Analysis of the Situation of Children and Young People in Turkey
2011
Introduction and Executive Summary

Children in Society

Aim of the report: This report aims to describe the well-being of children in Turkey, to analyse how far they are able to enjoy the rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to contribute to the determination of policies and practices that will improve child well-being in the future.

The "big picture": Children do not live in separate worlds of their own. Their growth and development, and the opportunities and risks which they face, are determined by their parents, families and communities, by the institutions and professionals that educate and care for them, and by advertising, television and the internet. All these in turn operate under the influence of history, culture, politics, government, demographics, economics, and technology. This report seeks to examine the "micro" situation of children in the light of these wider "macro" issues.

Children and social change: The social environment is changing rapidly under the influence both of global trends and domestic dynamics. The population continues to grow, but the birth rate has slowed, and adolescents and young adults are increasingly forming the most important tranche of the population. Migration from rural areas to urban environments is well advanced, but not yet over. The economy boomed between 2002 and 2007, and again in 2010, creating job opportunities and permitting a general increase in private consumption and public services. In 2008-9, however, the economy was caught up in the global crisis, which interrupted the growth of output and welfare and highlighted the issue of unemployment. Amid all this change, some circumstances are remarkably persistent. These include a large measure of social stability, positive family values, and a widespread willingness to do good for children. But they also include political and social tensions, harmful traditions - and large socioeconomic disparities.

Child poverty: Turkey is an upper middle income country, and absolute poverty is very low by global standards. Only 0.2% of the population lives on less than $2.15 a day. As the economy recovers from the crisis, this percentage may fall further. From a longer-term perspective, the present generation has enjoyed much higher living standards than previous generations. Nevertheless, people's experiences of economic development in Turkey have varied. Informal employment, employment in small agricultural enterprises, seasonal work, unpaid family labour and tenuous forms of self-employment are common. Gender roles can be rigid, and three quarters of women are outside the workforce. Wider measures of poverty, based on income or consumption expenditures, point to substantial disparities. More than a sixth of the population lives below the nationally-determined poverty line. In rural areas, almost two thirds of the population falls below the line. Poverty is closely linked to irregular employment and low educational attainment.

Poverty can be particularly damaging for growing children: it can lead to malnutrition and illness, cause them to cut short their education and expose them to all forms of violence, exploitation and neglect. Poor children are likely to become poor adults. Yet the proportion of children suffering from poverty is considerably higher than the proportion of adults. Over a quarter of under-fifteens live below the national poverty line - and as many as 50% in rural areas. Children in large families, which are most common among low-income groups and in some regions, are especially likely to live in poverty. In 2009, many poor families reported cutting back on food due to the global crisis. The disadvantages and risks which many children face, and which are discussed later in the report, are determined to a large extent by economic inequalities. The education and health services seek to include all children, and a number of public institutions provide assistance to the poor in cash and kind. However, social protection expenditure for families and children is very low as a percentage of GDP.
The Childhood Experience

The childhood experience: Turkey still has a relatively young population. Approximately 22.6 million people, or 31 percent of the population, are under the age of 18. However, economic development, urbanisation and the education of girls have contributed to a decline in fertility, and the share of the 0-4 and 5-9 age-groups in the total population has started to fall. Most of Turkey’s boys and girls are cared for by their parents in mostly stable families. They receive adequate nutrition, basic health services and participate fully in education, at least at the primary level. Under-five mortality declined from 61 per 1,000 live births in 1998-2003 to 24 in 2003-2008, and child nutrition and the take-up of basic health services improved. Further improvements are to be expected, given the national level of economic development. Likewise, enrolment in primary education is now almost universal, eliminating a major source of disadvantage for poor children and discrimination against girls. The quality of children’s lives could be raised further with the aid of heightened sensitivity to child rights, especially in areas like violence against children and children’s right to participation, and continuing amelioration and expansion of all public services, including a broader, better-funded and more child-centred education system. Gender stereotyping imposes domestic roles and low expectations on girls, and affects their participation in education and their use of their free time. Disabled children may face difficulties due to economic and capacity constraints, gaps in provision, discrimination and/or issues of physical access.

Significant disparities: Some children - especially poorer children in rural and Eastern areas - are still missing out on the health, nutrition and education enjoyed by others. In 1999-2008, under-five mortality was 50 per 1,000 live births in the East and 43 in rural areas compared to a national average of 33. Full immunisation among two-year-olds is 60 percent in rural areas and in the East, which is 14 points below the national average. 20.9 percent of under-fives in the East are short for their age – twice the national average. More detailed data would undoubtedly also reveal important discrepancies from province to province and district to district. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of children of primary school age are still out of school, partly due to late starting, while hundreds of thousands are frequently absent and – particularly in the case of girls in grades 6-8 – may be in danger of dropping out. Underlying these disparities are geographical, economic and cultural factors. In remote, predominantly rural areas and fast-growing urban districts, the education and health services may be inadequately equipped and staffed.

The early years: More investment in early childhood care and development would improve children’s well-being and their educational achievement. It would also reduce inequality of opportunity in later life, which is currently being transferred from generation to generation. Parents are unaware about the importance of stimulating cognitive development in early childhood and do not read or play with them enough. Only parents of an estimated 3.5% of children are reached with parenting education. At the age of five, the majority of children are now attending preschool, but the ratios are much lower for younger age groups. While there is no comprehensive early child development policy encompassing adequate institutional arrangements, the government is committed to an ambitious expansion of pre-primary school education, initially for the 60-72-month age group, with the goal of 100 percent coverage by 2014. Success will depend on the allocation of resources, maintaining the quality of the education provided and above all ensuring access for the most disadvantaged groups.

Youth: Another key challenge facing Turkey is how to meet the special needs of adolescents and young people. This age group makes up a growing part of the population, and preparations are now under way for the development of a national youth policy under the leadership of the General Directorate for Youth and Sport. Almost 70 percent of children attend secondary schools, compared to under 50 percent a decade ago. However, school does not always guarantee that these children achieve a satisfactory level of general knowledge, acquire life and livelihood skills or enjoy sufficient opportunities for social, cultural, sporting and leisure activities. The incomes and educational level of parents tend to determine school performance, especially as many children attend fee-paying cramming schools (at the cost of their own leisure time) to prepare for the highly stressful university entrance examination. For school-leavers and university students, the prospect of unemployment is a serious concern: youth employment was 21.7 percent in 2010. Meanwhile, some 1.5 million children of secondary school age are out of school. Net secondary school enrolment rates vary from over 80 percent in the most fortunate provinces to about 30 percent in some mainly rural Eastern provinces. For girls, enrolment is only 66 percent compared to 72 percent for boys, and the discrepancy is much higher in certain provinces. Girls who do not attend secondary school are likely to be idle or engaged in domestic chores. Meanwhile, young people have alarmingly little knowledge about reproductive health, tobacco smoking is widespread - especially among boys - and abuse of alcohol and narcotics is not uncommon. Young people are not encouraged to participate in decision-making and have few opportunities to contribute to addressing the issues which they face.
Child Protection

**Issues and responses:** As in other countries, poverty, urbanisation and consumerism may be adding to the numbers of children who face risks such as street life, exploitative labour, contact with the law (as suspects or victims), violence or addictions. Recent years have also seen growing concern about sexual abuse of children, early marriage among girls, honour crimes/forced suicides, drug addiction, and the number of children who go missing. Many of these risks can best be reduced by lifting children out of poverty, improving the education and skills of both children and parents and raising the awareness of professionals and the general public about child rights. In addition, specific policies are also needed for prevention and intervention, based on detailed knowledge of the phenomena in question, adequately resourced, and supported by a solid legislative framework. Turkey is also responsible for upholding the rights of a significant number of foreign children within its jurisdiction, including migrant and asylum-seeker children and trafficked children.

**Child protection services:** Much of the responsibility for child protection falls upon the shoulders of the General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK). SHÇEK provides residential care for children who have no parents, or whose parents fail or are unable to look after them. The number of children in residential care is low compared to other countries in Turkey's region. In recent years, SHÇEK has reduced the number by more than a third to about 13,000 by supporting parents so that their children can live with them and promoting foster parenting – although an assessment of these programmes is not available. SHÇEK also provides: rehabilitation services for children who have been abused, engaged in street life or pushed into crime; training, support and activities for working children; family counselling services, and social assistance in cash and kind. In future, SHÇEK plans a major expansion of services for the disabled. Besides SHÇEK, the health sector, local administrations, NGOs and others have facilities or services for children with negative experiences. Capacity needs to be expanded and improved in order to ensure that all children and families in need are served. A model has been designed for coordination between all the sectors involved. An early identification system is envisaged involving all sectors, from health and education to justice and security, for identifying, referring and supporting especially vulnerable children.

**Justice for children:** The Judicial Reform Strategy of the Ministry of Justice pledges continuing efforts to improve the juvenile justice system in line with international documents, the best interests of the child and the principle that imprisonment should be a last resort. Despite numerous initiatives, more awareness and capacity, and better inter-agency coordination, will be needed to achieve this. As child courts are still only established in 33 out of the 81 provinces, a large proportion of child suspects are still tried in adult courts. In 2008, the average duration of trial for children was 414 days in child courts and 502 days in child heavy penalty courts, compared to 258 days in adult courts. Alternatives to detention may not be invoked as judges lack confidence in the effectiveness of the support and monitoring systems. All this results in very long pre-trial detention periods. As of January 2011, a total of 2,168 children, overwhelmingly boys, were deprived of their liberty nationwide. Close to 90% were in pre-trial detention centres. Conditions in detention vary and children are often held in children’s wings of adult prisons. Mechanisms for reintegrating children into society after their release from detention or custody are in need of improvement. As of May 2011, there were 7,179 children benefiting from probation services including alternative sentences and judicial control. Meanwhile, children who are victims of crimes often still face long and unpleasant legal and forensic procedures. More work needs to be done to prevent children from coming into contact with the law by alleviating child poverty and identifying and supporting children in difficult personal circumstances.

**Child labour:** The number of children in work has fallen sharply due to social trends, longer years of schooling and elimination programmes. Even so, there were 320,000 6-14 year-olds and 638,000 15-17 year-olds in work in 2006 – not counting children, mainly girls, excessively engaged in domestic chores. Moreover, some of the worst forms of child labour like street work and migrant agricultural work are persistent. The children involved may be missing out on education, leisure and opportunities for socialisation. Their future prospects are compromised and they are exposed to a wide range of risks from malnutrition, disease accidents and addictions to violence, street life and contact with the law. Causes of child labour include child poverty, socioeconomic and cultural factors and gaps in legislation and inspection. In 2008, a national multi-sectoral strategy for eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2015 was drawn up under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour Department of Child Labour. It focuses on: children working on the street; children engaged in heavy and dangerous work in small and medium-sized enterprises, and children in paid, non-family, migratory and temporary work in agriculture.

**Legislation and monitoring systems:** Turkey signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and ratified it in 1995. Turkey is also a signatory to several other international documents safeguarding child rights. The Civil Code and the Child Protection Law of 2005 reflect many of the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Constitution and other laws also protect children, but many amendments are desirable to guarantee the
rights of all children and ensure that their best interests are taken into account. Children’s rights to hold opinions and participate are not sufficiently recognised, and 15-17 year-olds are not always accorded the protection which applies to other children. Independent and continuous monitoring of the child rights situation is in its infancy. Although amendments made to the Constitution in 2010 paved the way for the establishment of an ombudsperson institution, and hence a child ombudsperson institution, legislation to this effect is still awaited. However, a parliamentary child rights monitoring committee was formed in 2008 and launched its website in 2009. While its status has still to be formalised, it aims to work closely with children and with professionals working with children. The child rights situation is also monitored, to some extent, through the international reporting process foreseen in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, for which SHÇEK is responsible, and the activities of NGOs.

**Partnerships for Children**

**Opportunities for partnership:** Partnerships and collaboration, involving not only governments but also the private sector and civil society, have come to play a central role in global development strategies. As a middle-income country and an EU candidate member, Turkey has many institutions and organisations with aims and/or resources that are complementary to those of the government for children. Turkey is also a member and/or partner of numerous international organisations. If all these cooperate efficiently towards common goals, duplication and confusion can be avoided, knowledge and know-how shared, and wider awareness and ownership of goals, policies and programmes secured. In these circumstances, it will be much easier to bring about sustainable improvements in the well-being of Turkey’s children. UNICEF is well placed to act as a convener and coordinator. Already, its programmes of cooperation with the government of Turkey involve international, private and non-government organisations as partners, in addition to multiple government agencies.

**Knowledge partners, civil society and the private sector:** Turkey’s universities and research centres have substantial research and implementation capacities, which are only just starting to be tapped for child rights purposes. Non-government agencies are already playing a role in advocacy for child rights, as well as in areas like social mobilisation, training programmes and service delivery, and this role is likely to increase. The Turkish National Committee for UNICEF raises funds for children, and the private sector has demonstrated its willingness to contribute in cash and kind to efforts for children. The potential of the media for raising awareness and disseminating information is not yet fully realised.

**International partnerships:** The EU, of which Turkey is a candidate member, is paying more and more attention to children and child rights, and monitors progress in this area through its annual progress reports. EU pre-accession funding is available to be used for the benefit of children in Turkey. The World Bank has competencies relevant to children in areas such as health, education, social policy, youth and early childhood development. Several UN agencies in Turkey are active in Turkey and their work is coordinated through formal mechanisms. The OECD is a potential partner for Turkey in the area of social protection, especially data systems. The Council of Europe has expertise in a number of relevant areas including good governance at the local level.

**South-South cooperation:** “South-South cooperation” is a major trend of recent years. It refers to the process whereby developing countries share their experiences and know-how with each other. As a middle-income country, Turkey has considerable practical knowledge from which other developing countries in its region and beyond may benefit in their development programmes and projects. Cooperation of this kind is already under way through bilateral technical assistance, the work of international organisations and other channels. Such cooperation can be enhanced by paying greater attention to adequate documentation and dissemination of the efforts being made in Turkey to improve child rights and child well-being.
Data Availability and Use

One of the inevitable limitations of this report is that it is based on the available data. As in other areas of government, the adoption and assessment of policies for securing children’s rights depends on the availability and correct interpretation of appropriate statistics.

Official data: As a member of the OECD and a subscriber to the IMF’s Special Data Dissemination Standards, Turkey makes much basic data available on a timely basis, especially on the economy. The Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) is the main state body responsible. Turkstat is a semi-independent institution with over 3,000 staff and a range of academic, international and other activities. Data gathered and published by Turkstat includes: national accounts and economic data; statistics on industry and business; agricultural and environment statistics, and social statistics. Social statistics cover population, demographics, education, culture, tourism, health, sports, housing, justice and politics, as well as household labour and budget surveys and a poverty study. Turkstat is constantly adding to the data series which it collects and publishes. As of 2008, it introduced a Survey of Income and Living Conditions, providing more data on living conditions, relative poverty and income distribution. In 2008-9, new surveys were introduced on health, health expenditures and causes of death. The first results of the 2011 Population and Housing Survey, conducted with a very large sample, are expected in late 2012. This survey will provide a more detailed picture than currently available of the workforce and employment, fertility, migration and its causes, causes of death among infants, children and adults, disability and homes and buildings. The survey is also designed to facilitate international comparisons.

In addition to Turkstat, numerous other public institutions, such as the Central Bank, the Treasury, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of National Education and the Social Security Board also regularly publish data in their own areas of competence.

Other data and surveys: Government agencies, universities, think-tanks, international financial institutions, UN agencies and NGOs also all carry out or sponsor surveys, collect and process data or publish reports from time to time, independently or in collaboration, in areas of interest to them where quantitative or qualitative data may not be available or may not be available in sufficient detail. These studies have led to the collection of valuable data on domestic violence, risk behaviour, family life and other issues. However, many topics relevant to children – what they do in their free time, how much money they have to spend, what they are afraid of or how they feel about themselves – have not yet been explored. Moreover, such studies are not usually done on a regular basis.

One major regular survey is the five-yearly Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) carried out by the Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies, which provides many of Turkey’s basic indicators in areas such as fertility, maternal care and infant and young child survival, health and nutrition. The results of the first national nutrition survey for 35 years conducted by the Ministry of Health were awaited in late 2011.
**International comparisons:** Comparisons of Turkish data and data from other countries are available through the OECD and the annual flagship reports of UN agencies including UNICEF's 'The State of the World’s Children' - although time lags may be long and data may not be strictly comparable. Data on Turkey is, however, sometimes missing, indicating that not all the data collected in other countries is yet collected in Turkey. This includes some data items which are acquired by UNICEF in some other countries through its Multi-Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS), but which are not covered by the DHS survey. Turkey takes part in the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) surveys and (although some questions are not asked) in the WHO’s Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) surveys.

**Detail and frequency gaps:** Data is not always sufficiently detailed, or collected as frequently as desirable. For example, poverty rates are calculated based on an annual Household Budget Survey, from which figures for child poverty can be derived – but only for the under-fifteen age group, which is out of line with the UN definition of children. Not all forms of poverty are taken into account. Social data is not usually published on a province-by-province or even a sub-region-by-sub-region basis (Annual data on the education system and employment are exceptions). Where data is disaggregated by rural-urban populations the same definition of the rural-urban divide is not always used. Turkstat has conducted child labour surveys - which provide little detail - only once every seven years, and has conducted only one disability survey. Turkey has participated only once in the European ESPAD school survey on addictive behaviour. For political reasons, data is very rarely disaggregated by ethnic origin or mother-tongue.

**Making data available:** Data collected by institutions other than the Turkish Statistical Agency (Turkstat) may not be published, or made widely available via the Internet, or may be published with a long delay. Children may not be disaggregated from adults or girls from boys. Definitive, timely information about judicial proceedings or accidents involving children, for example, is not readily available. Even the Government’s regular report to the UN on Turkey’s progress towards the Millennium Development Goals has been delayed. Data obtained through the Ministry of National Education e-school database is not yet available to the public. The Ministry of Health has information about health services, public health interventions and outcomes which is not regularly shared with the public. Sometimes data only becomes public knowledge when it is reported in the planning documents of the Ministry for Development or in answers to parliamentary questions. Where data is made available, it may not be well explained or presented. Reasons for these deficiencies may include lack of capacity, the unreliability of the data or wariness about stepping into Turkstat’s field of responsibility. A desire to avoid scrutiny or criticism may also contribute to the non-publication or late publication of administrative data or survey results. Fiscal transparency is problematic at the national level and very limited at the local level.

**Data literacy:** There is a need for greater critical awareness about data at all levels. On the one hand, mistrust of the data produced is commonplace; on the other, politicians, columnists and a range of professionals and interest groups commonly cite data selectively, or simply from hearsay, or make use of data which is out of date. In these circumstances, it is hard to say that policy-making or public debate is based on objective knowledge. This requires improvement not only in the supply of data but also in the demand for it and the ways in which it is used, analysed and re-presented by academics, NGOs, the media and others.
The economy is open to direct and financial investment, and closely integrated with and influenced by the European, Western and global economies. The private sector accounts for the great majority of output and employment, and there is a "working market economy" by EU criteria. The IMF and World Bank have played an important role in policy-making, with almost unbroken IMF tutelage between 1998 and 2008. The economy has been characterised by boom-bust cycles and volatility. Most recently, in 2008-9, Turkey felt the impact of the global financial economic crisis. This led to GDP growth of only 0.7 percent in 2008 and a contraction of 4.8 percent in 2009. It lifted employment for the 2009 calendar year to 3.5 million or 14.0 percent and forced households with children to cut their expenditures due to reduced earnings and lost jobs. Informal employment, employment in small agricultural enterprises, seasonal work, unpaid family labour and tenuous forms of self-employment are common. Most women are outside the workforce.

Population over 15 by occupation, 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'000s</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>'000s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>52,541</td>
<td>25,801</td>
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<td>IN WORKFORCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Employed</td>
<td>22,594</td>
<td>16,170</td>
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<td>---paid employee</td>
<td>13,762</td>
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<td>---employer</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>1,120</td>
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<td>---self-employed</td>
<td>4,548</td>
<td>3,725</td>
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<td>---unpaid family worker</td>
<td>3,083</td>
<td>823</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Unemployed</td>
<td>3,046</td>
<td>2,088</td>
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<td>OUT OF WORKFORCE</td>
<td>26,901</td>
<td>7,544</td>
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<td>-available for work but not seeking</td>
<td>2,013</td>
<td>878</td>
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<tr>
<td>-employed only seasonally</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>-engaged in housework</td>
<td>11,914</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-in education/training</td>
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<td>2,210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-retired</td>
<td>3,577</td>
<td>2,847</td>
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<tr>
<td>-old, inform etc.</td>
<td>3,394</td>
<td>1,238</td>
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<tr>
<td>-other</td>
<td>1,817</td>
<td>355</td>
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</table>

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat)
**Disparities and poverty:** As one would expect of an upper middle income country, Turkey displays a low level of absolute poverty by global standards. However, Turkey has a high level of inequality – at least by comparison with most countries in Europe and many in Asia. Accordingly, there is a considerable level of poverty within the country, which is mostly concentrated in rural areas, underdeveloped regions (mostly in the East) and poor urban districts, including those mostly inhabited by recent migrants. In 2009, the proportion of the population living in food and non-food poverty was as high as 18.08 percent. For rural areas, the figure was a striking 38.69 percent. Turkstat’s poverty studies also show that poverty is closely linked to irregular employment (casual day labour and marginal self-employment) and low educational attainment of parents. Those in irregular employment seem to be at greater risk of poverty than those actually unemployed. With respect to gender, the food and non-food poverty rate for 2009 was put at 17.10 percent for men and 19.03 percent for women. However, the data is conducted on the basis of households, not individuals. In practice, female members of households may be disadvantaged or may make most sacrifices when it comes to meeting dietary requirements and other basic needs and to allocating household resources in general.

**Percentage of poor individuals by various measures of poverty (all ages)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
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<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<td>Food poverty</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.54</td>
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<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.06</td>
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<td>--rural</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; non-food poverty</td>
<td>29.96</td>
<td>28.12</td>
<td>25.60</td>
<td>20.50</td>
<td>17.81</td>
<td>17.79</td>
<td>17.11</td>
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<td>--urban</td>
<td>21.95</td>
<td>22.30</td>
<td>16.57</td>
<td>12.83</td>
<td>9.31</td>
<td>10.36</td>
<td>9.38</td>
<td>8.86</td>
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<tr>
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<td>34.48</td>
<td>37.13</td>
<td>39.97</td>
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<td>31.98</td>
<td>34.80</td>
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<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
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<td>0.03</td>
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<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below $2.15 per day*</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.49</td>
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<td>1.41</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>0.22</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.37</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>--rural</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>0.63</td>
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<td>Below $4.30 per day*</td>
<td>30.30</td>
<td>23.75</td>
<td>20.89</td>
<td>16.36</td>
<td>13.33</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>6.83</td>
<td>4.35</td>
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<tr>
<td>--urban</td>
<td>24.62</td>
<td>18.31</td>
<td>13.51</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>4.40</td>
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* At purchasing power parity. ** Based on 50 percent of median
consumption expenditure.

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute – Turkstat: Poverty Study 2009

[1] Turkey had an Atlas method GNI per capita at purchasing power parity (PPP) of $13,500 in 2009, according to the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI). On this basis, Turkey places 56th in the world - behind the developed Western countries, the richest countries of Asia, some oil-producing countries, the central European countries, Russia, Mexico and Argentina, but ahead of most Balkan countries, Iran, Brazil, South Africa, Kazakhstan or Ukraine. From another perspective, Turkey's GNI per capital at PPP in 2009 was 55 percent higher than the world average, but still only 39 percent of the figure for the euro-zone.

[2] These figures are based on the main national poverty line and data from the annual Household Budget Surveys. The main national poverty line relates to "food and non-food poverty". This is based on the income which is required in order to ensure both an adequate dietary intake and to meet other basic needs such as housing. In order to meet its targets for 2015 under the Millennium Development Goals, Turkey needs to reduce the proportion of people living below the national poverty line to 13.5 percent (and also to raise the 9.0 percent of household consumption expenditures made by the poorest quintile of the population to 11.0 percent).

[3] The figures are often assumed to underestimate unemployment because the number of those who are excluded from the workforce, and hence from the unemployment figure, because they are not actively seeking work even though they are available to start work is very high.

Children in Poverty

Available data: According to Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The Convention obliges governments to help families and guardians who are unable to provide for their children's needs, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing. This is also an investment in the future of the community and the country. Yet in most countries, including many EU countries, children are worse affected by poverty than adults. In Turkey, the gap is striking. In 2009, the proportion of under-15s living in food and non-food poverty was 25.77 percent - 7.69 points higher than the general poverty rate. This means that 4.9 million under-fifteens (and perhaps 5.8 million under-eighteens) were living below the national poverty line. Poverty among under-fifteens was 13.71 percent in urban areas and a disturbing 50.15 percent in rural areas\(^5\). Meanwhile, current OECD data for relative poverty among children suggests that child poverty in Turkey is the highest in the OECD, at 24.6 percent, which is almost twice the OECD average\(^6\).
Poverty is more common among children than among adults. Over a quarter of under-fifteens live below the national poverty line - and as many as 50% in rural areas. Children in large families are most likely to live in poverty.

Poverty damages children's present health and happiness, their future prospects and the chances of their own children in the next generation. Poor children are especially at risk from all child rights deprivations from infant mortality to malnutrition, low educational attainment, and deprivation of all child rights deprivations from infant mortality to malnutrition, low educational attainment, and deprivation of all child rights deprivations from infant mortality to malnutrition, low educational attainment, and deprivation of all child rights deprivations from infant mortality to malnutrition, low educational attainment, and deprivation of all child rights deprivations from infant mortality to malnutrition, low educational attainment, and deprivation of all child rights deprivations.
Large, poor families:

Children are poor not only because their parents’ incomes are low but also because households with several children are less likely to be able to provide for their basic needs than smaller households. There is a strong correlation between poverty and large household size, which is mainly a function of the number of children. People living in households with 5-6 members are more than twice as likely to be below the national poverty line as people living in households with 1-2 or 3-4 members. The likelihood almost doubles again for people in households with 7 or more members, 40.05 percent of whom were poor in 2008 (54.06 percent in rural areas). Households are generally largest in the Southeast and parts of Eastern Turkey, in rural areas in many central, northern, eastern and southeastern provinces, and in those neighbourhoods of cities throughout the country which are inhabited by recent migrants or other relatively under-educated populations.

Locating poverty

The prevalence of poverty and deprivation in Turkey is closely related to location:

- Figures for per capita income in the 81 provinces were last published in 2001, when per capita GDP in the richest province (Kocaeli) was eleven times higher than in the poorest (Muş). Recently-published figures for the 26 “level 2” statistical regions show that per capita national income in 2008 ranged from US$14,591 in Istanbul to US$3,419 in the region comprising Van, Muş, Bitlis and Hakkari.
- In 2008, average monthly consumer expenditure per household was TL1,808 in urban areas but only TL1,183 in rural areas, where the majority of poor children live.
- The 2008 Demographic and Health survey shows that almost a quarter of rural households still use unimproved sanitation facilities.
- In 2010, the employment rate (the proportion of people of working age actually working in any kind of economic activity, including irregular and unpaid work) averaged 41.2 percent for the country as a whole but was only 29.1 percent in the region comprising Şanlıurfa and Diyarbakır and 31.8 percent in the Mardin-Batman- Şırnak-Siirt region.
- As of January 2011, Social Security Board (SGK) records put the number of social security contributors – a proxy for the number of persons in decent employment – at under 12 percent of the population in thirteen out of 81 provinces. All these provinces were in the Southeast and East, where the proportion of children in the population is high, due to high fertility, and where opportunities for regular work are limited. In Ankara, by contrast, the figure was 30.2 percent. The number of persons drawing a pension from the social security agency constituted 2.2 percent...
of the population of Şırnak but 23.1 percent of the population of Zonguldak.

Information specifically related to children is more limited. Nevertheless, it is clear that children’s chances in life are closely related to the places where they are born and grow up:

- In 2003, the only year for which official poverty analysis gave a detailed breakdown by statistical regions (NUTS-2), the regions with the highest absolute numbers of children living in poverty were Şanlıurfa/Diyarbakir, Mardin/Batman/Şırnak/Siirt, Van/Muş/Bitlis/Hakkari and Samsun/Tokat/Çorum/ Amasya. In some provinces, rural and urban districts - and in many villages - it is likely that the great majority of the child population is living in poverty by national standards.
- The infant mortality rate was 16 per 1,000 live births in the West of Turkey and 39 in the East, according to the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey. The rate of stunting among young children was 7.6 percent in the West and 21.0 percent in the East.
- The Ministry of National Education’s formal education statistics for 2010-11 show that there are geographical discrepancies in participation rates and achievement at all levels of education. In a few eastern provinces, net primary school enrolment is still below 95 percent. In several provinces in this region, under 40% of children of secondary school age are enrolled in secondary education. In some western provinces, by contrast, net enrolment is over 80%. Disadvantage arising from location affects girls more than boys. In provinces like Ankara, Izmir and Antalya, net secondary school enrolment is higher among girls than among boys, but in the eastern province of Siirt it is only 27.2 percent for girls compared to 47.4 percent for boys; in Agri it is 20.3 percent for girls and 32.9% for boys.

Disaggregated data is often available for broad regions, or for urban and rural areas, but is less frequently available on a province-by-province basis. Yet observation also suggests important differences in levels of poverty and deprivation within regions, within provinces, and especially between the richer and poorer districts of cities. Mapping out the many dimensions of child poverty and deprivation at the level of provinces, districts and neighbourhoods would make it possible to improve the lives of whole communities and to measure progress and assess the effectiveness of policy initiatives more accurately.

