

# KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT – TÜRKIYE 2022

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the European Commission (EC, 2022a), Türkiye remains a key partner for the European Union and a candidate country for accession to the EU. However, Türkiye's accession negotiations have effectively come to a standstill, and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing.

The EC lists several areas where developments and progress are recognised. Türkiye's economy is well advanced but made no progress over the reporting period (EC, 2022b). Serious concerns were raised over the continued proper functioning of Türkiye's market economy, as there has been some backsliding on essential elements, such as the conduct of monetary policy and the institutional and regulatory environment. Türkiye's economy recovered strongly from the COVID-19 crisis, growing by 11.4% in 2021, and by more than 7% in the first half of 2022 despite the fallout of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The country's overly loose monetary policy and lack of policy credibility have weakened the Turkish lira and have driven the official inflation rate to a two-decade high of more than 80% (Delegation of European Union in Türkiye, 2022a).

Despite a gradual decline, the informal sector still accounts for a significant share of economic activity. A reduction in the cost of employing low-skilled workers has been suggested, despite the reform of employment protection legislation. Incentives are needed to enhance female labour market participation through legislative and fiscal measures and by providing an appropriate and affordable childcare infrastructure beyond Türkiye's large urban centres. A higher budget allocation and coverage of active labour market policies could ease the transition of women and young people to the labour market.

At the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, Türkiye's Ministry of National Education established a series of policies to maintain education services and meet the larger needs of society. Throughout this period, Türkiye was able to rely on a strengthened distance education environment to provide teachers, students, and parents with an extensive variety of solutions for pedagogical continuity. The solutions deployed immediately covered all levels of primary and secondary education, including vocational education and training, and partly consisted of a package of academic, social, and psychological support delivered through online teaching, radio, television, and other media. Türkiye's government is building on the Education 2023 strategy, by increasing access to and use of e-platforms, already available e-graduate websites, as well as platforms for teacher training and ICT-based curricula. The government has taken measures, such as providing free connectivity to students and teachers on mobile services to facilitate access to online educational platforms.

Türkiye continues to score poorly in educational attainment in the Gender Gap Index calculated by the World Economic Forum, ranking 101st of 156 countries in 2021. Substantial differences remain between boys and girls in terms of their fields of study, which affect girls' prospects in the labour market. Programmes have been launched, for example, to increase girls' enrolment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), which remains low. There is an issue of increasing offers and participation in lifelong learning to step up the upskilling and reskilling of the labour force.

Türkiye has made satisfactory progress in science and research, in its e-infrastructure under Chapter 25 on Science and Research and Chapter 26 on Education and Training. Efforts are being made to encourage its research and innovation community to strengthen participation, and success rates. Emphasis has been placed on the critical role of digital education and training in enabling innovation and technology transfer. Türkiye's efforts in stepping up its ranking in the European Innovation Scoreboard led not only to tangible improvements in the scoring, but also in bringing together policies in the field of education and culture, people working in science, research, the audio-visual field and ICT, as well as researchers, labs and economic operators, SMEs, multinationals and the EU.

The EU and Türkiye have agreed that a stronger integration of research and innovation capacities and technology transfer activities, coupled with human capital development, are key in sustaining the

ongoing transition. The collaboration between academia, industry and SMEs is being continuously supported through Horizon Europe, the EU's framework programme for Research and Innovation, of which Türkiye is a full member. In mid-2021 Türkiye launched a high-profile Skills Gap Reduction Accelerator Programme linked to a multi-country World Economic Forum initiative. The Geleceğin Becerileri programme<sup>1</sup> has received cross-government commitment from key ministries to implement a set of actions designed to significantly upgrade skills intelligence provision, anticipation, and evaluation at the national and regional levels. The new measures on innovation, the links between innovative businesses, academia and VET schools in key sectors, the development of business incubators etc., are to be commended in the context of Türkiye's transition from a low-tech to a high-tech country and a middle to a high-income country.

Türkiye has responded to the challenges posed by technological changes through several policies and actions. According to data provided on the Ministry of Industry and Technology's website, there are currently more than 1 500 research and development (R&D) and design centres employing more than 70 000 people in Türkiye. R&D activities are defined as creative activities undertaken to enhance existing know-how and which provide original, experimental, scientific, and technical output. Design activities aim to increase and improve the functionality of products capable of creating added value and competitiveness in industry and other relevant fields. Industry has forged closer relations with the education and training system to support the public sector in rolling out the planned reforms with a view to improving quality and equal access to education and training at all levels. There are many protocols between the public and private sectors to enhance the quality of education and the vocational education and training system to further improve skills provision.

On 16 November 2022, the EU-Türkiye High-level Dialogue highlighted the need to deepen and broaden joint efforts for the green and digital transformation and the enabling role of education, research, and innovation in Türkiye (Delegation of European Union in Türkiye, 2022b). The dialogue focused on green industrial production, renewable energy, climate-neutral and smart cities, as well as other Green Deal aspects. Green and sustainable Organised Industrial Zones (OIZs) are a driving force in this context.

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<sup>1</sup> The World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020) is a platform that aims to create multi-stakeholder cooperation at the global and national levels for reforms which will be made in education systems and labour policies to prepare the workforce for future jobs and to increase their employability by reorganising the education and training system to eliminate talent and skill deficiencies.

# 1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

## Political developments

In the past few years, growing economic vulnerabilities and a more challenging external geopolitical environment and relations, including with the EU, have threatened to undermine earlier socio-economic achievements in Türkiye. The relations are strained due to Türkiye's backsliding in the areas of democracy, rule of law and fundamental rights. The European Commission holds that there are serious deficiencies in the functioning of Türkiye's democratic institutions (EC, 2022c).

Türkiye is a key strategic partner of the EU on issues such as migration, security, counterterrorism, and the economy. However, Türkiye's accession negotiations have effectively come to a standstill, and no further chapters can be considered for opening or closing. In early 2022, Türkiye submitted its eighth annual Economic Reform Programme covering the period 2022-2024. Over the reporting period, the Türkiye's government has not reversed the negative trend in relation to reforms, despite its repeated commitment to EU accession. According to the World Bank, there has been a slowdown in reforms in several areas (WB, 2021a) and this, together with economic vulnerabilities, risks reversing some of the progress made to date in Türkiye.

## Demographics

In 2021, the population of Türkiye stood at 85 042 700, of which 41 698 377 women and 41 915 985 men (TurkStat, 2021). According to the Address-Based Population Registration System (ABPRS) data, 16% of Türkiye's population in 2021 consisted of individuals aged 20-29 years, 51% of which are men and 49% of which are women (TurkStat, 2021).

According to the ILO, Türkiye<sup>2</sup> has been both a destination and transit country for refugees as humanitarian crises persist around its neighbourhood. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates<sup>3</sup> that Türkiye currently hosts the world's largest refugee population — more than 4 million, of which over 3.8 million are Syrians under Temporary Protection (hereinafter referred to as Syrian refugees). Refugees in Türkiye live mostly in urban areas and are concentrated in Istanbul, Bursa and İzmir in the west, Konya in central Anatolia, and Kilis, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Hatay, Adana and Mersin, which have higher unemployment rates in Türkiye.

According to the Directorate General for Migration Management, 29 256 international protection applicants were present in Türkiye in 2021. Moreover, according to the UNHCR, there were close to 330 000 international protection status holders and asylum seekers. In addition, there were 1 364 991 foreign nationals under residence permit holder status; this number includes humanitarian residence holders (UNHCR, 2022).

According to TurkStat data based on the ABPRS, 1 531 000 foreigners were residing in Türkiye in 2019. Foreigners in this data are defined as 'the foreign population by country of citizenship', excluding those Syrians who are under temporary protection status (TurkStat, 2019). As only those Syrians who are not under temporary protection but have legal permits to stay are included in this number, Iraqis and Afghans took first and second place, respectively. A report by Sermerci & Elmas, compares the situation of Türkiye's citizens with that of citizens from non-EU 27 countries residing in Türkiye with Eurostat data available in the areas of poverty, inequality, overcrowded households, education, NEET, unemployment including residents requiring citizenship (Sermerci & Elmas, 2022).

