Analysis of the Situation of Children and Young People in Turkey
2012
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1. Introduction and Executive Summary

1.1 Purpose of the Analysis: This Analysis 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 Analysis also seeks, as far as possible, to describe the situation of all young people, whether under the age of eighteen – and therefore within the protection of the Convention – or over the age of eighteen, yet still making the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Turkey’s end-2011 population of 74.7 million included about 23 million citizens under eighteen, and about 12.5 million in the 15-24 age group. The 0-24 age group includes 31.4 million people. Although the growth of the population has started to slow down, children and young people will continue to account for a much higher proportion of the population in Turkey than in the “developed” countries for many years to come.

1.2 Achievements: Turkey is an upper middle-income country with stable institutions and widespread public services. Most of its children grow up in a caring family environment, have access to food, shelter and other essential goods, and benefit from basic services, such as health and schooling, which are provided mainly in the public sector. Turkey’s main achievements for children and child rights can be summarised as follows:

Child survival, health and well-being: Infant and under-five mortality has declined rapidly in recent years, and infant mortality may now be in single figures (i.e. less than 1% of all children born alive die before their first birthday). Similar achievements have been registered in vaccination. Social spending, particularly on health, has started to increase. Turkey has introduced a family medicine system and free health insurance for all children. A network of family counsellors is proposed, to improve access to social assistance and protection.

Early childhood development: Parenting education programmes have been introduced, preschool education has seen rapid expansion, and a community-based model has been developed for preschool and child day care. Having lowered the school starting age to 60 months as of 2012, the government is targeting 100% enrolment in preschool education for four year-olds. Turkey has also pioneered development paediatric units for early identification of development delays.

Education: Parents place a high value on education and children like school. With the aid of improved monitoring, social mobilisation campaigns and benefits like cash transfers and free schoolbooks, net enrolment in eight-year primary education for 6-14 year-olds has risen to over 98% for girls as well as boys. Net enrolment in four-year secondary education has risen to 67% and gross enrolment to 93%. As of 2012, the government has made four-year secondary education compulsory. Enrolment in tertiary education has also increased.

Child rights monitoring and child participation: Turkey is a party to most international child rights treaties. Child rights are also upheld by the Constitution and numerous laws. There is a child rights sub-committee in Parliament and child rights committees in the provinces. A Child Rights Monitoring and Assessment Board was established in 2012. An ombudsperson institution is being established including a deputy ombudsperson for women’s and children’s rights.

Child protection: Various institutional arrangements, service models and standards have been introduced to protect children from exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect, particularly after the Child Protection Law of 2005. These aim to prevent rights abuses, to bring them to light and/or to provide victims with the right form of protection, treatment or rehabilitation. Children on the street, children without parental care, children in the justice and penal systems and child victims of sexual abuse and other crimes have benefited.
International contribution: In recent years, Turkey has begun to make a significant contribution to humanitarian and development efforts beyond its borders, with benefits for children and young people as well as adult women and men in Asia, Africa and elsewhere. Official bilateral and multilateral overseas development assistance amounted to over US$700m in 2009, according to the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA). Turkish NGOs are also active in this field.

The Syria crisis: In 2011-12, tens of thousands of Syrians fleeing violence were allowed to enter Turkey. As of October 2012, over 100,000 were being accommodated and their basic needs met in well-run, high-quality camps. Education was being provided for children, who made up about a third of the camp population. Turkey was also distributing food and other basic needs to thousands of people on the Syrian side of the border. Turkish spending on the emergency so far was put at over 500,000 US dollars.

1.3 Outstanding issues: While Turkey’s national income has grown, opportunities are not evenly spread among the population. There are significant inequalities in terms of material well-being and levels of education. Gender inequality is very marked. Social safety nets are limited. Some public services are relatively undeveloped while others are uneven in coverage and quality. Human rights are not always well understood and respected. All of these circumstances have serious – and sometimes dramatic – consequences for Turkey's girls and boys:

Poverty: Up to a quarter of children are living in relative poverty, and many more may be at risk in the event of an economic downturn. Poverty is higher among children than among adults. Children with relatively under-educated parents are most likely to be poor. Girls and boys experiencing material poverty are also the most likely to experience other physical and social deprivations and risks such as malnutrition, poor health, child labour, school non-attendance, lack of Internet access or leisure and socialisation opportunities, violence or family separation, and even death or injury due to natural disasters. The effects of poverty on children have been shown to last throughout their lives and go on to affect their own children.