Regional (and rural) development is one of the five axes of the Ninth Development Plan for 2007-2013. In addition to the regular funding and activities of local administrations and municipalities, several strategies and projects have been adopted for the purpose of regional development. Among these are the Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP), the East Anatolia Project (DAP), the Eastern Black Sea Project (DOKAP), the Zonguldak-Bartin-Karabuk and Yeşilirmak Basin regional development projects, and the National Rural Development Strategy and village support (Köydes) and municipality support (Beldes) programmes. Incentives are available for private investment in underdeveloped regions. From now on, regional development agencies are expected to play an important role in regional development initiatives in all parts of the country. However, these initiatives do not highlight the issue of child poverty.

Source: All data from Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) unless otherwise indicated.

**Consequences of child poverty:** Poverty affects children in different ways from adults – and the impact is often worse. Poverty can impair children’s chances of surviving infancy, enjoying a balanced diet, and avoiding frequent diseases and infections. It is poor boys and girls who are most frequently disabled, stunted or chronically ill. They
are unable to grow to their full potential due to inadequate nutrition and lack of early stimulus. Poor children are the least likely to benefit from quality child care or to attend preschool. They may also have difficulty reaching school, paying for educational materials and services, or finding a place to study. They may have to work early, with all the attendant risks. They may be stigmatised or excluded from play and other social activities. Their parents may not be able to care for them and support them well, and they may be more exposed than other children to accidents, abuse, street life or conflict with the law. Child poverty is therefore a cause of many of the disparities and risks described in the following pages. Moreover, the impact of child poverty is inter-generational. The problems which children growing up in poverty face, especially with respect to education, leave them unprepared for adult life. They are unable to find regular employment and may lack the knowledge and skills needed to obtain public services or care for their children. As a result, their own children are likely to grow up in poverty.

**Households, boys and girls:** The national indicators of child poverty are derived from studies of adult poverty and are based on household consumption levels. This results in a focus on the household rather than the needs of the individual child, equating children who live in poor households with poor children. This can be misleading as children’s needs are different from those of adults. Policy-makers tend to assume that increases in household income will improve wellbeing for all family members, including children, to the same extent. In Turkey, the general public does not regard child poverty as a specific issue distinct from poverty in general, and even for the authorities and NGOs, “child poverty” remains a new topic. In practice, however, children may not benefit sufficiently or equally from household consumption. The needs of girls and boys in poor households may not be met to the same extent.

**Housing and other variables:** Another disadvantage of using household-based data to measure child poverty is that current household income or expenditure may not fully reflect the extent to which children are deprived of basic needs such as adequate housing, water and sanitation, access to satisfactory nutrition, public services and information, and opportunities to participate. With respect to housing, the proportion of the population with access to safe drinking water in Turkey is put at 97 percent and the proportion of the population with access to safe sanitation is 88 percent. These figures rise to 98 percent and 96 percent respectively in urban areas. In these respects, Turkey has better indicators than most middle-income countries. The spread of urban infrastructure, migration to urban areas, the transformation of shanty-town areas into modern settlements and the trend towards smaller families are all likely to be improving housing conditions for many children. For the poor, however, the picture may be different. In rural areas, the quality of water and sanitation is relatively low. Power supply may be intermittent. Overcrowding is common in the Southeast and some other rural and urban areas. In urban areas, the cost of rent and utilities may not be affordable. Buildings including shanty-town dwellings and older, unimproved urban housing may have significant structural deficiencies, harbour pests or be heated unsafely. Densely-populated urban zones are noisy and polluted, and lack spaces for children while heavy traffic causes accidents and restricts their movements. More research needs to be done on housing and other factors that may contribute to child poverty, instead of relying solely on received data for current household income or consumption. “Deprivation thresholds” based on criteria such as persons per room, access to safe water, experience of hunger or lack of basic household durables can be used to measure child poverty, and children may be asked for their subjective perceptions.
This information comes from the annual poverty studies conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat), based on household income/consumption expenditure/budget surveys.

OECD Family Database: www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database

Analysis of the raw data collected by Turkstat in 1994 and 2002-6 carried out by a team led by Assoc. Prof. Hakan Yılmaz as part of ongoing research for UNICEF.

“Children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic health-care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of the society,” declared the UN General Assembly in 2007(http://www.unicef.org/media/media_38003.html).

Save the Children UK: The Child Development Index, 2008 (The Index places Turkey 48th out of 137 countries).


Information is collected through the five-yearly Demographic and Health Survey conducted by the Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies.

A study on poverty and utilities entitled "Taking Poverty into Consideration for Public Utilities Governance" was published in March 2009 by UNDP and Hacettepe University’s Center for Market Economy and Entrepreneurship (PEGEM).
Limited safety net: Article 41 of the Constitution gives the State the duty of protecting the family, especially women and children, and Article 61 obliges it to protect the disabled, the elderly, and children in need of protection. One of the five key axes of Turkey’s National Development Plan for 2007-2013 envisages "Strengthening Human Development and Social Solidarity". In practice, responsibility for social protection has been shared between a wide variety of public institutions including social security institutions, public foundations, national budget agencies and local administrations. These run a wide range of programmes for the retired, the ill, the jobless and the poor.

Some aspects of health and education policies have also helped to counter poverty. Nevertheless, the amounts and coverage of social protection policies are limited. Budget analysis shows that social spending, although rising, is still low by European standards at about 17 percent of GDP and that it consists overwhelmingly of health and education expenditure and – despite the relatively young population - contributory pensions for those who have been formally employed. The Government’s Annual Programme for 2012 states that social transfers have less impact on poverty than in EU countries. In 2009, it explains, relative poverty was 26.5% before transfers and 23.8% after transfers, compared to 42.3% and 16.3% respectively in the 27 EU countries. Social protection expenditures specifically targeting families and children are especially low, and there are no programmes of child benefit or childcare support. This is clearly not an adequate response to the high level of child poverty.

The provision of social assistance/protection has been fragmented and does not necessarily ensure that the poorest children benefit.
In addition to the low amounts spent, the social policy set-up has been criticised on the grounds that it is disparate and uncoordinated, making it difficult for administrators to assess its effectiveness in reaching the needy and pulling them out of poverty, or for potential beneficiaries to know what it available. Assistance may not be provided on objective grounds and the overall logic has been described as “not that of a state-citizen relationship but rather of benevolence.”

**New social policy trends and child poverty:** Aware of the deficiencies of the existing system, the government is in the process of consolidating some of the existing social protection mechanisms and establishing objective criteria within a more rights-based perspective. Emphasis is being placed on the careful selection of the persons in need of assistance and on labour market inclusion, to avoid spiralling costs and a culture of dependency. Already much work has been done to consolidate databases, and implementation of the new approach was due to begin in 2012. The new approach does not, however, include a clear commitment to increasing the overall level of social assistance. Moreover, the emphasis is on households rather than individual members, and there has been very little debate about the likely impact of the new policies in terms of eliminating child poverty. In many European countries, by contrast, child benefit schemes are universal. In 2007, agreement was reached for the development of a national strategic plan to combat child poverty, along EU lines, under the leadership of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, but no progress was recorded.

In addition to income support, child poverty can be addressed through sectoral policies. As already noted, the education, health and social services sectors already have policies which favour children or disadvantaged children. Anti-poverty policies can also be integrated into policies for early childhood development (ECD) – for example by giving disadvantaged children priority access to professional childcare and preschool education services. In view of the importance of the early years for children’s future prospects in education and work, ECD represents a first opportunity to combat the inheritance of poverty by young children.

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[15] Included under this heading, alongside targets and strategies concerning education, health and culture, are the goals of “Improving Income Distribution, Social Inclusion and the Fight against Poverty” and “Increasing the effectiveness of the social security system”. Together with an emphasis on sustainable growth and on employment and education, the Plan foresees more efficient and redistributive transfer policies and social security restructuring. Reflecting a commonly-held concern, it adds that “Services to reduce poverty will be in a manner of preventing the emergence of a poverty culture and encouraging the poor to become producers.” The Plan addresses regional development separately.

[16] See Appendix 1 for an overview of social assistance programmes.

[17] According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat), 14.6 percent of households (mostly in low or very low income brackets) received some form of economic assistance in 2008 (other than social security system pensions). Of these households, 59 percent received support from relatives, neighbours and similar people, 30 percent from the Social Assistance and Solidarity institutions and 21 percent from municipalities. 52 percent of the households received cash, 33 percent food, 31 percent fuel, 12 percent rent assistance, 9 percent clothing and 4 percent other forms of assistance.


[19] In a budget monitoring guide for civil society organisations, researchers from Istanbul Bilgi University have attempted a rough calculation of social protection spending for children based on information obtained through various channels from relevant national government agencies. (Nurhan Yentürk/Ayşe Beyazova: Çocukun Korunmasına Yönelik Harcamaları İzleme Kılavuzu [Monitoring Guide for Expenditure on the Protection of Children], Istanbul Bilgi University, CSO Education and Research Unit, December 2009). They were able to identify expenditure equating to 0.69% of GDP for 2008, rising to a maximum of 1.03% of GDP when assumptions about missing data are included. This calculation, however, is not based on a rigorous classification of public finance and includes some health and justice spending (but not education expenditure).

[20] Prof. Ayşe Buğra, Prof. Çağlar Keyder, Ilgın Erdem: Social Assistance in Turkey – for a policy of minimum income support conditional on socially beneficial activity. The authors argued for the abolition of most of the existing social assistance schemes, especially those involving in-kind assistance. They proposed instead an extension of non-contributory old-age pensions, an increase in the amount of the conditional cash transfers provided to poor families taking up education and health services, the extension of this scheme to cover all children below the poverty line, and the introduction of a policy of income support conditional on socially
beneficial activity. Hande Hacımahmutoğlu states in a recent evaluation of the social assistance system (Türkiye'deki Sosyal Yardım Sisteminin Değerlendirilmesi [An Evaluation of the Social Assistance System in Turkey], Expert Thesis, State Planning Organisation General Directorate for Social Sectors and Coordination, Ankara 2009) that while social assistance programmes are run by various institutions, these are generally complementary, with the exception of overlaps between the assistance provided by the municipalities and by the SYDF system. She argues that there is no need for a major overhaul of the system. Nevertheless, she too underlines the need for some changes. She speaks of the need to structure social assistance in a way which supports employment by providing vocational education and support in seeking and finding work to the beneficiaries of social assistance, by requiring them to take part in temporary socially beneficial work and by giving them incentives to enter the labour market. She suggests that minimum income support should be provided regularly as a right, that the level of support should be based on family size and that this kind of support should be conditional on children of school age attending school. She also calls for the establishment of an information network for communication and coordination among the implementing agencies, for more effective “one-stop” procedures for applying for social assistance, and for greater transparency on the part of municipalities. Hacımahmutoğlu underlines that special attention should be paid to the most vulnerable groups including large families and children. She argues that one of the most important aims of social policy in Turkey should be to ensure that children and young people are brought up in the best possible way so as to boost human capital.


[23] A recent World Bank Europe and Central Asia Region Human Development Report entitled “Turkey: Expanding Opportunities for the Next Generation – A report on life chances” (February 2010) uses simulations to argue the case for an increase in currently low public investment in ECD as a key intervention for attacking poverty and interrupting the intergenerational transmission of inequity. The report is also valuable for its discussion of the origins of various dimensions of inequity, the way it is transferred from parents to children and children to grandchildren, and its consequences for health and education outcomes such as low birthweight, iodine deficiency, stunting, incomplete immunisation, access to education and educational achievement.

Appendix: Social Policy Institutions and Programmes

Responsibility for social policy has until recently been shared between several public institutions with varying status. These include the social security institutions, which are responsible for old age, survivor, sickness and disability pensions and certain other benefits, as well as for general health insurance. The social security institutions are funded by contributions from active members and their deficits are met out of the state budget. They also provide some benefits, notably small pensions for some 1.2m elderly, infirm and disabled people without any other means of support, which are not linked to contributions and are funded directly from the state budget. The extra-budgetary Unemployment Fund (IF), funded through employer and employee contributions, is responsible for some employment-related schemes and for the payment of unemployment compensation, although this compensation is limited and (like pensions) paid only to those formerly in regular employment. Parents benefit from income tax allowances and statutory maternity/paternity leave. However, these benefits are modest and by nature available only to those in regular paid employment.

Aside from the social security institutions, the main provider of social assistance and services has been the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Solidarity (SYDGM), together with the extra-budgetary Social Solidarity and Assistance Promotion Fund (SYDTF), which it manages, and the provincial and district level Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDVs). These institutions (a) provide food aid to people in need before the religious fests, (b) distribute coal for heating (The coal is provided by state-owned mining companies and the cost is reclaimed by the budget), (c) provide cash or in-kind assistance to poor people for the repair and renovation of low-quality housing, (d) provide daily hot food in soup kitchens in poor areas and (e) conduct - in cooperation with NGOs and professional organizations, and making use of EU grants – various projects in areas like vocational training and job creation. The same institutions are responsible for the conditional cash transfers (CCT) provided to poor mothers on condition that (a) they have regular check-ups during pregnancy and for their young children, or (b) they send their children to school regularly. From its instigation in 2003 up to March 2008, the CCT programme was financed with the support of the World Bank under its Social Risk Mitigation Project. The transfers are now being funded by the government. The Social Assistance and Solidarity institutions also provide or finance some specific health and education needs including health expenditures of disabled people with no social security

A more comprehensive child benefit system could lift many children out of poverty. However, the social policy debate revolves largely around the high cost of pensions and the high level of unemployment. Children are largely absent from it.
coverage, school transport for disabled children, schoolbooks, school clothes, school stationery, school lunches and board and accommodation.

Other national organisations providing social assistance and services include the General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK), the General Directorate for Foundations, the Department for Penitentiary Workshops (Ministry of Justice), the Istanbul Poor House (“Dar-ül Aceze” – Ministry of the Interior) and the Department of Disaster Relief (Ministry of Public Works and Settlements). In addition to children’s homes a wide range of protection services for children, families, the disabled and others, SHÇEK provides benefits in cash and kind to support foster parenting, or to help families to look after children at home rather than placing them in institutions. Administrative changes in 2011 required the transfer of SHÇEK’s duties to local governments and to the new Ministry for the Family and Social Policies (See below).

State policies in the areas of education and health can also be regarded as playing a role in supporting poor families, and particularly in reducing or mitigating child poverty in the wider sense. Mother-and-child and community health services, and primary and secondary education in state schools, are free of charge (although the quality of provision may be limited or may vary to the disadvantage of poorer families). The state pays the general health insurance contributions of poor people including children under the so-called “green card” scheme.

At the local level, municipalities and (outside municipal boundaries) special provincial administrations (SPAs) are involved in providing various kinds of support for the poor.[1]

Reform efforts

The government has acknowledged that the social services and assistance system is in need of improvement if those in need are to be reached and supported equitably, and is aware of the need for better data collection, objective measures and standards, enhanced cooperation between institutions and more qualified personnel. Under the heading “Increasing the efficiency of the social security system”, the Government’s Annual Programme for 2011 states that the “primary objective is to equip the social security system with a structure which covers the entire population, which can respond to the evolving needs of the society, which has financial viability and an efficient supervision mechanism, and which can offer high-quality services.” The Programme further pledges that “In order to ensure that social services and assistance are provided in line with the principles of equality, social justice, efficiency and effectiveness, an identification mechanism which runs on objective criteria will be established to identify the individuals in need of social services and assistance, and communication and cooperation will be ensured among the institutions involved in the system. The lack of qualified and experienced staff in the field of social services and assistance will be eliminated and the quality of services will be raised.”

Some steps are already being taken along these lines. The data available to the SYDGM has been much improved, and the various institutions have begun to share information. In 2011, the SYDGM was due to begin trial implementation of a scoring formula for establishing objective criteria in the system. At the same time, efforts are being made to prevent the beneficiaries of the system from becoming dependent on social assistance through an Action Plan for Linking Social Assistance System with Employment adopted in 2010. This plan envisages that individuals who benefit from social assistance but are capable of working should be registered with the employment agency ISKUR, and should be able to participate in vocational training programs without loss of benefit. An Integrated Social Assistance Services Project is foreseen, which is likely to absorb the education and health-linked supports for children, and to link social assistance and social services provided to households in difficulties.

A decree-law published on June 8, 2011 established a Ministry for the Family and Social Policy, with general directorates for: the Family and Social Services; Child Services; the Status of Women; Services for the Disabled and the Elderly, and Social Assistance. The Ministry will effectively take over the responsibilities formerly carried out by several general directorates and other institutions – namely: SHÇEK; the Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People (ÖZIDA); the Prime Ministry General Directorate for the Status of Women; the Prime Ministry General Directorate for Family and Social Research; the SYDGM, and the Social Security Board’s Non-Contributory Payments General Directorate.

[1] Both municipalities and SPAs cooperate with public and private foundations in this context. Legislation encourages them to work in collaboration with NGOs and professional organizations as well. Social assistance at the local level takes forms such as: providing meals during Ramadan; hand-outs of food and coal (including from “food banks”, which benefit from tax deduction); ad hoc cash assistance in personal emergencies; the provision of school
uniforms, stationery and scholarships to schoolchildren; assistance to families of poor soldiers or those killed on duty; mass circumcision and wedding ceremonies; second-hand clothes markets; vocational training and handicrafts courses (mostly for women, coordinated with Ministry of National Education adult education units); course in topics like family planning and combating domestic violence; provision of micro-credits (by SPAs), and the construction and maintenance of community centres and other public buildings.


Appendix: Budget for Social Protection

The ratio of total public social expenditures, broadly defined, to GDP varies considerably from country to country, depending on the nature of the education, health and pension systems. In Turkey, it is around 17 percent, which is quite low by comparison with the member countries of the EU, which Turkey aspires to join. In some European countries, like France and Sweden, the ratio is 25-30 percent, and the average for the OECD countries is 19.3 percent.25

The breakdown of public social expenditures is given in the Annual Programme of the government for 2012. This shows that public social protection expenditures – which do not include education and health – amount to about 8 percent of GDP. However, these expenditures are overwhelmingly dedicated to pensions, just as – if not more than - in most developed countries. This is a striking situation in a country which still has a relatively young population and where 31 percent of citizens are children.

Public Social Expenditures
(Ratios to GDP, percent)

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<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Programme, 2012

Rather than increasing social spending, and especially investment in its poor children, Turkey is trying to be more efficient by targeting social assistance more carefully.

Public expenditure on welfare and combating poverty remains modest, in spite of the plethora of institutions and forms of assistance. This is because of the small amounts of almost all of the benefits in question. The Annual Programme for 2012 puts the ratio of "total public social assistance payments" to GDP at 1.18 percent as of 2010, compared to 1.37 percent in 2009, a year of negative GDP growth, and 1.03 percent in 2008.27 The Programme acknowledges that "Although social protection expenditures have increased, issues like social exclusion, poverty and income disparities remain to be important."

Social assistance expenditures by national institutions (million lira)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elderly and disabled benefits</td>
<td>1,266,174 2,018,629</td>
<td>1,321,373 2,366,527</td>
<td>1,363,670 2,562,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHCEK Monthly payments to families with children in need</td>
<td>30,909 59,300</td>
<td>35,756 78,266</td>
<td>35,298 94,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home care</td>
<td>113,000 399,899</td>
<td>204,652 959,303</td>
<td>284,595 1,567,245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly payments to orphans/disabled in need</td>
<td>4,433 13,728</td>
<td>3,629 13,425</td>
<td>3,662 13,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free meals</td>
<td>149,530 98,005</td>
<td>137,100 88,909</td>
<td>21,746 17,074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment for poor patients in Vakıf Gureba hospital</td>
<td>4,935 726</td>
<td>6,975 1,068</td>
<td>7,414 1,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships for primary/secondary education students in need</td>
<td>10,000 4,555</td>
<td>10,000 3,756</td>
<td>10,000 2,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10,000 4,555</td>
<td>10,000 3,756</td>
<td>10,000 2,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green card</td>
<td>9,225,745 4,031,000 9,647,131</td>
<td>5,506,000 9,451,583</td>
<td>4,951,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships for primary/secondary education students in need</td>
<td>172,940 113,137</td>
<td>184,295 211,911</td>
<td>188,637</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships for higher education students in need</td>
<td>181,490 320,823</td>
<td>198,707 375,601</td>
<td>234,130 535,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Coal Board Coal distribution</td>
<td>- 433,283</td>
<td>- 594,500</td>
<td>- 557,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Hard Coal Board Coal distribution</td>
<td>- 5,318</td>
<td>- 15,425</td>
<td>- 20,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipalities Various</td>
<td>- 519,034</td>
<td>- 484,860</td>
<td>- 452,813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>9,814,517</td>
<td>13,018,611</td>
<td>12,997,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(% GDP)</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual Programme, 2012
Social protection expenditures specifically targeting families and children are especially low. In 2007, OECD member countries other than Turkey spent between 0.7 percent and 3.7 percent of their GDP on "public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures", with an average of 2.2 percent. This measure refers to public support that is exclusively for families, such as child payments and allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support. However, the OECD has no figure for Turkey, which has no substantial programmes in this area.

Budgeting for children is not easy to implement. Any attempt to increase the level of public spending on welfare and the struggle against poverty, especially among families and children, will face a number of constraints. Identifying fiscal space may be complicated by economic policy priorities and the rigidity of public spending (Non-discretionary payments like salaries and social security subsidies account for some 70 percent of national budget expenditures). The national budget process is not always effective in reflecting stated policies for reasons such as the role of off-budget institutions, the unpredictability of the macroeconomic environment and the frequency with which the government takes ad hoc decisions on expenditure. Participation in the budget-making process is limited. There is currently no official, academic or civil society organisation in Turkey which regularly monitors the level and composition of public social expenditures, or more specifically of expenditures for children. At the local level too, transparency is weak and similar considerations militate against the prospects for increasing welfare spending, particularly for families and children, through the existing budgeting processes. However, there are prospects for more public debate through Citizens Assemblies, and the UNDP is working to encourage NGO participation in local budgeting.


[27] This indicator corresponds approximately to the amount of public funds spent on social protection other than subsidies to the social security institutions for contributory pensions. It includes the "green card" system, which could also be regarded as health expenditure, but excludes municipal spending.
Children in the Population: The Family, and The Health and Education Systems

Children in the Population

A young, aging population: Turkey had a population of 73,722,988 at the end of 2010. After decades of rapid growth, a downturn in fertility since the 1990s has caused the annual growth rate of the population to slow to 1.3-1.4 percent - still high by European standards - from 1.7 percent in 2000. Life expectancy was 75.3 for women and 71.1 for men according to 2006 estimates. The population is still quite young with a median age of just under 30 for women and just under 29 for men. People aged 0-14 make up 26 percent of the population, compared to approximately 16 percent within the EU population. Approximately 22.6 million people – or 30.7 percent of the population - are children by the UN definition, i.e. under the age of 18. However, the trends outlined above mean that the population is gradually becoming less young. Assuming these trends continue, the proportion of children in the population will decline significantly in the years ahead, while the proportion of adults of working age will increase. Already, a change in the structure of the population is clearly visible, with the lower end of the population pyramid narrowing. The age group with the highest number of people is the 10-14 age group, at 6.57 million.

Population of Turkey by age group and sex (% of total population), 2010

Favourable dynamics? The period until 2025 is often labelled a “demographic window of opportunity” for Turkey, during which the socio-economic development process can accelerate, subject to successful education and employment policies. During this period, the share of the population of working age in the total population will be rising, and conversely the dependency ratio will be falling. After 2025, the dependency ratio is expected to start to rise again due to growth in the numbers of people over 65 as a proportion of the total population. In the shorter term, the relative decline in the number of young children should make it possible for Turkey to increase the resources, public and private, which it expends on enhancing the health and development experiences of each one of its boys and girls in the early years of their lives – a period which is crucial for their future lives. In other words, resources need not be spread so thinly, either in families or in public services like education. Clearly, good policy making is necessary to make the most of this opportunity. For adolescents and young people, the situation is not yet so favourable. Boys and girls in these age groups continue to form crowded cohorts. The parental attention and government resources available to many members of this generation may still be limited, together with their
opportunities for self-development, education and work. Yet they are now at an age when the course of their lives as adults will be set, and when they face important risks.

Regional variations: The gradual decline in fertility, population growth and the proportion of young children in the population shows important geographical variations. While it is falling in all regions, fertility remains much higher in some places than in others. Among the five broad geographical regions identified for the purposes of the Demographic and Health Survey, the East has a fertility rate of 3.26 compared to a range of 1.73 to 2.20 for the other regions. Data disaggregated by smaller regions, individual provinces or districts would almost certainly show steeper variations. This means that there remain regions and sections of society in which population growth is rapid, the average age is low and the numbers of children remain very high compared to the population as a whole – a situation which tends to stretch the resources of families, communities and the public authorities alike. In the Southeast and some Eastern provinces, under-eighteens make up 40-50 percent of the populace, whereas in several smaller provinces in western Turkey this ratio falls to 20-25 percent.

Populations of İzmir and Şanlıurfa by age group and sex (% of total population), 2010

Source: Turkstat

Migration: Another critical demographic phenomenon is internal migration, particularly from rural areas to the larger cities. The urban population accounts for three quarters of the whole population today, compared to 44 percent as recently as the 1980 census. Approximately half of the households in Turkey do not live in the village or
town where they were born. Of those aged between 15 and 19, 38 percent have experienced at least one migration. Migration to urban areas may improve access to better social services in the long-term, but in the short-term the supply of infrastructure and services, including schools and other services for children, may be unable to keep up with the pace of population growth. Meanwhile, families and children take time to adjust to urban environments, and to learn how to access services and cope with risks. Poor migrant families may remain in “ghettos”. Their children may have to work, or may have difficulty at school, or may come to spend a large part of their time on the street. All these phenomena have been amply observed in numerous cities in the Southeast, South and West of Turkey following the rapid migration of an estimated 1.1-1.2 million persons away from mostly rural parts of Southeast Anatolia for security reasons between 1986 and 2005. Some of today’s poor urban communities came into being as a consequence of this particular shift of population. One of the efforts being made to mitigate conditions is the ongoing EU-financed Internal Migration Integration Project (IGEP) being carried out by a consortium of NGOs and consultants with municipalities in Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and Bursa. Migration processes may now be slowing, providing an opportunity for better social integration and provision of services - as well as for turning attention to those “left behind” in villages or other undeveloped areas. However, migrants continue to display different social characteristics from more settled members of the population, and there is still considerable scope for rural-urban and East-West migration.

Cultural variety: A further characteristic of the population which may have implications for children’s lives and for all efforts to improve their well-being is ethnic and religious variety. Although only the small Greek Orthodox, Jewish and Armenian communities are officially recognized as minorities, a range of cultural characteristics are present. According to different sources, 10 to 23 percent of the population is Kurdish. Kurds constitute the majority of the population in many of the Eastern and Southeastern provinces, and a high proportion of recent migrants to several major cities. Frequently, therefore, economic disadvantage and Kurdish ethnicity overlap. Some Kurds especially women in rural areas and young children do not speak Turkish well. The issue of specific social and cultural rights for Kurds, including the use of Kurdish vernaculars in the state and public sphere, is very topical, and some Kurdish language broadcasting has been permitted. Other cultural elements range from Circassian and Laz to Arab and Syriac.

Roma children in urban settings

The Roma make up a section of the urban poor in several Turkish cities. Their total numbers have been estimated at anywhere between 0.5 million and 2.5 million. The vast majority have a settled life-style. Typically, they are concentrated in urban neighbourhoods where housing may be overcrowded and unsanitary but social solidarity persists. The poverty of Roma children, like other poor children, may be compounded by large family size, and they may be expected or obliged to work – often on the street – in order to earn income for their families.

Roma children have additional disadvantages. The concept of childhood is weak among the Roma, and work and marriage traditionally come early. The Roma tend to keep their distance from the public administration, which puts Roma children at extra risk of missing out on birth registration, timely school enrolment, immunization or basic health care. Roma families have little experience of the benefits of formal education and may not attach importance to it. Outside the entertainment industry, they have no successful role models. Their working conditions may increase the risk of alcohol and drug addiction. When seeking inclusion in society – as in employment or education – the Roma and their children may face a barrier of discrimination. The Turkish word çingene (gypsy) has numerous negative connotations. Today, a number of Roma associations are actively drawing attention to the issues faced by the Roma. The urban redevelopment scheme in Istanbul’s Sulukule neighborhood attracted much attention. In March 2009, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) and the Edirne Roman Derneği (EDROM) called on the government to apply to be a part of the international Decade of Roma Inclusion, which would require it to adopt and implement a plan for tackling the problems of the Roma community. The Prime Minister addressed a large gathering of Roma citizens in Istanbul on March 14th 2010.

Sources: Edirne Roma Association/European Roma Rights Centre/Helsinki Citizen’s Assembly: We are

**Family structure:** In Turkey, marriage (including religious marriages) is almost universal and children are almost always born in wedlock. The divorce rate, although rising, remains relatively low.[1] As a result, the great majority of children live with both natural parents. In this respect, children in Turkey may be considered more fortunate than children in other European countries, where one-parent families are more commonplace. Nevertheless, more than a million children arguably face a higher level of various risks due to living in a single-parent family or to temporary or permanent separation from their parents.[2] Other children may be affected by living with parents who do not get on well but who do not divorce due to economic reasons or social pressures.

According to the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey conducted by Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, 93 percent of children live with both of their natural parents. Five percent live with only one parent (usually the mother) due to the death of the other parent, separation or divorce. Two percent live with neither of their natural parents, although in most cases their parents are alive. As one would expect, these percentages vary with the age of the child. At the age of 2-4, for example, 97% of children are still living with both natural parents, but by the age of 15-17 this ratio falls to 86%. Over 5% of children in this age group are not living with either natural parent even though both of them are alive. There are also some small but significant variations between social groups and geographical regions, which may be linked to differences in life expectancy of parents, in separation and divorce rates and in the inclination (and opportunity) to send adolescent children to live with relatives while they study or work. Children in the wealthiest quintile of the population, for example, are most likely to be living with both natural parents (94%), but also most likely to be living with their mothers only (5%), whereas very few live with their fathers only or not with a natural parent. In the East and Southeast, the most common reason for children not to be living with both natural parents is the death of the father. Children in middle income groups in the East and West Marmara regions (but not Istanbul), the Aegean and Middle Anatolia are the most likely to be living with neither natural parent even though both are alive.