UNHCR (2020) published the 'Syrians Barometer 2019', which in turn was based on data from the Presidency of Migration Management. The report estimates that 54% of Syrian refugees in Türkiye are men and 46% are women. Men also outnumber women among Syrian refugee youth (aged 19-29),

<sup>2</sup> For further details of the ILO's work in Turkey please visit: <https://www.ilo.org/ankara/lang--en/index.htm>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/figures-at-a-glance>

58% versus 42%. According to January 2022 data, the city with the highest number of Syrians, based on the place of registration is Istanbul with 533 429 Syrian refugees (3.5% of the urban population), followed by 460 799 Syrians living in Gaziantep (22.1% of the population), 433 724 in Hatay (26.2%) and 427 582 in Şanlıurfa (20.3%). Kilis is the province with the highest number of Syrians in proportion to its population (75.5%). A total of 23.5% of Syrian refugees are between the ages of 19-29, while this rate is 8.6% among Türkiye's people. Having a young population among Syrian refugees provides opportunities, such as the availability of young workers or entrepreneurs. However, it can also place additional pressure on social security systems due to their inactivity or unemployment, on wages or the sectoral replacement of workers and on public employment services.

## Key economic developments

Türkiye remains the EU's sixth largest trading partner, while the EU is Türkiye's first and biggest trading partner. The volume of trade in goods with the EU was EUR 157.2 billion in 2021. EU foreign direct investment stock to Türkiye was EUR 52 billion in 2020. According to the World Bank (OECD, 2022a), the GDP growth rate grew by 11% in 2021, one of the fastest growth rates in the OECD. Buoyant private consumption has been driven by favourable labour market developments as labour force participation returned to pre-pandemic levels.

With a GDP of USD 720 billion, Türkiye is the 19th largest economy in the world. It is a member of the OECD and the G20, and an increasingly important donor of Official Development Assistance (World Bank, 2022). Following ambitious reforms which enabled Türkiye to enjoy high growth rates between 2002 and 2017, propelling it to upper-middle-income status and reducing poverty, the pace of the reform agenda has slowed. Over the reporting period, Türkiye's government has not reversed the negative trend in relation to reform, despite its repeated commitment to EU accession. Concerns have increased over Türkiye's economic governance and the functioning of its market economy. The country lacks comprehensive public fiscal management and public administration reforms. The administration's accountability is insufficient, and its policymaking does not necessarily use all the participatory mechanisms.

According to the OECD, GDP growth is expected to be moderate, from 5.3% in 2022 to around 3% in 2023 (OECD, 2022a). Exporters have been able to exploit opportunities from disruptions in Asian supply chains, and tourism has fully recovered in 2022. However, investment activity has been subdued and macroeconomic imbalances have risen. The current account deficit has widened due to increased energy imports, and consumer price inflation reached 85.5% and producer price inflation 158% by October 2022. The minimum wage was raised by 30% in July, 6 months after a 50% increase. Lira depreciation has raised import price pressures. Monthly domestic indicators such as electricity production suggest that economic activity is decelerating (OECD, 2022c).

Inflation will decline but remains above 40%. This will dent household purchasing power while heightened uncertainty will hold back investment. The COVID-19 crisis and economic malaise, as well as the Russian- Ukraine war, have put a lot of pressure on Türkiye's economy. The EBRD expects it to grow by 3.5% in 2023, driven by household and public spending ahead of planned elections. Global downturn risks, such as geopolitical tensions and aggressive monetary tightening in developed countries also risk affecting Türkiye's growth. Banks are well-capitalised, but global tensions may impact growth trajectory. The unemployment rate is projected to stay above 10% in 2023. Export growth will slow, as external demand weakens. Large external financing needs and low reserve buffers leave the economy highly vulnerable to shocks (EBRD, 2022).

Based on 2022 data, the three most important economic sectors in Türkiye, which employ the highest amount of workforce and generate the largest GDP, are manufacturing (25% of the workforce, 19.1% of GDP), construction (8.8% of workforce, 5.2% of GDP), and transport (5.8% of the workforce, 7.9% of GDP) (TurkStat, 2022). Enterprises of these sectors and others in Türkiye often quote inadequate skills as the reason for hindered growth and development. There are some efforts to respond to SME needs to enhance their productivity and competitiveness, which now also includes a stronger focus on digitalisation and greening. Türkiye has introduced formalised, structured frameworks, which would enable regular and systematic training needs analyses and, and conducts these through its

Information Management and Decision Support Department (OECD, 2022d). It updates the dedicated training portal accordingly. Results of training needs analyses inform the design of future support programmes.

Green practices are increasingly widespread in Türkiye. It is commendable that the private sector, VET schools and ISKUR (but not only) use information-based tools for their greening efforts, with business associations playing a leading role in this regard. There are many structures and platforms that enable interaction and partnership among enterprises of all sizes and schools/universities, particularly on the transition to a low-carbon economy and resource efficiency. Türkiye has introduced legislation on eco-labels and environment management systems, which are promoted by KOSGEB and the Ministry of National Education (MoNE).

## Key social issues

According to the Sustainable Governance Indicator (SGI, 2022), income distribution in Türkiye continues to be among the OECD's most unequal. According to TurkStat, while the top 20% of earners received 47.5% of income, the bottom 20% of earners received 5.9% of total income (TurkStat, 2021b). TurkStat data reveals that if the poverty line is determined according to 60% of median income, 21.9% of the citizens would be below the poverty line. Poverty remains prevalent among people with comparatively low educational attainment, workers in the informal sector, unpaid family caregivers and homemakers, and the elderly. As currency shocks have affected low-income households more than others, it would not be surprising to see a rise in poverty rates in the short term. Research, studies and assessments have been carried out by the Türkiye public and private sectors on the impact of COVID-19 and how it has exposed the many vulnerabilities and inequality affecting disadvantaged learners and workers in Türkiye. Social disadvantages are multi-faceted: the most affected are people living outside big cities/developed regions, from certain age groups, backgrounds, etc.

Young people living in rural areas, diverse geographical regions and of different ethnic backgrounds, or migrants from different surrounding countries, have bigger challenges regarding access to education, employment and affordable housing. They have fewer opportunities than their urban peers to participate in public and political life. Many publicly and privately funded initiatives support policy and action frameworks for local and regional authorities on how to provide better support for rural youth, to ensure the best representation possible of young women, youth from minorities, migrant communities, and vulnerable groups to be able to stay in rural areas. The focus should be on a better alignment between resources and the needs of vulnerable (young) people.

## 2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Republic of Türkiye's trajectory of improvement over the past two decades stands out internationally. Gender gaps in primary education have been progressively closed and trends have even reversed in some parts of the country, where more girls than boys are enrolled in primary education. However, Türkiye still faces significant skills challenges, and the inclusiveness of the labour market remains weak, despite some progress made in improving access to education.

According to the OECD (2022), the economy has one of the highest qualification mismatches (43%) and ranked at the bottom 20% among OECD economies for skill activation in the labour market, intensive use of skills in the workplace and innovative stimulation of skills (OECD, 2019[17]). Moreover, the unemployment rate among people with higher education remains persistently high at 12.8% in 2020 (European Commission, 2021[13]). Promisingly, positive developments are planned as part of the Eleventh Development Plan (2019-2023) to further align the education system with the requirements of the labour market (OECD 'SME Policy Index Western Balkans and Turkey', 2022, p. 960).

There has been more investment in the education and training system by the private sector with the aim of supporting the investment of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) for the VET system.

According to the same OECD report, there are many examples of social support programmes implemented throughout Türkiye. One of the flagship policies helping inclusion of disadvantaged groups in higher education has been more diverse quota rules for university entrance. Within many EU-supported programmes, Türkiye academia/researchers have conducted studies to analyse students' performance across different cognitive and content domains of learning. The aim is to provide sound evidence on the existing enrolment differences between girls and boys at the secondary and tertiary levels. The same applies to the VET part of the public system.

Türkiye's Ministry of National Education runs several innovative programmes for all levels of education. Distance education was developed and is used at all levels, even for preschool education. Design FILS (Future Innovative Learning Spaces)<sup>4</sup> aims to raise generations able to keep up with technological developments and to contribute to innovative policies. In addition, new educational content and activity books have been prepared for children living in remote settlements. The Directorate General for Basic Education sent to such children the 'My PlayBox' set<sup>5</sup>, developed as part of the Early Childhood Education project<sup>6</sup> and to be used for home-based education. To enrich preschool education, filming of the 'TRT EBA Anaokulu'<sup>7</sup> programme for preschool children was completed. According to MoNE statistics, as of October 2022, over 97% of 5-year-olds were enrolled in preschool in Türkiye. One of the key priorities of MoNE is that every child receives at least one year of early childhood education before starting primary school.