Nutrition: Despite improvements in child nutrition, 10% of Turkey’s children are stunted, meaning that they are of low height for their age and at risk of further health and development problems. Micronutrient deficiencies are also significant. Breastfeeding is widespread but rarely exclusive for the first six months of life.

Child labour: Some of the worst forms of child labour continue to be observed in Turkey, depriving children of their rights to health and development, putting them at risk and compromising their futures. Girls and boys continue to engage in migratory seasonal agricultural labour, to work on the streets and to perform repetitive and/or dangerous tasks in small enterprises in industry and services.

Participation in education: Some children, especially girls, drop out of primary school or do not attend regularly for reasons like poverty and/or child labour, conservative social norms, domestic responsibilities, low expectations or adaptation problems. The recent lowering of the school starting age to 60 months and the division of primary education into two phases may increase non-participation via late starting, lack of school readiness or failure to make the transition between the phases. In secondary education, there are significant inter-regional, urban-rural, socioeconomic and gender discrepancies in enrolment, and non-attendance is common, for reasons which include the need for children to earn income or work in the home, and discouragement.

Quality of education: Tests and observation suggest that a high proportion of school children fail to realise their full potential. Problems range from the impact of multi-choice examinations and cramming schools to the lack of a child-centred approach and child participation. There are wide disparities from place to place and school to school in the quality of education and the educational environment.

Emerging health issues: While the public health system has been largely successful in addressing infant and child mortality and communicable diseases, the new family medicine system has limited ability to monitor and prevent
development delays, accidents, injuries, nutrition problems, non-communicable diseases and mental health within a holistic approach.

**Children without parental care:** In spite of a policy of deinstitutionalisation and family support, concern continues to be expressed from time to time about the quality of care provided for children whose parents have died or are unable, unwilling or unfit to look after them.

**Violence:** Most boys and girls encounter some form of violence, abuse, exploitation or neglect, depending partly on their age, sex and social background. Violence may be perpetrated by adults or other children at home, in and around school, or in the community. Sexual abuse, particularly for girls, is rightly a cause of public concern. These problems have not yet been fully acknowledged or addressed.

**Children in contact with the law:** Despite much reform, the treatment of children who come into contact with the law is still often out of line with international standards. Many children are tried in adult courts. Long periods of pre-trial detention are common. Conditions in detention are sometimes very poor. Child victims can still face secondary victimisation.

**Adolescent health:** Adolescents' knowledge of reproductive health appears to be very limited, partly due to social taboos. Young people may also be in need of more information and services with respect to other health issues and risks, such as drug addiction.

**Youth engagement and participation:** Adolescents and young people are often not well understood and trusted by parents or society. Children are not brought up to express opinions or take decisions for themselves and as young people they may be severely discouraged from doing so. Opportunities for personal and social development, leisure, sport and information can be insufficient. For reasons associated with tradition, the activities of adolescent girls are restricted to varying degrees in all parts of society.

**Early and forced marriage:** There is a persistent and largely-unaddressed problem of early and forced marriage among teenage girls. This infringes their reproductive health rights, paves the way for risky fertility practices like early childbirth and multiple pregnancies, causes them to withdraw from education and begin to labour as housewives before they are physically, emotionally and socially mature, exposes them to domestic violence, and exacerbates the cycle of poverty.

**Honour crimes:** Cases of honour killings and forced suicides continue to be reported in some sections of society. The victims are usually young women – and sometimes adolescent girls - who are deemed to have damaged their family’s “honour” by infringing highly conservative standards for female public behaviour.

**Between school and work:** For many young people, the transition from school to work is a difficult and drawn-out period. At any one time, about 30% of young people in Turkey are neither in work nor in school. This is a very high proportion by international standards. The ratio is highest among girls, many of whom leave school early and/or never join the workforce at all.

**Birth registration:** There is evidence that some children still miss out on birth registration, which is the gateway to all children's and citizen's rights, for the first few years of their lives - or longer in some cases.

**Disaster preparedness and the environment:** Besides environmental degradation and climate change, housing and infrastructure are extremely vulnerable to earthquakes and floods – a major risk for children and young people.