About 25 percent of children (more in rural areas) are estimated to live in extensive households. These take various forms, requiring clear and appropriate definition, but most typically consist of members of three generations (usually meaning that one or more of the child’s grandparents is living with the family). Extensive households are more common in rural areas. Little is known scientifically about the impact of such differences in family structure on outcomes for children. One may surmise that extensive households can have positive impacts in the form of added care and attention and the sharing of resources (such as pensions). However, they may also give added cause for conflict (Tensions between women and their mothers-in-law are considered commonplace) and put pressure on financial resources, space, home facilities and the attentions of the main care-giver(s).

**Family size:** Several million children in Turkey may be disadvantaged because they live in large households. It is estimated that 80-85 percent of children have at least one brother or sister and approximately one-quarter have more than two siblings. Combined with family structure data described above, this means that the majority of children (estimated approximately 65 percent) in Turkey now live in households with at most five people.43 This ratio suggests that the majority of children can expect to receive adequate attention and resources from their parents. The remaining one third of children, however, are in greater danger of missing out on these. Moreover, having a large number of siblings (living in a more crowded household) usually coincides with other possible sources of disadvantage, such as economic and geographic disparities and low educational level of parents. According to the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey, for example, while about 16% of households have more than five members and 3.2% more than 9 members nationwide, these ratios rise to 24% and 6.6% in rural areas. Meanwhile, the average fertility of women who have not completed even a primary education is 3.28, falling to 1.39 for those with an 8-year primary education44.

Household survey data suggest that 18 percent of children in Turkey do not have any siblings – possibly an increasing trend, especially among the more educated parents. Being the only child has been associated with overindulgence and overprotection of parents and deprivation of some learning experiences in the absence of siblings. While the evidence in other countries is mixed,[5] there may be a need for more scholarly work on only children in the Turkish context. Social environments, in which children of the same age can gather, such as daytime care centres and pre-school education institutions, may be especially important for children without any siblings.
According to the Turkstat, the crude divorce rate in 2010 was 1.62 divorces for every 1,000 members of the population, with much lower rates in less developed Eastern provinces (albeit partly due to younger populations) and somewhat higher rates in more developed western provinces.


Turkstat, based on the Address-Based Population Registration System (ADNKS). In line with the age structure of the population, women are slightly outnumbered by men, making up 49.8 percent of the population.

Turkstat data based on the Address-Based Population Registration System (ADNKS) puts the rate of growth of the population at 1.31 percent in 2008, 1.45 percent in 2009 and 1.60 percent in 2010. No official explanation has been given for the uneven and rising rate of population growth, but it appears to stem mainly from the inclusion in the population of persons not previously identified by the system.

Turkstat.


The ratio is about 30 percent in urban areas (provincial and district centres) and 32.5 percent in rural areas (other towns and villages).

Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies: Demographic and Health Survey 2008. Two other valuable publications of the same Institute, currently available in Turkish, are "Demographic Transition in Turkey", which gives a detailed overview of demographic trends in Turkey with a longer-term perspective, and "Fertility, Reproductive Health and Ageing in Turkey", which contains a more detailed analysis of fertility trends by population sub-group.

According to the population data for 2010, at least 50 percent of the population is below the age of 20 in the provinces of: Ağrı, Bitlis, Hakkari, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Van, Batman and Şırnak, compared to 34 percent for the whole population. In Diyarbakır, the proportion of under-20s is 48 percent.

Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies: Survey on Migration and Displaced Population, 2006

Information in this paragraph is partly based on Minority Rights Group International: Forgotten or Assimilated? Minorities in the Education System of Turkey, 2009.

Calculated using data from the Household Labor Force Survey 2008 by Dr. Sezgin Polat (Galatasaray University).

Hacettepe University Institute for Population Studies, Turkish Demographics and Health Survey 2008

**Child Survival, Nutrition and Health**

**Children’s right to life and health:** The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child places great emphasis on health issues for all children. Article 6 of the Convention states that all children have a right to life. All governments should ensure the survival and development of the child to the maximum extent possible. Article 24 recognises the right of every child to the highest attainable standard of health. The Convention specifically mentions the need for reducing infant and child mortality rates, reaching all mothers with prenatal and postnatal services, providing preventive healthcare and ensuring access to information about health, nutrition, environmental health and the prevention of accidents.

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**Birth registration, non-registration and late registration**

In 2008, 6 percent of children under the age of five were not registered with the population registry – down from 16 percent in 2003. The percentage of under-fives whose births were not registered nevertheless remained as high as 8 percent in rural areas, 11 percent in Eastern regions and 14 percent among children of mothers with less than a primary education. Some of these children may never be registered; others will only be registered when the time comes for school enrolment, marriage or military service. Lack of registration makes the child and the parents ineligible for health services and social assistance. Lacking an identity card, the child cannot obtain any kind of school certificate. Late registration leads to the incorrect recording of ages, which can create problems such as having to study alongside children of other age groups or premature eligibility for military service. Problems related to birth registration can also contribute to early marriage and child labour, and hinder all kinds of monitoring and statistical work. Reasons for non-registration or delayed registration of births are believed to include the difficulties faced by rural and mobile populations in reaching population directorates, and ignorance or distrust of bureaucratic procedures. Births may also go unregistered in cases where the child is abandoned by his or her parents, or where the parents are unmarried, or became married before reaching the legal minimum age. Children with parents who are involved in crime, or who were never themselves registered in the population, may also miss out on birth registration. A new law on population registry services adopted in 2006 mainstreamed roles and responsibilities for the registration process. The 2008 survey figures suggest that these measures together with urbanisation and higher levels of education have reduced the incidence of non-registration and delayed registration. Further monitoring and additional measures may be needed to eradicate the problem altogether, from the counselling of expectant mothers to the modus operandi of registry offices.

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Infant and child mortality rates have declined rapidly, but
Infant and child mortality: The number of babies and young children losing their lives has fallen rapidly in recent years, according to the State of the World’s Children Report (SOWC)\(^47\). According to SOWC 2011 Report the infant mortality rate (mortality among infants in the first year of life) decreased from 29 per 1,000 live births in 2003 to 19 in 2009. The under-five mortality rate, meanwhile, decreased from 37 per 1,000 to 20. Despite the sharp decline in the infant and child mortality rates, they remain very high by European standards. While Turkey has the 54th highest income per capita level in the world, it ranks 100th with respect to under-five mortality (In the developed countries, the infant mortality rate averages 5 and the under-five mortality rate 6 per 1,000 live births).\(^48\) The recent decline in infant and under-five mortality, like earlier reductions, have been achieved partly as a result of socioeconomic changes including higher incomes, better education of mothers, falling fertility and urbanisation. They have also reflected improvements in health services. In DHS 2008, for example, 92 percent of mothers reported that they received medical guidance and care before birth and 91 percent that they had received assistance during birth. Monitoring during pregnancy and childhood has increased partly due to the provision of small conditional cash transfers through the Directorate-General for Social Assistance and Solidarity to the mothers concerned.

In 2008, more than 1 million children benefited from this programme\(^49\). Further improvement may require an intensification of activities in the worst-performing regions, provinces and districts (See below). In addition, the Ministry of Health, which aims to cut the infant mortality rate to 10 by 2015, is closely aware of the need to focus on the neonatal period (the first 28 days of life), as the progress for this period has been less satisfactory than the progress for the post-natal period. Efforts which have been made or which are under way in this context include the training of health personnel in neonatal care and resuscitation and investment in intensive care units in hospitals. Careful monitoring of the circumstances of infant and child deaths and of the programmes designed to reduce them would be useful in determining future policy. Data on infant and child deaths needs to be disaggregated by birthweight.

Stunting and wasting: There has been a gradual decline in the proportion of children in Turkey who are stunted, meaning that they are short for their age, a sign of chronic malnutrition. Poverty is the main cause. Efforts to boost exclusive breastfeeding and intake of micronutrients also need to continue.

Many of Turkey’s children are not well nourished, and a tenth are stunted, meaning that they are short for their age - a sign of chronic malnutrition. Poverty is the main cause. Efforts to boost exclusive breastfeeding and intake of micronutrients also need to continue.
Breastfeeding: Almost every child in Turkey is breastfed at some time in infancy, increasing his or her chances of survival, good health and strong emotional and cognitive development. The DHS puts this ratio at 98.5 percent for 2008. Ideally, however, babies should be exclusively breast-fed for six months. Within the last five years, the percentage of babies younger than six months who are fed only with breast milk has doubled to 40 percent. This reflects growing awareness which can be attributed at least in part to a Baby-Friendly Hospitals initiative and other related efforts carried out by the Ministry of Health and supported by UNICEF. In terms of exclusive breastfeeding, Turkey’s performance is now close to the World average. Nevertheless, one-fifth of babies younger than two months are fed with ready-made formula, and less than a quarter of babies are being exclusively breastfed at 4-5 months. Further improvements appear possible through full monitoring of the baby-friendly hospitals and continued efforts to reach hard-to-reach cases. Unfortunately, a code on the marketing of breast-milk substitutes first drafted in 2002 has still not been adopted due to issues of EU-compatibility, lobbying by formula manufacturers and the indecisiveness of the government.

Children in Turkey have divergent experiences of growing up. The incomes and education levels of their parents have a profound influence on their healthy growth and development, on the opportunities available to them and on their future well-being. Children in rural and Eastern areas are at the greatest disadvantage. Ethnicity may also be a factor. Weaknesses and disparities in public
**Micronutrients:** In addition to support for breastfeeding, various policies have been followed by the Ministry of Health, in some cases with UNICEF support, to reduce deficiencies of iodine, iron and Vitamin D. Iodine deficiency is a major cause of mental and psychomotor retardation in children, common in Turkey. More than 85 percent of households now use iodized salt, compared to 70 percent in 2003. In rural households, however, 29 percent of households still use non-iodised salt. Iron deficiency among children decreased from 30 percent in the early 2000s to 8 percent in 2006-7, according to the Ministry of Health. This followed the launch of a programme to monitor all babies in terms of iron deficiency, to support iron levels in babies aged 4-12 months, and to offer curative services for those suffering from iron deficiency. The fortification of flour with iron has increased and may be made mandatory, like salt iodisation, in a bid to ensure that fortified flour reaches even the poorest and furthest-flung households. More data is still needed, however, on the incidence of anaemia. Meanwhile, a similar programme is being conducted to reduce Vitamin D deficiency.

**Immunisation and disease reduction:** Among children aged 12-23 months, 74 percent have been fully immunised, according to the DHS compared to only 54 percent in 2003. Immunisation rates have gradually been increased, despite some problems such as reaching far-flung populations, and the scope of immunisation policies has been widened. Turkey has been polio-free since 2002, and a National Measles Vaccination Campaign carried out in 2003-2005 resulted in 95 percent coverage, according to the Ministry of Health, putting measles vaccination coverage on a par with the industrialized countries, and making the Millennium Development Goal target of 100 percent infant immunization look achievable. The elimination of Maternal Neonatal Tetanus was verified in 2009.

**Young children with development disabilities**

Developmental difficulties in children are a leading cause of morbidity and result in economic and social burden to countries and societies. At least one out of ten children in all countries, have developmental difficulties that includes or places them at risk for disabilities. Given that frequently encountered problems such as psychosocial deprivation, malnutrition, iron and iodine deficiency cause mild disability and that even a rarer form of severe disability, autism, is known to affect 1 in 150 children, it follows that rates of childhood disability are extremely high in Turkey. Accordingly, without waiting for further epidemiological studies to determine exact levels of prevalence, resources should be guided to provide the optimal care in prevention, early identification, and management/intervention in childhood disability.

**Prevention:** A cross-sectoral action plan for preventive efforts need to be adopted, and early identification methods put in place and diagnostic centres built up across the country. Within the health system, there are widespread preventive efforts in neonatal resuscitation, the prevention of iron and iodine deficiencies and screening for metabolic and endocrine disorders. However, these programmes address only limited preventable causes of developmental difficulties and disability and are neither comprehensive nor coordinated. Newborn intensive care units are becoming widespread, and many more at-risk children are surviving, but beyond survival, there is no system for addressing the many problems that these children encounter.

**Early identification:** Standardized methods of detecting children at risk for developmental difficulties are not in place within the health system. Old and insufficient methods are still in use. Health care staff are not routinely trained for developmental surveillance and do not know how to manage the cases that are identified.

**Diagnosis:** Developmental-behavioral pediatrics is practised in only a few centres in Turkey. Developmentally based, functional assessments that include family-centred approaches and issues related to activities and participation cannot be addressed in a holistic framework. The current standard
diagnostic framework International Classification of Functioning Children and Youth (ICF-CY, WHO 2007) is rarely used. In some centres, waiting lists for diagnoses particularly for cognitive and mental health problems are extensive, resulting in delays of up to six months.

Treatment, early intervention, special education and rehabilitation: The numbers of trained staff for treatment, early intervention, special education and rehabilitation need to be increased and the content and quality of training improved in line with contemporary approaches. Simultaneously, the current centre-based, directive teaching and behavioural teaching-oriented framework needs to give way to a community-based, home-based, holistic approach. In addition, major revisions are needed to the criteria for the issue of Disability Reports, upon which access to services depends, so as to make them functional and reliable and appropriate for young children.

Regional disparities: All parts of the country have benefited from the ongoing improvements in health outcomes for children and in the coverage of health services and interventions. Nevertheless, those parts of the country which are least developed socioeconomically continue to lag behind the other regions.

The improvements witnessed in the “East” region as defined for the purposes of the DHS, are not occurring rapidly enough for rapid convergence with other regions. This is also true of rural areas elsewhere. For example, only 79 percent of mothers receive medical guidance and care before birth in the East, which is thirteen percentage points below the national average. Only 74 percent of births in the East are assisted – seventeen percentage points below the national average. Moreover, only 33 percent of mothers in the East receive assistance from a doctor (rather than a nurse of midwife) during birth. Full immunisation among two year-olds is 60 percent in rural areas and in the East – 14 points below the national average. In the East, 20.9 percent of children are considered stunted – twice the national average. The percentage of households using iodised salt in the East, at 61 percent, is twenty-four points below the national average. More detailed data would undoubtedly also reveal important discrepancies from province to province and district to district. In order to tackle such geographical discrepancies, additional human and physical resources may be needed, and factors like the rapid turnover of health staff may need to be addressed. In addition, efforts to improve health outcomes in difficult locations will be much more meaningful if they are made in the context of policies designed to overcome the wider economic and socioeconomic disadvantages of the population.
Policy trends and challenges: At the national level, health policy for children has been dominated in past decades by large-scale programmes in specific service areas, such as prenatal care, immunization or breastfeeding. Correspondingly, the health of Turkey's children has been measured by collecting data on the anticipated results of these programmes – such as reduced infant mortality or the elimination of measles. These programmes have been successful, and are to some extent institutionalised and sustainable. Without underestimating the importance of continuing with this kind of work - especially in poorer regions and among disadvantaged social groups – national health policy now needs to take a more holistic approach to children, to widen its goals towards the ultimate objective of healthier lives for all, and to adopt appropriate new indicators. Priorities for intervention may need to change as the importance of old challenges subsides, hitherto-neglected issues (such as child injuries and accidents) rise to the surface and new problems emerge, such as lifestyle-related conditions such as obesity. Complementary feeding and dietics in general may take on more importance, alongside breastfeeding and individual micronutrients. All this will also require the development of better monitoring systems and data. The authorities are already taking steps in this direction.

Basic public health programmes such as immunisation have achieved a measure of success and sustainability. National public health policy for children now needs to address a wider range of...
Family medicine and child health monitoring: In the meantime, a wider transformation of the general healthcare and health insurance system has been taking place, with support from the World Bank, together with the introduction of a family medicine system. The responsibilities of family medicine doctors have been expanded and they are now expected to conduct an integrated mother-child monitoring service throughout pregnancy and early childhood. Family medicine doctors are to collect information from mothers and children regularly. In this way, the cognitive and psycho-social development of the child will be followed closely. One of the many potential benefits will be to facilitate the identification and referral of children with disabilities from an early age, by expanding and extending screening programmes. All this will not only make it possible for individual girls and boys to receive the timely treatments which they need but will also generate data to guide the conduct of public health policies and education. Moreover, the family medicine system can serve as a conduit for the education of parents and hence of society as a whole. As of 2009, family medicine is being implemented in 40 of the 81 provinces and is to be rolled out universally at the end of 2010. Key factors for success include the provision of adequate training and support for family medicine practitioners and the development of effective procedures for the collection and processing of data.

Outcomes of the transformation in the health system for children and adolescents

The public health system in Turkey has undergone a major reform process since 2003 which is labelled as Health in Transition programme by the Government. Under this programme, the Government will be collecting premiums from all working people and covering the premiums for unemployed poor people, so that each person can benefit from General Health Insurance. Health expenditures of all children under the age of 18 will be covered by public funds. The programme also foresees a widespread utilization of family doctors to monitor the medical situation of citizens closely. Largely as a result of the programme, the public health expenditures in Turkey increased to 4 percent in 2007 from 3.2 percent in 2001. Yet, it is of concern that expenditures for curative services increased much faster than public health and preventive services so far. This may lead to problems of financial sustainability of the programme as the economic growth slows down. For a more efficient/sustainable and equitable health system, preventive services should be prioritized, and greater use should be made of nurses and of child development specialists who can contribute to the early childhood development efforts of families and public agencies.


Capacity and budgeting for children’s health: Turkey has an extensive health infrastructure extending to all corners of the country, but improvements are still needed in some areas. The Annual Programme of the Government for 2009 noted that "...quality problems in the health service keep their importance due to the reasons such as the inadequacy of the physical infrastructure and health personnel both qualitatively and quantitatively as well as their imbalanced distribution among regions, inadequacy of protective health care services, access problems and the lack of ability to form a referral chain." The Ministry of Health makes health policy, regulates prices and implements public health policies. It also owns the State’s hospitals and health centres, including the hospitals formerly
belonging to the Social Security Board (SSK), apart from university hospitals and a few hospitals owned by
specialised institutions including the armed forces. The university and military hospitals include several prestigious
institutions. Recent years have seen a rapid increase in private hospitals and health centres. According to the WHO,
Turkey had 285 hospital beds and 154 doctors per 100,000 head of population as of 2007. The ratio of health
personnel to the population is still low by European standards and personnel are unevenly distributed, and may be
inadequately trained and/or subject to rapid turnover. It may be possible to make more efficient use of human
resources. Public health services are generally provided free of charge while most of the costs of curative services
and medicines are met by the social security institutions. Departments of the Ministry with key responsibilities for
public health for children are the Directorate General of Basic Health Services and the Directorate General of Mother
and Child Health and Family Planning. Like mother and child health, programmes for the control of important
diseases, such as tuberculosis, malaria and cancer, have tended to be vertical rather than fully integrated into a
primary health care system. Public sector health expenditures have registered a steep increase over the past ten
years, mostly due to government efforts to facilitate access to curative services and medicines, including the green
card scheme making health services available to many of those without social security. Under recent legislation, all
persons under eighteen are to benefit from free health insurance, regardless of the social security status of their
parents. Despite the intentions expressed in national policy documents, public health continues to account for a very
small proportion of total government health expenditures and of GDP (2.2 percent and 0.09 percent respectively).
In addition to the World Bank and UNICEF, the World Health Organisation is active in Turkey with a small country
office. One of the six focus points of the WHO’s strategic agenda for Turkey for the years 2008-13 is as follows:
“Primary Health Care/Family Medicine: Promoting an integrated approach to maternal and child health, reproductive
health and developing family medicine as the core of the health care delivery system; strengthen primary care to
ensure this and incorporate immunization delivery strategies to improve coverage and reduce inequalities.”

[46] Hacettepe University Institute for Population Studies, Turkish Demographics and Health Survey 2008

Data in this and the following paragraphs comes, unless otherwise stated, from Hacettepe University Institute for Population
Studies, Turkish Demographics and Health Survey 2008.

[49] A case study of the decline in the infant mortality rate in Turkey and its causes has been drafted by the Ministry of Health,
Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies and UNICEF, and will be finalised shortly.

[51] www.unicef.org/nutrition


[53] In DHS fully immunised means: one dose of BCG, 3 doses of polio and one dose of measles.

[54] This section is based largely on information kindly provided by Professor Ilgi Ertem of the Developmental Pediatrics Unit,
Ankara University School of Medicine

[55] In DHS, Turkey is divided to five groups: West, North, South, Central and East.

[56] WHO Turkey (http://www.who.int/countryfocus/cooperation_strategy/ccsbrief_tur_en.pdf)

[57] See also Vujicic, Sparkes and Mollahilaloglu: Health workforce policy in Turkey: recent reforms and issues for the future, World
Bank, 2009

[58] ongoing research on the Social Protection System in Turkey and Budgeting for Children undertaken by Ankara University
Faculty of Political Sciences for UNICEF and written by Ferhat Emil and Hakan Yılmaz
# Early Childhood Development, School Readiness and Pre-primary Education

**Importance of early childhood:** There is a widespread consensus on the importance of the early childhood period in the life of any individual. This is the period when most of the cognitive and emotional development of the child takes place. The child’s development depends to a considerable extent on the conditions in which these years pass. Combined with good health and adequate nutrition, a supportive emotional environment and sufficient and appropriate stimulation pave the way for strong language and social skills, self-esteem and good performance at school.

By contrast, children who suffer from poor health or inadequate care and stimulation during early childhood are likely to be slow learners and to face a higher risk of psychological problems. “Implementing child rights in early childhood is... an effective way to help prevent personal, social and educational difficulties during middle childhood and adolescence,” commented the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in its General Comment 7 of 1995, issued in response to a lack of information on the rights of the child in the early childhood period. Since then, it has even been suggested that trauma in early childhood may increase the likelihood of adult diseases including cancer. For all these reasons, the value of investing in children at an early age is reckoned to be several times higher than the value of investing in them at a later age. Moreover, the implementation of programmes to improve the care and education of very young children born into disadvantaged circumstances is increasingly being regarded as an "equaliser": children who benefit will be less likely to fall behind their peers in future, more likely to "succeed in life", and therefore less likely to suffer from poverty or other forms of social exclusion, and to pass these on to their own children. In short, early childhood development and education programs can be critical for school preparedness, the development of children’s full potential and a more equitable society. In Turkey, data to assess cognitive stimulation and development has been collected by Koç University (Study on Early Childhood Development Ecologies in Turkey – TEÇGE). Initial analysis suggests that inputs for the cognitive learning process, such as language stimulation and the availability of learning materials, differ significantly among socio-economic status groups - as do cognitive development test scores.

**Educational attainment of mothers**

Declining birth rates are reducing the numbers of young children in the population, providing an opportunity to invest more resources in children in these early years of life, which are now known to be vital for their development and future well-being. This is also an opportunity to reduce inequalities of opportunities which are passed on from generation to generation via low academic achievement.
Knowledge and abilities of parents: The role of parents in the health and development of the young child can scarcely be overestimated. The strong correlation between the mother’s level of education and the likelihood of infant mortality revealed by DHS surveys is the most striking indicator of this. The educational attainment of parents is also likely to be an important determinant of developmental support provided by parents for their children. However, children in Turkey are not fortunate in this respect. Among women aged 15-49, only 30 percent have had an education lasting more than five years and 18 percent have had even less. While indicators of education and literacy are somewhat better among the younger women, they are worse among women in the East and in rural areas, who are likely to have the most children. A recent UNICEF survey, funded by the EU, provides evidence about the level of cognitive stimulation provided to young children. Only 50 percent of the parents questioned stated that they play with their children at least “usually”. Out of the twelve provinces, there were five in which less than 50 percent of parents played with their children at least usually, and all of these were located in the East or Southeast of the country. Only 38 percent of the parents surveyed read stories to their children and only 62 percent and 64 percent do not make them tell stories using pictures in a book. Clearly, parents are unaware about the importance of stimulation in early childhood. Moreover, low levels of cognitive stimulation usually coincide with other sources of disadvantage. For instance, all of the indicators of interaction and stimulation mentioned here are worse in Eastern provinces, where mothers are less educated and families are larger. Children who do not receive this early stimulus are likely to be slow learners and may well drop out of school at an early age.

Responses to the question “Do you read/yarn stories to your child?” by provinces
Parenting education: The provision of training courses for mothers and fathers is an important policy tool for ensuring that better care is taken of children’s health and nutrition, and that they benefit from sufficient interaction and stimulation at an early age. In this way, the likelihood of health disorders is reduced and emotional, cognitive and linguistic development can be accelerated. Children are better prepared for school and less likely eventually to drop out. These policies are particularly important in families and communities where parents are poor and not well educated. Parenting education has increasingly been made available in Turkey in recent years as a result of the efforts of various public institutions in the health, education and social protection sectors and of NGOs including the Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV). The Directorate-General for Non-Formal Education of the Ministry of National Education implements many of these courses, using programmes developed by UNICEF with support from the EU. The Directorate is also now coordinating parenting education with the help of a multisectoral scientific committee. A national action plan has been drafted, which emphasises the need to reach the most disadvantaged parts of society. The content of parenting education programmes is constantly being enriched. In 2009, the Directorate General developed a consolidated, modular package for parents not only of young children but of children of all ages, to be used in different environments and with different groups. Based on the existing programmes and existing best practice, the new package includes renewed and more comprehensive content for the 0-3 age group and a module dedicated to sensitivity to issues of disabilities. Draft surveys and cost-benefit analysis conducted under UNICEF’s programme in Turkey have shown parenting education programmes to be successful and cost-effective. Moreover, the implementation of parenting education has generated alarming anecdotal evidence about existing parenting practices, which include the use of violence as a form of discipline, the failure of parents to communicate things to their children and the harmful practices passed on by mothers-in-law. The coverage of parenting programmes is still modest compared to the number of children in need (Roughly 3.5 percent of children in the age group 0-6 are reached). Expanding the programmes and reaching the most disadvantaged communities remains a challenge in terms of political support and funding. The General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) also offers family training programmes and counselling services at 79 Child Community Centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods across the country.
Daycare for young children: Most children of pre-school age are looked after at home, usually by their mothers. Where the mothers are working, the mother is still the primary care giver for 30 percent of the children (depending on the nature of her work). Other care-givers include the mother’s mother-in-law (25 percent) or mother (11 percent), a girl child (6 percent) or another relative (5 percent). Only 7 percent of the pre-school age children of working mothers are in kindergarten and only 5 percent are cared for by a baby-sitter. The latter types of care are more common among educated women in higher-income groups in urban areas in western regions. Professional early childhood care services for the age group 0-3 are mostly provided by the Directorate General for the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (Sosyal Hizmetler ve Çocuk Eğitim Kurumu – SHÇEK) and have a very limited coverage. In the EU, 27 percent of children in this age group are covered. The absence of early childhood care services is an important deficiency in the social policy system, and also curbs women’s ability to participate in the workforce. The cooperative neighbourhood day-care centres for women and children implemented by the Foundation for the Utilisation of Women’s Labour (KEDV), an NGO which bring women in poor neighbourhoods together to self-finance day-care services for their children, is one innovative model for overcoming this deficiency.

Coverage of pre-primary education: The majority of children in Turkey start school late and suddenly, which compromises their chances of success and puts them at a disadvantage emotionally, cognitively and linguistically when compared with the smaller number of children who have enjoyed more opportunities for learning and socialisation at an earlier age. Centre-based pre-school programmes run by the Ministry of National Education constitute the most widespread early childhood development programme. These programmes serve children in the age group 3-6 and are delivered in independent kindergartens or pre-school classes within primary schools (public and private). As recently as the 2006-2007 school year, the coverage rate in early childhood education was 16 percent - well below the world average (37 percent) and close to the average for sub-Saharan Africa average (12 percent). Concerted efforts to increase enrolment in pre-primary education are starting to pay dividends, and the coverage rate reached 29.85 percent for the 3-5 age group and 43.10 percent for the 4-5 age group in 2010-2011. (In the EU, about 85 percent of children in these age groups benefit from pre-primary school education). The total number of children in pre-primary education in 2010-11 was 1,115,818, of whom 824,760 were born in 2005, 237,292 were born in 2006 and 53,766 were born in 2007.
Equity in pre-primary education: Early childhood education is one of the most important public policy options to improve equality of opportunity within a society. It is therefore important that participation in pre-primary education should include children from the poorest and least education sections of society. Currently, the lowest enrolment rates in pre-primary education are observed in some Southeastern and Eastern Anatolian provinces, and in major cities where observation suggests participation in pre-primary education may be closely related to social stratification. Thus there is a risk that pre-primary education serves to reinforce the disadvantages of the most excluded social groups. However, the pattern is complex – at least for the time being – and participation in pre-primary education is also strong in several provinces of varying socioeconomic character which have been given priority and/or where public officials have been very active. Meanwhile, girls are slightly less likely to attend pre-primary education than boys. For 2010-11, the Ministry of National Education has calculated enrolment ratios of 30.25 percent for boys and 29.43 percent for girls in the 3-5 age group. For the 4-5 age group, the ratios are 43.70 percent and 42.47 percent respectively.
**Expansion of pre-primary education:** The Ministry of National Education is aiming to universalize pre-primary education. Priority is being given to the 60-72 month age group, in which 100 percent enrolment has already been achieved in 32 out of the 81 provinces (albeit not the largest provinces). The Ministry intends to go on to increase the national enrolment rate to 100 percent for the 60-72 month age group and 50 percent for the 36-72 month age group by 2014. The expansion of pre-primary education will require a substantial increase in capital expenditures, so that facilities can be built to provide decent services for children. It will also require increased awareness about the importance of early childhood development and education. The TL50 per month fee currently charged for pre-school programmes may also need to be waived or subsidised. A recent survey conducted for the Ministry of National Education on behalf of UNICEF Turkey indicated that while the attitudes of parents and others towards preschool education in Turkey were broadly favourable, some families might not send their children to school for economic reasons, because they perceived the child to be "too little", because they felt it was the mother's role to look after him or her, or due to concerns about conditions at school or about transport. The ongoing EU-supported "Strengthening Pre-School Education" project is expected to improve access to pre-school education for families in disadvantaged communities by triggering demand and developing a community-based service model which will minimise obstacles to participation.