## 2.1 Trends and challenges

### Education strategy and legal framework for education

The measures of the last few years have been taken to lower school dropout rates and facilitate the school-to-work transition. While rolling out Türkiye's Education Strategy 2023, policies and actions aim to deliver adequate skills for the labour market, not only for youth but also for adults in need of upskilling or reskilling. There are many initiatives at the multi-country level, EU-supported projects but also national initiatives that introduce innovative education and training practices. Thus, MoNE developed innovative projects in teacher professional development. Tools and methodologies are developed (together with many European peers) to advance the pre and in service teacher training on how to recognise learner progress and achievement in the 'hard-to-reach' entrepreneurial and green learning outcomes developed through diverse learning contexts, e.g. Design Skills Labs, robotic and coding workshops, or activities such as those in Deneyap Türkiye<sup>8</sup>, which provide experimental technology training to students in 81 provinces<sup>9</sup>.

Insights could be drawn from the developments and practical training delivered through EntrComp Europe, involving the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) and Türkiye's government. This is being complemented by future-focused research into developing evidence-based guidance on effective methodologies to develop learners' entrepreneurial competencies through digital and online learning. Work has been launched to explore how to track and evaluate the implementation and quality of entrepreneurial competencies in compulsory education, with the potential to demonstrate this through the breadth of practical entrepreneurial experiences being delivered. Türkiye recently trialled the SELFIE tool and could consider developing a similar tailored national approach to understand the progress and recognition of entrepreneurial competencies among educators and learners. There are attempts by some sectors to look at innovative ways of developing competencies for green skills.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://designfils.eba.gov.tr/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/en/stories/journey-numbers-cartons-and-packaging-my-playbox>

<sup>6</sup> Early Childhood Education project, co-funded by the European Union and the Republic of Türkiye and led by the MoNE in close cooperation with UNICEF, [The Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, UNICEF and the European Union reaffirm their support for early childhood education in Türkiye](#)

<sup>7</sup> [www.eba.gov.tr](http://www.eba.gov.tr)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.deneyapturkiye.org/deneyap-EGITIM-AMACI-5.html>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.deneyapturkiye.org/Kurumsal-DENEYAP-TURKIYE-13.html>



## Education expenditure

Total expenditure on education stood at 5.4% of GDP in 2020, representing a real increase of 4.5% year-on-year. Government spending accounted for around three-quarters of this, or 4.0% of GDP in 2020, decreasing by 0.4 percentage points from 2019. The highest increase in education expenditure per student was observed in tertiary education (UNESCO, 2022).

## Access, participation and early school leaving

In the 2020-2021 school year, net enrolment rates decreased for primary education (first 4 years) and for lower secondary education (second 4 years), whereas they increased for upper secondary education (final 4 years) and tertiary education (OECD, 2022).

The share of pupils in religious education increased in lower secondary education to 13.7%, up from 10.1% five years before, but remained broadly stable at close to 11% in upper secondary education.

The proportion of students in vocational and technical secondary education fell further to 27.4% in 2021 (from 35.9% five years before). VET programmes in the field of engineering, manufacturing, and construction enrol the highest number of students in Türkiye, with 23% of upper secondary vocational students graduating in these fields in 2020. The second most prevalent VET field in Türkiye is health and welfare, which accounted for 21% of upper secondary VET graduates in Türkiye (OECD, 2022b).

The number of university graduates has been increasing. However, despite all efforts, some parts of university education remain of low quality and disconnected from the labour market. Substantial differences exist between males and females in terms of their chosen fields of study. Girls' enrolment in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) remains exceptionally low. The enrolment of girls in STEM fields is constrained by stereotypes and biases that uphold the belief that boys have higher innate abilities than girls have in these fields and are better suited for careers that make use of these skills (OECD, 2022c). This educational segregation has long-term consequences as it determines men's and women's status in the labour market and beyond, in all spheres of life – economic, political, and private. It directs men who study STEM subjects towards dynamic, productive, and well-paid sectors that benefit from the digital transformation, while women tend to be concentrated in sectors such as wholesale and retail or food and accommodation services (ILO, 2022).

According to the OECD's 'SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey 2022', in Türkiye entrepreneurship careers continue to be promoted and supported for students in universities supported by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization of Türkiye (KOSGEB) and the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TUBITAK), due to a network of university business incubators and government-supported technoparks. In recent years, there have been put many efforts to further developing entrepreneurial skills and careers in VET. The involvement of VET schools to produce different medical materials needed by the hospitals /clinics during the COVID emergency is clear evidence. VET students in Türkiye, now have access to entrepreneurship courses as well as start-up training via KOSGEB; they are entitled to support credits to set up their businesses and can access help for key processes, such as patent applications. Through the National Youth Employment Strategy, there is an innovative commitment to support entrepreneurship development through practical education and business cooperation opportunities (OECD, 2022).

In 2020, among the candidate countries and potential candidates, the proportion of early leavers from education and training among persons aged 18-24 was the highest in Türkiye, with 27.5% of young men and 25.8% of young women. Türkiye has seen a constant increase in the number of pupils every year between 2013 and 2020, reaching 18.2 million pupils in 2020, an increase of 13.0% compared to 2013. The proportion of early leavers decreased by 10.3 percentage points (pps) for men and 22.1 pps for women, reversing the gender gap from +10.1 pps in 2010 to -1.7 pps in 2020.

An alternative measure for analysing the outcomes of education systems is the youth education attainment level, which denotes the proportion of 20-24 year-olds who have achieved at least an upper secondary level of education attainment (ISCED level 3). As per the Commission's Enlargement countries - education statistics updates (data extracted in March 2022), a lower level of youth

educational attainment was recorded in Türkiye (65.6%) in 2020<sup>10</sup>. Youth educational attainment rose notably in Türkiye between 2010 and 2020 by +14.5 pps. The highest change in the gender gap among all OECD countries was recorded in Türkiye, with an increase of 15.7 pps between 2010 and 2020. This has reversed the gender gap from -11.2 pps more young men than young women having attained at least an upper secondary level of education in 2010, to +4.5 pps more young women than young men in 2020.

In Türkiye, the annual average change rate of students in tertiary education (ISCED levels 5-8) between 2015 and 2020 has increased (+7.3% per year; 2014-2019 data). The proportion of 30-34 year-olds who have completed a tertiary level of education stood at 33.1%, while women who graduated from a science or technology discipline accounted for 34.5%, as in 2014 (34.7%)<sup>11</sup>.

When looking at the educational attainment of 25-34 year-olds, 13% have general upper secondary education as their highest qualification, while 11% have vocational upper secondary education and training. These data are 5 pps and 10 pps, respectively, below the OECD average (OECD, 2020).

## PISA results

As regards the performance of 15-year-old Türkiye students in PISA 2018: in reading literacy they scored 466 points compared to an average of 487 points in OECD countries. Girls performed better than boys with a statistically significant difference of 25 points (OECD average: 30 points higher for girls). On average, 15-year-olds scored 454 points in mathematics compared to an average of 489 points in OECD countries. Boys performed better than girls, with a non-statistically significant difference of 5 points (OECD average: 5 points higher for boys). In Türkiye, the average performance in science of 15-year-olds is 468 points, compared to an average of 489 points in OECD countries. Girls performed better than boys, with a statistically significant difference of 7 points (OECD average: 2 points higher for girls). Students' socio-economic status can explain 11% of the variance in reading performance in Türkiye, which is lower than the OECD average of 12%. According to the same OECD analysis, the average difference between advantaged and disadvantaged students in reading in Türkiye was 76 points, while the average in the OECD countries stood at 89 points<sup>12</sup>.

## Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

Türkiye has a young population, almost half of which is under the age of 30 and one-quarter between 15 and 29 years old. As a response to increasing youth unemployment and the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), in 2021 Türkiye launched the National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2023). With the adoption of the National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2023)<sup>13</sup>, Türkiye is increasing its efforts to improve vocational training and to reduce the NEET rate to 20% by the end of 2023. The strategy and action plan are built around three main pillars: reinforcing the link between education and employment; increasing employment of young people who are neither in employment nor in education/training (NEETs); and preparing for future jobs.

