological innovation;
- taking measures to reduce the unemployment rate among young people, women and the disabled;
- implementing active and passive employment policies, which prevent redundancy of unqualified people working at a low wage level;
- establishing an occupational standardisation, examination and certification system in order to improve efficiency in the labour market (see details above).

Several platforms have been created in order to achieve these objectives, such as the establishment of the Coordination Committee for the Improvement of the Investment Climate (YOIKK), which became operational in March 2002. The Committee is an advisory body to the Council of Ministers and has as its objective the facilitation of investment through eliminating administrative barriers. The Committee is made up of representatives from the public sector and three private-sector organisations.

Beginning in 2002 the Turkish economy has actually demonstrated positive signs of recovery as may be seen in the figures published by the State Statistical Institute. GDP has grown by 7.9% in the third quarter of 2002 when compared with the same period of 2001 with growth in all sectors, with the exception of mining. Exports have increased by 9.6%. However, this economic growth is not reflected in an increase in the level of employment, which, on the contrary, shows a declining trend.

As stated above, ISKUR was legally established in 2003 as the principal executive agency for employment policy, following the abolition of the previous institution, the Turkish Employment Organisation (IIBK), which was considered unable to keep up with changes in the labour market. It is administratively and financially independent but has to report to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. The principal responsibilities of ISKUR, as set out in the law, are as follows:

- helping job-seekers to find employment while helping employers to find workers;
- providing job and career counselling services and training programmes for improving job-seeking methods through vocational information centres;
- implementing active labour market programmes (in addition to the usual training and employment services);
- implementing passive labour market programmes (a law on unemployment insurance was approved on 25 August 1999; the first contributions were paid in 2000);
- regulating private employment agencies.

It is a legal requirement that social partners be represented at the general level as well as the executive level: among the 50 members of ISKUR's general board, 28 represent employers' organisations, trade unions, higher education institutions, chambers of commerce, and voluntary organisations. Similarly, of ISKUR's six members on the national executive board, there is one representative from the employers' confederation, one representative from the trade union confederation, as well as one TESK representative.

ISKUR has offices in each province, and provincial employment boards (local employment committees) have been created at the provincial level (one committee in each province, established as multipartite groups involving social partners and other major stakeholders, and chaired by the provincial governor). In accordance with legal requirements, ISKUR's staff is to be increased from the present 1,400 employees to 3,100, which is still a limited number when compared with the size of the country and the population. In addition to the lack of adequate human resources due to its recent establishment, ISKUR's ability to play a meaningful role in developing, monitoring and evaluating policies and programmes is still at the preliminary stage of development. Information and counselling services for the unemployed are as yet limited. There is still little labour market information available at the local level.

## EU ASSISTANCE IN THE FIELD OF EMPLOYMENT

The 2002 EU pre-accession financial assistance project included a programme for Active Labour Market Strategy, which started in October 2003 with the object of strengthening the capacity of ISKUR in order to become a modern and efficient provider of employment services throughout Turkey. As regards the institution-building component, ISKUR will receive assistance for the elaboration of the first National Action Plan for Employment. The programme also includes a fund for active employment measures, such as training, vocational guidance, on-the-job placement. Social partners take part in running the programme as members of the ISKUR executive board together with other key public institutions and the Steering Committee of the programme. However, both bodies are quite large and consequently their effectiveness leaves some room for doubt.

## 7. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The EU accession process is a key driver with the potential of creating better awareness, reinforced momentum and a more open attitude towards the importance of social dialogue, especially from the administration's side. Social partners seem to be aware of, as well as interested and actually involved in, the implementation of the new generation of EU assistance programmes in the field of VET and employment. However, the number of people involved in particular at the national level is limited and the coordination and awareness of developments at the local level appears to be weak.

**Recommendation No 1.** *Involvement in EU assistance programmes offers a learning opportunity for social partners, who are then able to act as agents for disseminating the results of this experience more widely in their organisations. Consultation mechanisms are in place for the implementation of EU assistance programmes, which are expected to lead to the development of a national policy framework for VET and employment. Social partners should try to draw on the partnership experience acquired in these preparatory platforms and mechanisms in order to play an active role and to define their responsibilities within the future framework.*