**Quality of pre-primary education:** There is a risk that the expansion of pre-primary education will come at the expense of quality. The teacher-pupil ratio of around 1:23 needs to be maintained and improved. The universalisation of pre-primary education also needs to be accompanied by the establishment of a system through which compliance with minimum standards can be monitored and quality of instruction ensured in all settings.

**Number of children in pre-primary education**
The mother-tongue issue

The transition to primary school can be particularly difficult for children whose mother tongue is not Turkish. The only medium of instruction in Turkish primary education system is Turkish, and those children whose mother tongue is not Turkish do not receive any additional support. Moreover, judging by their geographical distribution, these children may often be among those who receive the least cognitive stimulation at home and are therefore least well-prepared for school life. The danger is that this situation may lead to a persistent disadvantage at all levels of the education system. A quantitative study of the determinants of the drop-out phenomenon in primary education found that children with a home language other than Turkish are less likely to continue attending primary schools even after making allowance for other socio-cultural and economic characteristics of their families. The same is true for success in education: analysis based on TIMMS data shows that, other characteristics being constant, a child scores lower in the exam when Turkish is used less in his or her home. So far, no policy initiative has been taken to counter the potentially negative impact of mother-tongue variation on the transition to primary education or on educational performance.

A vision for early childhood: A variety of service models can be followed to increase the availability of early learning opportunities and improve young children’s preparedness for school. Centre-based pre-school programmes may not always be the best, most practical or most efficient option, depending on the resources available and the target groups. Indeed, a longitudinal study in Turkey suggests that unless quality standards in centres are ensured parent training can be more effective than centre-based models in terms of continued attendance to school, educational achievement and psycho-social development. Besides community-based models and parenting education, summer schools might also be used as alternatives or complements to formal pre-school. In order to be able to form and implement a coherent policy, which is able to use alternative models in different contexts, and to integrate early childhood development programs successfully into the early years of primary education, it has been suggested that the institutional capacity of the Ministry of National Education needs to be improved, and that the Directorate-General for Pre-School Education should be transformed into a Directorate-General for Early Childhood Development.

[59] See, for example, www.unicef.org/earlychildhood and www.bernardvanleer.org
[60] Available at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/GeneralComment7Rev1.pdf


[62] The "Heckman curve" designed by Nobel prize-winning economist James Heckman


[65] This figure shows the educational attainment of mothers as a percentage of children. For instance, 24 percent of children in Turkey have illiterate mothers, whereas 4 percent of children have mothers with a university degree.

[66] Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies: Demographic and Health Survey 2008


[69] Ibid.

[70] Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies: Demographic and Health Survey 2008


[75] Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement

[76] Ebru Erberber, presentation delivered at Bogazici [Bosphorus] University, 2008


Children in the Formal Education System

Children’s rights in education: Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all governments recognize the right to education of all children, that primary education should be made “compulsory and available free to all” and that governments should take measures to ensure that secondary education is accessible to every child. Educational settings and processes must also take account of all the other rights of the child because, as stated in General Comment 1 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Children do not lose their human rights by virtue of passing through the school gates”. Educational services should be provided without discrimination in healthy and safe environments, where children are protected from violence and abuse, and where their right to participation is respected.

Aim and content of education: According to Article 29 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, education should aim to develop a child’s personality and capabilities to his or her full potential and develop his or her respect towards the natural environment, basic human rights, parents, cultural and national values, and civilizations other than his or her own. The content of education is a topic of constant debate as in other countries. Compulsory religious education in primary schools, the role of religious secondary schools and the existence of separate Koran classes are controversial. School hours and subjects and the opportunities for children to pursue their own interests appear limited, at least by Western standards. It has been suggested that the central control over the curriculum and rather restrictive education legislation curb the ability of education personnel to tailor the content of education to the needs, characteristics and interests of the child. In other words, the education system in Turkey is far from being “child-centred”. It is also unclear how far educational materials and the priorities of the curriculum reflect the spirit of the Convention. Until 2006, for example, human rights education was a required subject in the primary education curriculum, but this subject was then abolished, on the grounds that human rights is to be integrated into the syllabuses of all subjects. One important initiative undertaken since 2003-2004 has been a process of reforming curriculum methodology throughout primary and secondary education so as to ensure that students contribute actively to the formation of knowledge through critical thinking, rather than being passive receivers of information. This process was completed in 2008-2009 for primary education, and is continuing in secondary education. The new curriculum has been welcomed by many experts in the country and perceived to be an effort for convergence with the requirements of the CRC. On the other hand, lack of educational materials in disadvantaged areas, inadequate teacher training and support, and incompatibilities between competencies and activities are reported to negatively affect the full realization of the aims of the new curriculum. The Government’s Annual Programme for 2010 also specifies “synchronisation of materials and the curriculum” as one of the problems of the education system. Impact assessment of the new curriculum is required in order to overcome the deficiencies. In secondary education, and especially vocational education, several projects including EU and World Bank-supported projects are under way to increase the quality and relevance of teaching and the curriculum.

Most children appear to like school and to want to be in school. Nevertheless, the quality of education can be damaged, especially in disadvantaged locations, by poor physical resources, high student-teacher ratios, a low quality of teaching (and teacher training), gaps in the curriculum, the excessive use of multiple-choice examinations and examination stress. The level of knowledge and skills achieved by most children is disappointing.
The school experience/monitoring: Most children spend much of their time at school, and their experiences at school are a major determinant of the happiness of their childhoods. The quality of the school environment is a combination of the quality of the facilities provided, the teaching, the curriculum and materials, extracurricular activities, counselling services, opportunities for participation and many other factors such as travelling distances, friends, exam pressures or the incidence of violence or discrimination. Ideally, the school environment would support the well-being and full development of the child in every respect. Children would feel safe at school and achieve a sense of belonging. This may be particularly important in locations, such as poor urban areas, where children are disadvantaged and families and the community are not well to support them.

The General Directorate for Primary Education has begun to establish a quality assurance mechanism in line with these goals by creating a set of minimum standards incorporating child-friendly school standards. The monitoring of schools according to these standards will need to be accurate, objective and transparent, and care will need to be taken to make maximum constructive use of the results obtained. Education managers and other duty-bearers will need to internalise the standards and be equipped to achieve them. A similar process might also be envisaged for secondary schools. Schools and the education system as a whole could also be more open to independent monitoring and external consultation. Research as to how children themselves perceive their experiences at school could yield interesting results. According to the WHO’s European Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) survey, 57.4 percent of children in Turkey like school – the highest in the OECD. As in other countries, satisfaction declines with age, and girls seem to enjoy school a little more than boys. However, the survey also contains less favourable information about Turkish children’s experiences in specific areas of school life. These contradictions remain to be resolved, and perceptions of school by boys and girls from different regions and social groups remain to be compared.

School health policies

“School health” consists of all efforts undertaken to evaluate and develop the health of students and school personnel, to establish and sustain a healthy school life, and to give health education to students and hence to society. Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that the right to have the highest level of health and the right to use institutions that provide medical care and rehabilitation services must be recognized. When the right to health, which is included in other conventions as well, is evaluated within the school context, it gives rise to a framework encompassing the life and nutrition of children, health education, environmental health and the protection of children
from accidents.

The Ministry of Health and Ministry of National Education could usefully establish a joint “school health policy” in line with the requirements for the right to education and health contained in international legislation. Such a policy would include practices aimed at both protecting and improving the health of students. Schools would have to be organised in a way that enables the resolution of health problems when necessary. They would have a structure that supports treatment and rehabilitation for children with chronic health problems. They would aim to prevent injuries, and they would strive towards the eradication of risks to food hygiene, healthy school environment and traffic safety.

Legal changes need to be made to ensure that children undergo regular health screenings in schools and that their development is monitored. This will make it possible to intervene in a timely manner to protect and improve children’s health, as well as to diagnose health problems and risky behaviour at an early stage.

Within the context of environmental health, education standards focus mainly on the physical school environment. There is no reference to the social environment. The scope and level of detail of the arrangements differ significantly depending on the type of institution. The national legislation includes some clauses on the physical structure of the school and the social environment, but lacks legal arrangements with regards to new risks and environmental health.

Budgeting for education: Public sector education expenditures have increased in real terms in recent years but have remained modest as a proportion of GDP, at 3-4 percent. In 2010, public sector education expenditures amounted to about 3.8 percent of GDP. About 1.6 percent of GDP went on pre-primary and primary education, 0.8 percent on secondary education, 0.8 percent on tertiary education and the remainder on subsidiary services, education not definable by level, research and other miscellaneous items. The State Planning Organisation estimates in its Annual Programme for 2011 that education expenditures will rise to 4.0% in 2010. Nevertheless, compared to the OECD average (around 5.8 percent) and the ratio which is recommended by UNESCO to developing countries (6 percent), Turkey’s current level of public education spending is quite low. Moreover, compared to most OECD countries, a larger proportion of the population in Turkey is of an age at which it is normal to be in formal education. In its 2010 Education Monitoring Report, the Education Reform Initiative estimated annual public expenditure (central + local government) per pupil in 2010 at TL1,583 for pre-primary and primary education, TL2,406 for general high schools and TL2,723 for vocational and professional high schools.

A part of the shortfall in public sector education expenditure is made up for by private, out-of-pocket spending. Recent data is not available, but research conducted for the World Bank Education Sector Study by the State Planning Organization in 2002 suggests that 35-37 percent of resources spent on education are made by private households. This compares to an OECD average of about 12 percent. Such expenditure permits the provision of additional or improved education services – such as cramming courses and extra school-based activities – to those who can afford it, and so strengthens the correlation between the socioeconomic status of parents and the educational attainment of the child.

Population of the age group 5-24 and public expenditures on education as a share of GDP in selected countries

Provision of staff and resources: Important efforts have been made in recent years to improve school environments and equipment, including making computers and the internet available in all schools. Even so, many children may still have to study in poor physical conditions, in crowded classrooms or in schools with limited
facilities. Deficiencies such as these are not surprising in view of the growing and migrating population of children and the relatively modest budget for public education. It is particularly challenging to provide the necessary resources for quality education quickly enough in remote locations and in poor neighbourhoods with fast-growing populations. The adequacy of teacher numbers is a topic of debate. In primary education, the student-teacher ratio is about 22 as opposed to 16 in OECD countries. Overall, the student-teacher ratio has been decreasing, but regional disparities remain. In parts of Southeast Anatolia, Istanbul and other fast-growing cities, the student-teacher ratio is well above the national average. In secondary education, student-teacher ratios are much lower, although they are now increasing as a result of the rising demand for this level of education (See below). With respect to the provision of classrooms, impressive progress has been made with World Bank lending and contributions from the EU, local administrations and not least the private sector, which has benefited from 100 percent tax relief for its support to education. Nevertheless, more needs to be done to eliminate twin-shift schooling and to achieve the government’s goals of 30 students per classroom by 2014. It is estimated that 55-60,000 more classrooms are needed in primary education and 75-80,000 in secondary education to secure these aims.97 This will require an increase in capital expenditures which does not appear to have been budgeted for.

Teachers: As in other countries, there are varying opinions about the motivation of teachers, their rewards, the structure of the profession and similar matters. The knowledge and abilities of teachers need to be increased in line with the curriculum reform. In-service training provision is very limited, and may not be effective in creating a change of attitudes. The Ministry of National Education plans to provide each teacher with comprehensive in-service training, but even if this is achieved, it will only be given once every five years. Improving the quality and appropriacy of pre-service training is likely to require greater cooperation between the Ministry and the Higher Education Council. As it stands teacher training may not prepare teachers well for work in difficult environments. Schools in such areas, including remote parts of the East and Southeast, may have inexperienced teachers and high staff turnover ratios. Teachers are selected through a centralised testing system based on multiple-choice questions, and local officials such as provincial education directors or school principals have no say in recruitments and appointments. Long-term goals might include the incorporation of expanded recruitment criteria and local input in the selection process, and new programmes for teacher quality in disadvantaged areas88.

Learning outcomes and the examination system: Children in Turkish schools achieve modest levels of knowledge and abilities by the standards of developed and leading developing countries. In PISA (Programme of International Student Assessment) tests conducted in 2006, Turkish fifteen-year-olds came 44th in science, 38th in reading and 43rd in mathematics out of the 57 OECD-member and other countries where the tests were held. Moreover, the proportion of Turkish children who did not achieve “basic competency levels” was as high as 32 percent in reading, 47 percent in science and 52 percent in mathematics, suggesting that a large number of children have been unable to acquire basic qualifications necessary for active participation in social life.89 In the 2009 PISA tests, Turkish students had higher scores but still came only 32nd among 34 OECD countries in science literacy. As many as 30 percent did not demonstrate basic competency. The lack of appropriate skills even of the most successful secondary education graduates – with the possible exception of graduates of a few elite schools - is a common complaint both of employers and of universities. There is a long way to go if all young people in Turkey are to gain a set of foundation skills, including critical thinking, digital literacy, foreign languages and health education, for life, further learning and employment.

Besides scoring low on average, children in the Turkish education system show very diverging levels of achievement. This is apparent both from PISA tests and from the university entrance examination results, according to which candidates from small Eastern provinces like Hakkari and Şırnak are not only few in number but also achieve the lowest success rates. Studies suggest that there is a high degree of correlation between the education of parents and the economic status of the family and the educational attainment of the child.95 This situation is only aggravated by the tests-driven character of the system, since children need to attend fee-paying cramming schools in order to be successful in highly competitive entrance examinations. The tests-driven system creates inefficiencies as the time, energy and money of families and children are spent acquiring skills to solve multiple-choice questions rather than critical thinking, creative writing or proper self-expression. In addition, children attending cramming schools – and often making several journeys to and from school each day - are deprived of their rights to rest, leisure and play.

Examination stress: The frequency of examinations and the importance placed upon them by schools and parents are also a major source of stress, which sometimes even brings children to the point of suicide. According to the HBSC survey91, children in Turkey are more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork than children in any other European country. Of the 11, 13 and 15 year-olds surveyed, 54.6 percent felt pressured. Turkish schoolchildren also appear to feel this kind of pressure from an earlier age by comparison with their peers in other countries. Some children from economically disadvantaged families also feel pressure because scholarships and free boarding education provided with the aim of increasing their opportunities are made conditional on academic success. All of the drawbacks of the examination-driven system – with respect to both learning outcomes and stress levels - are likely to remain essentially in place in spite of the changes currently being made both to the entrance exam for
science and Anatolian high schools and to the university entrance examination. The changes may, however, have some benefits in terms of redistributing the burden of examinations as well as encouraging students to identify their strengths or interests towards the end of secondary school.


[84] See appendix 1 for an overview of the education system, the organisation of the Ministry of Education and roles played by other actors in children’s education.

[85] The figures given relate to central government budget “education” spending.


[88] Isha Sheth: Choose Wisely: Improving Turkish Teacher Quality through Selection and Recruitment (forthcoming), Education Reform Initiative (ERG), 2009


Appendix: The Formal Education System

Primary education is mandatory, and free in public institutions. All girls and boys in Turkey are obliged to enrol in primary education for eight years. Prior to 1997, compulsory primary education lasted for only five years followed by an optional three years of “middle school”. Partly for this reason, access to primary education has been the major priority of the education authorities over the past decade. It is the responsibility of the parents and public officials, from the governor to the school principal, to ensure that all children within their jurisdiction continue schooling at the least until the end of primary education. In the 2008-2009 school year, 10.7 million children were enrolled in primary school throughout Turkey (including “open” primary school students seeking to complete their primary education belatedly). Primary education is followed by secondary education, which normally begins at the age of 14. While primary schools are comprehensive (except for schools for children with severe disabilities), there are many different types of high schools. Entrance to Anatolian high schools and science high schools is selective and based on a competitive entrance examination. The majority of children who decide to stay within the education system attend other high schools. In 2008-2009, 3.8 million children and young people attended secondary education schools throughout Turkey (including about half a million “open” secondary education students). Of these, 59 percent were in general high schools and 41 percent were in vocational or technical high schools. Policy-wise, secondary education is increasingly coming into the limelight in terms of both access and quality, in view of the extension of primary
education, demographic pressure, rapid urbanisation and the competencies required by the information age. The duration of secondary education was increased from three years to four years between 2005 and 2009, while the number of high school types was decreased. In vocational high schools, subjects are now given as independent “modules” rather than consecutive courses, in order to increase the flexibility of the system. At the end of secondary education, there is another centralised national examination for entrance to various higher education programs. Private schools are available for those who can afford them but play a relatively small role in the Turkish formal education system, accounting for only about 2 percent of students at primary level and 3 percent at secondary level. However, a high proportion of students attend private cramming schools outside normal school hours to prepare them for the key examinations.

Roles and responsibilities
The Ministry of National Education is responsible for formal, informal and non-formal education activities. Most decisions regarding the organisation of instruction, personnel management, planning and resource allocation are made by the central organisation of the Ministry in Ankara. The structure of the Ministry is open to criticism on account of its highly centralised structure and its many vertical divisions. An EU-funded capacity building project is currently under way at the Ministry, which may encourage restructuring. Providing schools with more autonomy while enhancing the ability of the Ministry to monitor their performance could result in more efficient and transparent governance, stronger school autonomy and local administration ownership. So far, however, there is still no concrete output on which deliberations can be conducted in the public sphere. Through online and electronic systems like “e-school” and “e-investment”, the monitoring capacity of the central organisation has substantially increased but there have been no major gains in school autonomy, arguably impairing the ability of schools to tailor educational processes to the needs of children. In addition to Parliament, the government and the Ministry, the autonomous Higher Education Council is a significant actor in children’s education through its control of teacher-training as well as the Student Selection and Placement Centre, which is responsible for key examinations. A few schools, such as military high schools, fall under public institutions other than the Ministry of National Education. Local Authorities (especially Special Provincial Administrations) and the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDV) provide assistance and support to education sector in variety of ways such as school building and maintenance or the provision of scholarships. The World Bank and EU have provided substantial loans and technical assistance for school building, curriculum development and other education-related activities. UNICEF has advocated for and supported the Ministry’s innovations especially with respect to primary education access, quality and monitoring systems, catch-up education and pre-primary school education. A range of specialist and non-specialist Turkish academic institutions, think-tanks, private companies and non-government organisations have produced research and recommendations on education for children (including education/youth/labour market issues), and/or are involved in charitable activities such as school building or improvement, supporting school attendance through mobilisation campaigns and grants, and providing volunteers. These organisations include: the Education Reform Initiative (ERG); the Turkish Education Association (TED), the Turkey Education Volunteers Foundation (TEGV), the Society for the Support of Contemporary Living (CYDD), and the Contemporary Education Foundation (ÇEV).

Children out of School

Children out of primary school: Some children in Turkey are still unable to complete even a primary education, and many cannot attend secondary education. To be out of school is not only to be deprived of the right to a quality education but also to miss out on opportunities for socialisation and potentially on access to other activities and services.
The Girls’ Education campaign of 2003-7 secured the enrolment of 230,000 girls and 100,000 boys who had previously been out of primary school for reasons such as economic difficulties, child labour, distance to school, discouragement, family neglect, discrimination and social restrictions against girls. At the same time, conditional cash transfers started to be provided to poor parents sending their children to primary school. Textbooks were made free of charge and in some cases, free school transport and meals were provided. Thanks to these and other efforts, the net enrolment ratio in eight-year primary education has risen to 98.41 percent, as of the 2010-2011 school year. Some children of primary school age are understood to be at secondary school. Nevertheless, this still leaves about 70,000 children unaccounted for.

Furthermore, some children are enrolled but do not attend regularly and may eventually drop out altogether. As absenteeism and dropping out of school are not clearly defined, exact numbers are not available. Over 10% of primary school pupils are understood to have been absent for 20 days or more during the 2009-10 school year. The Ministry of National Education has developed a system for monitoring and responding to non-attendance. A related issue is late starting: although children are required to start schooling at the age of 6 by law, many children have to wait until they are 7 years old, either because their parents are not well informed about the mandatory starting age, or because they do not consider their children ready for school in terms of their cognitive and/or psycho-social development, and prefer to wait for another year. The phenomenon of late starting calls for an awareness-raising campaign as well as measures to direct children who may not be ready for primary school into pre-primary education. Non-registration or inaccurate registration of births may also be a factor leading to non-enrolment or late enrolment.

Source: Ministry of National Education, Formal Education Statistics, 2010-11
Accelerated learning programme: An accelerated learning programme (also known as catch-up education) was introduced in the 2008-2009 school year. The programme is designed to enable children in the 10-14 age group who have either never been enrolled, or who have already been out of school for long periods, to return to the education system and study alongside children of their own ages. It is conceived of as a one-off opportunity – rather than an alternative to normal schooling - and is to be phased out by the end of the 2012-2013 school year. This programme reaches out to girls and boys from some of the most disadvantaged social groups, and its success depends not only on commitment and resources but on an ability to respond rapidly to difficulties which these children may have in adapting to the school environment and vice-versa.

Children out of secondary school: Net enrolment in secondary education has increased from under 50 percent to almost 70 percent in the last decade. In the 2010-11 school year, the net enrolment ratio was 69.33 percent and the gross rate 93.34 percent (The large discrepancy may reflect a tendency for many children to complete their education with a delay, due to interruptions or failure to pass classes, as well as extra preparatory years in the curricula of some secondary schools). However, non-attendance and drop-out rates in secondary education are understood to be very high: over 40% of students do not attend for 20 days or more within each school year, and about 8% officially drop out. Unlike primary education, secondary education is not mandatory, nor does the Convention on the Rights of the Child require this. Nevertheless, both for the quality of life and prospects of children and the level of education of the population, it is a matter of concern that participation in secondary education is low by European standards. Moreover, as in other levels of education, participation in secondary education is affected by geography and socio-economic status, in contradiction with the principle of equal opportunities in access to education referred to in Article 28 of the Convention. In the western province of Bilecik, net secondary enrolment is 89 percent, compared to 27 percent in Ağrı on the eastern border. In addition, regression analyses suggest that socio-economic characteristics of the family (as well as gender – see below) may have a determining effect on participation in secondary education. The Ministry is aiming to increase the enrolment rate in secondary education to 90 percent in 2014.

Gender disparity in primary and secondary education: Boys and girls are almost certainly treated more equally in school than in any other field of activity or at any other time of their lives. In examinations, girls perform at least as well as boys. Nevertheless, highly gendered social norms are still influential when it comes to determining whether boys and girls are in the education system or not. In primary enrolment, gender parity appears to be coming closer. As a result of the various campaigns and initiatives undertaken in recent years, enrolment in primary education is 98.22 percent among girls, compared to 98.59 percent among boys. As there are more boys than girls in the population of this age group, this means that there are about 94 girls for every 100 boys in primary schools. However, the ratio of girls to boys in graduation from primary education has risen only to 89 for every 100 boys, indicating that girls are more likely to drop out in the later years of primary education. The ratio of girls to boys decreases further in secondary education. Despite improvements over the years, gender disparity in access to education can be found in most provinces and may be linked to the low income and low educational level of parents, low urbanisation and/or local tradition. It is generally much more marked in eastern and central parts of the country. In secondary school enrolment, discrepancies are small or non-existent in Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and some other Western provinces, but are accentuated in many provinces in the Southeast and East – where enrolment rates in general are low – and in some less developed western provinces. To cite some examples, net secondary school enrolment is 90.99 percent among boys but only 74.31 percent among girls in Erzincan, 88.88 percent among boys but only 74.10 percent among girls in Kütahya, and 50.57 percent among boys but only 30.57 percent among girls in Siirt.

Efforts are needed to step up the low level of enrolment in secondary education, which is 72 percent for boys and only 66 percent for girls.
Data and information on school attendance: Recent steps to ensure universal participation in primary education have included the launch of a new education information management system, e-school. By comparing data acquired through the e-school system to address-based population records, it is possible for the Ministry of National Education to determine enrolment rates by province, sub-province and school catchment area, and to take action accordingly. In addition, school administrators are able to monitor children who are frequently absent and take early measures to prevent them from dropping out. The performance of the system and the capacities of administrators in using it have yet to be verified. In the interests of transparency and a healthy policy debate, consideration might be given to publishing the most accurate statistics - and perhaps regular reports - not only on enrolment but also on attendance, non-attendance and non-enrolment, disaggregating by gender and location as far as possible. It is equally important to record and analyse objectively the reasons for non-enrolment and irregular attendance, since this will point to issues that need tackling both within and beyond the education system.

Further policies for school participation – getting girls into secondary school: Policies for reducing non-enrolment, dropping out and non-attendance in primary education and for increasing participation at secondary level, need to be pursued further. As the number of children out of primary school falls, more and more careful identification and targeting of the most affected groups may be needed. At the secondary level, the rise in boys’ participation seems to be levelling off, which gives cause for concern. However, there is a particularly strong case for a comprehensive initiative to boost girls’ access, especially in those locations and sections of society where girls lag boys the most. The Directorate General for Girls’ Vocational Education received special attention in the 2009 budget,
but it has also been argued that girls’ vocational high schools may not be the ideal channel for increasing girls’ education, as they are open to criticism for reproducing gender stereotypes and not leading to increased female participation in the labour market. Further research may be needed to pinpoint the underlying reasons for the failure or inability of girls and boys of varying backgrounds to participate fully in school. Efforts to increase school enrolment and continued attendance are likely to be more successful if they are combined with other initiatives benefiting the same children, such as policies for reducing child poverty and exclusion, child labour or gender discrimination. Improving the quality of all aspects of the school experience will also help to encourage children to attend school regularly and stay on for longer.

[92] According to UNESCO (Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2009), the expected number of years of full schooling works out at 11 in Turkey – barely above the world average and the same as for the Arab countries, whereas the figure is 15 in developed countries and 13 in Latin America and the Caribbean.


## Violence Against Children

**An increasingly-recognised global issue:** Children growing up in Turkey are surrounded by violence. The problem is not specific to Turkey, although it may have some local aspects. Recent global studies have shown that almost all children witness violence at home, in schools and in the community - and that large numbers of children are directly affected by this. Violence may be physical, sexual or emotional. Exposure to violence in early childhood can affect the maturing brain, while prolonged exposure in children of all ages can have long-term health effects. Depending on its frequency and severity, violence can also affect children’s ability to express themselves, their school performance, their socialisation, their self-esteem and their general emotional well-being. In later life, children exposed to violence are more likely than others to engage in substance abuse and early/risky sexual activity, to suffer from anxiety and depressive disorders, impaired work performance and memory disturbances, and to engage in aggressive behaviour themselves, thereby transferring the human and social costs from one generation to another."

**Violence at home:** According to a survey conducted in Turkey in 2006, 17 percent of fathers and 35 percent of mothers of children aged 3-17 admitted to beating their children at least occasionally (and in most cases “sometimes”) as a form of punishment. They also resorted to other forms of punishment that may be regarded as violent. Ten percent of mothers, for example, had confined their children in a room within the past year. Similarly, in a 2008 survey, 4,200 parents from 12 provinces in all regions were asked how they disciplined their children. Of these, 9.3 percent admitted to giving physical punishments, 7.3 percent to “frightening” them and 31.8 percent to shouting or raising their voices. Physical punishments were less likely to occur where mothers had a university education. Parents explain their use of violence against children in terms of “discipline” and “control”, and Turkish proverbs extolling the benefits of violence in disciplining children remain in popular use. Parents from disadvantaged backgrounds who take part in parenting courses regularly report that they have stopped beating their young children and learned to talk to them. These circumstances indicate that continued awareness raising and education of parents can play a major role in reducing violence in the family.

**Violence: what children say**

**Effects of violence:** The child’s mental health is spoilt. S/he becomes unsociable. S/he inflicts damage on her/his environment and reflects the violence s/he has suffered onto others. S/he loses her self-confidence, turns her/his back on life, doesn’t enjoy living and becomes depressive. [Violence] can cause physical damage and leave the child with permanent injuries. When s/he grows up, it can cause the violent environment to be transferred to the future in the same way that s/he experienced it. It can
push the child who is subject to violence to leaves home and to live and work on the street, and to become addicted to substances. The physical damage suffered by the child may cause him or her to cut short his or her dreams.

Proposed solutions: Seminars can be organised about violence in schools, to make sure that children learn about the damage which violence does and come to hate it. Violence generally stems from the family environment so families need to be educated on this issue. Families who inflict violence on their children could have their children removed from them temporarily and placed in protection with the Social Services and Child Protection Agency... A parent who is violent towards his or her children is in need of treatment and the necessary therapy should be provided. If families using violence against their children repeat their action after being warned, they could be fined. Because money is very important nowadays it can solve a lot. Child police should educate the families in their areas and penalise those who act violently towards their children.