Promisingly, positive developments are planned as part of the Eleventh Development Plan (2019-2023), to further align the education system with the requirements of the labour market. There is a persistent mismatch between the requirements of the labour market and the skills acquired in education. In 2020, the share of young people aged 15-29 who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) stood at 32%, whereby the female rate (42%) exceeded by far the male rate (21.3%). In total, 24.1% of NEETs were inactive. According to Türkiye (and other reports), the economy has one of the highest qualification mismatches (43%) and ranked at the bottom 20% among OECD economies for skill activation in the labour market, intensive use of skills in the workplace and

<sup>10</sup> [Enlargement countries - education statistics - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement_countries_-_education_statistics)

<sup>11</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement\\_countries\\_-\\_education\\_statistics&oldid=563831#Number\\_of\\_pupils\\_and\\_students](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Enlargement_countries_-_education_statistics&oldid=563831#Number_of_pupils_and_students)

<sup>12</sup> <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=TUR&treshold=10&topic=PI>

<sup>13</sup> Türkiye National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2023), <https://www.eu4youthdays.eu/t%C3%BCrkiye>

innovative stimulation of skills (OECD, 2022a). Moreover, the unemployment rate among people with higher education remains persistently high at 12.4 % in 2021. The rolling out of the Eleventh Development Plan aims to address some of the significant skills challenges, and the inclusiveness of the labour market mentioned above.

According to the European Commission, the labour market showed signs of recovery and efforts were taken to tackle skills mismatches and shortages (EC, 2022). However, the relevance of education, and women's and young people's situation in the labour market, remain key challenges. The potential of women in the labour market remains untapped. Low participation rates in early childhood education and care have a negative impact both on women's labour market participation and on the educational foundation of children later in life.

According to Türkiye's Economy Profile (OECD, 2022)<sup>14</sup>, Türkiye still faces significant skills challenges, and the inclusiveness of the labour market remains weak, despite some progress made in improving access to education. The same report emphasises that Türkiye's economy has one of the highest qualification mismatches (43%) and ranked at the bottom 20% among OECD economies for skill activation in the labour market, intensive use of skills in the workplace and innovative stimulation of skills (OECD, 2022a).

Active labour market policies, as well as upskilling and reskilling opportunities, do exist, and further efforts were made in 2021, but they remain limited in scope. Overall, the policy package is insufficient to address the risks of discouragement and labour market disengagement among young people, particularly young women. NEET shares are even higher among refugees due to the tendency of Syrian young women not to participate in the workforce and the tendency of Syrian young men not to continue their education. Structural challenges of the labour market and the effects of the pandemic on employment and working hours have created additional negative pressures on labour force participation among young women compared to the pre-pandemic period.

Although Türkiye does not have a budget exclusively earmarked for youth employment, Türkiye's Employment Agency (İŞKUR)<sup>15</sup>, is engaged in related activities through the allocation of funds from the general budget and its other revenue for active employment measures. To facilitate the job search of vocational training graduates, İŞKUR cooperates with VET schools/centres.

In addition, KOSGEB and the Ministry of Economy support youth employment and entrepreneurship practices with allocations from the general budget. Furthermore, employment and entrepreneurship policies and activities geared towards women and young people are implemented with funding from the EU's Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). Although no separate mechanism or system is available for monitoring employment measures and projects applied for young people, quality is ensured by means of strategic plans, activity reports and annual programmes of the relevant establishments.

## 2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

A detailed description of Türkiye's VET system can be found on the European Commissions' Eurydice website<sup>16</sup>.

Education and training in Türkiye are provided at upper secondary and post-secondary education levels and cater to young people and adults. Upon completion of lower secondary education, students, typically aged 14, can continue to upper secondary education in general or vocational programmes. Both general and vocational upper secondary education last 4 years. The share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) was 39.4 % in 2020, a decrease from 49% in 2015.

<sup>14</sup> [Turkey: Economy Profile | SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey 2022: Assessing the Implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe | OECD iLibrary \(oecd-ilibrary.org\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/>

<sup>16</sup> [Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary Education | Eurydice \(europa.eu\); Teaching and learning in vocational upper secondary education | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#)

Efforts are being made and policy discussions are taking place on the importance of adult learning with a focus on reskilling and upskilling for new jobs. Adults in Türkiye seem to be less prepared for the future than their peers in other countries. The current offers for lifelong learning are not fit for purpose. In 2020, 5.8% of adults aged 25-64 participated in training/lifelong learning, which is a slight improvement over 2019 (5.7%). İŞKUR has launched several programmes responsible for increasing adult learning<sup>17</sup>. The low participation is also due to the inadequate level of measures by MoNE's Directorate General for Lifelong Learning or other directorates, and of companies' investments in workers' (re)training, and of adult training programmes implemented by municipalities. The coverage and quality of adult education vary, and Türkiye's private sector conducts research and analysis to better understand skills needs in each sector. Many 'skills for the future' platforms have been organised in which the public and private sector in Türkiye suggested that the workforce would need to improve their skills considerably, and called for joint action. The underlying conclusion is that reskilling and upskilling efforts would be key to achieving sustainable change in the workforce.

According to the Regulation on Lifelong Learning Institutions<sup>18</sup>, formal adult education in Türkiye covers all types of learning activities that combine to develop the skills and competencies in the formal education system and continuous education and training in a lifelong learning public and private provision. Many adult education institutions operate under MoNE's Directorate General for Lifelong Learning, including public education centres, open education schools and distance learning providers. In addition, there are vocational and technical secondary schools affiliated with the Directorate General for Vocational and Technical Education and vocational training centres, except for the secondary education programme in the fields and branches specified in the Vocational Education law, which provide training and issue certificates for adults (Vocational Education Law No 3308).

There are other institutions and modalities of funding and cooperation that cater for the provision of lifelong learning courses. For example, İŞKUR, which is affiliated with the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, prepares national qualifications and occupational standards. The National Agency for Erasmus+ provides funding for adult education and projects related to vocational training under the programme to maintain their Active Labour Programmes. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry carries out training activities in the respective sector, in cooperation with the MoNE and other relevant institutions and organisations. Special teaching activities in private institutions are also carried out with the approval of the Directorate General for Private Education Institutions (Law on Private Education Institutions No 5580).

## Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

The key strategy for the sector is the 2023 Education Vision for a Strong Future, which defines the key goals in the field of education. It is in this strategy that Türkiye's government has included lifelong learning objectives/targets. For VET, the main aims are to improve the perception of VET, to update VET contents, as well as infrastructure and equipment, to increase training opportunities for teachers, and to strengthen cooperation between education and business.

Türkiye's Economic Reform Programme 2020-2022 provides the basis for progress in the form of measures for technical and vocational education and training (VET). These include the preparation of digital content and skills-based programmes, updating curricula in vocational and technical education, and the establishment of a private sector cooperation protocol for vocational training and skills development. Türkiye has developed policies and actions for the improvement of education and skills provision with a focus on improving the quality and equality of educational achievement at all levels, as evidenced by the latest EU benchmarks, and acknowledged by OECD's policy report (OECD, 2021)<sup>19</sup>.

As mentioned above, the analysis shows that the main human capital challenges in the country comprise of the following: further improving the access and quality of initial education and training,

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/en/job-seeker/on-the-job-training-programs/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://eurycle.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/turkey/developments-and-current-policy-priorities>

<sup>19</sup> [Türkiye Economic Snapshot - OECD](#)

providing career opportunities for a large youth population and reskilling and upskilling the adult workforce, including a vast number of refugees.

Students' academic proficiency differs widely by school and by socio-economic background. There are disparities between the capital, large cities, and more peripheral areas. However, the government continues to provide impetus – financially and through policies and partnerships – to VET at all levels. VET ensures skills development in a wide range of occupational fields, through school-based and work-based learning (OECD, 2022b).

## **VET governance and financing arrangements**

Nationally, the main actors in VET governance are the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), responsible for higher vocational schools (post-secondary VET is under the Council of Higher Education); the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS); the Ministry of Development (MoD); and the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology (MoSIT). MoNE is engaged in six out of seven functions of VET governance. Both MoD and MoLSS participate in four.

Other strategic actors are MoNE's directorates: Board of Education, Directorate General for Vocational and Technical Education, Directorate General for Lifelong Learning and Directorate for Strategy Development and they all participate in many governance functions. The Vocational Education Council (VEC) has a crucial role, as it is engaged in six out of seven governance functions. It comprises representatives of the ministries, trade and employers' unions, public institutions and agencies and other key social partners who decide on the planning and implementation of VET programmes.