**1.4 Disadvantaged groups:** Children and young people belonging to one or more of the following disadvantaged social groups are especially likely to be affected by the issues mentioned above, in addition to some other issues:
**Disabled children:** Despite the policies in place and commitment from the government, boys and girls at risk of disability – and especially those from poor backgrounds - are still often unable to benefit fully from their rights in the same way as, and alongside, their peers. Their needs may not be identified early and accurately, they may face problems of physical access, and they may suffer as a result of discrimination, low expectations or overprotective attitudes. A large number of disabled children do not seem to be benefiting from their right to quality education.

**Children and young people in underdeveloped regions and rural areas:** Children and young people in underdeveloped regions and rural areas are most likely to experience material poverty. Poverty correlates closely with large family size, which is highest in parts of East and Southeast Turkey. In rural areas, up to half of Turkey’s children are at risk of poverty. Children and young people in underdeveloped regions and rural areas are disadvantaged with respect to nutrition, health and education outcomes, services and opportunities. Levels of infant and child mortality, stunting, school non-participation and gender disparity in school non-attendance are all highest among children in underdeveloped regions and rural areas. Internet access is much lower in rural areas than in urban areas. Opportunities for leisure and social activities are also limited.

**Children and young people in poor urban neighbourhoods:** Observation suggests that children and young people in poor urban areas, many of whose parents are migrants from rural areas or less developed regions, also experience significant levels of poverty and deprivation, and a lack of social security. In addition, they face the highest risk of conflict with the law, street life and other dangers associated with city life and the urban environment.

**The Roma:** As in other countries in Turkey’s region, children and young people from Roma communities are known to live in difficult conditions and to face especially high barriers - ranging from discrimination to lack of role models - in accessing their rights and fulfilling their potentials. The participation of many Roma children in education, for instance, is observed to be low.

**Children and young people in conflict situations:** Children and young people living amid the political tensions and violence in Southeast Turkey experience psychological stresses and significant additional risks of death or physical injury, in addition to underlying material deprivation. Many come into conflict with the law and some are recruited by the PKK, which frequently leads to a violent death.

**Children whose mother tongue is not Turkish:** Children whose first language is not Turkish may face difficulties in the early years of formal education and fall behind from an early age. This issue is most relevant in Kurdish- and Arabic-speaking parts of East and Southeast Turkey and in other urban areas with large populations of migrants from these regions.

**International migrants:** Some of the children and young people applying to the UNHCR for refugee status and subsequent resettlement receive social assistance and health care and are able to attend school, but others face difficulties for reasons which may include poverty, language competencies or issues related to identity documents and compulsory places of residence. Children and young people also make up a high proportion of the irregular migrants who are frequently intercepted - and who not infrequently lose their lives - seeking to enter Europe via Turkey. These children may be detained in removal centres or forcibly deported.

**1.5 General recommendations:** Individual solutions can and should be developed for each and every one of the issues of child rights and child and youth well-being with which Turkey is faced. Some of these issues are already well understood and regularly monitored; others require additional data collection, study and analysis. In many cases, it may be sufficient to pursue existing policies and initiatives further or more vigorously; in others, fresh initiatives need to be taken. An effort has been made to consider such policy matters in more detail in the relevant sections of this Situation Analysis. At the same time, it will be much easier to bring about improvements in all
areas of child rights and child and youth well-being if the following general principles are widely adopted and internalised:

**A rights-based approach:** The willingness to do good things for children which exists at all levels of society needs to be complemented by a culture of child rights, so that children are always perceived as individuals with rights, and never as the properties of parents or other individuals or institutions - and so that parents, professionals, officials and policy-makers acknowledge their full obligations and work to ensure that every girl and boy everywhere benefits from a satisfactory level of well-being and protection. Regarding children’s issues as a question of rights will ensure that no child is forgotten – not even the few who still lack birth registration, or fail to attend primary school, or go missing each year. It will lead to a much greater sense of urgency about violence against children, about long detention periods and about the trial of children by non-specialist courts. It will ensure that children have a say in decisions affecting themselves, and that complaints and monitoring mechanisms are put in place. It will cause restrictive, controlling attitudes towards young people, especially girls, to be replaced by an empowering approach. It will also ensure that efforts are made to provide children not only with health and education services but with the full range of child rights including civil rights and freedoms and the rights to information, leisure, a safe environment and protection from the impact of disasters. All decision-makers and professionals working with children need to be fully conversant with children’s rights. The mass media can also play an important role in creating this culture. The current process of constitutional change provides an opportunity to increase guarantees of child rights in the Constitution, and subsequently to make necessary updates to those pieces of legislation which are not fully in line with child rights principles – for example with respect to child participation.