--views expressed by children taking part in a consultation workshop in June 2009

Violence outside the home: Violence by children against children, including bullying and gang-like behaviour, takes place most commonly in and around schools. In extreme cases, firearms and other weapons have been used, sometimes fatally. A child’s use of violence may be motivated by a desire to prove himself (or herself) or linked to the stealing of pocket money, food or other items. Underlying causes may include low self-esteem or other psychological factors including the psychological impacts of violence, abuse or neglect which the child himself suffers at home or elsewhere. In addition, children complain quite frequently of violence by teachers and school officials. In 2006-7, a parliamentary inquiry held into violent tendencies among children and young people and violence in and around schools found, among other things, that many children carried weapons because they found school environments unsafe. Meanwhile, the Ministry of National Education launched a campaign against violence in school environments involving schools, parents, children themselves and members of the local community such as traders and internet café owners. Precautions against violence are now being incorporated into minimum standards for primary schools, which should ensure that violence is monitored. Violence in and around secondary schools may need more attention and corporal punishment may need to be banned more explicitly. In addition to the education of staff, physical facilities and the availability of sufficient dedicated personnel are important factors for eliminating violence in the justice system (see above), children’s homes and boarding schools – whether it is exerted as a form of discipline or control, or inflicted by children on one another.

A multi-sectoral approach: While different sectors have been developing policies in response to concern about violence against children, an umbrella policy could be useful in ensuring that all violence against children everywhere, is targeted (including violence by members of the security forces, or violence against members of vulnerable groups such as working children and children on the street). In addition, the incidence and nature of violence and the implementation and impact of policies adopted to reduce violence need to be assessed objectively on a regular basis. Following a Prime Minister’s directive issued in 2006 on violence against women and children, including honour crimes (see below), the General Directorate of Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) was given the task of developing an action plan for the prevention of violence against children. This process is currently under way. The Council of Europe programme “Building a Europe for and with Children” has drafted guidelines for national strategies in this area.

Perceptions and intervention:

The perception that all violence against children is unacceptable has not been fully internalised throughout Turkish society. A strategy for preventing violence against children needs to pay attention to the existence of opinions to the effect that at least some forms of violence against children are normal or even beneficial. Attention also has to be paid to the presentation of violence – often as a form of problem-solving - in the news and entertainment media, and to the prevalence, normalcy and acceptability of violence in the adult community. After all, children learn about violence from adults, and in the words of one child, “There is always violence except for the moment when I close my eyes.” Correcting perceptions will also help to ensure that children who are being subjected to violence are identified by relatives, neighbours, teachers and others, so that they can be provided with the protection and support which they need. Failure to perceive the unacceptability of violence against children may lead to children who are affected by violence being ignored within child protection context. The early warning system being modelled by SHÇEK and other partners as part of the modelling of child protection systems at the local level has an important role to play here. A survey which has been conducted on behalf of SHÇEK and UNICEF paints a detailed picture of
the various levels of violence which ordinary children witness and suffer in their everyday lives, the effects which it has on them and the ways in which they seek to cope[1]. The survey results may illuminate the way for all efforts to combat violence against children.


[96] UN Study on Violence against Children/World Report on Violence against Children, 2006; UNICEF/Inter-parliamentary union: Eliminating Violence against Children


[98] UNICEF Turkey/Genar: Türkiye Etkili anne Bablık Eğitimi üzerine bili̇g/tutum/beceri araştırması kantitatif sonuçları taslak raporu (draft report on quantitative results of Knowledge-Attitude-Practices survey on Effective Parenting Education)


[100] Official Gazette No. 26218 July 4 2006

[101] www.coe.int/children

**Children with Disabilities**

**Rights of disabled children:** The Convention on the Rights of the Child foresees that “a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community.” As well as having the same rights as other children, children who are disabled are entitled to special care under Article 23 of the Convention, with a view to ensuring “that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child’s achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development”. Care is to be provided free of charge wherever possible.

**Disabled adults and children in Turkey:** According to the national survey conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) in 2002, 2.58 percent of the Turkish population were disabled. The most common form of disability was orthopedic disability, affecting 1.25 percent of the population. This was followed by sight impairment (0.60 percent), mental disability (0.48 percent), speech impairment (0.38 percent) and hearing impairment (0.37 percent). All forms of disability are most common among males, in rural areas and in the Black Sea region. Children make up a high proportion of the disabled. The Turkstat survey found that about 1.54 percent of 0-9 year-olds and 1.96 percent of 10-19 year-olds were disabled in some way as of 2002. For boys, the ratios were higher, at 1.70 percent and 2.26 percent. The figures cited exclude the chronically ill. According to Turkstat, 2.60 percent of children aged 0-9 and 2.67 percent of children aged 10-19 were chronically ill. The frequency of disability and chronic illness may be partly related to the prevalence of inter-marriage between relatives. A second national survey is now being conducted and is due to be completed in 2010.

*Policies are in force to ensure that the special needs of disabled people, including children, are met and that they are not...*
Disability law: Parliament ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in December 2008. Turkey is also in the process of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which will allow individuals and groups to complain about any violations to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 61 of the Constitution states that “The state shall take measures to protect the disabled and secure their integration into community life”. Legislation on services for children with disabilities was first passed in 1997. This legislation was updated in 2005, through Law No. 5378. The latter law aims to prevent disability, resolve problems related to the health, education, rehabilitation, employment, care and social security of the disabled, provide for their full development, remove obstacles to their participation in society and ensure coordination of public services for them. It opposes discrimination and sets a deadline of 2012 for making public buildings and local transport accessible to disabled people.

Education for disabled children: The Ministry of National Education includes children with disabilities in the education system either in an integrated way or through special education schools. Within the Ministry, the Directorate of Special Education, Guidance, and Counselling Services and its provincial and district units are responsible for managing the education of disabled children. The Special Education Decree-Law (No. 573) of 1997 emphasises that children requiring special education should be educated alongside their peers in regular schools on the basis of personal education plans. The education of those who need to receive education in a separate school or institution alongside other children with similar disabilities, the Decree-Law says, is to be carried out in special education schools and institutions with appropriate arrangements for mixing. The Decree-Law also makes preschool education mandatory for children identified as being in need of special education. In practice, most children identified as having special educational needs (45,532 children in the 2005-6 academic year) are educated alongside their peers. Others (8,921 in the 2005-6 academic year) are educated in special education classes in regular schools and about 25,000 attend special education schools or are educated in special education classes within primary education schools.103 Some disabled children also receive free school transport. Formal documentation and analysis of Turkey’s experiences in the education of disabled children might make it possible to pinpoint successes and difficulties, with respect to both social integration and to educational access and achievement, as well as contributing to the international literature.

Care, rehabilitation and other services: The 1997 law provided special education and rehabilitation services to children with health insurance if they were issued with disability reports by provincial disabled health boards. The 2005 law extended the responsibilities of various public agencies towards the disabled, and made special education and rehabilitation services available for children with or without health insurance. It also provided for the provision of such services by the private sector, subsidised by the state. As a result, such centres have sprung up all over the country, and the number of children benefitting from their services has risen rapidly to a reported 182,000 in the 2007-8 school year.104 Various other services, programmes and benefits are also provided for the disabled and chronically ill in areas such as health, education, social security, social services, employment and taxation. The Prime Ministry Administration for Disabled People (Ozida) acts as a coordinating and policy-making body with respect to services for the disabled. Municipalities and non-government organisations are also involved in provision for the disabled. There are numerous local and national associations made up of disabled persons and members of their families. For members of those groups of disabled whose needs are greatest, the General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) provides residential care and/or supports home care, and supervises private sector institutions providing these services. As of August 2009, the General Directorate operated ten family counselling and rehabilitation centres, where group therapy and similar services are provided, as well as 61 residential care and rehabilitation centres. Home care is the preferred approach, and since 2006 SHÇEK has made it possible for financial support to be paid in respect of close to 200,000 disabled persons in low-income families. Typically, a minimum wage is paid to the carer.104 Efforts are under way to handle applications more rapidly. Efforts are also being made to improve the quality of residential homes and standards for carers. The services offered by SHÇEK and the information which it provides do not always distinguish between adult disabled persons and disabled children, and individual residential institutions may cater for both age groups. According to Turkey’s second periodic report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the number of disabled children under protection and care rose from 473 in 2001 to 856 in 2006, while 26 disabled children were placed with foster-parents and daycare care was provided at SHÇEK family consultation and rehabilitation centres to 513 disabled girls and 719 disabled boys.

Children in special education
Outstanding issues: The 2002 survey provided useful information on the extent to which the disabled benefited from services and participated in daily life and on the difficulties and attitudes which they faced. However, the secondary analysis was not published until 2006. As efforts to identify the disabled and facilitate their access to services have increased since 2002, the results of the 2002 survey are now of limited value in this respect. The new survey will provide evidence as to the progress made since then, and may point to outstanding needs. Efforts to enable disabled persons to work, to have a satisfactory income and obtain health services, equipment, care and rehabilitation as necessary will need to continue. Entitlement to care and rehabilitation services may need to be broadened in terms of income qualifications and level of disability, and/or levels of assistance may need to be increased. Public health and social security systems may need to cover more of the costs of health services and aids, such as hearing aids. Extra effort may be needed to extend services to rural areas and all regions. National capacity to provide the disabled and their families with information, to provide professional care for disabled persons and to monitor policy implementation may need to be enhanced. The treatment of the intellectually disabled in institutions has been a special source of concern. A report published in 2005 spoke of intolerable conditions for mentally disabled people living in both Ministry of Health hospitals and SHÇEK facilities and called for the adoption of a mental health law. Closer attention may also need to be paid to the monitoring of private rehabilitation and education facilities and the content and quality of the services provided. With respect to the inclusion of disabled persons in all walks of life, the sensitivity of duty-bearers may need to be raised. For children specifically, it may be necessary to investigate the impact of the provision of rehabilitation and education services outside regular schools. Families may have low expectations of the capacities of their disabled children to socialise. In view of traditional roles, special effort may be needed to prevent disabled girls from being excluded from educational, social and leisure opportunities. Undoubtedly, issues of physical access raise serious problems for disabled persons of all ages, especially in crowded and chaotic urban areas. Accordingly, more effort may be needed to meet the 2012 deadline concerning public buildings and public transport. In addition, more comprehensive legislation or additional regulations may be required and the enforcement of additional provisions needs to be strengthened.

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Mental Disability Rights International: Behind Closed Doors: Human Rights Abuses in the Psychiatric Facilities, Orphanages and Rehabilitation Centers of Turkey

Freedom of Opinion and the Right to Participation

**Rights of thought and expression:** Under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child." (Article 12). In addition, children are guaranteed freedom of expression (Article 13), thought, conscience, religion (Article 14), and association and peaceful assembly (Article 15), as well as privacy (Article 16). These rights can only be implemented if the family environment and educational institutions promote participation, and if the social settings in which the child or the adolescent seeks to be influential are not closed to change and transformation. All children of all ages are capable of expressing their views in one way or another. They have valuable experiences, sentiments and insights. But if they perceive that their efforts at participation can have no impact, they lose the enthusiasm to participate. In practice, the rights to a hearing and to freedoms of thought, which are considered fundamental for adults, are largely ignored in most countries when it comes to children. Families, communities and societies which fail to give children a voice are also unable to engage their support or to benefit from their valuable experiences, sentiments and insights. Moreover, children’s habits of non-participation and non-engagement - of failing to stand up for one’s rights or to take responsibility for self and others - persist into adulthood, impoverishing the social fabric and political culture, and perpetuating a democratic deficit. Children whose every decision is taken on their behalf cannot grow up into self-esteeming, responsible and active citizens, good at communicating, respectful of the rights of others and capable of taking and implementing decisions collectively for the good of society.

**Participation in the family and education system:** In Turkey, too, children’s rights to participation are widely overlooked. Families are mostly patriarchal and hierarchal, and children are not expected to have views and express opinions. One survey of 15-24 year-olds suggests that only 55 percent are able to participate in decisions about the TV channel to be watched, and only 43 percent have a say on economic matters. The ratios fall significantly as the age of the child or the socio-economic status of the family lowers. Decisions about children’s schooling are taken for them, not with them. A child’s religion is decided for him or her at birth and inscribed in his or her identity card. Parents also frequently control the professions their children aim at, the friends they bring home and the partners they eventually marry. In these circumstances, children are rarely even aware that they are being deprived of their right to a hearing, and make only material demands on their parents. The situation in the education system is similar. Despite recent changes in the curriculum, it is unclear how far children are rewarded for stating their own opinions. Children are not normally consulted or asked for feedback about lessons or other school activities in which they are obliged to take part. All schools are supposed to have student councils to which children elect their own representatives, but these are not widely perceived as channels for involving children in decision-making. To some extent, children have the chance to learn about child rights, including the right to participation, through the primary school curriculum, as well as through the work of non-governmental organisations such as the International Children’s Centre (ICC) or the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation (TEGV) and Community Volunteers (TOG). But the curriculum and schoolbooks do not give consistent messages about child rights and child participation. Even during the annual April 23 Children’s Day and May 19 Youth and Sports Day celebrations, children and young people mostly play decorative roles which adults have chosen for them.

**Participation in public affairs:** It is hard for children and young people to find an institution through which they can exert influence on decisions taken about them. Local and national government agencies – including those...
dealing most directly with children – have not made a habit of consulting with children on an ad hoc or systematic basis or to encouraging their participation. Many municipalities have created children’s assemblies, although these are not well known and vary in their functioning. The tendency to overlook children, who do not have the vote, is shared by politicians. Just as child participation is not yet seen as a right, there is little understanding of the role which children and young people can play in the solution of social and environmental problems, and especially issues directly affecting themselves. Turkey is one of two countries in Europe which does not have a National Youth Council for the participation of young people. Active participation in an NGO activity can increase the self-confidence of young people, and contributes to their social responsibility, sense of citizenship and personal development. Children were given the right to form their own associations under a legislative change made in 2004. However, the Law on Associations makes children’s membership of associations dependent on parental permission, limits memberships of children only to child associations, and also limits the fields of activity of child associations, while the extensive and bureaucratic procedures foreseen in the Regulation for Associations make it very difficult for children to establish associations. In practice there are almost no such associations.

Photo by Oktay Üstün

Provincial child rights committees: Research has not been carried out to determine whether children’s participatory rights are being respected better over time, or to detect good practices or measure the impact of those initiatives which have been taken. The provincial child rights committees, made up of children themselves, constitute an exception to the overall picture of low child participation. These were originally formed by SHÇEK with UNICEF support, as part of the Child Rights Promotion Campaign organised to mark the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Representing children from all backgrounds, the committees send delegates to regional meetings and an annual National Child Forum. They have helped to implement child rights training and the action plans determined by the Forum, and to run child rights promotion campaigns. Members have briefed teachers, lobbied head teachers and provincial governors and advised UNICEF. The committees are also the only children’s network available which can support the newly-formed Child Rights Monitoring Committee in Parliament. Efforts are being made to strengthen the governance and capacities of the children’s committees.

National strategy for child participation: A review of the experience of the child rights committees was carried out in 2009, and in the light of the review, a national strategy for child participation in Turkey was drafted. This work is being carried out under the leadership of SHÇEK with the participation of other government agencies and adolescents themselves, using EU financial and UNICEF technical support. On the one hand, the child rights committees need to be strengthened, to make more use of communications technologies, and children’s clubs in schools need to be activated as channels for child participation. On the other hand, child participation and engagement needs to be mainstreamed in all sectors. A precondition for success is that adults have to question how they behave towards children and be strengthened for child participation.

[107] Survey carried out by the About Life Foundation (YADA) for the UNDP National Human Development Report - Youth in Turkey, 2008.
Children and the Mass Media

The role of the media: Children’s lives are influenced just as much by the mass media – visual, printed and electronic – as they are by environmental, economic, social and cultural conditions and by the attitudes and policies of government, institutions, professionals and parents. The mass media can be supportive of children and children’s rights by: paying adequate attention to children’s issues; respecting children’s rights in reporting about children; reporting positive news about children; making it possible for children’s voices to be heard; providing quality information and entertainment services (programmes, publications, etc.) for children and parents, and protecting children from disturbing images. Drawing attention to the role of the mass media, Article 17 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child obliges states to “ensure that the child has access to information and material from a diversity of national and international sources, especially those aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health”. It also refers to the need for guidelines protecting the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being.

Positive trends? No comprehensive assessment of the performance of the media with respect to its responsibilities to children is available, either in Turkey or in other countries. Observation suggests that the print media, in particular, has played a significant role in highlighting child rights issues in recent years - especially prominent protection issues. There is also evidence of more sensitive news reporting about children - for example by concealing the identities of child victims or suspects. The development of child-friendly media education for journalists has been followed by the development of a child rights syllabus for use in the communications faculties of several universities, where journalists are trained.

Criticisms: Nevertheless, there is much room for improvement. In the mainstream media, children are mostly represented as “victims of tragedies” like violence, accidents, natural disasters or family feuds. Even news about education depicts children as the victims of deficiencies in the system such as wrongly asked questions or miscalculations in the examinations. In advertisements, children are frequently used as an object of attraction, even for products not used by children. Thus, children are generally portrayed in passive roles and their own voices are not heard. In these ways, the media can reinforce the general violation of the right to active participation in social life. Sensationalism can cause children’s rights to be neglected and positive portrayals of disadvantaged children are rare. It is unclear whether the Internet – still not available to all children - provides more entertainment and informational materials for children and families than traditional media.

Children and television: As a favourite leisure activity, children are estimated to watch television three hours per day, which may lead to the lack of physical activity, increase in obesity, and disorders in attention. Mainstream television channels produce and broadcast few shows specifically targeting children of various ages, and the quality is open to question. As a result, “children’s TV” is dominated by cartoon films. The launch in November 2008 of a newly established public television channel exclusive to children (TRT Çocuk) may help to overcome this deficiency. Programmes containing excessive violence – often implicitly endorsed - and disturbing images are commonly broadcast during hours at which children are likely to watch TV. The use of “smart signs” is obligatory to inform parents and children about programme content. While this is a positive step, it is unclear how far families follow the advice given, and there is a risk of actually legitimising and increasing the broadcasting of programmes which are detrimental to the proper development of children.

The mass media is becoming more sensitive towards children’s issues and child rights, but children are still portrayed mainly as victims and there is insufficient information and entertainment specifically for children. Children of all ages probably spend too much time watching television, including unsuitable programmes.


[109] UNICEF Turkey 2008: Turkey: An Analysis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Turkish Law

[110] Necla Mora, Medya ve Çocuk [Media and the Child].
According to the Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) survey conducted for the World Health Organisation in 2005-6, 63.9 percent of Turkish children watched television for more than two hours on weekdays – just short of the European average.
Adolescents and Youth

Adolescents, Their Environment and Their Health

Need for special attention: Adolescents need special attention and, in many circumstances, services tailored to their needs. In its General Comment on the “Adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child”, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defines adolescence as “a period characterized by rapid physical, cognitive and social changes, including sexual and reproductive maturation; the gradual building up of the capacity to assume adult behaviors and roles involving new responsibilities requiring new knowledge and skills.” In this period, adolescents and young people need time and space to support their physical, cognitive and social development, access to information in order to avoid the risks attached to social, physical and reproductive maturation, and decent opportunities to participate in adult life, including economic activities. This stage of life is very critical, as skills and knowledge essential to one’s adult life – from oral communication skills and control of emotions to knowledge about how to access public services or avoid addictions - are gained during adolescence and early youth. The right kinds of attention and services can maximise the benefits of the rapid development of boys and girls in this age group, and at the same time minimise the risks which come with it.

Numbers and perceptions: It is difficult to define adolescence accurately as an age group, as experiences of children differ widely in terms of transition to this period. Combined with the lack of attention which has been given to adolescence, this makes it difficult to find statistical data exclusively related to adolescents. As of the end of 2010, there were 6.6 million people in Turkey aged 10 to 14 and 6.3 million aged 15 to 19. The days when young people were regarded as protectors of the Republic and catalysts of modernization and development have long faded. In the 1970s, they were held to be responsible for the polarization of society between leftists and rightists. The Constitution, drafted under military rule in 1982, emphasises the need to protect youth from divisive ideologies (Article 58). In the public discourse of the 1980s and 1990s, young people were perceived as apolitical and consumerist and were generally distrusted. Attitudes may be more varied today, but a tendency to regard adolescents as a problem rather than an asset persists.

Parental capacity: Most parents are not well educated themselves, and just as they have little knowledge about the health and development of young children, so they can assumed to be largely unprepared to recognise and respond to - or talk to their children about - the issues that arise during adolescence. This problem may begin at an early age when parents shower love and affection on their children and/or are able to discipline them with the threat of violence, but pay little attention to orienting them towards useful spare time activities and interests, setting consistent rules, or winning respect by explaining and discussing. Adults who struggle to meet their children’s basic needs, whose children are more educated than themselves, or whose children are growing up in an environment very different from that in which they themselves grew up may find it particularly hard to influence them during adolescence. Some parents are over-protective and over-tolerant. Parents who have developed unrealistically high expectations may have extra difficulty understanding poor performance at school or perceived disobedience or irresponsibility, and may respond with verbal abuse, excessive discipline or loss of interest. Adolescent sons and daughters are also often affected by the problems of their parents’ marriages.

Gender discrimination: Common cultural values discriminate hugely between the behaviour expected of boys and girls during adolescence and young adulthood – and not only in lower socioeconomic strata and rural areas. The term delikanlı ("crazy blood": a person of unexpected behaviour) refers only to male young people. Many girls are given no option but to become ev kızı ("house girl") and to work and stay at home. According to the Family Structure Survey of 2006, Turkish young people experience problems with their parents mostly when it comes to choice of friends (30.5 percent), consumption and expenditure habits (28.1 percent) and style of dressing (26.1 percent). School and job choices (15.9 percent), marriage and family life (14.6 percent) and political opinions (7.2 percent) emerge as problems more rarely. It is unclear whether this means that parents are tolerant towards their sons and daughters on these more serious issues, or whether young people adopt their parents’ views and choices as their own without much questioning.
Adolescent health: The 2007 Youth Sexual Health Survey showed that 65 percent of young people assessed their health as "very good" or "good in general", while 46 percent reported that they cared "very much" or "much" about their health. Considering that youth is generally the healthiest phase of human life, there is a potential to increase the former rate. Objective data on adolescent health, physical and mental, is difficult to come by, due to insufficient screening, monitoring and recording. As with young child health, the introduction of the family medicine system may present an opportunity to improve the monitoring of adolescent health. Another source of concern is the limited attention paid to the special characteristics and problems of adolescence in higher education institutions where future health personnel are educated. The capacity of the current human resources to provide services to adolescents taking their special circumstances into consideration is also limited. This curbs the ability of public institutions to deal with the problems of adolescents severely.

Reproductive health and sex education: In a survey of tenth graders (aged approximately 16) in Istanbul, 35 percent of boys and 5 percent of girls declared that they had already had sexual intercourse. 38 percent of these boys and 46 percent of these girls reported that they did not use any form of contraceptive, or only used unsafe ones. These figures suggest that young people may frequently be involved in risky sexual behaviour. The knowledge of young people on the matters of sexual and reproductive health is quite limited. In the 2007 Youth Sexual Health Survey, 39 percent of people aged 15-24 reported that they do not know where babies grow. 40 percent of young women gave the answer "I don’t know" when asked about male reproductive organs. Only 42 percent of respondents were aware of the existence of a specific period for a woman to become pregnant, and among those only 27.4 percent had the correct knowledge. The proportion of 15-24 year-olds with correct knowledge about HIV/AIDS was 11.2 percent among males and 9.6 percent among females. This lack of knowledge may also lead to discriminatory behaviour towards people with HIV/AIDS.

Information sources of young people (15-24) about sexually transmitted diseases

Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child states that "States parties should provide adolescents with access to sexual and reproductive information". Figures about the knowledge of young people concerning sexually transmitted diseases and about their sources of information suggest that there is an important need for sex education in Turkey to ensure socially and physically healthy development for all adolescents. The most frequent sources of information about sexual health and sexually transmitted diseases, especially for young men, are the media and friends. These may be sources of incorrect information. Parents are rarely cited as sources for knowledge on sexually transmitted diseases suggesting that sexuality cannot be discussed freely in the family context. Currently, the curriculum is insufficient on the subjects of reproductive and sexual
Tobacco smoking is widespread among adolescents. Abuse of alcohol is not uncommon. There is sufficient evidence of drug use among adolescents to warrant more research and a more comprehensive response.

Alcohol and tobacco: Alcohol consumption and drunkenness is much lower in Turkey than in Western countries, but is still familiar in many parts of society, and some children are affected, although reports concerning the exact proportion vary. A 2007 survey\(^{123}\) found that 22 percent of 15-19 year-old boys and 7 percent of 15-19 year-old girls had consumed alcohol at least once within the last three months. Consumption was most likely (especially for girls) among urban children and those with higher socio-economic status. Use of tobacco is very common in Turkey, mostly in the form of cigarettes, but also water pipes. Among adult men, tobacco usage has been put as high as 60-65 percent – one of the highest levels in the world – and among adult women at 20-24 percent\(^{124}\). However, the Global Adult Tobacco Survey conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) in 2008 among persons aged fifteen and over put the figure at 48% for men and 15% for women, including casual smokers. A 2003 study\(^{125}\) suggested that adolescent smoking levels too, are higher in Turkey than in Western societies, and that consumption of tobacco typically starts at around the age of 15—sometimes lower. However, smoking at this age may be intermittent due to family disapproval. The 2007 survey found that 28.6 percent of 15-19 year-old boys and 12.9 percent of 15-19 year-old girls were “current smokers” – much lower than the figures for 20-24 year-olds.\(^{126}\) ‘Stop smoking’ campaigns targeting the 15-19 age group might be effective. Turkey ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2004 and legislation has been progressively tightened so that the content of tobacco products, restrictions on their sale and use to children, health warnings and smoking in public places are now similar to those in Europe. Smoking in enclosed public spaces was banned in 2008-9. In spite of this, and of widespread awareness of the health effects, cigarette-smoking seems remarkably persistent.

Drugs and substance abuse: The number of adolescents using or abusing drugs and similar substances and/or engaging in other forms of risky behaviour may be increasing. The ESPAD\(^{126}\) survey conducted in six cities in 2003 by the Ministry of Health and UNODC suggested that 4 percent of high school students in Turkey had used cannabis, compared to a European average of 21 percent, while 3 percent had used other illicit drugs, 4 percent had used inhalants, and 3 percent had used tranquilisers and sedatives without a doctor’s prescription. However, a 2004 survey of 15-17 year-old high school students in Istanbul pointed to considerably higher rates of illicit and licit substance use, concluding that the use of illegal substances, headed by ecstasy was on the rise, and that it was spreading to broader socioeconomic groups.\(^{127}\) A study of adolescents applying to a rehabilitation centre in Izmir in 2005 and 2007 pointed to “a considerable increase in the use of cannabis and ecstasy.”\(^{128}\) Press reports, some other studies, statements by public officials, available information on judicial proceedings and policing and consultations held with children and young people during the preparation of the present document suggest that drugs are available to young people quite readily, that drug use starts in adolescence, that it is geographically widespread and that it has causes and consequences (unhealthy relationships, school failure, social exclusion, crime, serious health problems and so on) similar to those encountered in other countries. Boys appear to be more involved than girls. The growth of crowded inner city environments where drug control is difficult and global concern about a possible increase in synthetic drugs in developing countries\(^{129}\) also make it likely that Turkish children are facing an increasing risk of drug abuse. However, despite the intentions of the Ministry of Health, the ESPAD survey, which is conducted at four-yearly intervals, could not be repeated in Turkey in 2007. Nor has Turkey taken part in the 2011 survey. There is a need for more frequent and timely monitoring of drug use especially among children, such as a nationwide ESPAD survey. No children or adolescents are known to have contracted HIV/AIDS through intravenous drug use, reflecting the low prevalence of the disease and the minor role of intravenous drug use as a cause of it in Turkey.
Adolescents living on the street: The use of addictive substances such as adhesives and solvents remains a problem in large cities, often associated with children living on the streets and working children. About half of the children living on the street who came into contact with the services of the Social Services and Child Protection (SHÇEK) between 2004 and 2007 were engaged in substance abuse. For this reason, children living on the street are frequently referred to as ‘tinerci’ – a reference to their addiction to paint thinners – and considered dangerous or anti-social. The presence of thousands of children living on the street, mostly in certain large cities, became a matter of public concern in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and was the subject of a parliamentary committee of enquiry in 2004-5. The issue was seen to be closely related to poverty, internal migration and in some cases domestic violence or other problems at home and school. From 2005 onwards, support and rehabilitation was provided under a new service model coordinated by SHÇEK, in addition to the work of NGOs. An objective assessment is required to determine the current situation.

Drug awareness, prevention and rehabilitation

The body which coordinates government efforts to combat drug use in Turkey is the Turkish Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (TÜBİM), a branch of the Smuggling and Organised Crimes (KOM) department of the General Directorate of Security. TÜBİM is the national focal point for the EU’s European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA), to which it makes an annual report. Turkey became a member of the EMCDDA in 2007. TÜBİM drew up Turkey’s first national policy and strategy document on combating drugs and addiction in 2006, and the first national action plan in 2007. In-patient and out-patient rehabilitation services for children using drugs or other substances (or addicted to alcohol) are available in the health sector and at universities. Children or their parents may apply of their own accord or may be directed there through the juvenile justice system or by social services. Of the nineteen centres, three specialise in children and adolescents and two have separate departments dedicated to them. The remainder treat all age groups together. Costs are covered in the same way as the costs of health care. Inadequate capacity or distance to the centre may, however, hinder access to rehabilitation services. With respect to prevention, information is provided to professionals and adolescents by TÜBİM, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Health and other government agencies under various programmes. In addition, some non-government organisations, notably the Yeniden Education and Health Association, conduct research, awareness-raising and guidance activities. However, these activities do not reach the whole population, and the
The overall level of knowledge and awareness of children and adolescents concerning drug-related issues is not regularly assessed. The knowledge and capacities of professionals working with children in health, education and other sectors may also be insufficient. In addition, efforts to reduce child labour and street life will also contribute to reducing drug damage among children.