The government sees social dialogue in VET as especially important. NGOs and social partners participate in decision-making. The most active are the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), business confederations and associations, and other trade and employers' unions and associations. They participate in many functions of governance, through public bodies like VEC or public-private partnerships for skills development or capacity building.

At regional and local levels, the provincial and district national education directorates, the Provincial Employment and Vocational Education Board and the Provincial Employment Agency oversee both the implementing of VET policy and the development of public-private partnerships at provincial, district, and municipal levels.

The private sector in Türkiye provides considerable investment in education and training.

The Directorate General for Vocational Education and Training (DGVET) of Türkiye's MoNE has developed a very comprehensive e-governance system for VET students, in partnership with other public and private institutions.

Major financial sources of education are made up of the share allocated from the budget of central administration, the budget of private provincial administration and metropolitan municipalities, credits, scholarships, donations and protocols obtained from foreign countries and institutions, personal and institutional donations for education, income from the school-family union. Early Childhood Education as well as primary and secondary education are financed mostly by the government.

## Qualifications, validation, and recognition

Türkiye's Qualification Framework for lifelong learning (TQF)<sup>20</sup> which was adopted in 2015, has been designed as a single structure that integrates all qualifications obtained through education and training programmes, including primary, secondary, and higher education, special needs education and continuing training. It also recognises outcomes achieved through experience in the workplace or other non-formal or informal environments. The TQF has eight levels and includes all types and levels of qualifications and certificates.

At the VET level, the Vocational Qualifications Agency has initiated a project to identify the skill sets required for the greening of the economy. Related to 5 sectors, they identified green skill sets for 45 vocations. These skill sets are not finalised as the agency will organise a series of workshops to validate them with the representatives of different sectors and try to come up with generic and sector-specific green skills. There is ongoing work to work closely with Türkiye's Ministry of National Education and the private sector to develop curricula (at early pilot stages) for the VET level, including Level 5. It is accepted that there is a pressing need for the Ministry of National Education and Higher Education Institutions to further develop curricula and provide training for the skills needed across education levels. The MoNE, the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE) have jointly developed and are implementing the framework. The Vocational Qualifications Agency has created different expert groups and works closely with research institutions working on sustainability education on defining national professional standards with the aim of defining job profiles and competencies. Legislation on the TQF provides that all qualifications obtained through education, training or other learning pathways are to be quality-assured. TQF qualifications are published in the Official Journal upon approval by the TQF Coordination Board<sup>21</sup>. Quality assurance principles are modelled on those of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). All diplomas, certificates and Vocational Qualifications Certificates issued in Türkiye must meet these criteria<sup>22</sup>. Implementation structures, main working methods and instruments have been established and the TQF is a reference point for the use of learning outcomes, for the continuous revision and renewal of qualifications and the allocation of qualifications to different levels. To date, 29 000 qualifications have been entered in the TQF database. Most of them are outcomes-based, but TQF implementation is progressing at different speeds in the various subsectors of the education system.

Türkiye is a member of the EQF Advisory Group and participates in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA-Bologna process). The TQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the framework of qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA) in 2017<sup>23</sup>.

In 2022, the TQF Principles and Procedures on Recognition and Quality Assurance of Prior Learning (TQF RPL Principles and Procedures) were published. These Principles and Procedures use the four phases of validation as the basis for the framework of RPL requirements that should apply to all TQF qualifications. The RPL requirements for TQF qualifications are set out in the TQF RPL Principles and Procedures. Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) was one of the six priorities of the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2018. The MoNE adopted a national framework, procedures and operational guidelines and has implemented processes to validate non-formal and informal learning for qualification levels 1 to 5. The Ministry has undertaken an increasing number of pilot projects on VNFIL<sup>24</sup>. Türkiye is now in the third phase of developing its qualifications system, which comprises the 'Implementation Phase' completing the 'Preparation Phase (2010-2015)' and the 'Improvement/Further Development Phase (2016-2020)'. With the actions from the Turkish Qualification Framework (TQF) Action Plan for 2016-2018 largely completed or in the final stages of completion, and the 'infrastructure' of the TQF largely in place, the Implementation Phase of TQF will focus on putting the framework into place 'on the ground' (TQF Strategy Paper, 2021). The priorities of

<sup>20</sup> [Turkish Qualifications Framework](#).

<sup>21</sup> [TQF Coordination Board](#).

<sup>22</sup> For more details, see: [Quality assurance | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#).

<sup>23</sup> TQF (Turkish Qualifications Framework), Strategy Paper, Ankara, VQA, 2021.

this phase are quality assurance (QA), including Qualifications in TQF and tools for broadening access to VNFIL qualifications (validation of non-formal and informal learning) & Credit transfers, making TQF a reality. Within the process, implementing systems for VNFIL have been a priority. This system is operated by the VQA, a powerful platform that brings together the state, employees and employers in the country. The main aim of the system is to equip the labour force with up-to-date qualifications and recognise learning in the workplace. Türkiye has been making an excellent case for validation as an instrument of economic development policies. European Qualifications Framework (EQF) referencing criterion 3 refers specifically to the relation of national qualifications frameworks with arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. EQF referencing ensures the accountability and validity of all qualifications, formal, non-formal and informal<sup>25</sup>.

### Quality and quality assurance

The heterogeneity of vocational education programmes and of academic degrees constitute a major challenge regarding quality and quality assurance. To address the challenges, Türkiye has embarked on a nationwide quality assurance system for VET institutions. A Directive on Quality Assurance in Vocational and Technical Education Institutions was adopted in May 2019. This includes self-assessment studies to be conducted by all vocational schools once a year, whose results are accessible to the MoNE.

Since the academic year 2016/2017, all VET institutions in Türkiye conduct regular self-evaluations and underwent external evaluations. MoNE's progress assessment of 2018 showed some satisfying outcomes: the labour force participation and employment rates were both higher for vocational upper secondary students than general upper secondary students in 2018. A national review in the context of COVID-19 (2020) reported that between 2018 and 2019 the number of students choosing to enter Vocational Technical Anatolian High schools increased by 17%. Yet, challenges persist in most study areas. Less than 10% of VET graduates are employed in the field where they graduated. Further priorities identified include reducing the intensity of academic courses for VET students and facilitating the transition to higher education (OECD, 2020).

### Work-based learning arrangements

Türkiye has boosted employer engagement and apprenticeships at national and local levels. Türkiye's employers' associations play a crucial role in skills development, both through their own funding and through implementing EU or other donor-funded projects. Most of the large employers' organisations have VET departments that interact directly with public institutions, and work-based learning (WBL) is a key part of Türkiye's VET system. Depending on the age of the student and type of VET institution, this ranges from practice periods during holidays, to in-company training periods lasting three days per week, to full-time training in the company. An increasing number of students in Türkiye participate in VET programmes. In 2017, the country introduced the concept of 'Master craftsman' as part of its apprenticeship system within the scope of compulsory education. To support education-business cooperation, the MoNE established integrated online e-platforms, such as Türkiye's VET Map and the 'My Job My Life' platform.

The OECD (2020) provides a thorough analysis of Türkiye's VET system, including the WBL system. Türkiye's policy efforts in the VET sector focus on strengthening collaboration with employers to improve young people's transition to the labour market. The School Protectorate Project (2016) endeavoured to link vocational and technical secondary education institutions with at least one sector organisation. Türkiye's co-operation model, revised in 2019, requires private sector representatives to collaborate on curriculum updates, provide students and teachers with WBL and offer scholarships for students coming from a more marginalised background with a focus on skills provision for employment.

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<sup>25</sup> For more details, see Akkök, F (2022), *The role of career guidance in the VNFIL*.

One successful example is the Co-operation Protocol signed between the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) and the TOBB University of Economics and Technology in 2019, which provides for the establishment of workshops or laboratories in one VET institution per province (81 in total). Another good example is the Ministry of Culture and Tourism which is aiming to establish 189 new VET schools between 2020 and 2023, in addition to the 200 which are already in place. Schools and hotels are paired, with students performing their skills by training in the hotel.

More detailed information can be found on the portal of the Ministry of National Education<sup>26</sup>.

## Digital education and skills

The development of digital skills for students and teachers in Türkiye has been the focal point of several policy documents even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The key policy document is MoNE's Education Vision 2023. The pandemic has brought this subject to the fore, and all stakeholders acknowledge the vital importance of digital skills and competences. Under 'Digital content and skills-backed transformation of the learning process', two main goals are stated: (1) an ecosystem will be created for the development of digital content and skills, and (2) content will be developed, and teachers will be trained for the development of digital skills.