- There is an apparent centralised outlook and rigidity in the decision-making process accompanied by a widespread feeling of division and lack of trust between the central state authorities and civil society/local communities. There is a strong relationship between this perception and the half-hearted use of available institutional settings for dialogue.
- The peer review team witnessed the existence of numerous platforms (in both the employment and VET fields) of tripartite (or multipartite) dialogue, established at both national and provincial levels. In most cases the principal function of these bodies is a consultative one, with an agenda driven by public administrative priorities and interests. The efficiency of tripartite bodies seems to be hampered in particular by:
  - the lack of a tradition of working together (the government is unwilling to share power with social partners; the interest and capacities of social partners in training remain limited);
  - the lack of coordination between government departments (e.g. Education and Labour).
- The examples of good practice identified during the peer review team's visits constitute valuable points of reference for reinforcing mutual trust as well as enhancing and expanding cooperation between social partners.
- The general feeling is that the improvement of the current situation of social partnership in the initial VET sector does not require further legislative initiatives but rather new approaches to dialogue, which may encourage social partners to realise that they can influence the decision-making process. This may be supported by wider access to international experience demonstrating the positive impact of the strong involvement of social partners in increasing the social profile, prestige and relevance of VET.

**Recommendation No 2.** *For a better exploitation of the scope of the remit of tripartite bodies, the following actions are proposed:*

- *to strengthen the focus on strategic aspects;*
- *to increase the frequency of their meetings;*
- *to support their work through systematic access to professionals/experts who could provide analytical input to their decisions/opinions;*
- *to develop short-term work plans in cooperation with these experts, setting target objectives, identifying responsibilities and indicators of achievement. The necessary human and financial resources should be allocated in order to achieve the expected results. The needs for capacity building should also be identified and the possible assistance of donors in this field pursued;*

- to ensure regular feedback and monitoring on the follow-up to their opinions/actions;
  - to associate them closely with local/regional development planning process;
  - to encourage the wider use and dissemination of autonomous initiatives such as:
    - cooperative protocols signed by the Provincial Education Branch/Provincial Education Council of Istanbul and a number of sectors leading to the joint establishment and operation of VET high schools. These schools are also reported to be active in providing continuing training for sector employees;
    - the annual VET Fair organised by the Ankara Provincial VET Council.
- ISKUR is appreciated as a well-functioning example of tripartite institution. Nevertheless, its capacity remains quite low, as it suffers from a serious staff shortage and limited know-how in terms of implementing a modern active employment strategy. The limited staff could also jeopardise the impact of the EU programme.

**Recommendation No 3.** *Social partner organisations need to consider making dedicated internal resources available (e.g. in the form of coordinators/resource persons/committees) to ensure the adequate priority and continuity in addressing training/learning/employment issues. Such persons should become specialists in the dedicated issue.*

- Participation of social partners in provincial councils is viewed as not very effective. In the case of very large provinces (e.g. Istanbul with 15 million inhabitants) the work of a single provincial council may not be sufficient to guarantee the appropriate targeting of actions to local/district needs.

**Recommendation No 4.** *Organising the spread of competences to lower levels (i.e. the involvement of elected district representatives) could be an option worth considering. A proposal was put forward by a trade union and by the Turkish Confederation of Employers' Associations to merge the two councils (employment and VET) or at least to improve the communication between them. The peer reviewers support this proposal, as merging the two councils would allow an increase in the number of meetings, which should take place at least twice a year. This measure could be adopted in pilot provinces to test its effectiveness and could be extended later on to the rest of the country.*

- There are indications that interesting training-related initiatives have been developed in some sectors (e.g. banking, and the metal and construction industries), as a result of bilateral dialogue between employers and trade union organisations.

**Recommendation No 5.** *It would be worth considering appropriate actions to evaluate and increase visibility of such initiatives within the wider economic structure of the country.*

- Despite criticisms from the employers' side on its utility and management, the abolition of the VET Fund in 2001 can be considered as a step backwards, leaving a gap to be filled. Paradoxically, the major financial crisis of the last two years has triggered an increased awareness of the need to find solutions and in particular to find a way to:
- attract private-sector resources to the modernisation of the VET system;
  - strengthen cooperation between the business sector and VET;
  - increase the attractiveness of VET with respect to general education (if the target of reversing the current participation rates between the two streams is to be achieved).

- The example of the legal obligation of companies with more than 200 employees to set up training centres is significant in this respect. It seems that this obligation is not being respected so far; businesses argue that such arrangements need public support and closer public/private cooperation.
- The information provided on the establishment of school boards was fragmented and inconsistent. Apparently, school boards have been established but they are not operational.

**Recommendation No 6.** *Priority should be given to increasing the role of social partners in the design of VET study programmes (currently this is carried out by the National Board of Education where the presence of general educationists is predominant) and improving the governance at school level through the effective operation or reinforcement of school boards.*

- Practical training is provided in a variety of forms. Some of the schools visited are operated like small companies with a strong business orientation, using the output produced by trainees for commercial purposes.