[113] Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat).


[117] Cinsel Eğitim Tedavi ve Araştırma Derneği, Bilgilendirme Dosyası-7: Gençlik ve Cinsellik [Society for Sexual Education Treatment and Research, Information File-7: Youth and Sexuality], (date not available), page 30.


[120] UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: General Comment 4, 2003, para. 28.


[125] The 2003 UNODC National Assessment of Drug Abuse in Turkey

[126] Council of Europe/Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs: *The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD)*


The 2008 Turkstat survey gives figures only for broader age groups. In the 15-24 age group, 39.6% of males and 29.6% of females were smokers. These percentages include 4.7% of males and 2.5% of females who were only occasional smokers. Almost 90% of regular male smokers aged 15-24 smoked ten or more cigarettes a day and 70% smoked fifteen or more. For female smokers, these percentages were lower, at about 60% and 35% respectively. Nearly a quarter of current male smokers said that they started to smoke every day before they were fifteen and almost 60% before they were eighteen. Only a tenth of current female smokers said that they had begun smoking daily at less than fifteen, and only about two-fifths smoked every day before they were eighteen.

**Personal and social development, leisure and sport**

**Leisure needs and provision:** From early adolescence onwards, the development in physical, cognitive and social capabilities accelerates. Adolescents develop their personalities, interests, skills and competencies through cultural and artistic activities, physical activities/sports and social interaction.

They may also require the provision of venues, facilities, equipment or services over and above those available at home and school. Apart from school-based activities, opportunities and facilities where adolescents and young people can take part in free-time activities are provided by the General Directorate of Youth and Sports, registered youth clubs, municipalities, voluntary organisations and, for those who can afford it, the private sector. While statistics are lacking, such facilities appear to be quite limited – certainly by European standards - especially in poor and crowded urban settings. The General Directorate of Youth and Sports has more than 130 youth centres, but only 40 of them have their own buildings and facilities. It is thus clearly able to reach only a very small proportion of adolescents (Moreover, the main beneficiaries may be over the age of 18). Such activities also contribute to the individual’s health, fitness and intellectual abilities. However, they require time, meaning that school and/or work should not take up all of children’s time.

**Leisure activities – what children say**

Problems with leisure activities: The schools and the education system obstruct these activities. The playgrounds are inadequate. Some of the playgrounds are being used by older young people for other purposes. Cultural activities are absent in many schools or they are inadequate. Families violate the right to rest, leisure and play of children as well – they want them to revise and study.

Recommendations: A playground is needed for every neighbourhood. It should be maintained regularly and repaired when necessary. Playgrounds should be constructed in such a way that disabled children can also use them. The authorities should stop people from using playgrounds for the
Disparity between girls and boys: Boys can go outside and play freely but girls have to stay at home. They are not allowed to go outside. They are also made to marry early.
--views expressed by children taking part in a consultation workshop in June 2009

**Most popular activities:** Information on the activities in which adolescents take part is patchy. Surveys cover only some activities and age groups, and are not repeated regularly. The most common leisure-time activities of adolescents and young people in Turkey appear to be watching TV, chatting with friends and going to shopping malls. In the Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey, 75 percent of young people named going to shopping malls as one of their favourite leisure time activities. Going to the cinema (20 percent), going to concerts (around 24 percent) and playing a musical instrument (around 15 percent) - all activities with a higher potential for improving physical and mental capabilities - were far less common. Shopping malls appear to be places which young people – and especially their families – find safe and secure, and where it is possible to come together without spending too much money. It has therefore been suggested that adolescents and young people are obliged to spend their free time in shopping malls due to the lack of alternative leisure spaces and financial resources, and also as a result of parental restrictions. Only 20 percent of Turkish adolescents aged 11-15 engage in the amount of physical activity recommended by the medical profession. This figure is close to the average for the OECD countries. While 25 percent of 11-year-olds claim to be physically active, the ratio decreases to 14 percent by the age of 15. Young people in Turkey do not read much: 36 percent of them read newspapers daily and 27 percent of them read books. Public libraries serve a minute proportion of adolescents.

**Children, young people and the Internet**

Overview: Access to the Internet has grown rapidly in Turkey, and children and young people are among the biggest Internet users. However, rates of access remain below Western levels, and there are wide gaps in access between people of different social and geographical backgrounds, and between girls and boys. These discrepancies threaten to deepen the inequities which already exist in Turkish society, Meanwhile, children and young people are not fully aware of the risks associated with Internet use. Nor do they make full use of all the opportunities which the Internet provides for self-development, creativity, self-expression and participation. While promoting the use of technology among children and young people, the government has been suspicious of the Internet, and officials and public opinion have come to regard it as dangerous. This leads to over-protection and acts as a barrier to policies that would empower children and young people to explore the benefits and opportunities of the Internet and to learn how to protect themselves from risks.

Internet access: A household ICT access and use survey conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) in 2010 showed that 48.7 percent of urban dwellers aged 16-74 had access to the Internet, compared to only 24 percent of rural inhabitants. Internet usage is highest by far among young people: almost two thirds of 16-24 year-olds use the Internet. The Turkstat study showed that while 76.6 per cent of males aged 16-24 use the Internet, only 49.9 per cent of females aged 16-24 do so. There appears to be a lack of parental and familial support for use of ICTs by female adolescents, which may be linked to perceived risks of the Internet as well as traditional gender roles.

For children and young people, access is primarily from home (and typically from a child’s own room). Children and young people also access the Internet from school, from friends’ homes and (especially for boys) from Internet cafes. For the time being, at least, only a small minority of children are able to...
access the Internet using their mobile phones or other hand-held devices. Almost all children using the Internet have an email account and most also communicate and share information through social networking sites headed by Facebook. In addition to communicating with friends, children and young people use the Internet very intensively for online gaming and homework/schoolwork.

Cyber-risks: Risks associated with using the Internet include cyberbullying, exposure to malicious software, sharing of personal information and exposure to adult content. In an EU Kids Online survey, 13 per cent of the 9-16 year-olds surveyed reported seeing images containing sexual content on the Internet[2]. The same study showed that many children shared private information freely, and most did not know how to change their privacy settings. Some surveys report a high incidence of what might be called cyberbullying. The problem of children talking to and meeting strangers whom they encounter on the web appears to be less common than in Western countries, but still a matter of concern, with girls and younger children more cautious than boys and high school students.

Government policy: Turkish authorities and/or courts have blocked web content frequently for reasons ranging from anti-Turkish sentiments and terrorist propaganda as well as in response to concern over child abuse images, sites about drugs, and other harmful content. At times, well-known global websites have been blocked entirely. In May 2007, as a measure to protect families and young people as per Article 41 of the Constitution, Parliament approved Law No. 5651 permitting the Turkish Internet Board to block websites which it suspects of encouraging suicide, sexually exploiting and abusing children, facilitating the use of drugs and other unhealthy substances, displaying obscenity, committing crimes against Atatürk, or providing sports betting services. The provisions of the Law have been interpreted and enforced very widely and summarily, often in response to hotline complaints from the public. However, it is unclear whether there have been any benefits in terms of protecting children from the main Internet risks. Additionally, as of 2011, new Internet filtering regulations are due to come into force which would require service providers to offer consumers centrally-defined ‘family’, ‘domestic’ and ‘child’ filtering profiles blocking access to a black-list of websites, foreign websites and all websites not on a white list, respectively – a move likely to increase state control and strengthen negative perceptions of the Internet in society.

This section is based mainly on “Youth of Turkey Online - An Exploratory Study of the Turkish Digital Landscape”, a study prepared by UNICEF in 2011 as part of an international and national project on Digital Citizenship and Safety, which is continuing. The study reviews and refers to a range of surveys and academic work.

[1] The Turkish government, especially the Ministry of National Education, is actively promoting computer and Internet usage by children, most recently through the FATIH project, which will equip schools and schoolchildren with electronic boards and tablets.

**Internet use:** Internet use is seemingly more common, especially among boys: while 71 percent of male young people use internet, the rate is 34 percent for girls.\(^{135}\) Qualitative research suggests that parents, concerned at the possibility that their daughters will interact with men in a way which they cannot supervise, restrict their internet use.\(^{136}\) Young people report that they mostly use internet for socialisation purposes. Use of the Internet does not necessarily imply the acquisition of technological skills. Second to the home environment, internet cafes are most popular places for internet use. Especially for male adolescents, internet cafes have become a place for social interaction in which they can play games, come together with friends, and do homework and prepare school projects.\(^{137}\) As these places become central to young people’s lives, new regulations were passed in 2007, the most important of them being the Bylaw for Providers of Collective Internet Use. It is unclear how effectively this regulation is being implemented. In addition, a private telecommunications company and the Ministry of Transport and Communications launched a campaign in 2007 to establish an internet house for each district in the country in order to increase the safe access of young people to internet. The beneficial and adverse impacts of the use of the Internet and other technologies, such as mobile telecommunications, by children of different age groups could be a fertile area for further study.

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\(^{134}\) Survey carried out by the About Life Foundation (YADA) for the UNDP National Human Development Report - Youth in Turkey, 2008, quoted in Euromed, *Studies on Youth Policies in the Mediterranean Partner Countries* (prepared by Asuman Göksel), (date not available), page 16.


School to Work

Between two stools:

Children aged 10-14 are subject to mandatory education. For 15-19 year-olds, however, education is not mandatory: they may be in education, in work, seeking work, or none of these. Analysis of the 2006 Household Labor Survey shows that only 2.6 million (45 percent) of the 15-19 year-olds were students, while 1.6 million (24 percent) were either in or seeking work and as many as 2.0 million (32 percent) were inactive. The gender disparity, reflecting traditional role models, was very marked: as many as 45 percent of girls aged 15-19 were inactive compared to 19 percent of boys. It has been pointed out that while the proportion of inactive males in this age group tends to decrease with age (as they join the workforce), the opposite is the case for inactive females. Turkey has the highest percentage of inactive young people in the OECD, where on average only 8 percent of young people aged 15 to 19 are neither in school nor in the labour force, reflecting lower years of schooling and higher workforce participation, especially among girls. Turkey and Mexico are the only two OECD countries in which gender disparity persists in this respect. These patterns of inactivity among young people under 20 are likely to persist to some extent for years to come, especially among disadvantaged groups, in spite of increasing secondary school enrolment rates.

Exit from education: The majority of young people leave school during these years of their lives: at the age of 15, four out of five boys and two out of three girls are in school, but by the age of 19 only one of out five young people is continuing his or her education. Between 15 and 19, the schooling rates decrease continuously, partly due to the number of individuals embarking on a secondary education but not completing it. Fifteen percent of 15-19 year-olds have no primary school diploma and a further 22 percent have left school without a secondary school diploma. According to the Lisbon goals of the EU, member states should strive to increase the percentage of people with upper secondary diplomas to 85). It can only be added that the educational and workforce status of adolescents undoubtedly varies greatly not only by gender but also from place to place and social group to social group.
Entering the workforce: As of 2006, 1.7 million young people, accounting for 28 percent of the population aged between 15 and 19 participated in the labour force. In 2009, the youth (15-24) unemployment rate was 25.3 percent, while the general rate was 14.0 percent. These figures reflected a sharp deterioration due to the economic slowdown. In 2010, the youth unemployment rate improved but remained high at 21.7%, compared to a general unemployment rate of 11.9%. Young people in Turkey also perceive unemployment as their major problem. When asked what they most desire, 49 percent of young people cite being able to find a decent job; social status (18 percent) and love (17 percent) are given much lower priority. Youth unemployment reflects the failure of the economy to create enough employment to offset the growth of the workforce, particularly given a structural decline in employment in agriculture. In addition, many young people experience severe problems in school-to-work transition, revealing deficiencies of education and youth policies.

Better employment prospects for young people require education reforms that prepare all young people with the skills needed to qualify for good jobs after leaving school, stronger links between the education system and employers, better career counselling services beginning from an early age, and more effective job search assistance. An objective debate is needed on the future of vocational secondary education: the importance of quality vocational education for the economy is frequently stressed by employers, but at the same time changes are being made in the university entrance system to make it easier for graduates of vocational secondary schools to enter university courses in fields unrelated to the professions for which their secondary curricula are designed to prepare them. Meanwhile, difficulties are also encountered in returning to formal education, transferring from one type of school to another and finding lifelong learning opportunities. In order to provide young people with second chances, the flexibility of the system should be enhanced and opportunities for further education should be provided through collaboration between the Ministry of National Education and Ministry of Labour.

For young people in work, working conditions are often harsh and exploitative. 82 percent of working young people aged between 15 and 19 are not covered by any social insurance scheme. In non-agricultural sectors, 85 percent of young people work more than 40 hours per week, and 82 percent earn less than TL250 per month at 2006 prices.

In these circumstances, economic participation may hamper the development of young people rather than contributing to it. Opportunities for combining income-generating work with further study may be limited.

Policy implications: These characteristics of adolescents in Turkey have important implications for policy-makers. Clearly, increasing enrolment and completion rates in secondary education is important for improving the opportunities and quality of life of young people and raising the level of skills and knowledge in society. Another priority is to reduce gender disparities in access to education and the transition to work. Achieving these goals may generally in school, and older young people, who have the vote, and are more likely to be in employment. Two million 15-19 year-olds are neither in school nor members of the workforce, reflecting low secondary school participation, poor preparation for work, high youth employment and discriminatory expectations concerning girls.
require research into the economic, cultural or other causes of non-participation in education and work. New models of education and vocational training may be required, or ongoing initiatives may need to be modified, to fit the conditions in which the more disadvantaged children find themselves. Education and transition-to-work policies may both need to be more flexible, demand-led, holistic and gender-sensitive. Different approaches may be required depending on local conditions. More effort may be needed in areas like career counselling, the quality of on-the-job training and the poor public image of vocational education. Meanwhile, any and all policies directed towards supporting adolescents, improving the quality of their lives and protecting them and strengthening them against risks cannot be channelled solely through the education system: other channels also need to be utilised to reach the large numbers of those who are not in school, especially as these are also very likely to come from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, with the least access to services or knowledge.


[142] Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat): Employment statistics

[143] Survey carried out by the About Life Foundation (YADA) for the UNDP National Human Development Report - Youth in Turkey, 2008.


**Youth Policy**

**Existing models and need for coordination:** The Constitution gives the state the task of providing services for the development of young people, albeit from a largely protective standpoint. Similar references to youth are to be found in the current Ninth Development Plan. Various sectors of national government (education, employment, sports, health, social services, culture...), local governments and NGOs are providing information and services for adolescents and young people of various age groups within their own fields of responsibility and organisational structures. The Ministry of National Education Directorate General of Special Education Guidance and Counseling Services has developed a parenting education programme for parents of children aged 7-19 (now incorporated into the parenting education activities of the Directorate General of Non-Formal Education), and a peer-to-peer life skills-based education (LSBE) programme for adolescents. The latter model in particular recognises the needs: to enhance the capacity of adolescents themselves—especially those form disadvantaged backgrounds—to protect themselves against violence, abuse and exploitation, HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases, drug abuse and health risks; to make them aware of the services and information available to them; to help them to communicate with their parents, control their anger, resolve disputes, deal with stress and peer pressures and make their own safe, healthy choices about sexuality, and to inform them about their rights and gender issues and encourage them in planning their futures. Despite positive efforts such as these, the UNDP’s National Human Development Report for 2008, entitled ‘Youth in Turkey’ concluded that “Turkey needs to go beyond its present rather problem-based, sectoral approach to youth with a comprehensive youth policy and with institutions to ensure follow up action.” The report, which was drawn up in close consultation with young people, covers the 15-24 age group.

**Youth in the Constitution and Ninth Development Plan**
Constitution:

**Article 58:** The state shall take measures to ensure the training and development of the youth into whose keeping our state, independence, and our Republic are entrusted, in the light of contemporary science, in line with the principles and reforms of Atatürk, and in opposition to ideas aiming at the destruction of the indivisible integrity of the state with its territory and nation.

The state shall take necessary measures to protect youth from addiction to alcohol and drugs, crime as well as gambling, and similar vices, and ignorance.

**Article 59:** The state shall take measures to develop the physical and mental health of Turkish citizens of all ages, and encourage the spread of sports among the masses…. The state shall protect successful athletes.

Ninth Development Plan:

- The accelerating transformation process has also negatively affected the cultural and social relations within the family and the society. Diversification in mass communication, inability to leave traditional methods in communication within the family, and insurmountable problems of the education system have increased the problems young people face such as breaking away from their families, becoming insensitive to social problems, hopelessness and lack of self confidence and, consequently, increased the crime proneness among young people. On the other hand, increase in communication opportunities and development of non-governmental organizations enable the young people to clearly express their personal demands.

- Equal opportunities will be provided for the women, the young, and the long-term unemployed, the disabled and former convicts, who encounter difficulties in the labor market.

- Measures will be taken to ensure better communication of the young people with their families and the society, to develop their self-confidence, to increase their sense of belonging to the society and sensitivity towards the society they live in, and to ensure their participation in the decision making processes.

Towards a youth policy: There is as yet no single policy document or other mechanism which would help to coordinate public work for adolescents and young people in line with an overriding vision of providing all young people with the necessary information and opportunities for the enjoyment of their rights and a healthy transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, the government’s Medium-Term Programme for 2010-12 promised that “Youth services will be restructured so as to cover all areas regarding the youth and will improve their self-confidence and feeling of belonging to the society.” Although it has mainly been concerned with Sport in the past, the General Directorate for Youth and Sport is likely to be the lead institution. If there is to be a national youth policy, it is important that it should not merely duplicate the work going on in various sectors, that it should pay adequate attention to the adolescent end of the age range (often neglected by comparison youth aged 19-24, who have the right to vote), and that it should bridge the gap between those in school and those not in school.
Policy design: In view of all the above issues, a youth policy responding to the needs of adolescents will contain many strands, potentially ranging from awareness-raising about adolescence among the general public and professionals working with children to the provision of physical infrastructure. The development of a youth policy can best be achieved through a participatory process. 155 countries in the world have developed their own national youth policies, and 168 countries have established youth coordination mechanisms. In Europe, only Turkey and Poland do not have national youth councils. A participatory process will help to build support for institutional and financial arrangements to ensure provision of cultural, leisure, sporting and social activities for young people on a rights-based, demand-led basis, taking local characteristics into account. It will also facilitate the collection of the necessary additional data on adolescents and their needs and concerns. Adolescents can be closely involved in research.

The Child Protection Challenge

The impact of urbanisation and consumerism: Turkey’s children are enjoying more opportunities, but are also becoming increasingly vulnerable, as a result of the demographic, economic and political forces – in many cases global – which are transforming society. Rapid urbanisation has involved, and continues to involve, high levels of internal migration, with all the associated shocks and disorientation. Against a backdrop of economic modernisation and liberalisation, new kinds of communities have come into being where livelihoods are fragile and spaces crowded, but family and neighbourhood ties have been weakened. In all sections of society, individual aspirations are increasing, and individual consumption has become a major source of social status and self-esteem - yet inequality is highly visible. Value systems are being challenged and eroded - or reinforced in intolerant forms. Intergenerational clashes – for example, over gender roles – are accelerated. Life is increasingly competitive and new forms of crime and exploitation are emerging. This is true of cities in all parts of the country. In parts of Southeast Turkey with rapidly growing populations, social strains are exacerbated further by the effects of ongoing political tensions, violence and terrorism.

Need for both prevention and intervention: The harsh pace of change demands that extra attention be paid to eliminating inequality of opportunity. It requires increasingly sophisticated support for all children and their families: better-informed parenting; good health care, quality education for life-skills and jobs; material support for the poor, opportunities for recreation and participation, and a child-friendly media. The role of these preventive factors in safeguarding girls and boys from exposure to all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse, deprivation or other damaging or unpleasant experiences cannot possibly be overestimated. In the meantime, however, the fact remains that more and more children and adolescents are likely to face special difficulties and to need extra protection of a kind which may not be available in their families and schools. The sight of children working on the street is a constant reminder of this. Less visible, but no less alarming, is the rapid increase in the number of children coming into contact with the law, and the growing public concern about violence and abuse including sexual abuse committed against – and sometimes also by – people under the age of 18.

Higher standards; wider coverage: Meanwhile, child protection authorities around the world are being challenged to meet higher standards than ever before. In recent years, the rights of children have been recognised and defined more clearly in international fora. These developments represent a historic opportunity for children and for everybody who believes in children’s rights. At the same time, the number of children considered to be at risk or in need of special protection has increased, and duty-bearers have taken on extra responsibilities towards children deprived of parental care, children in conflict with the law, working children and many others. All this requires the development of deeper understanding and expertise and the effective deployment of a wider range of protection mechanisms backed by appropriate legislative and institutional arrangements and human and financial resources.

Urbanisation and consumerism have added to the numbers of children who face risks such as conflict with the law, street life, addiction and severe forms of violence, exploitation and abuse. These risks can best be reduced by lifting children out of poverty, improving the education and skills of children and their parents and raising the awareness of professionals and the general public. However, specific child protection policies are also needed.
Legislative Framework

Convention on the Rights of the Child: Turkey signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 and ratified it in 1995. This makes the Convention an integral and indisputable part of domestic law, taking priority over domestic laws in matters of fundamental rights and freedoms. Turkey has reserved the right to interpret and apply the provisions of Articles 17, 29 and 30 of the Convention - all of which refer to language rights and/or cultural identity - according to the letter and spirit of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and those of the Treaty of Lausanne of 24 July 1923. Turkey has also adopted the optional protocols of the Convention on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

Other international human and child rights conventions: Turkey is a party (with a few reservations) to most other global and European conventions related to human and child rights, such as: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the European Convention on Human Rights; the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the European Social Charter; the European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children; the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, and the The Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. These too have become an integral and indisputable part of domestic law, taking priority over domestic laws in matters of fundamental rights and freedoms. There are some exceptions: For example, Turkey is not a party to the The Hague Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children, or to the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education.

The Turkish Constitution: The Constitution enshrines most basic rights and freedoms, but it also warns against their abuse and indicates the ways in which they may be circumscribed by law. The recognition of these rights and freedoms for children is not made explicit. Reference is not made to child rights or to the principle of the best interests of the child. A reference to children's rights was included in the Constitution in September 2010, when the title of article 41 was amended to read: Protection of the Family and Children’s Rights. This article previously made the state responsible for taking the necessary measures and making the necessary organizational arrangements to protect the peace and welfare of the family, especially mothers and children. Now it also states that every child has the right to adequate protection and care, and the right to have and maintain a
personal and direct contact with his/her parents unless this is explicitly contrary to his/her best interests. Article 41 also now gives the state the duty of taking measures for the protection of the child against any kind of abuse and violence. Separately, under article 61, the state is to take all kinds of measures to “win children dependent on protection over for society”. Thus while focusing on the good of the family and society, the Constitution underscores the child’s right to protection and contact with his/her parents, but does not detail children’s other rights.

**Key laws:** Clauses envisaging the protection of children are contained in innumerable pieces of legislation, including: the Turkish Civil Code; the Turkish Penal Code; the Law on Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK); laws governing police and judicial procedures, employment, broadcasting, education, health and hygiene, and related by-laws and regulations. In a society where children are regarded as elements of the family, the education system or society rather than as individuals in their own right, it is important that legislation should incorporate the principle of the child’s best interests, underline the child’s human and civil rights – such as freedom of opinion and the right to a say in matters concerning themselves – and specify how these principles and rights are to be exercised. Turkish legislation, which has been drawn up and amended at various times, is inconsistent in this regard. Some recent legislation, such as the Turkish Civil Code, most recently amended with effect from 2002, is progressive. The Code deals with several critical issues: marriage; parental responsibilities, duties and rights; the naming of children; adoption, and custody. It gives the state and parents joint responsibility for the development of children. It also specifies that while exercising their custodial rights parents should give their children the right to organise their own lives, depending on their level of maturity. These and other clauses of the Code closely parallel the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Law on Population Services gives parents an obligation to have their children registered and the State the obligation to step in where parents do not fulfil their obligation. The Law on Turkish Citizenship is inclusive, according Turkish citizenship from birth to children born in Turkey and unable to acquire citizenship from their parents. In other respects Turkish laws are less favourable to children. Like the Constitution, they do not express the child’s right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion. The Law on Associations severely circumscribes children’s right to form and join associations. Relevant laws, such as the Civil Code, the Code of Criminal Procedures and the Law on the Practice of Medicine, do not uphold the child’s right to privacy or safeguard the right of the child to participate in decisions on important issues concerning himself/herself, in line with his or her cognitive capacity. The Code of Civil Procedures allows a judge the discretion to hear a parent instead of a child up to the age of 16. Children cannot apply to court without parental consent. Harmful practices like corporal punishment or the payment of bride price are not explicitly banned. Laws which set out the duties of state agencies to provide services and support to families and children in areas like education, health, social security, leisure or information, may not mandate universality of access or equality of opportunity. Budget laws and regulations do not set out any rules concerning the use of resources for children.

**The Child Protection Law:** There are specific laws on the Protection of the Family and on Child Protection. Despite some drawbacks, the Child Protection Law, adopted in 2005, is probably Turkey’s most advanced law from the point of view of children, as it explicitly incorporates many of the principles of the Convention of the Rights of the Child. It also details and improves juvenile justice procedures, sets out procedures for the adoption and implementation of counselling, health, education and shelter orders for children in need of protection and determines the roles and duties of the related government departments, social workers and probation officers. This law, and the juvenile justice system as a whole, are discussed in more detail below.

**Age limits:** There are various legal age limits in areas like employment, marriage and penal procedures. The Civil Code, the Child Protection Law and the Turkish Penal Code identify all boys and girls up to the age of 18 as children, as recommended by the UN Convention on the Right of the Child. The minimum age to vote is also 18. However, the normal minimum legal age of marriage is 17 and the age of consent is only 15, which does not provide sufficient protection in all cases. While Turkish policy-makers and society seem to favour hard-and-fast age limits, they appear to be undecided about whether 15-17 year-olds should be regarded as children. Labour laws and the justice system differentiate between children up to the age of 15 and children older than 15, providing much more protection to the former than to the latter. The minimum age of criminal responsibility is 12. The Law on Civil Aspects and Scope of International Child Abduction and the Penal Code penalise the abduction of children under 16 only. There is also a minimum wage for under-16s.
Prospects for change: A comprehensive review of national legislation for conformity to the Convention of the Rights of the Child carried out for UNICEF in 2008\(^{147}\) suggested a large number of constitutional and legislative changes with a view to expanding the scope of the protection envisaged for children, making proscriptions and the duties of the state more explicit, bringing age limits into line with the Convention, closing loopholes and ensuring that the best interests of the child and children’s own opinions are taken into account. However, political awareness on the issue remains limited and concrete proposals have not been drafted. Opportunities for improvement may also arise incidentally as the Constitution and/or laws come up for amendment. Many of the necessary amendments might be capable of obtaining cross-party support - perhaps upon the initiative of the Speaker of Parliament or the parliamentary child rights committee. This committee, which is described below in the context of child rights monitoring, could also take on the role of vetting new legislation for conformity to child rights norms. However, it does not currently have this function or the capacity to carry it out.

[147] “Turkey: An Analysis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Turkish Law, 2008”.

Child Rights Monitoring

Needs and mechanisms: Even with the best legislation, child rights violations and issues may go unnoticed, unrecognised or unresolved. Governments prefer not to publicise failings of health, education or protection systems, while children themselves do not vote, and cannot easily appeal to courts or public opinion. For these reasons, the legislature, judiciary, non-government organisations and the media have a special responsibility for monitoring the implementation of child rights and drawing attention to deficiencies. In addition, over 60 countries - almost half of them in Europe - have found it desirable to set up dedicated institutions known as child ombudsmans or child commissioners for this purpose. These institutions may exist within or separate from the institution of the general ombudsman, if there is one. Often they are established by Parliament. To act successfully as the voice of children, they need to be independent, to have statutory authorities and to maintain close contact with children themselves, who know best what is happening in their own lives and worlds. Their roles and functions may include some or all of the following: to promote full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; to promote a higher priority for – and more positive attitudes to – children; to influence law, policy and practice, if necessary by actively proposing changes; to promote effective coordination of government for children at all levels; to promote effective use of resources for children; to encourage listening to children and provide a channel for children’s views; to ensure that adequate data is published on the situation of children; to promote children’s and adults’ awareness of child rights, and to make investigations and conduct and/or encourage research.

The child ombudsman debate: The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concern about the absence of an independent mechanism such as an ombudsman to monitor children’s rights and to register and address individual complaints from children in Turkey\(^{148}\). Reasons for establishing a child ombudsman in Turkey include the need to implement international standards, the EU accession process, the existing gaps in child rights implementation and monitoring, the serious issues affecting children, the still-evolving perception of childhood, the tense nature of politics and the relative weakness of civil society\(^{149}\). A law establishing a general ombudsman was passed in 2006 but the law was challenged in the Constitutional Court, which eventually overturned it in December 2008, without it ever having been implemented, on the grounds that it did not fit into the constitutional government framework\(^{150}\). Meanwhile, in April 2008, a major EU-supported conference was organised in Ankara by the Bar Association (TBB) and UNICEF to explore the possibility of establishing a child ombudsman\(^{151}\). Here, speakers underlined the possibility of moving ahead with a child ombudsman system even in the absence of a general ombudsman, and debated issues such as the most desirable structure, powers and modes of operation. Amendments to the Constitution made in September 2010 provide for the establishment of an ombudsperson, although not specifically a child ombudsperson. Legislation to this effect is now awaited.