At the outset of the COVID-19 crisis, the MoNE put in place a series of policy actions to maintain education services. When schools closed on 17 March 2020, Türkiye could rely on a strengthened distance education environment to provide teachers, students, and parents with an extensive variety of solutions for pedagogical continuity. MoNE's Directorate General for Innovation and Educational Technologies fully rolled out the Educational Information Network (EBA)<sup>27</sup>. EBA is an online social education platform offering digital educational materials for free use by students at any time and place, ensuring the integration of technology into education. It provides videos, educational software, and educational games, ensuring educational provision beyond the school premises. EBA continues to evolve by delivering reliable digital educational content tailored to each class level and by following innovations in education and technology. EBA is enriched with digital content provided by leading education firms in the field in Türkiye and worldwide. International organisations are studying its content and massive outreach.

Responding to COVID-19 and looking beyond, the World Bank had signed a USD 160 million (EUR 143.8 million) loan to invest in innovation, digitalisation and outreach to all students. The deployed funds and innovative measures helped to immediately cover all classes in primary and secondary education, including VET. They consisted of a package of academic, social and psychological support delivered through online teaching, radio, television and other media.

The COVID-19 outbreak affected educational personnel in many aspects of their work. One of the main challenges, as reported in the assessments of Türkiye's Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in 2020/2021, is the fact that experienced educational staff lacked training in digital skills, digital pedagogy and IT tools already before the crisis. Urgent action is needed for teachers, academics and other educational staff in relation to the use of ICT tools, digital technologies and media to foster inclusion in education.

The pandemic affected some groups and individuals more than others, in particular the most vulnerable. The existing social inequalities were magnified, amongst others due to a lack of appropriate access to digital courses for learners and the availability of parents/carers to support them. While remote teaching during the pandemic exposed many systemic deficiencies, respondents argue that innovative technologies could also be of significant help in implementing inclusive education.

In 2020-2021, Türkiye piloted the EU 'Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the use of Innovative Education' (SELFIE) tool for WBL. Assessments are ongoing on how these tools can be

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.meb.gov.tr/vocational-high-schools-made-export-agreements-with-5-different-countries-within-11-months/haber/28132/en>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.eba.gov.tr/eicerik>



embedded in the EBA platform. No decision has been taken yet whether SELFIE can be mainstreamed.

Jobs in Türkiye face an elevated risk of automation. More than half of all occupations are at risk of redundancy soon. Türkiye has improved its performance as regards individuals' digital skills. Still, only one-third of people aged 16-74 have basic or above basic overall digital skills (Eurostat 2022). This is another vulnerability of the youth workforce. Further tailor-made reskilling and upskilling would be of great benefit to workers affected by the changing world of work.

### Statistics on education and training

Türkiye's Statistical Institute (TurkStat)<sup>28</sup> is the source of data and analyses for the education and training system, labour market, etc. TurkStat data are available to a variety of target groups and for various uses. They also share data and analyses with the European Commission and its services, the ETF, and all international organisations.

Türkiye's Ministry of National Education (MoNE) carries out assessments and analyses regarding the status of the education management information system (EMIS). Reviews have been undertaken on the current state of the MoNE information systems in terms of interoperability with other information and data sources. The Ministry of National Education has some features in terms of both intra-organisational and inter-organisational interoperability, but it cannot fully use the opportunities arising from the use of the Central Education Management Information System (EMIS); accordingly, some areas need to be developed in both dimensions in terms of interoperability. As regards in-house interoperability, suggestions have been made such as transferring the data in the Education Information Network (EBA) to e-school, moving more student data between education levels, and transferring the data expected from the management levels through information systems by making it pre-defined. In terms of inter-organisational interoperability, it is recommended that the MoNE information systems be made interoperable with the Ministry of Health, Higher Education Institutions and Social Security Institutions (Boz, M., & Simsek, I. (2022)).

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<sup>28</sup> [Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu \(TÜİK\) \(TurkStat.gov.tr\)](https://www.turkstat.gov.tr)

## 3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

### 3.1 Trends and challenges

#### Labour market characteristics

According to the European Commission (2022), Türkiye's labour market recovered from the pandemic, but deep-seated structural challenges remain. The strong economic growth lifted the labour market and the number of jobs reached new heights in 2022. The activity and employment rates increased markedly, to pre-crisis levels. Job creation was particularly strong in services and industry, extending its gains in early 2022, while the sector of agriculture shed jobs. The number and share of workers without social security registration declined further to their lowest level on record in early 2022.

Despite the economic rebound, the labour market continues to be characterised by structural imbalances, which include the lacking integration of Türkiye's young population, the underused potential of women in the labour force and the substantial rate of informality.

Despite women's higher educational attainment, their labour force participation rate continues to be structurally and significantly below that of men. The activity rate (15+) of women in 2021 was 32.8% (on an upward trend from 30.8% in 2020, but lower than in 2019 with 34.3%), less than half the male activity rate of 70.3%. Policies aimed at the activation of women in the labour market have had so far limited results. The most important policy initiative to increase employment and labour force participation among women has been a subsidy system to incentivise employers to hire female employees, first introduced following the 2008 global financial crisis. More recently, Türkiye introduced several pilot projects for the Social Security Institution. In 2019 two programmes were started to support childcare provision, but they only involve 14 000 working mothers. These measures are commendable but remain limited in scope and impact due to the lack of childcare facilities.

The picture is the same concerning the employment rate. The employment rate of women continues to be structurally lower than that of men. In 2020, the female employment rate (20-64) was 32.0%, less than half the rate of male employment.

The rate of unregistered employment was around 31% in the third quarter of 2020. Apart from economic costs such as lower productivity and tax revenues, there are considerable social costs generated by informality. Informally employed persons are subject to social exclusion. The absence of social security premiums and taxes weakens social security and tax revenues of the state budget. In Türkiye, tax revenues account for around 25% of GDP, while on average in the EU it is around 40% of GDP.

The unemployment rate (15-74) reached 12.0% in 2021, which presents a downward trend from 13.7% in 2019 and 13.2% in 2020. The female rate, at 14.7%, was slightly higher than the male rate. Regional labour market disparities have declined but are still significant, with the unemployment rate across different regions ranging from 5.8% to 29.8% in 2021 (TurkStat).

#### Statistics on and labour market and employment

TurkStat, as a well-established institution, produces and publishes labour market data and analyses based on their regular Labour Force Surveys based on Eurostat standards. It consults with the Public Council for Statistics and cooperates with State offices and other bodies to conduct statistical projects and publish their results.

The Public Employment Service of Türkiye (İŞKUR), employs administrative and survey-based methods for the generation and management of datasets concerning registered jobseekers, vacancies, and the participation of jobseekers in labour market policy measures and services.

## 3.2 Employment policy and institutional settings

### Strategy and legal framework in the employment policy field

Strategy and legal framework in the employment policy field in Türkiye are framed by the Presidency of Türkiye, and government policies for employment and social inclusion. The system is governed by a multi-institutional set up: the Constitution and Presidential Governance, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, Ministry of Youth and Sports, National Youth Council and by many strategic documents, such as the Presidential Annual Program, New Economy Programme (Medium Term Program) 2020-2022, Eleventh Development Plan and Priorities (2019-2023), National Employment Strategy (2014-2023), and National Youth Strategy (2021-2023), Plans, Policies and Measures for National Employment Service (İŞKUR).

İŞKUR was established under the Law of 25/06/2003 and No 4904 to facilitate activities relating to protection, improvement, generalisation of employment, and prevention of unemployment and to provide unemployment insurance services. İSKUR plays a leading role in upgrading the skills of jobseekers and facilitating their access to productive employment by providing vocational training and other employment support services. İSKUR currently provides many programmes to help workers access jobs through on-the-job training support (wage subsidies) and other subsidised forms of employment, including hiring subsidies (covering social security premiums and other non-wage costs for new workers). Apart from financial support measures, there are also programmes that encourage links between enterprises and research universities in activities such as training, skills exchange programmes, and joint ventures.

Türkiye introduced a new regulation on teleworking in March 2021 (OECD, 2021), which clarified the legal framework around its practice. The generalised experiment in mass teleworking has made one issue particularly salient to regulators and the public, namely the risk of work intensification, related to a reduced work-life balance and blurring of the boundaries between working and non-working times and spaces linked to the introduction of work.