**Recommendation No 7.** *The balance between quality of teaching/learning and the use of training for commercial purposes should be subject to a specific analysis and assessment.*

- The principal aim of the new labour law enacted in 2003 was to make the labour market more flexible. The approach taken in its preparation is a good example of the advantages of an effective consultation process: it allowed the gradual rapprochement of views, the removal of disagreements and a final consensus on its adoption.

**Recommendation No 8.** *New legislation currently in preparation (the law on collective representation of the public sector, collective agreements law, trade union law) should build on the experience of this effective consultation process.*

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Security voiced the interesting view that education should equip people with skills and knowledge relevant to the needs and reality of the wider EU market. To some extent it coincides with the observation by some social partners that there is a growing and unsatisfied local demand for skilled workers at middle/technician level and therefore a need to increase the number of young people graduating from vocational high schools.

**Recommendation No 9.** *Social partners view the enacting of the law on occupational standards as a priority issue, as it would help to improve the quality of the labour force.*

- The example of the Ankara Municipality organising non-formal courses especially for housewives is a case highlighting the merits of wide partnerships (between local communities, NGOs, training institutions, etc.) to improve the flexibility of and outreach to training supply structures. This also has the important side effect of boosting the potential demand of groups that otherwise would not have been able to articulate their interests.

**Recommendation No 10.** *Fostering the economic and social role of women emerges as a key priority to be catered for in the social dialogue process through adequate investment in education and training.*



- The division between formal and non-formal VET (apprenticeship training being placed in the second category) needs to be underlined. It is rather surprising when the following facts are taken into account:
  - the significant place of apprenticeship within VET;
  - the use of apprenticeship as an access path to a significant number (110) of regulated/'recognised' professions in Turkey;
  - the recent legal obligation requiring unskilled workers currently employed in the labour market to obtain a journeyman/mastership certificate as a condition to remain in employment (compliance with this rule is to be controlled by the Labour Inspectorate).

**Recommendation No 11.** *It would be interesting to explore further how social partners are able to seize this opportunity for the above certification process of unskilled workers (which also foresees, as a transitional arrangement, the recognition of their professional experience), to promote a more general validation framework of non-formal and informal learning. On the other hand, there are indications that the above-mentioned obligation has triggered a significant demand for apprenticeship training courses among the adult population.*

- The existence of large industrial complexes created by a combination of SMEs, which are networked through a cooperative association, is a notable experience contributing to de facto proximity and to close links between businesses and initial VET schools (nevertheless, some negative feedback was received by the IMES Industrial Site regarding its unsatisfied need for the establishment of a VET high school on its site; this view was contradicted by social partners' representatives on the Provincial Education Council). It appears, however, that the potential of this proximity for boosting in-company continuing training has so far not been tapped.
- Universities appear to be playing a major role in the adult training market. They are also cooperating satisfactorily with companies in different sectors. It is worth mentioning that ISKUR is taking part in the joint initiative promoted by the Higher Education Council and the Chamber of Industry to renew curricula in post-secondary schools. This initiative is funded by the Chamber.

**Recommendation No 12.** *The development of a comprehensive policy and institutional framework for continuing vocational training and adult learning, building appropriate bridges with initial school education and creating incentives to promote wider access for the adult population to skills and competence development is viewed by the peer review team as a key priority for the social partnership agenda.*