**More resources for more, better and more equitable services:** In public services, Turkey is in a position to “think big” and set itself higher goals in terms of quality, quantity and equity. In education and health, a minimal service is being provided to almost the whole population; the challenge now is to work towards an equitable, child-friendly education process developing the potential of girls and boys from all regions and sections of society, and towards a more holistic public health service for all, especially children and young people, leading to healthier and safer lives. In social protection, a rights-based system is still developing, and a special focus on social protection for children, who are the worst affected by poverty, is still lacking. Social services and child protection services are patchy and quality is not assured. The establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in 2011 is an opportunity to develop more extensive, better-coordinated, comprehensive child protection services, with more emphasis on prevention and early warning systems. In juvenile justice, it is essential to follow the right procedures for all children in contact with the law, and not just for some of them. Turkey currently has no clear policy for the preschool age group, and devotes few resources to this area, notwithstanding the critical importance of care and stimulation in the early years for the future healthy development and achievements of the child, and the role which early childhood development can play in the elimination of cycles of poverty. Diversification of services for adolescents and young people, especially girls, is desirable in order to meet the needs of the members of this large and important element of the population for all kinds of practical information, life and livelihood skills, opportunities for work experience, personal and social development and civic engagement, and protection from exploitation or early marriage.

Increased delivery of quality public services reaching all children and young people equally requires improved coordination among the institutions responsible, the development of standards and monitoring systems - or the full and open implementation of those already developed - and the employment of more, better-trained, specialised professionals. It also requires larger budgets and effective use of resources. The public resources spent on children, families and young people are clearly low by European or OECD standards, even though children and young people make up a relatively large part of the population in Turkey. For example, the extension of compulsory education to twelve years in 2012 has not been matched by a corresponding increase in resources. The available resources need to be raised and closely monitored. Both the inadequacy of public spending and the tendency for public resources to be concentrated in more developed cities, provinces and neighbourhoods, and in
more central, prestigious or long-standing institutions, limit the ability of public services to compensate for wide socioeconomic discrepancies.

Focus on inequality, disadvantage and exclusion: In addition to ensuring the comprehensiveness of policies and services for the general population, a direct focus on those categories of children and young people who face the greatest risk of deprivation, exclusion and rights abuses could be the quickest way to ensure more equitable access to rights and opportunities. This includes:

--girls, because gender inequality persists - girls remain more likely than boys to drop out of school, for example, or to be obliged to do housework rather than pursuing their own interests and goals - and because they are particularly at risk of early and forced marriage, honour crimes and sexual violence.

--poor children in both rural and urban settings, because socioeconomic disadvantage is the single main reason why children are deprived of rights and exposed to risks. No child can deserve to live in poverty, and the effects of poverty cannot be reversed in later life. Parental self-sacrifice alone cannot be expected to compensate, particularly as parents of poor children are generally uneducated and socially insecure, and may have several children.

--children and young people with disabilities, who face multiple barriers in accessing their rights, despite efforts to address their special needs in the health, education and social services sectors. In addition to better services and physical environments, there is a need to change social norms and attitudes concerning the rights and potentials of persons with all kinds of disability and their integration into society.

--Roma children and young people, children and young people affected by political violence, and migrants and asylum seekers. Partly for various political reasons, few policies have been devised or activities carried out to ensure the rights and well-being of these children and young people.

Working together: Improvements in child rights and in the well-being of children and young people will be easier to bring about if full use is made of the energies and resources of all those able and willing to make a contribution. Government institutions have to take overall responsibility, but universities and academics, the media, international organisations, the private sector, NGOs, professional associations, business and employers’ organisations and trades unions, all have a contribution to make. This contribution may take the forms of advocacy, research, contributions to policy development, professional training, the adoption of internal good practices, the sharing of experience, the communication of messages, the financing and implementation of service delivery and/or democratic supervision and monitoring. It would be beneficial if government were more open to the views and proposals of such groups and sought their contributions more systematically, so as to integrate them into the predominantly state-controlled system of child-related services and rights monitoring. Local government and other local-level organisations and community groups or leaders are to be valued for their access to the population and knowledge of local conditions as well as the resources which they are able to provide in cash and kind. Professionals working with children or families should be equipped to champion the rights of children within and, as far as possible, beyond their own specific areas of competence. It will also be beneficial to support and inform parents, who often knowingly or unwittingly deny their children’s rights or act contrary to their well-being, so that they are able to care for their children well and provide them with necessary knowledge and support at all stages from the vital early years to the awkward moments of adolescence. Last but not least, it is important to collaborate with and listen to children and young people themselves, facilitating their efforts to claim their own rights and inform and support one another.
2. Children and young people in the population

* Although the growth of the population has started to slow down, children and young people will continue to account for a much higher proportion of the population than in the “developed” countries for many years to come. There is a need for more investment in these age groups.