### Initiatives to boost employment

The massive rollout of short-time work schemes, which involved a total of 6.2 million beneficiaries, the ban on layoffs and the obligation to grant unpaid leave for those not entitled to short-time work benefits in 2020 and 2021 proved effective in protecting formal jobholders in the labour market from a more severe impact. At the same time, workers in the informal economy and the self-employed received only ad hoc cash support, while these groups were among the hardest hit by the pandemic (OECD, 2021).

The İŞKUR Portal<sup>29</sup> is the platform that helps to match labour supply and demand. İŞKUR also invested in its career guidance system and increased the number of career counsellors.

Public authorities, notably İŞKUR and MoNE, deliver a wide range of skills development programmes. In addition, non-governmental organisations target both host and refugee communities. Women's potential in the labour market continues to be underutilised. Policies aimed at getting women into the labour market have so far had limited results. İŞKUR is the institution that runs the most important policy initiative to increase labour force participation and employment among women through a subsidy system that incentivises employers to hire female employees. It is the continuation of the first programme, first introduced following the global financial crisis in 2008.

Yet, the coverage and funding of active labour market policies (ALMPs) continue to be too low and fail to cater to the needs of the increased number of registered jobseekers.

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<sup>29</sup> [www.iskur.gov.tr](http://www.iskur.gov.tr)

## Initiatives to increase the capacity of the public employment services

There is continuous support to enhance the employment policy-making capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, İŞKUR and the social partners as their key partners. EU financial support, coupled with the Türkiye government programmes, have boosted the institutional capacity of İŞKUR central structures but also of the provincial directorates to deliver better public employment services in provinces within the 'Model Offices' approach.

Thanks to technical and financial support to İSKUR, monitoring reports and analyses<sup>30</sup> suggest that İŞKUR has improved its labour market information system, guidance services regarding occupations, careers and jobs, as well as public employment services in the regions<sup>31</sup>.

In Türkiye, guidance services are conducted in various contexts by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), universities, the private sector, and trade unions and employer associations. MoNE and İŞKUR provide most of the regular services. There are two main guidance and counselling systems in Türkiye: one in the education sector (basic, secondary, VET schools, Guidance and Research Centres in the provinces, tertiary education, career planning centres) and the other in the employment sector (basic secondary, VET, university education, adult learning). In the education sector, guidance practitioners, classroom teachers and specialists in career guidance centres are the practitioners, while in the employment sector, Job and Vocational Counsellors are the main practitioners.

İŞKUR has a well-developed system to monitor ALMPs, also with a view to increasing their efficiency and effectiveness. Much support has been provided to further enhance the functioning of the Provincial Employment and Vocational Training Boards and to design, implement and monitor tailor-made employment policies in all NUTS II regions. These efforts resulted in increased access to the services of İŞKUR.

İŞKUR's services are integrated with Türkiye's e-Government Gateway infrastructure. The website<sup>34</sup> is fully developed and is updated regularly. There has been substantial investment in infrastructure and in staff capacity to enhance İŞKUR's service delivery with a view to providing services. Needs were identified for developing and implementing new policies, and capacity development plans and digital transformation road maps were prepared accordingly.

İŞKUR is an active member of the 'Centres of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC)' network<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentlist?qterm=Turkey%20ISKUR>

<sup>31</sup> World Bank Support for Transition to Labour Market Project, [Support for Transition to Labor Market Project \(worldbank.org\)](#), Turkey: Employment Support and Activation of Work-able Refugees and Turkish Citizens (P171471)

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/en/news/members-of-centre-of-public-employment-services-of-southeast-european-countries-cpessec-gathered-in-north-macedonia/>

# TÜRKIYE: STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Annex includes annual data from 2015, 2019, 2020 and 2021 or the last available year.

	Indicator	2015	2019	2020	2021	
1	Total Population (in thousands) <sup>(1)</sup>	78 529.4	83 429.6	84 339.1	85 042.7	
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24 and denominator age 15-64, %) <sup>(1) C</sup>	24.9	24.2	24.0	23.8	
3	GDP growth rate (%)	6.1	0.9	1.8	11.0	
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	6.9	6.4	6.7	5.6
		Industry	27.8	27.2	28.0	31.1
		Services	53.5	56.4	54.2	52.7
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	M.D.	4.3 <sup>5</sup>	M.D.	M.D.	
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	M.D.	12.4 <sup>5</sup>	M.D.	M.D.	
7	Adult Literacy (%) <sup>C</sup>	95.5	96.7	M.D.	M.D.	
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15-74) (%)	Low <sup>(2)</sup>	67.5	62.5	60.7	M.D.
		Medium <sup>(3)</sup>	18.3	20.0	20.5	M.D.
		High <sup>(4)</sup>	14.2	17.5	18.8	M.D.
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Total	36.4	28.7	26.7	M.D.
		Male	35.0	28.9	27.5	M.D.
		Female	37.6	28.6	25.8	M.D.
10	NET enrolment rates in secondary education (ISCED level 2-3) (%)	86.6	87.5	88.1	M.D.	
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%) <sup>C</sup>	49.0	42.5	39.4	M.D.	
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics, and science – PISA (%)	Reading	40.0	26.1 <sup>5</sup>	N.A.	N.A.
		Mathematics	51.4	36.6 <sup>5</sup>	N.A.	N.A.
		Science	44.5	25.2 <sup>5</sup>	N.A.	N.A.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	51.2	52.9	49.3	51.4
		Male	71.6	72.0	68.2	70.3
		Female	31.4	34.3	30.8	32.8

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%) <sup>c</sup>	Total	48.8	47.1	50.7	48.6
		Male	28.4	28.0	31.8	29.7
		Female	68.6	65.7	69.2	67.2
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	46.0	45.7	42.8	45.2
		Male	65.0	63.1	59.8	62.8
		Female	27.5	28.7	26.3	28.0
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15-74) (%)	Low <sup>(2)</sup>	41.6	40.7	37.3	37.0 <sup>c7</sup>
		Medium <sup>(3)</sup>	52.8	50.3	47.2	49.5 <sup>c7</sup>
		High <sup>(4)</sup>	71.5	69.0	66.0	67.0 <sup>c7</sup>
17	Employment by sector (%) <sup>c</sup>	Agriculture	20.4	18.1	17.6	M.D.
		Industry	27.2	25.3	26.2	M.D.
		Services	52.4	56.6	56.2	M.D.
18	Incidence of self-employment (%) <sup>c</sup>	39.1	31.5	30.2	M.D.	
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%) <sup>c</sup>	33.8	27.1	25.7	M.D.	
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15-74) (%)	Total	10.3	13.7	13.2	12.0 <sup>7c</sup>
		Male	9.2	12.4	12.4	10.7 <sup>7c</sup>
		Female	12.6	16.5	14.9	14.7 <sup>7c</sup>
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15-74) (%)	Low <sup>(2)</sup>	9.7	13.0	12.6	11.0 <sup>7c</sup>
		Medium <sup>(3)</sup>	11.3	15.6	15.0	13.5 <sup>7c</sup>
		High <sup>(4)</sup>	10.8	13.5	12.6	12.4 <sup>7c</sup>
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)	Total	18.5	25.2	25.1	22.6 <sup>c</sup>
		Male	16.5	22.4	22.5	19.4 <sup>c</sup>
		Female	22.2	30.3	29.9	28.7 <sup>c</sup>
23	Proportion of people aged 15-24 not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) (%)	Total	23.9	26.0	28.3	24.8
		Male	14.1	18.3	21.2	17.5
		Female	33.7	34.0	35.7	32.4
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Total	5.5	5.7	5.8	M.D.
		Male	5.6	5.7	6.0	M.D.
		Female	5.3	5.7	5.5	M.D.

	Indicator	2015	2019	2020	2021
25	Human Development Index	0.8	0.8	M.D.	M.D.