## **ANNEX: EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE IN TURKEY**

- The OSTIM Industrial Site situated in Greater Ankara, was established in the 1970s with 3,500 companies as members. It is a multipartner investment organisation, providing a wide range of services to its members. On their own initiative, they operate a human resources department which acts as a clearing house for job matching, advertising and directing employees to appropriate training according to their companies' needs. They operate a radio station and a website where information on the latest developments of interest to its members can be found and, in addition, a specific topic is presented and discussed every month. OSTIM is linked to a VET high school, a post-secondary vocational school, an apprenticeship school and vocational training centre. It is represented on the MoNE Provincial VET Council and the Provincial Employment Council. Adult education and training, catering to local needs, is provided at the VET centre (under the auspices of the MoNE) and the support of OSTIM was praised for the diversity of programmes provided to local trainees. Courses are designed at the centre and taught by daytime teachers. Job-placement and clearing-house activities take place at the centre, though these are not considered official duties.
- The Foundation for the Promotion of Vocational Training and Small Industries (MEKSA) was established with bilateral assistance from Germany in 1985. It is a self-sustainable organisation providing training for SMEs. MEKSA has 25 training centres in 12 provinces to provide enterprise training.
- The METEM SUPRA Training Centre was established in 1992 by TESK, OSTIM MEKSA (German/Turkish) and the MoNE, in order to fill the gaps in apprenticeship training and providing training in new technologies in cooperation with foreign institutions. The director and teachers are appointed by the MoNE, the deputy director by MEKSA and the support staff by TESK; OSTIM has provided the land. Salaries are paid by the sponsoring organisations for each position.
- The provincial branch of the MoNE in Istanbul has succeeded in establishing protocols of cooperation with market sectors and the cooperation of employers (TESK) and employees (TISK). As a result of these tripartite protocols, 15 VET schools were opened and their cooperative 'employment guarantee' clause has yielded almost 100% absorption of graduates into the labour market. Curricula are drafted through tripartite cooperation. The branch is also active in attracting donations such as that from the Istanbul Stock Exchange to open 18 schools in the province, meeting local needs. The sectors were also convinced to cover the expenses of trainers undergoing further training, even abroad.
- The KOSGEB Training Centre inside the IMES Industrial Area in Istanbul provides active support to SMEs to enhance their competitiveness, improve quality and support their needs for better penetration into the markets. They subsidise the employment of skilled workers for the first 18 months and provide training courses as well as support in the area of quality systems, new technologies, human resource management focused to needs, marketing, computer skills, etc.
- The Banking–Insurance Employees' Union (BASISEN) is the largest in its sector with 30,000 members. During the recent financial crisis in the banking system in Turkey, only a small number of its members (1,500) were dismissed as a result of the unions' negotiations with employers. Active in the training of its members (union training, new products and developments, accounting, financial analysis, foreign exchange, loans, bank guarantees, etc.), BASISEN secures training through references in the collective agreements. As a union, it allocates 10% of its fees to the training of its members. Members undergo training every four years, but the certificates awarded after training are not recognised by any official body.
- The Turkish Employers' Association of Metal Industries (MESS) has integrated the lifelong learning concept in its main priorities in order to secure a high level of quality and competitiveness of its member industries. They have founded the MESS Training Foundation (a non-profit organisation established by MESS and individual industries) to undertake the in-house training of their member companies. The Foundation provides – through a network of centres – seminars, courses, consultancy services and

focused training programmes as well as conferences dealing with the latest developments in the sector. It is affiliated with the MoNE and the universities. They accommodate teachers and principals in their training centres for their own training as well as for trainer training activities. They consider that post-secondary non-university VET level graduates are needed for their industries. The certificates awarded on completion of training are not recognised by any official body.

- The Istanbul Textile and Apparel Exporters' Association (ITKIP) began its training activity in 1995 with a VET high school providing to the members of the four unions that fall under ITKIP sectoral training, technical documents, and strategy formulation guidance for SMEs, within the framework of a qualitative and lifelong learning process. ITKIP has 'sponsored' the organisation of four VET schools where half of the school is dedicated to training and the other to production. They also provide teacher training for the sector according to the needs of the labour market. One very successful and interesting activity initiated in 2002 is the development of mobile educational units, where individuals interested in taking a short-term skills development course needed by the local labour market, after passing a 'talent' exam, attend the course and if they successfully graduate, are placed in a local job. ITKIP also provides in-house training through 120 educational programmes and has the capacity to train VET teachers in the area. Their human resource department has a job-matching and placement function. ITKIP has developed professional standards for 25 occupations in its field, but they are not yet recognised by the MoNE. They strongly believe that a national qualifications framework and occupational standards administered by a single institute recognised at the national level, are urgently needed in Turkey.

The Municipality of Greater Ankara has taken the initiative to launch two important skills development programmes.

- BELMEK has programmes geared for women (young girls and housewives) in 22 fields (e.g. wood painting, embroidery, clothing) and has 90 centres throughout the city. The length of each course is eight months and there is provision for short-term courses of two months. The project is entirely financed by the municipality's own funds and is provided free of charge to the trainees. Over the last six years of operation of this popular programme, 50,000 women have attended. The teachers design the programmes they offer. No formal recognition is provided; however, this is not regarded as an obstacle because the local labour market accepts the graduates' acquired skills.
- BELTEK provides five-year programmes for men of all ages in 126 fields through nine branches, and has 50,000 graduates. The project is entirely financed by the municipality's own funds and is provided free of charge to the trainees. The courses are developed and offered by Gazi University at its campus and taught by university staff. Teachers design the programmes they offer. No formal recognition is provided; however, this is not regarded as an obstacle since the local labour market accepts the graduates' acquired skills.

## ACRONYMS

CEC	Commission of the European Communities
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISKUR	Turkish Employment Agency
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
MSK	Occupational Standards Commission
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SME	Small and medium-sized organisation
VET	Vocational education and training