* In some parts of the country, children make up an extremely high proportion of the population and/or are in the process of migration. Accordingly, special efforts are needed in the allocation of public services to ensure that all children benefit equally from their rights.

* There is evidence that some children still miss out on birth registration for the first few years of their lives - or longer in some cases. This issue needs to be pursued vigorously, as birth registration is the gateway to all children’s and citizen’s rights.

2.1 Children in the population: Children and young people account for a high proportion of the population by western standards and will continue to do so in the coming decade. About 22.7 million children, defined as persons under eighteen, were living in Turkey as of the end of 2011, making up some 30.3% of the population. This percentage has been declining slowly due to reduced fertility and the growing population of adults. With respect to youth, the number of 15-24 year-olds in the population was about 12.5 million as of the end of 2011, accounting for 16.8% of the population. Despite signs of a shift in the arguably anti-natalist policies of the past half-century, the continued impact of urbanisation and increased education for women may keep fertility rates falling during the coming decade, causing the absolute number of children to stabilise or fall and the gradual decline in the percentage of children in the population to continue. Meanwhile, the number of 15-24 year-olds in the population, which was about 12.5 million as of the end of 2011, seems likely to remain at about this level, and the importance of this group as a proportion of the population seems likely to decline only marginally. The gender distribution of the child and youth population is expected to remain normal, with a slight preponderance of boys over girls.

Regional variations: The proportions of children and young people in society vary significantly from place to place. Under-eighteens make up 40-50 percent of the populace in the Southeast and some Eastern provinces, whereas in several smaller provinces in western Turkey this ratio falls to 20-25 percent. This is the result of sharp geographical variations in fertility rates. Among the five broad geographical regions identified for the purposes of the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey, the East had a total 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. The national total fertility rate was 2.16, but this was 2.0 in urban areas and 2.68 in rural areas.
**Impact of migration:** Migration from rural areas to urban areas and from poorer provinces to richer ones – a phenomenal trend of past decades which still continues, to some extent, today – has tempered the geographical variations in fertility rates and population structure, but also tended to transfer them to the various districts of major cities. It is clear that Turkey will remain very diverse in these respects throughout the next ten years, even assuming that fertility declines most markedly in those parts of the country and society where it is currently highest. Variations in population structure between locations and communities will continue to have important consequences for the provision of health, education, other social services, social protection and social assistance for children, young people and families.
Sources, availability and reliability of demographic data

Since 2007, population data has been published annually by the Turkish Institute of Statistics (Turkstat) based on the Address-Based Population Registration System (ADNKS), replacing the old system of periodic censuses. The data is broken down by gender, cohort and province, by rural and urban areas (defined administratively), and by marital status and literacy. The figures are sufficiently accurate to show general trends, but can show unexpectedly sharp variations from year to year for reasons which are not explained. As the ADNKS is still new, it has not yet generated official population projections. Turkstat also publishes regular data on births, deaths, marriages, divorces and domestic and international migration. In 2011, it began to conduct a Population and Housing Survey, with results due in October 2012, to add to knowledge of the labour force and employment, housing conditions, migration, disability, fertility and infant, child and adult mortality. Meanwhile, the five-yearly Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) conducted by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (HIPS) is the main source of information on family structure, birth registration and fertility rates, practices and preferences, as well as on mother and child health and nutrition and other related issues. The next DHS is due in 2013. Many international organisations including the World Bank, the OECD and UN organisations (UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA) publish demographic data with international comparisons. Population trends are analysed from a long-term perspective in the HIPS publication, Demographic Transition in Turkey (in Turkish), covering 1968-2008. Population projections are given and their implications for education, labour, health and social security systems are discussed in Demography and Management Towards 2050, published jointly by the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TÜSİAD) and UNFPA in 2011.