	Indicators	2015	2019	2020	2021	EU (2021b)
26	Share of early school leavers (% aged 18-24)	36.4	28.7	26.7		9.7
	<i>Female</i>	37.4	28.6	25.8		12.6
27	Share of those aged 20-29 low educated (ISCED 0-2)	45.8	39.4	37.0		14.8
	<i>Female</i>	48.5	39.3	36.3		12.7
28	Share of those aged 20-24 who attained ISCED levels 3-8	53.8	62.0	65.6		84.6
	<i>Female</i>	53.4	63.4	67.8		87.1
29	Share of those aged 25-34 high educated (ISCED 5-8)	26.5	34.1	36.2		41.2
	<i>Female</i>	25.5	34.2	36.8		46.8
30	Participation in formal education (% aged 15-29)	29.6	29.0	30.1		39.5
	<i>Female</i>	30.9	30.9	32.0		41.1
31	Participation in formal education and work (% aged 15-29)	11.2	10.5	9.3		15.2
	<i>Female</i>	7.3	7.0	6.1		15.7
32	Not in employment/education/training (NEETs) aged 15-29	27.9	29.5	32.0		13.1
	<i>Inactive</i>	22.0	20.9	24.1		8.2
	<i>Unemployed</i>	5.8	8.6	7.9		4.9
	<i>Male</i>	14.2	18.3	21.3		11.8
	<i>Male Inactive</i>	7.4	8.5	11.8		6.3
	<i>Male Unemployed</i>	6.8	9.8	9.5		5.5
	<i>Female</i>	41.6	40.8	42.8		14.5
	<i>Female Inactive</i>	36.7	33.4	36.6		10.2
	<i>Female Unemployed</i>	4.8	7.4	6.2		4.3
33	Youth employment rate (% aged 15-24)	34.1	33.1	29.2	32.2	32.7
	<i>Female</i>	23.0	22.6	19.2	21.2	30.3
34	Employment rate of tertiary graduates aged 20-34	61.9	57.8	53.0		79.6

	Indicators	2015	2019	2020	2021	EU (2021b)
35	Employment rate of ISCED 3-4 VET graduates aged 20-34	59.3	50.6	47.9		76.4
36	Employment rate (% aged 20-64)	53.9	53.8	51.0		73.1
	<i>Female</i>	32.5	34.4	32.0		67.7
37	Youth unemployment rate (% aged 15-24)	18.5	25.2	25.1	22.6	16.6
	<i>Female</i>	22.2	30.3	29.9	28.7	16.7
38	Unemployment rate (% aged 15-74)	10.3	13.7	13.2	12.0	7.0
	<i>Female</i>	12.6	16.5	14.9	14.7	7.4
39	Lifelong learning during past 4 weeks (% aged 25-64)	5.5	5.7	5.8		10.8
	<i>Low-educated (ISCED 0-2)</i>	2.7	2.8	2.7		4.3
	<i>Unemployed</i>	9.0	9.7	9.4		12.7



# KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

The European Commission (EC) pays special attention to youth, education, and innovation in Türkiye. Cooperation between Türkiye and the EU in science, technology and innovation has advanced. Türkiye and EU share the ambition and have the assets to design, deploy innovative technologies, and transform research and innovation outputs into industrial products.

Within the scope of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 431 projects have been carried out so far. The EUR 486 million programme, implemented with EU financial support, includes support ranging from women and youth employment to girls' enrolment. With projects ranging from promoting formal employment to providing lifelong learning opportunities, it has made a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of people, especially disadvantaged groups: [Publications – İnsan Kaynaklarının Geliştirilmesi Program Otoritesi \(ikg.gov.tr\)](#).

The increased participation of VET and university institutions in the EU Erasmus Programme and other EU Programmes has helped exchanges and cooperation among Türkiye and partners in Europe. Emphasis has been placed on the critical role of digital education and training in enabling innovation and technology transfer. Views of the industry on the future and the ongoing digital transformation have also been selected as an area of cooperation. Future opportunities for collaboration between academia and business, including through the activities of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) are in the pipeline.

As an eligible country, Türkiye is fully integrated into the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+). This will allow Türkiye to benefit from a wide range of budgetary guaranteed mechanisms that facilitate public and private investments. The recently established Türkiye investment platform (TIP) became the main vector for identifying and selecting investment opportunities that reflect the EFSD+ priorities - Green Deal, Global Gateways, Jobs and Growth. This new mechanism will aim to support innovative investments proposed by EU financial institutions in areas that include decarbonisation, digitalisation, access to finance, innovation and green investments.

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) will also underpin the EU's evolving relations with Türkiye, through support to people-to-people contacts, civil society, fundamental rights, the good functioning of the EU-Türkiye Customs Union and the green and digital agendas. For more detailed information on the programmes and support provided, see the [IPA III factsheet](#).

On 27 October 2021, the Commission and Türkiye signed three agreements granting association status to EU programmes for the period 2021-2027: *Horizon Europe*, the EU research and innovation programme; [Erasmus+](#), the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport; and the [European Solidarity Corps](#). Researchers, innovators, students, pupils, trainees, teachers, young people can now participate under the same conditions as participants from Türkiye and in partnership with EU Member States and Neighbourhood countries. Türkiye participates in the following programmes: [International cooperation with Türkiye](#); [Horizon Europe](#); [Europe's Global Approach to Research and Innovation](#); [Erasmus +](#); [European Solidarity Corps](#).

The EU Facility for Refugees in Türkiye provides EUR 6 billion in support to refugees (mostly from Syria) and host communities. In 2020, an additional EUR 535 million in humanitarian funding outside the Facility ensured the continuation of two Facility flagship programmes. In 2021, EUR 3 billion were provided to ensure the continuation of Facility support. The EU is supporting the socio-economic development and reforms in the enlargement region, including in Türkiye, with financial and technical assistance through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA).

In Türkiye, the European Bank for Reconstructions and Development (EBRD) focuses on strengthening financial resilience, fostering the knowledge economy, promoting inclusion and skills for

inclusion, and accelerating the shift to the green economy: for more information, see [‘The EBRD in Türkiye’](#).

The *International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Türkiye*, has a strong, visible and proactive presence in Türkiye by effectively engaging with the government, employers’ and workers’ organisations, and other international organisations to promote decent work for all, ensuring that the core ILO priorities, standards, interests, policies are promoted, and its experience is disseminated. For more information, see [‘About the ILO Office in Ankara \(ILO-Ankara\)’](#). Many programmes and studies on skills development programme have been provided by the ILO Office for Türkiye. The most recent is the Work-Based Learning Programme (locally known as ISMEP), which continues to create productive environments where everyone is protected and empowered through access to decent jobs. The ISMEP is currently implemented in Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Denizli, Gaziantep and Istanbul and has extended its cooperation in Ankara with the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality. Through ISMEP, Syrians under Temporary Protection and Turkish citizens receive technical and vocational training at their workplaces and are employed formally from the first day: [Applications started in Ankara for Work-Based Learning Programme \(ISMEP\) with Ankara Metropolitan Municipality \(ilo.org\)](#). All jobseekers aged 18 and above may apply to the ISMEP programme, with women, young people and persons with disabilities particularly encouraged to apply and supported with additional financial incentives.

The *Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)*, [OECD opens Istanbul Centre for Global Relations to support work with partner countries - OECD](#), opened a regional Centre focused on Global Relations in Istanbul, Türkiye in 2021. It is part of the OECD’s commitment to broaden the impact of its standards and recommendations beyond its 37 member countries. Co-operation with partner countries includes regional programmes in [Eurasia](#), [South East Europe](#), [the Middle East and North Africa](#), [Southeast Asia](#), [Latin America and the Caribbean](#), as well as the [OECD Development Centre](#). Through analytical work, conferences, capacity building and high-level meetings, it chairs multilateral co-operation, encourage regional collaboration, and offer guidance in areas like governance, transparency, adult skills, gender equality, and regional transport, energy, and digital infrastructure. The Centre will also contribute to advancing the implementation of the OECD’s Global Relations Strategy.

*United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)* through its ADAP focus addresses the needs of adolescents and young people. [Adolescent Development and Participation \(ADAP\) | UNICEF](#). UNICEF Türkiye, *Early Childhood Education project*, co-funded by the European Union and the Republic of Türkiye and led by the MoNE in close cooperation with UNICEF, The Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, UNICEF and the European Union reaffirm their support for early childhood education in Türkiye (<https://www.unicef.org/turkiye/en/press-releases/ministry-national-education-ministry-labor-and-social-security-unicef-and-european>).

*United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)* supports Türkiye’s Employment Agency (İŞKUR) in improving their services to enhance the labour market access of Syrians and host community members in sixteen provinces. [UNDP helps strengthening İŞKUR and increasing access to decent jobs | United Nations Development Programme](#), <https://www.undp.org/turkiye/news/%E2%80%98engineer-girls-turkey%E2%80%99-met-istanbul>

There are many UN, bilateral and EU country-by-country cooperation protocols on the skills agenda in Türkiye.

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