Parliamentary committee: The child ombudsman debate contributed to the formation, beginning in July 2008, of a Child Rights Committee in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Parliament). The multi-party committee of eight Members of Parliament (MP’s)\(^{152}\) is to ensure that Parliament, through its key roles of law-making, budgeting, oversight and representation, responds effectively to the rights of children. It will...
serve as the central resource/space for children’s issues within Parliament, and serve as a bridge between Parliament and key external actors such as children and civil society. It is envisaged that the committee will work in close cooperation with the child rights committees established in the provinces with UNICEF support by the General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK). In this way, the role of these committees, which are composed of children themselves, in child rights monitoring will be enhanced. A web portal and other forms of communication have been developed with UNICEF support to ensure that the committee is in touch with children across the country. The Committee is currently only an informal sub-committee, but procedures are expected to be completed shortly to institutionalise it as a permanent committee with its own budget and its own resources, which will make it much more powerful. The committee’s effectiveness will depend on many factors including the mechanisms which it establishes for receiving and processing information and the extent to which it is supported by and earns the confidence of children and civil society. The formation of the committee could also be a step towards the establishment of a child ombudsman. In the event of arrangements being introduced whereby parliamentary legislation is vetted for compatibility with child rights and other policies for children, the committee could play a pivotal role.

**UN Committee:** States which are signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two optional protocols are obliged to report periodically on their implementation to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Committee is made up of experts from all over the world elected by the signatory states themselves. It reviews the reports through a transparent and participatory process and records its concerns and recommendations in the form of “concluding observations”, which serve as guidance for further action. Turkey is currently in the process of presenting its combined second and third report to the UN Committee. SHÇEK is the institution which has responsibility for the reporting process. SHÇEK does not appear to regard the reporting process, and more generally the monitoring of child rights, as a core activity: no mention of the process is made in its Strategic Plan for 2010-2014. It has, however, expressed determination to ensure that future reports to the Committee are drawn up without delay.

**Other mechanisms:** A number of non-government organisations and platforms are involved in the independent monitoring of child rights, along with individual lawyers, journalists, parents and others. Work being done by the Turkish Bar Association, provincial bar associations and UNICEF, with EU support, to set up complaints mechanisms for children will contribute to making child rights violations and issues more visible, as well as to ensuring that grievances are addressed. The provincial bars will be well positioned to provide local information to the Child Rights Committee in Parliament and to the child ombudsman’s office if and when it is established.

[148] Concluding Observations for the Committee on the Rights of the Child on Turkey’s first report to the Committee

[149] These arguments, as well as issues relating to the process of establishing an ombudsman, are elaborated in: Vanessa Sedletzki/UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre: The Establishment Process for a separate Child Ombudsman in Turkey: a Case-Study
The justification for the Court’s decision was published in the Official Gazette on April 4, 2009.

UNICEF Turkey: Say Yes newsletter, Spring 2008


http://www.shcek.gov.tr/Cocuk_Haklari/CocukHaklariGelisimRaporu_2-3_en.pdf In addition, alternative reports have been drawn up for the benefit of the Committee by non-government organisations and children.

Institutions, Policy and Childcare

SHÇEK and its services: The General Directorate for Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) is the main national government body responsible for the protection of children, organised in every province[1]. SHÇEK is also the coordinator agency responsible for child rights monitoring and the fulfilment of Turkey’s international obligations related to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the public mind, the General Directorate is associated primarily with residential care for children who have no parents, or whose parents have abandoned, mistreated or neglected them or are unable to look after them at home. The responsibilities and activities of SHÇEK have also come to include foster parenting and the rehabilitation, whether at home or in institutions, of children who have been abused or who have been living on the street or pushed into crime. SHÇEK has been providing more and more social assistance in cash and kind. It provides family counselling services, and operates centres where training, psychosocial support and social, cultural and sporting activities are provided for working children, for children who have been working on the street and for other children at risk. The services of the General Directorate are not limited to children and families: it operates women’s shelters and runs homes and provides rehabilitation and counselling services for disabled people and senior citizens. SHÇEK’s duties are set out in detail in Law 2828 of 1983, which has been amended several times. The General Directorate is also repeatedly referred to in the Child Protection Law, which requires it to open “Protection Care and Rehabilitation Centres” for children dragged into crime and “Care and Social Rehabilitation Centres” for child victims of crime. The first Protection, Care and Rehabilitation Centres have been opened in Izmir and Kocaeli. In recent years, SHÇEK has seen a considerable increase in its resources. In 2007, it had a total budget of TL791.7m (about US$600m, or 0.01 percent of GDP) and a permanent staff of close to 10,000. A similar number of people were employed through sub-contracting or other service agreements. Although SHÇEK employs over 1,100 social workers as well as psychologists and other professionals, these may not be sufficiently specialised. Their workload may be excessive due to insufficient numbers – for budgetary or other reasons – and there may be gaps in certain regions or areas of specialisation.

Residential care: The General Directorate has been improving the quality of its children’s homes and hostels, notably by reducing the numbers of children per room and introducing new, friendlier/smaller types of home known as “affection homes” and “child houses”. SHÇEK has developed minimum standards for children without parental care, to apply not only to its own institutions but to all situations where children are away from their parents overnight, and is currently drafting tools for their implementation in its own institutions (including residential institutions for the disabled where children are accommodated). Staff profiles, child rights awareness, administrative procedures, physical conditions and hygiene are among the issues covered in the minimum standards. Together with ongoing improvements in physical conditions and staffing, the implementation of the minimum standards will, provided they are fully implemented and monitored, help to enhance the care, school performance, self-esteem, socialisation and life skills of the resident children, as well as to eliminate cases of violence and abuse towards and among children. It is important to document all these improvements and their effects on the development of the children concerned. Meanwhile, NGOs and children continue to suggest improvements at homes and hostels with respect to issues such
as inadequacy of educational support or recreational activities, the separation of brothers and sisters and the suddenness of the transition to adult life in the community. As a possible solution for this last problem, the establishment of youth homes, where those leaving institutions can live together, has been attempted but not formally assessed. There have been calls for changes in custody laws to permit the state to take custody of children, so as to avoid the conflict of interest which arises when the child’s legal guardian is also the body responsible for childcare, and ensuring that there is somebody to represent the child vis-à-vis the latter if necessary. The care of disabled children, who are often resident together with adults in homes for the disabled, remains a challenge, due to the importance of having sufficient qualified and specialised staff and the high level of home support needed if the disabled are to be deinstitutionalised. The number of disabled children under protection and care rose from 473 in 2001 to 856 in 2006; a small number of disabled children have been placed with foster parents, and over 1,000 receive daytime care at the Agency’s family consultation and rehabilitation centres.

**De-institutionalisation**: International understanding of the benefits of providing all children with a family environment has grown in recent years. Children in families receive more stimulation and individual attention, and have a better chance of reaching their full potential, than children in even the best of residential institutions. This is particularly important for infants and young children at an early stage in their development. Programmes of deinstitutionalisation are under way throughout the world, and especially in Central Europe, the Western CIS countries, Bulgaria and Romania, where 1–2 per cent of all children were in residential care in 2003. Although the scale of residential child care in Turkey has always been far lower than this, institutionalisation has been widely regarded as a satisfactory solution for orphans and for children whose families abandon or mistreat them in any way or put them at risk, or who are incapable of taking care of them or simply too poor to do so (The conditions which lead to decisions on taking children into institutional care, and the procedure for reviewing such decisions, may still require clarification). In the past, orphans have made up only a small proportion of children in institutions, whereas over 70 percent have been placed there wholly or partly because of poverty. Where resources are available, uncles, aunts or other relatives usually take care of orphans and other children who cannot be looked after by their parents. Accordingly, SHÇEK too has been reducing the number of children living in institutions both by supporting families, so that families can care for their children at home, and by promoting foster care and adoption. Since 2005, almost 6,000 children living in institutions – about 30 percent of the initial total - have been returned to their families or

**SHÇEK services for children (May 2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of institutions</th>
<th>Residential capacity</th>
<th>Non-residential beneficiaries</th>
<th>Residential beneficiaries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children’s homes (age 0-6)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s homes (age 0-12)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3,156</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s homes (age 7-12)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3,452</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection homes (age 0-12)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys’ hostels (age 13-18)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>4,881</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls’ hostels (age 13-18)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>2,595</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affection homes (age 13-18)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child houses (age 0-12)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>455</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child houses (age 13-18)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and Youth Centres (residential)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and Youth Centres (residential + non-residential)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and Youth Centres (non-residential)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation Homes (First step stations)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection, Care and Social Rehabilitation Centres (age 7-18)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>472</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SHÇEK
relatives. In addition, the families of 18,000 children have been given economic support to avert the need for institutional care.

There are approximately 10,000 adopted children in Turkey and over 1,000 in paid or voluntary foster care. However, procedures can be slow, adoption remains largely limited to babies, and girls are generally preferred for both adoption and foster-parenting, although the majority of children in care are boys. Adoption, where the parents officially take full responsibility for the child, appears to be regarded positively in society, although not immediately thought of as an alternative for parents unable to have children of their own. Rules for adoption were most recently updated with the entry into force of the new Turkish Civil Code in 2002, reducing the minimum age for adopters from 35 to 30 (with an eighteen-year age gap), foreseeing joint adoption by couples married for at least five years, permitting couples with children of their own to adopt, forbidding marriage with one’s adopted child, improving the rights of children and women and introducing a one-year trial period. SHÇEK has issued a guideline in accordance with this law. The Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption has been in effect in Turkey since 2004. Foster-parenting (paid and voluntary) does not seem to be fully embraced by all sections of society, and relations between natural and foster parents can be an issue.

The belief that it is the duty of the state to take care of unfortunate children directly remains quite common, perhaps even among policy-makers and public officials themselves. Even if they receive tailored parenting education, foster parents and natural parents and relatives to whom children are returned may also need more information and ongoing support. The de-institutionalisation programme and the standards of care provided in the families concerned require closer monitoring and documentation. In this as in other areas, SHÇEK needs to be more transparent and to have a frank dialogue with public opinion.

**Other institutions and coordination:** Some services associated with SHÇEK are provided through voluntary contributions and/or by volunteers, or through cooperation protocols signed with public agencies and organizations, universities and non-governmental organizations. In this way, children in institutions can receive extra attention, spend time with families or attend private crèches or schools, or children with certain rehabilitation needs may receive the special care which they require. However, volunteers and NGOs have not become an integral part of the system. Their numbers and capacities may be limited or they may need more training and assistance. More generally, child protection requires cooperation and understanding among many institutions from judicial bodies to the health and education sectors in order to identify children in need and ensure that they receive the appropriate services by referring them efficiently to the appropriate service-providers and monitoring the outcome. Under an EU-funded project, child protection systems are currently being modelled at the local level. These include a coordination system, led by the Ministry of Justice, and an early warning system, led by SHÇEK. Meanwhile, many municipalities are involved in providing social services including some services for children. Municipalities have general responsibilities for social services and assistance, and specific responsibility to open women’s and children’s centres. Municipalities are well placed to recognise local needs and mobilise local resources, but their resources may be limited and/or their priorities may be determined by political considerations. They are independently elected and do not necessarily coordinate their activities with those of national government organisations. In practice, the services they provide vary from place to place.

**Strategic plan:** In its Strategic Plan for 2010-14, SHÇEK expresses a vision of itself as the central actor in determining and implementing social services policies and ensuring coordination between institutions. Prioritising the preservation of the unity of the family, SHÇEK sets itself the task of making social services accessible to all who are in need of them. SHÇEK places great emphasis on enabling individuals in need of care to look after themselves in their own environments wherever possible, and on extending its protective and preventative services, while pledging to making sure that those who have to live in residential care can socialise and develop just as much as other individuals, in line with international standards. SHÇEK also plans to strengthen guidance and monitoring functions, increased international cooperation and secure the involvement of society through a continuous flow of information. Among its key principles, it lists transparency, impartiality and readiness to cooperate. The General Directorate estimates that the number of persons receiving its services will rise almost threefold in five years to reach 1.2m - although the total number in residential care (including both children and adults/elderly people) will decline by over 20 percent to just over 20,000. SHÇEK anticipates a doubling of its budget, in lira terms, between 2009 and 2014, to reach TL3bn (about US$2bn); SHÇEK further expects that the disabled will become the main beneficiaries, accounting for 72 percent of the budget compared to 21 percent at the start of the period.

**Outstanding issues:** There is a consensus about the need to increase the institutional capacity and efficiency of the child care system, including monitoring and evaluation, and in particular to increase and invest in human resources. More specialists are needed, and expertise needs to be matched with changing requirements. This requires cooperation with universities and the education authorities. International benchmarking could be used to measure progress. Building capacity will also require secure financial resources, which may not be guaranteed in the current
economic circumstances – especially when it is considered that national budget allocations have not always been released on time even during times of strong economic growth. Some officials have suggested the establishment of a high board or “child ministry”, which would also be a sign of political commitment towards upholding the rights of vulnerable children, and might also be influential in obtaining resources. On the other hand, SHÇEK has arguably acquired responsibility for the provision of too wide a range of services - from long-term institutional care to day-time training and rehabilitation to social assistance – to people of all ages, including the disabled. Some of the services of the General Directorate overlap with those provided by other institutions such as the ministries of National Education, Health and Youth and Sports and the Social Assistance and Solidarity Fund (SYDTF). Regardless of who takes responsibility for the provision of child protection services, there is still room for mindsets to evolve, so that all those concerned see themselves not merely as protectors or practitioners but as enablers and as upholders of the rights of the child, including their rights to be heard and to have their best interests taken into account. While honing the system for intervening on behalf of children in need, more attention needs to be paid to how to prevent such needs form arising. As in other sectors, there is a special need to recognise the rights of the disabled and to adopt approaches which facilitate the participation of all the disabled into society rather than isolating them from it.


[157] Supporting children in their families can also be cost-effective compared to the cost of keeping a child in an institution, which was put at TL850 by the parliamentary inquiry held into violent tendencies among children and young people and violence in and around schools in 2006-7.

[158] A general performance assessment of the SHÇEK Child Protection System was carried out by SAM Research and Consulting Inc as part of the World Bank-supported Social Risk Mitigation Project on the basis of official records and a survey of children, families, employees, officials and experts conducted in 2005. The assessment provides a balanced view of the quality of the services provided by SHÇEK for children at the time. One issue it pointed to was low morale. In view of rapid ongoing changes, assessments could be carried out more regularly.

[159] Law on Municipalities, Article 14

[154] Information on SHÇEK and its activities are derived from the SHÇEK website and in particular from its recently developed Strategic Plan for 2010-14.


Justice for children

International safeguards: Around the world, police and judicial procedures, often lengthy and repetitive, can be especially disturbing for children, affecting their relations with their families and friends, their schooling and their life-long employment opportunities. Children in detention are often vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. Children forced into, or suspected of, committing offences can therefore find themselves very heavily penalised. In some cases, their experiences lead only to further contact with the law. For reasons such as this, Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child safeguards the human rights of children in conflict with the law, outlaws capital punishment and life sentences without remission for offences committed by children, insists that the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child should be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and calls for each child deprived of liberty to be separated from adults and treated in a manner which takes into account the needs of persons of his or her age. Article 40 further details the rights of children accused of infringing the penal law. It encourages states to make special arrangements for such children - including the establishment of a minimum age and the possibility of using measures other than judicial proceedings - and mandates a variety of alternatives to institutionalisation.

UN recommendations: Juvenile justice systems are one of the issues most frequently discussed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child when monitoring the adherence of states to the Convention. In 2007, the Committee issued a general comment on the matter. The Committee called on states to adopt a comprehensive approach taking into account general principles such as non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, respect for the
child’s dignity, the child’s right to survival and development and the child’s right to be heard in matters affecting herself or himself. Such a system would incorporate both measures to prevent children from coming into conflict with the law and the use of alternative measures, such as diversion and restorative justice, for those who do come into conflict with the law. This would not only serve the best interests of the children concerned but also the short and long term interest of the whole society. Since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, more detailed international standards related to juvenile justice have been elaborated in the United Nations Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Rules for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (the Havana Rules).

Numbers, causes and trends: Official figures suggest that the number of court cases opened against children rose sharply between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s, reaching about 100,000 per year, that 90 percent of the children concerned are boys, that three-quarters of them are aged between 15-17, that theft and robbery are the most common charges, followed by physical injury, and that children are also regularly accused of various other crimes including damage to property, threats and insults, breaking and entering, firearms offences, possession of drugs, sex offences and homicide. Many of these children are observed to come from poor/excluded urban communities including migrant communities. This suggests that well-targeted social policy and steps to reduce child poverty are essential to bring down or contain the numbers of children coming into conflict with the law. Only limited statistical evidence is available however, on the backgrounds of these children and on the circumstances (family conflict or break-up, street life, addiction and so forth) and mechanisms (pressure from parents, older relatives or adult criminals, personal needs, social norms, psychological factors) which bring them into conflict with the law.

Key legislation: In Turkey, all children who come into conflict with the law are in principle questioned by child prosecutors and tried in child courts. The age of criminal responsibility is 12. Courts are obliged to obtain social inquiry and forensic reports before pursuing proceedings against 12-14 year-olds and may not detain them on minor charges. However, these advantages do not apply to 15-17 year-olds. Children (especially those under 15) also enjoy greater remission of sentence than adults. The Child Protection Law, adopted in 2005, provides that juveniles should be detained separately from adults, should not be handcuffed, and should have the right to be visited by family members (However, it does not explicitly include children in conflict with the law among children in need of special protection). When the police begin to investigate a case involving a juvenile offender, they must normally notify the child’s parents or guardian as well as the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK), and the bar association. Medical examinations are mandatory. The courts have several options for avoiding lengthy proceedings and/or detention pending trial and eventual imprisonment in the case of child suspects. However, there are no arrangements for police diversion, and some significant limits remain on the discretion of prosecutors not to prosecute and of judges not to detain suspects and to invoke alternative measures. Strangely, security measures can be ordered for children not proved guilty, and children can be tried in adult courts in cases where a crime has been committed jointly by an adult and a child.

Although efforts have been made to bring juvenile justice into line with international standards, much more awareness and capacity is needed if all children in contact with the law are to benefit.

The Child Protection Law (CPL) and the Need for Coordination

Law no. 5395 of 2005:

- introduces into Turkish law, more clearly than before, basic international concepts and principles such as the “child in need of protection”, the “child forced into crime,” the “best interests and well-being of the child”, the definition of children as all persons under 18, the prohibition of discrimination against the child and/or family, the participation of the child and family in decision-making, the objective of protecting children in their own family environments, and the use of detention and of residential care as a “last resort” only;
- governs the establishment and competence of juvenile courts (superseding an earlier law), and appoints social workers to the courts;
- defines the procedures for the issuance of protection orders (urgent and otherwise) by child court
judges, giving the judge a range of options besides that of placing the child in a residential institution – namely, counselling measures for children and parents or other care-givers, educational measures (such as placement in school or apprenticeship), health measures (such as courses of rehabilitation) and shelter measures (such as housing for homeless families);
• lists judicial and administrative authorities, education and health institutions and civil society organisations, in addition to security personnel, among the persons charged with reporting children in need of protection to the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK), and
• establishes child prosecution offices, makes improvements in the treatment of children involved in investigations and court proceedings, and makes it possible for children charged with less serious offences to benefit, subject to various conditions, from mediation, postponement of prosecution and postponement of judgement linked to probation.

The Law does not, however, create a separate justice system for children. Children in conflict with the law continue to be treated in line with the Turkish Penal Code and several other laws as well as the CPL. Some of these laws also have special provisions for children (such as the provisions of the Code regarding age limits and reduction of sentence). However, children are still treated in the same way as adults in respects such as principles for establishing criminal responsibility, grounds for detention, the keeping of criminal records and the statute of limitations on the length of judicial proceedings and sentences.

A regulation issued (belatedly) in December 2006 by the Ministry of State responsible for SHÇEK and the Ministry of Justice set out in more detail the procedures to be followed for the implementation of the CPL.

For the Law to be implemented fully, many further steps were needed, encompassing:

• the establishment of infrastructure and standards for the provision of the new services foreseen and keeping of records;
• the appointment and training of the necessary staff (child court prosecutors, judges, social workers and other staff; SHÇEK staff such as social workers and counsellors; probation officers and others), and
• arrangements to ensure that specialised staff are employed with responsibilities only for children.

Many of these steps are ongoing.

Additionally, while the law contains some provisions allocating responsibilities, mainly to national government organisations, these also need to be able to coordinate among themselves and with the judiciary in the provision of the envisaged services. The CPL gives the Ministry of Justice overall responsibility for coordination to this end. The regulation referred to above foresaw two levels of coordination:

• at the central level, meetings are held as required under the chairmanship of the undersecretary, or a deputy undersecretary, of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to provide guidance and evaluate suggestions and information arriving from the provinces. These meetings involve the deputy undersecretaries of the ministries of the Interior, National Education, Health and Labour and Social Security, the General Director of Social Services and the Child Protection Agency, the
General Director of Penal Affairs of the MoJ and the President of the Education Department of the MoJ. Other public bodies and non-government organisations may also be invited.

- at the provincial level, coordination is ensured by the provincial governorate and meetings are held every two months under the chairmanship of the governor or a deputy governor with the participation of the chief prosecutor, the provincial director of Security, the provincial Gendarmerie commander, the provincial director of National Education, the provincial director of Health, the mayor of the provincial centre and central district mayors, the regional director of Labour and Social Security or the provincial director of the Labour Board, the provincial director of Youth and Sports, the provincial director of Social Services, the Provincial Special Administration director – or their assistants or deputies – the branch director of the Probation and Support Centre and the representative of the Bar Association. Universities, judges and invited representatives of non-government organisations may also attend the meetings. Similar arrangements apply at the district level. Challenges which the provincial coordination bodies encounter and which cannot be solved at the local level for instance because they require changes in legislation or directives etc.) are to be reported regularly to the central coordination body so that solutions can be found.

These arrangements have had the advantage of bringing together, particularly at the local level, the various authorities who need to coordinate not only on the implementation of the CPL but also on many other children’s issues. While coordination has improved, discussion of all children’s issues has been stimulated. However, the functions of the coordination bodies established, and the modalities of day-to-day interaction between professionals at the various institutions may need further clarification. A strategy is now being developed to further improve coordination at the local level.

**Institutional capacity:** The child police are organised in all 81 provinces and are well-established and much-praised, although children are usually first apprehended by regular police. By contrast, there are not enough child courts and prosecutors. As of May 2011, there were 59 child courts and 12 child “heavy penalty” courts, for handling more serious charges, in a total of 33 of Turkey’s 81 provinces. The Court of Appeal has no special unit for child cases. The work of existing child courts and their ability or willingness to use alternatives to detention can be hampered by lack of court staff, social workers, probation officers, facilities and coordination mechanisms. The probation system, although new, is established in all provinces and psychologists and social workers have been appointed. The Ministry of Justice has an EU twinning project with its UK counterpart to meet the urgent need for training for probation staff dealing with juveniles and victims and develop new policies for these. May 2011, there were 7,179 children benefiting from probation services including alternative sentences and judicial control. Education programmes on children’s rights and child-friendly justice systems have been developed for members of the legal and security professions and other professionals working with children in conflict with the law, and these are in regular use by the Ministry of Justice, the Security General Directorate (police) and other agencies. However, such education is not necessarily compulsory or built into pre-service training programmes. Child court judges and child prosecutors, for example, may be appointed to and from other posts and may not be specially trained.

**The large numbers of children coming into contact with the law, long detention periods, poor conditions in some prisons and limited number of child courts**
The main institution responsible for the pre-service training of judges, prosecutors and other members of the judicial profession is the Justice Academy. The Academy also conducts in-service training for judicial personnel and is therefore capable of playing an important role in the training of child court judges, prosecutors and social workers. The Academy was part of the development of the training programmes referred to above, and UNICEF is collaborating with it for their institutionalisation.

The Police Academy is an academic institution providing undergraduate, graduate, pre-service and in-service training for all security staff. The Academy also conducts scientific research, produces and disseminates knowledge and offers consultancy services. The Academy is well placed to strengthen the capacity of the child police, to assess its performance in terms of both impact and cost, and also to conduct research in the area of child justice more generally.

In contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Protection Law, children are often still held in prisons and detention centres which are not dedicated to children (or to children and young people). In many institutions where children are detained, there is a high rotation of personnel and the personnel are not specifically dedicated to working solely for the care and protection of children. An individualised treatment (case management) system has been developed which aims to identify the needs of every child and to develop and implement an individual plan based on this needs analysis. However, only a few institutions have begun to operate this system so far.

The bar associations in 50 of Turkey’s 81 provinces have set up child rights committees providing free legal counsel for all children. This has been found necessary to supplement the legal support mandatorily available to defendant children. Bar associations are also modelling child rights centres (complaints and referral centres), and working on complaints mechanisms. There are some small but very active non-government organisations carrying out advocacy and service provision in the area of juvenile justice, such as Öz-Ge Der (Society for Solidarity with Young People without Freedom) and the Türkiye Çocuklara Yeniden Özgürlük Vakfı (Youth Re-autonomy Foundation of Turkey).

**Implementation:** In practice, children in conflict with the law in Turkey are receiving varying treatment. Professionals including the police, prosecutors and judges may not always follow proper procedures, due to lack of training, the wrong mindset and/or pressures caused by insufficient resources. As child courts have not been established in all provinces, large proportion of all child suspects (more than half up to 2007) are tried in adult courts which may not have sufficient knowledge of child rights and juvenile justice. Even when children are tried in child courts as foreseen by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Child Protection Law, alternatives to detention are not invoked as frequently as they might be, as judges lack confidence in the effectiveness of the support and monitoring systems. Moreover, periods of detention pending trial are unacceptably long, with limits of up to three years. In 2008, the average duration of trial for children was 414 days in child courts and 502 days in child heavy penalty courts, compared to 258 days in criminal courts on average. Appeal proceedings are also protracted. As of January 2011, a total of 2,168 children, overwhelmingly boys, were deprived of their liberty.
nationwide. Close to 90% were in pre-trial detention centres. Children awaiting trial, including those awaiting the outcome of appeals, are detained - depending on the facilities available in their location - in child or child-and-youth detention centres or in children’s wings of prisons (or in women’s prisons for girls). This means that hundreds of children are not fully separated from adults as required by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Despite improvements, the institutions concerned vary considerably with regard to physical accommodation, staffing levels, the degree of staff training, the risk of violence and abuse and the availability of recreational or educational facilities/activities rehabilitation programmes. Children whose sentences are confirmed are placed in Education Houses, which are open institutions with the goal of rehabilitation, but there are only three such houses and the children are often far away from their parents. In any case, only a small minority of children in conflict with the law reach the Education Houses, due to long periods spent in detention pending trial, or because they reach the age of 18 while still on trial for offences committed as children. Mechanisms are also lacking for reintegrating children into society after their release from custody. Data on recidivism is limited. It may be added that keeping children in detention is expensive: the parliamentary inquiry held into violent tendencies among children and young people and violence in and around schools in 2006-7 put the cost per day per detainee or convict at 960 liras per month.

**Commitment to change:** The government broadly views children in conflict with the law as children in need of support or rehabilitation rather than punishment. The Annual Programme of the Government for 2010 pledged to improve services for children and young people in conflict with the law, to improve and add to the programmes available to rehabilitate child convicts and reintegrate them into society, and to increase the numbers and staffing of child courts. Nevertheless, the high number of children being held in detention pending trial during a formative period of their lives does not appear toalarm the authorities, politicians or the general public. The impact of this treatment on the children’s well-being and future prospects may not be fully understood. Achieving high standards in juvenile justice still requires more awareness-raising, changes in legislation and institutional cultures, improvements in infrastructure, staffing and training, better data management and dissemination, initiatives to prevent offending and re-offending and close monitoring of the impacts of all innovations. All of this requires strong commitment, without which funding for improvements in juvenile justice may not be guaranteed.

**Judicial reform strategy:** Child justice is not allocated a separate heading in the Judicial Reform Strategy drawn up by the Ministry of Justice for 2008-13 with a view to meeting political criteria for EU membership. However, under the heading of enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the judiciary, the strategy pledges to continue its activities to improve the juvenile justice system in line with international documents, the best interests of the child and the principle that imprisonment should be a last resort. The accompanying Action Plan states that in the short term: the practices of other countries will be examined through mutual cooperation; needs analysis will be conducted in cooperation with relevant institutions; the development of the new juvenile justice system for the protection of children will continue in the areas of both civil and criminal law in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child; efforts will be made to solve the problems which arise from the prosecution, detention, trial, sentencing and penalisation of juveniles coerced into crime, and necessary legal amendments will be made.

**Victims and witnesses:** A child who is a victim or a witness of a crime may need just as much support or rehabilitation as a child who is accused of committing one. Girls are more likely to be victims or witnesses than suspects in a crime. Yet child victims and witnesses in Turkey sometimes find themselves in repeated contact with the police and judiciary as they are called on to give evidence. They may receive no special treatment, especially where the suspect is an adult and the case is heard in an adult court. Free legal aid has been mandatory for victim children since 2005. It is also envisaged that children should be asked to give evidence only once, with a social worker present, and that their statements should be recorded on video. However, infrastructure for implementing these procedures is lacking. Compensation by the State is not legally mandatory. The responsibilities of various actors towards these children may need to be more clearly specified.

The establishment of child protection centres within provincial universities will help to prevent this secondary victimisation of child victims and witnesses. The centres will ensure coordination between different departments at the faculties of medicine, and act as one-stop shops for all types of examinations and treatment of children in need of protection and in conflict with the law. A regulation adopted by Marmara University and approved by the Higher Education Board was published in August 2009 and will serve as a model for other universities.

**Treatment of children taking part in demonstrations**

In recent years, Turkey has frequently found itself debating “stone-throwing children”. These are children – overwhelmingly boys, of all ages - who become involved in Kurdish nationalist
demonstrations, disturbances or riots in cities with large Kurdish populations. They may engage in behavior such as shouting slogans, carrying placards, blocking roads, throwing stones and/or causing damage to public and other property. Opinions have differed as to how far the prominence of children in demonstrations is a tactic of the violent PKK organisation and its supporters and how far it stems from children’s normal presence on the street and the lack of other forms of expression, entertainment or recreation. The response of the security forces on such occasions is often heavy-handed, and children are not guaranteed any special treatment. During the arrest and detention of children, it is frequently alleged that their human rights have been infringed or that proper procedures have not been followed in accordance with their age – for instance, their cases have not been handled by the child police, the police have subjected them to violent or humiliating treatment, they have not been immediately questioned by a child prosecutor, their families have not been informed, or they have not had timely access to a lawyer. Many of the children detained are charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act, the Law on Demonstrations and Marches or articles of the Penal Code concerning illegal organisations and damage to public property. Prosecutors have demanded prison sentences of up to 25 years. The children are often deprived of their liberty pending trial. In 2006-7, over 700 children were tried under the Anti-Terrorism Act and over 800 under the said articles of the Penal Code174. The same situation continued in 2008-9. Meanwhile, a legislative amendment made in 2006 provided for children aged 15-17 charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act to be tried in adult heavy penal courts and made them ineligible for the alternatives to custodial sentences foreseen in the Child Protection Law. The issue of the treatment of these children attracted mainstream NGO, media and public attention and led to the formation of a civil initiative known as the Justice for Children Initiative/Appeal.

In March 2009, joint study visits were made by UNICEF Turkey and the Turkish Prime Ministry’s Human Rights Presidency to Adana, Diyarbakır and Hakkari. Proposals made by children, parents and officials of public agencies and NGOs interviewed during these visits included: urgent action to prevent death and injury of children at demonstrations; re-amendment of the Anti-Terrorism Act and possibly other legal amendments to protect children from charges such as “membership of an illegal organisation”, the rapid expansion of juvenile courts to ensure that all children are tried in juvenile courts, adoption of the principle of “single responsibility for multiple offences” in juvenile justice, the deployment of child police during demonstrations and stronger efforts to ensure that public officials abide by laws and rules and to investigate those responsible for mistreatment of children. Attention was also drawn to the impact of poverty and the general climate of violence on children, and to the need for more services and facilities to fulfil the entertainment, leisure, rest and sports requirements of children in poor neighbourhoods. In July 2010, Parliament re-amended the law to permit children charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act to be tried in child courts and benefit from alternative measures. Thus the rights of the 15-17 year-olds concerned to child-specific judicial procedures were restored. However, children involved in demonstrations continue to face many risks and to constitute a significant proportion of all children coming into contact with the law. The Ministry of National Education is to conduct research, with UNICEF financial and technical support, on the violation of the educational rights of children of primary school age participating in violent street demonstrations.
[161] General Comment No 10

[162] Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Criminal Registration and Statistics, and Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat)

[163] See, for example, Gülümser Gültekin Akduman, Barış Akduman, Gürol Cantürk: Investigation of some personal and familial characteristics of juvenile delinquency in Turkish Archives of Pediatrics 2007; 42.

[164] Diversion = measures for dealing with children alleged as, accused of, or recognized as having infringed the penal law without resorting to judicial proceedings

[165] UNICEF Turkey: An Analysis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Turkish Law

[166] In 2007, the average duration of trial in the Court of Appeal (for both children and adults) was 391 days.

[167] See for example Turkish Medical Association (TTB): Diyarbakir E-tipi Kapali Ceza ve İnfaz Kurumunda Alikonulan Çocukları İzleme Raporu (Monitoring Report on Children detained in Diyarbakir E-type Closed Prison), June 2009


[171] Priority 84 – Measure 209


Child Labour

Consequences of child labour: Article 32 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child upholds the right of the child to be protected from "performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development". It also calls on states to take legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to this effect, including the regulation of working hours and conditions and the imposition of sanctions. In this way, the Convention does not ban children's participation in economic activity, but it circumscribes it considerably, especially for children of compulsory school age. Nevertheless, numerous children around the world are pulled out of school in order to work or drop out of school or miss classes because they are working. This damages their socialisation and prospects of enjoying an adequate income in adulthood. The worst forms of child labour expose large numbers of children to various blends of unsanitary environments, dangerous substances, poor nutrition, physical pain and exhaustion and/or the risk of accidents, addictions or violence and abuse from employers or others. Children working on the street face the additional risk of being recruited into gangs or may turn to crime as a way of generating the income expected of them.

Forms of child labour: While the economic exploitation of children is not as widespread in Turkey as in some developing countries, unacceptable forms of child labour persist. Tens of thousands of boys and girls of all ages migrate annually with (and sometimes without) their families to work in regions growing cotton, hazelnuts and numerous other crops, where accommodation, utilities and services are usually minimal. Children too young or small to work who accompany their families are also affected by these conditions. Migratory labour typically involves families from Southeast Turkey and can continue from early spring to late autumn, overlapping the school calendar. Many other children throughout the country work long hours on the family farm or in the family business. Boys and small girls peddle goods, shine shoes or wipe windows for long hours on the streets of major cities as well as watering graves, sorting household waste and guiding tourists. Children also perform menial and repetitive tasks in repair shops and factories. Babies and toddlers are used by beggars to attract passers-by.

Prevalence of child labour: The 2006 child labour survey showed that 5.9 percent of all children aged between 6 and 17 were employed in some form of economic activity. This represents over 900,000 children. One third were in the 6-14 age group and the remainder aged 15-17. Just under half worked as unpaid labourers in family enterprises. About 40 percent were working in agriculture. Girls accounted for about a quarter of children working in urban areas and 40 percent in rural areas. 39 percent of working 6-14 year-olds and 83 percent of working 15-17 year-olds were not attending school. Compared to 1999, when the previous survey was conducted, the number of working children had declined, particularly in rural areas and in the case of unpaid family labour, reflecting urbanisation and greater and longer participation in education. However, there was only a limited decline in the proportion of the urban child population working in economic activities, and there was an increase in the absolute number of 6-14 year-olds working in urban areas. The survey is modelled on adult labour force surveys and does not specifically distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable forms of child labour. It seems possible that unacceptable forms of child labour are among the most persistent.
Causes, patterns and trends: The main underlying cause of child labour is undoubtedly the need or desire of the child’s family (and perhaps especially mothers) for the income generated by the child’s labour. For this reason, it is clear that a well-targeted, well-managed social policy for reducing child poverty is required to break the inter-generational cycle of low educational attainment, child labour and poverty. At the same time, the willingness of families to use child labour can also reflect factors such as their own experience of traditional forms of child labour, the extent to which they are aware of the dangers of particular forms of child labour or the value they place on education. A low value may be placed on education if there is no history of educational success in the family or the children do not seem successful at school. For children unhappy at home or at school, work may appear attractive. Children from certain communities, such as migrants, may be more likely to be involved in child labour and street work in major cities. All in all, more frequent surveys and more detailed studies are needed to monitor variations and trends, inform policy and assess progress in the prevention of child labour. It is not clear, for example, how the current recession is affecting child labour, or whether declining “opportunities” for some forms of child labour are pushing children towards more dangerous forms such as working on the street.

Domestic chores: Besides economic activity, many children take responsibility for domestic tasks such as cooking, washing, cleaning, shopping and the care of younger siblings. According to the 2006 survey, 53 percent of all girls and 33 percent of all boys aged 6-17 carry out household chores. These figures were higher than those recorded in 1999. Some children, especially adolescent girls, carry out substantial amounts of housework, made necessary by large family size or by the death, illness, injury or absence of a parent. Like other forms of child labour, domestic
labour, which is often female and invisible, affects children’s educational opportunities and exposes them to various risks. Domestic child labour calls out for more attention: no policies or projects have been conducted in this area.

**Laws and their enforcement:** In addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Turkey is also a party to international conventions directly related to child labour, including International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions numbers 138 (the Minimum Age Convention) and 182 (on the Prevention of the Worst Forms of Child Labour). Turkey has not become a party to ILO conventions numbers 79 and 90 on Night Work of Young Persons. The Labour Law, the Law on Public Hygiene, the Law on the Establishment and Powers of the Police and the Law on Primary Education and Training contain provisions regarding the tasks in which children may be employed, minimum ages and the rights/protection of children in work. However, there are a number of gaps and loop-holes in the legislation which require correction. For example, the Labour Law outlaws employment below the age of 15, with certain exceptions, but it does not cover key sectors in which children work. One of these is agriculture, where social security coverage is also not mandatory, and the authority of labour inspectors is limited to enterprises with over 50 workers. Moreover, the penalties foreseen in the Law are too small to serve as a deterrent. Although 16-18 year-olds can be employed in heavy labour, agricultural work is excluded from the definition of heavy labour, and there is still a separate minimum wage for under-16s. The enforcement of labour legislation with respect to children is complicated by the socioeconomic context, including aspects of the labour market such as weak trades unions and inspectors, widespread informal employment and the large number of small enterprises. In this context, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security is planning to develop a training package for its inspectors.

**Policy framework:** Efforts to address child labour and the specific issue of children working on the street have been under way for many years, with the involvement of national government organisations headed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Social Services and Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK). Provincial authorities, municipalities, civil society and UN agencies such as the ILO and UNICEF have also been involved. In 2005, a parliamentary inquiry was launched into children on the street (including those living as well as working on the street) and the State Ministry responsible for Social Services and Child Protection developed a policy response. City action plans were devised in a number of provinces. Today, SHÇEK has 44 child and youth centres which provide services for children on the street. In 2008, a national multi-sectoral strategy for eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2015 was drawn up through a participatory process led by the Ministry of Labour Department of Child Labour. This document also contains information on the legislative framework and the projects carried out since 1992 in order to prevent child labour and/or to provide services to and improve conditions for the children concerned. The forms of child labour targeted are: children working on the street; children working in heavy and dangerous work in small and medium-sized enterprises, and children working in paid, non-family, migratory and temporary work in agriculture. A large number of activities are foreseen under the headings of; strengthening existing institutional structures; awareness-raising, social mobilisation, measures related to education, measures for eliminating poverty, expansion of the social protection and social security network, legal arrangements and implementation of legislation, and monitoring and evaluation. The successful implementation of the strategy will depend on many factors including political will, accurate information, adequate capacity at the local level and the extent and effectiveness of collaboration. It will also be essential to take into consideration the impact which eliminating the worst forms of child labour will have on family budgets, social structures, the circumstances of employers, intermediaries and other interested parties, and economic outputs such as production, prices, employment and exports.

[177] Interview with Dr. Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör in the January 2009 bulletin of the Internal Migration Integration Project (IGEP)
[178] UNICEF Turkey: An Analysis of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Turkish Law

## Child Marriage

**International situation:** The right to free and full consent to a marriage is established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), with the recognition that consent cannot be free and full when one of the parties involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner. Under article 16.2 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to which Turkey is a party, “The betrothal
and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage.... The Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) recommends this age to be 18. In spite of this, child marriage persists for varying reasons in many countries and cultures. Child marriage disproportionately affects girls, separating them from family and friends, robbing them of their childhood, exposing them to domestic violence and compromising their development and their educational, social and professional opportunities. Child marriage often leads to early and frequent pregnancies, increasing the risks of maternal and child mortality. Meanwhile, unregistered marriages deprive girls/women of legal redress if there are problems in the marriage and of legal rights included the rights of property. For all these reasons, UNICEF regards early marriage as a violation of numerous rights including the right to equality on grounds of sex and age, the right to marry and found a family, the right to life, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to education and development and the right to be free from slavery.

Legislation and practice: Since 2002, when extensive amendments to the Turkish Civil Code took effect, the age of marriage in Turkey was set at 17 for both boys and girls, from 17 for boys and 15 for girls previously. Under-18s require the approval of their parents. In extraordinary circumstances, marriage may be permitted at 16 with the approval of a judge. The minimum age at which a child can be deemed to have consented to sexual intercourse is 15. In practice, urbanization and longer years of schooling have raised the median age of first marriage among women from about 19.5 twenty years ago to about 22 in 2008. Nevertheless, the marriage of children, and especially girls, before the age of 18 is regarded as acceptable, normal or even desirable in some sections of society, including – but by no means limited to – many Eastern and rural areas and some Roma communities (where boys are also likely to be married young). In extreme cases, the age of marriage is reported to fall as low as 12. Under-age marriages take the form of religious marriages, which do not involve the state and do not confer legally binding rights (Living together without a marriage ceremony of any kind remains very rare). The Penal Code forbids the holding of religious marriage ceremonies unless an official marriage ceremony has been conducted, on pain of a 2-6-month prison sentence, but this provision is not enforced. Under-age religious marriages may or may not be formalised through civil ceremonies when the under-age bride (and/or groom) reaches the age of 17 (or, by order of a judge, 16). According to an official study, 86 percent of married couples in Turkey have had both a religious and a civil ceremony, and most of the remainder a civil ceremony only. However, 3.7 percent (5.1 percent in rural areas) of couples have only been married via a religious ceremony, and this proportion rises sharply in Eastern regions, particularly Southeast Anatolia, where it reaches 16.1 percent.
Prevalence: Official data on marriage encompasses only civil marriage ceremonies. Even this data suggests that a significant proportion of marriages may involve girls under the age of 18. Turkstat figures for the age of marriage, based on data from the Central Population Administrative System, show that 26 percent of brides are aged 16-19. The central province of Yozgat records the highest figure of 44 percent. When religious marriages are taken into account, it is often claimed that some 30 percent of girls who marry are below the age of eighteen at the time. Survey data is mixed. According to a 2008 survey,185 16.5 percent of women aged 20-24 had been married or in union by the age of 18 and 2.5 percent by the age of 15. However, in a 2006 survey,186 as many as 31.7 percent of married women and 6.9 percent of married men said that they had been married by the age of eighteen.

According to the same source, early child-bearing (mother or pregnant by the age of 20) appears to be most widespread in rural areas and among the second-lowest socioeconomic quintile. Out of twelve regions, it is most widespread in Central East Anatolia, but also relatively common in the Aegean, West Black Sea, Central Anatolia and West Anatolia regions.

Causes and characteristics: The causes and characteristics of child marriages, and especially very early marriages, in Turkey require further study. Undoubtedly, the causes and incidence of child marriage vary from place to place, community to community and case to case. Early marriage is often regarded as customary or traditional. In parts of rural central and eastern Turkey, and also in some urban areas, it is normal for girls to leave school at the age of 15, if not younger, and patiently await their “fortune”, unaware that they have any right to refuse the man whom their parents choose for them (Parents also exert a strong influence over their children’s choices of partners in most other parts of society). In such areas, families may regard the marriage of their daughters as a way of ensuring male guardianship for their daughters, protecting them from sexual assault or other unwanted sexual attention (thereby also protecting the family honour) or extending their childbearing years. The parents may also receive a “bride price” (17 percent of current marriages involved a bride price, rising to 24 percent in rural areas)187. Poverty may also encourage early marriage. Families may hope that their daughters’ new families will be able to provide for them better economically, or may simply be glad of one less mouth to feed, and be pleased to receive the bride price. Very early marriage seems to occur most commonly in those parts of society where the status of women is lowest, where levels of education are low and where the gender gap in education is highest. Early marriage, including very early marriage, may sometimes also be linked to practices such as marriage between relatives (typically cousins), marriages arranged during early childhood, exchanges (such as where a girl is obliged to marry the brother of the girl whom her brother marries) and polygamy (which is not prosecuted, as only one wife has an official marriage). As well as depriving children of their rights, early marriage sometimes has secondary consequences such as the non-registration of babies born, or the prosecution of the ‘husband’ for sexual assault.

Response: In April 2008, the Social Democracy Foundation (SODEV) started a campaign to raise awareness of the phenomenon of child marriage and educate community leaders in three provinces. In May 2009, the newly-established Parliamentary Committee on Equality of Opportunity for Women and Men set up a sub-committee of five members to conduct research on child marriage. The committee reported back in early 2011 with a series of detailed findings and recommendations, headed by a recommendation to enforce the law. Efforts to reduce poverty and gender disparities and to increase participation in secondary education should help to counter early marriage. In addition, more specific mapping and analysis of the current situation, including more detailed analysis of existing marriage statistics is required. Strategies directly tackling child marriage could include: social mobilisation; awareness-raising about the implications of child marriage among carefully-targeted groups, including men; civil rights education at primary schools, and cooperation with religious officials, community leaders and community-based NGOs. There is also a need for debate on the existing legislation and its enforcement. Meanwhile, girls and boys who are already in union and married before the age of 18 need to be supported.
Honour Crimes and Forced Suicides

Description: Honour crimes are an extreme form of violence against women, and girls under eighteen are among the victims. Turkey is one of many countries where such crimes are known to occur. In almost all parts of society, women face family scrutiny with respect to what they wear, where they go, whom they speak to and so on. But in some families, any relations with men other than immediate relatives can be perceived as a source of disobedience or disgrace requiring retribution.

This way of thinking appears to run deepest in families living in, or with roots in, rural Southeast Turkey. In these families, any suspicion about a woman or girl’s behaviour can lead to her being killed - typically by a male member of her own family - to purge the family honour. Even raped women and girls are treated in this way. The decision is sometimes taken by a family council. Families that do not enforce what is referred to as “the custom” may be ostracised by their communities. If the victim hides or runs away, she is likely to be pursued. Sometimes, a male child may be made to commit the murder, in order to benefit from greater remission of sentence when apprehended – although stronger prosecution and sentencing of those who incited the crime may have made this practice less common. In some cases, women or girls are not killed but have their noses mutilated, are forced into unwanted marriages (including marriages with their rapists) or are excluded and rejected by their families and forced to live in another place. The man involved in the “dishonourable” incident is sometimes killed or injured as well. In 2006, Yakin Ertürk, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences, travelled to Southeast Turkey to investigate the high suicide level among girls and women, and concluded that these deaths might also be disguised honour killings or forced suicides, or otherwise related to the patriarchal order.

Incidence and trends: Data on honour crimes and forced suicides is not collected systematically. A report on the issue published in 2008 reported over 1,100 cases of “ethics and honour killings,” broadly defined, between 2003 and 2007, with no sign of any decline over time. Of these, 9 percent involved children. The killings took place in all parts of Turkey and were most intensive in Istanbul. A correlation was drawn to low levels of education and migration to large cities. Changing social circumstances may be affecting the incidence or nature of honour crimes or the likelihood of children becoming victims, perpetrators and witnesses. For instance, the clash of traditional and modern ways of life may be making women more likely to transcend traditional limits on their behaviour, and men more likely to enforce penalties. As in the case of early marriage, the interplay of cultural and economic considerations may also merit attention.

Response: Since 2004, honour killings have been treated by the Penal Code as aggravated murders and higher sentences have been foreseen for those ordering them. It is also a crime to force someone into committing suicide: putting pressure on someone who is unable to grasp the meaning or consequences of his or her actions to commit suicide is characterized as murder. In 2005-2006, a parliamentary inquiry was held into honour killings and violence against women and children. In July 2006, the Prime Minister issued a circular to public bodies calling for the implementation of the report’s recommendations. Besides a policy of zero tolerance, eliminating honour crimes requires mentality change through communication via community leaders, schools and other channels, and refuge needs to be available and known to potential victims. Organisations which help women and girls at risk and advocate for clarification of the penal sanctions for honour killings include the KAMER foundation, which has centres for women and children in most Southeastern provinces.

Knowledge and commitment are needed to tackle honour crimes and forced suicides, which persist and may even have increased. Victims include adolescent girls.
Sexual Violence and Abuse

**Rising global concerns:** Sexual violence against children is an issue that has only recently come out of the shadows worldwide. It is now recognised that the effects of sexual violence and abuse against children range from temporary distress and sense of guilt to long-term injury and trauma and risky sexual activity or abuse of others later in life. Sexual violence and abuse can also have significant secondary effects. Rape victims may face rejection or even murder by their families (see also section on honour crimes, above). When criminal charges are brought, victims may face disturbing legal proceedings including repeated medical examinations and confrontations with their assailants (see also juvenile justice, above). Babies born as a result of rape or incest may be killed or abandoned or may grow up in very difficult circumstances.

**Forms and prevalence:** Cases of children – especially but not exclusively adolescent girls - being raped or molested by strangers, or by people they knew and trusted, are reported in the Turkish media from time to time. Girls who leave home may face multiple rape and/or attempts to sell them into prostitution. Incest is probably the most common form of sexual abuse against children and is known to affect girls and boys over long periods and from a very young age. There appears to be a market in Turkey for pornographic material involving children, but the production of the pornography is generally assumed to take place abroad. According to landmark research published in February 2009, 7 percent of the women interviewed reported that they had experienced sexual abuse before reaching the age of 15. The nature of the abuse was not specified. The research conducted by UNICEF and the General Directorate for Social services and the Child Protection Agency (SHCEK) into violence against children (summary available at http://panel.unicef.org.tr/vera/app/var/files/c/o/cocuk-istismari-raporu-eng.pdf) suggests that at least 10 percent of children between 7 and 18 have been witnesses to some form of sexual abuse, with at least 1 percent forced to look at pornographic material and at least 0.5 percent forced to engage in sexual behaviour such as touching or being touched.

**Policies:** Accepting the existence of sexual violence against children and beginning to discuss it is a positive step. A recent report on incest[^191] - the first of its kind - recommended the training of guidance counsellors, improved awareness of legal professionals, delivery of mental assessments by specialists and the establishment of multidisciplinary centres at healthcare institutions that bring together paediatric specialists, child mental health specialists, forensic specialists and social services experts as key elements of a response. It is possible to make young children aware of the risk of sexual abuse and how to respond to it. Those in contact with children need to be able to recognise the symptoms of child abuse, which otherwise can go unnoticed for years. Sexual violence and abuse against children needs to be addressed in the context both of efforts to end violence against women and of broader efforts to protect children facing violence and other adverse situations.

[^190]: Directorate General of the Status of Women: National Research on Violence against Women in Turkey

[^191]: UNFPA/Population Association: Understanding the Problem of Incest in Turkey, 2009 references, all

Missing Children

**Global and national data:** Every year, hundreds of thousands of children around the world are kidnapped, run away from home or become separated from their families for other reasons, ranging from wars and disasters to being sold by their families. Some children are reported missing and are quickly located, returned safely to their families or placed in care.
However, many others - whether reported missing or not - find themselves being used in sex work, begging, other forms of child labour, armed conflicts, terrorism or crime, or are “adopted” by buyers in rich countries. Child disappearances and child trafficking have occurred not only in Africa and Asia but also in developed countries and in regions closer to Turkey - for example, the Balkans. In 2008, in response to media reports about children going missing in Turkey, the Prime Ministry Human Rights Presidency carried out a first-ever national survey on the issue. This indicated that while most of the 7,183 children reported missing in 2007 were found within the year, 833 were unfound (including 253 in Istanbul). The report noted that this figure only encompassed children whose disappearances were reported to the public authorities, and that the true figure might be higher. The disappearances were not broken down by age or sex. Later, in early June 2009, in a response to a parliamentary question, Deputy Prime Minister Cemil Çiçek reportedly put the number of missing children at 1,444 for the end of 2008 and 1,592 as of May 27, including 641 who had been missing since 2008. The rise in the figures may be due to improved efforts to obtain statistics in some or all provinces.

**Regional distribution of missing children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number of missing children</th>
<th>percent of missing children</th>
<th>percent of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marmara</td>
<td>434</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Anatolia</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Anatolia</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Sea</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aegean</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Anatolia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediterranean</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>833</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Why children go missing:** According to the Presidency’s report, children may run away from home or a residential institution of their own accord in search of excitement, adventure or money. Alternatively, children may leave under various pressures, such as poverty, violence, abuse, neglect, bad parenting, child labour, family break-up or pressures associated with lack of success at school. Some children are deceived (for example with the promise of marriage) and/or kidnapped in order to be sold-on for adoption, used as beggars or sexually abused. The report also mentioned allegations that ideological and terrorist organizations and criminal gangs (including organizations trafficking drugs and human organs) are making great efforts to recruit children. It questioned the role of the media and internet cafes. Problems missing children encountered were listed as disease, drugs, violence and sexual abuse.
**Recommendations:** The Presidency’s report made numerous recommendations for preventing child disappearances, including an increase in services and support to children and the family, awareness-raising and preventive actions by public authorities. In preventing, identifying and responding to disappearances, roles were envisaged for the police, schools, the media, social services, local government, universities, non-government organizations and members of the public. Many of the recommended actions are the same as those needed to protect children from other dangers or risky behaviour. A project to establish a national information system on missing children and increase effectiveness in finding them through cooperation and coordination among the relevant institutions is being coordinated by the Family and Social Research General Directorate with the participation of the General Directorate of Security (police), the Ministry of Justice, SHÇEK and the Bar Association. By continuing to publish reports on missing children and increasing the level of detail, authorities will enhance the understanding of the problem and the policies needed to combat it, sensitize institutions, professionals and members of the public so that they are ready to intervene more effectively and generally increase awareness of the importance of supporting children and families.


**Child Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

**Obligations to children who are not Turkish:** Signatories to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child agree to respect and ensure the rights set forth in the Convention to "each child within their jurisdiction." This encompasses not only Turkish citizens or legal residents but also temporary visitors (such as child tourists), refugees, asylum-seekers and children living, either as dependents or as workers, in communities of irregular (illegal) immigrants, or in the process of irregular migration.

**Asylum system and children:** Turkey does not process requests for asylum except from Europeans. Would-be refugees – who usually come from parts of southern and southwest Asia, including neighbouring Iraq and Iran, or from parts of Africa - can apply to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) in Turkey with the aim of resettlement in recipient countries. The Turkish authorities generally permit these asylum seekers to stay in Turkey under certain conditions pending their applications, appeals and/or resettlement procedures - which may take several years - and do not necessarily forcibly expel them subsequently. This leads to the presence of thousands of asylum seekers in numerous provinces of Turkey – so-called “satellite cities” where they are obliged to reside, such as Afyonkarahisar, Kayseri, Nevşehir, Kırşehir and Niğde – all in central parts of the country. There are also significant numbers of asylum seekers in the Eastern province of Van and in Istanbul. Under-eighteens constitute approximately 30 percent of these. As of March 2009, there were 6,027 children of asylum seekers living in Turkey, about 45 percent of them Iraqi.

**Rights of asylum seekers and refugees:** Some efforts have been made to ensure the rights of children of asylum-seekers to health and education. Notably, the Ministry of National Education, in conjunction with the Ministry of the Interior, has made it possible for children of asylum seekers to attend schools and more recently to obtain primary school certificates (until and unless their appeals are finally rejected). As an incentive, residence permits are given free of charge to the children who enrol. UNHCR provides children documenting their school attendance with TL92 per semester. In some provinces, the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations provide support to children attending school. However, only about a quarter of asylum-seeking children aged 7-14 are understood to attend regularly. Among the reasons given for this are: schooling imposes an additional financial burden on families; the families are in any case are hoping to move on soon (This may be particularly true for Iraqis); families may not be residing in the province to which they have been assigned, identity documents may be incomplete, and (particularly for older children) language problems may also act as obstacles to access to education. Classes in literacy and vocational training have been opened at local Adult Education Centres but have generally been discontinued due to non-attendance. Some groups of asylum-seekers try to educate their children themselves. NGOs like the Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (SGDD/ASAM) and

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*Turkey has a responsibility to uphold the rights of a significant number of foreign children within its jurisdiction including migrant and asylum-seeker children and trafficked children.*
the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation (TEGEV) carry out some much-needed social and cultural activities with and for children of asylum-seekers, or provide them with assistance in kind (such as schoolbooks). The lack of a law on refugees and asylum seekers stands in the way of the provision of services for their children on a more systematic basis.

Unaccompanied minors: Unaccompanied asylum-seeker children benefit from the care services of the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK), and hence from health and education services, albeit only after procedures like age tests and medical tests for contagious diseases. The rules governing the treatment of these unaccompanied minors have been defined quite clearly. Conditions for them are comparable to those faced by Turkish children in institutional care, although they may be in need of extra support due to language problems, cultural unfamiliarity, lack of relatives or their past experiences. The protection of the rights and best interest of asylum-seeker/migrant children in their admission to residential care might be better secured if custody laws were changed to enable the state or another body to act as legal guardian.

Irregular migration: Thousands of children are known to be among the tens of thousands of irregular migrants intercepted by the Turkish security authorities each year. Most of the irregular migrants are trying to enter Europe as a way of escaping poverty, conflict or oppression in East Africa and south and southwest Asia. Some lose their lives, usually in sea or road accidents or due to the poor conditions in which they live and are transported. It is not known how many escape interception. Those intercepted are provided with minimal shelter and food and may be permitted to apply for asylum. However, large numbers, including children, are also turned back at the border, summarily deported, prosecuted and detained in poor conditions for illegal entry and/or not informed about their rights to apply for asylum. Specific legislation may need to be adopted and a dedicated institution established if irregular migration is to be approached in a manner more respectful of human and child rights. Smuggling of migrants is specifically prohibited by the Turkish Penal Code.

Human trafficking: Girls under eighteen are among the foreigners - mostly women from ex-Soviet countries – who are trafficked into Turkey as forced prostitutes. Thirty-one out of 706 victims of trafficking assisted by the International Organisation for Migration in Turkey between 2004 and mid-2009 were under eighteen, according to the IOM. Victims of human trafficking are provided with health and rehabilitation services by the Ministry of Health and, in the case of children, SHÇEK. Human trafficking is specifically prohibited by the Turkish Penal Code. It is worth noting that a third of all trafficked adult women have children of their own.

[193] Article 2. The specific rights of child refugees and asylum seekers are addressed in Article 22.
[194] March 2, 2009 UNHCR Ankara
[195] This is the figure for the 2008-9 school year.
[196] Information for this paragraph was provided by UNHCR Ankara and the SGDD/ASAM
Partnerships and Collaboration

- Joining Forces for Children
- International Organisations
- Knowledge Partners, Civil Society and the Media