2.2 Birth registration, non-registration and late registration: Birth registration has been problematic in the past and some children are still registered late, or possibly not at all, due to their disadvantaged backgrounds or personal circumstances. In 2008, 6% of children under the age of five were not registered with the population registry, according to the Demographic and Health Survey. This compared to 16% in 2003. The percentage of under-fives whose births were not registered nevertheless remained as high as 8% in rural areas, 11% in Eastern regions and 14% among children of mothers with less than a primary education. 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, or are involved in crime, or were never themselves registered in the population. Lack of registration makes the child and the parents ineligible for health services and social assistance, while an unregistered child cannot obtain any kind of school certificate. In addition, problems related to birth registration can contribute to early marriage and child labour, and hinder all kinds of monitoring and statistical work. Many of the unregistered under-fives may be registered when the time comes for school enrolment. However, late registration also 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. A new law on population registry services adopted in 2006 obliged schools, law-enforcement bodies and various other institutions and officials to report children without birth registration. Together with urbanisation and higher levels of education, and an amnesty for fines, these measures may have reduced the incidence of non-registration and delayed registration. Even so, 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.
3. Social conditions and the family environment

* The proportion of children living in poverty is higher than for the adult population. The effects of inequalities, deprivation and poverty on children last throughout their lives and go on to affect their own children. The issue of child poverty needs to be acknowledged, measured and addressed.

* In addition to material inequalities, the quality of the care which children receive within the family varies, with serious consequences for their rights and their life prospects. More can be done to support parents so that they are able to care for their children well.

* Social spending aimed at children, and families with children, is low, especially for children not yet in school. While reorganising social assistance policies and social services, a special effort should be made to remove this imbalance.

* Some of the worst forms of child labour continue to be observed in Turkey, depriving children of their rights to health and development, putting them at risk and compromising their futures. It is time to control child labour effectively, whatever the economic cost.

3.1 Incomes and living conditions/poverty and well-being: Children and young people are affected at least as much as the adult population by the large disparities of wealth, income and economic security which characterise Turkey, associated with factors such as the uneven distribution of development among regions and between urban and rural areas, the boom-bust pattern of growth, the large agricultural workforce and the prevalence of informal and irregular forms of employment. In 2009, for example, the proportion of under-15s living in households in food and non-food poverty was 25.77%, according to the official poverty study conducted by Turkstat - 7.69 points higher than the general poverty rate. The rate of poverty among children is compounded by the fact that those parents who are less educated and live in economically underdeveloped locations - and who are therefore most likely to have low incomes – also display the highest fertility and consequently have the most “mouths to feed”. The Turkstat study demonstrates the correlation between poverty and family size very clearly. Households are generally largest in the Southeast and parts of Eastern Turkey, and also in rural areas in many central, northern, eastern and southeastern provinces, and in those neighbourhoods of cities throughout the country which are inhabited by migrants or other relatively under-educated populations. In rural areas, poverty among under-fifteens was put at 50.15% in 2009, compared to 13.71% for urban areas. Poverty rates among both adults and children changed little in 2006-9 after declining in earlier years. Children in poverty are most vulnerable to malnutrition, disease, accidents, violence, child labour and many other risks, and may nevertheless be least likely to have access to quality health, education and protection services, so that they are unable to develop to their full potential or to acquire the vocational and life skills they need to escape poverty in later life. Poverty among children is the major obstacle to breaking the vicious cycle of poverty both in terms of the individual life cycle and in terms of inter-generational transmission. Poverty and disability are also inter-related: limited access to health leads to disabilities that could be treated and cured if necessary services are provided, while disability limits access to the labour market contributing to low incomes. Reducing child poverty will not be easy: economic growth has weakened in 2012, and while the declining trend in fertility may have a positive impact in the years ahead, some parts of society may still be left behind.

Measures of child well-being
Available statistical information on child well-being focuses mainly on education and health (See the relevant sections of this Situation Analysis) and on material well-being. Little is known about other aspects of child well-being which are today attracting more interest globally, such as children’s subjective evaluations of their own safety and happiness. With respect to material well-being, information on living standards in Turkey is derived mainly from household surveys conducted by the Turkish Statistics Institute (Turkstat): the annual Household Budget Survey (HBS), which focuses on consumer expenditures, and the Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC). Both can be used to assess income distribution and to determine poverty rates. The SILC, conducted for the first time in 2010, also provides some information on a range of other aspects of deprivation or poverty, including household income, home ownership, housing quality, indebtedness, ability to meet unexpected expenses, and a multiple material deprivation indicator.
Turkstat poverty analysis based on the HBS has yielded poverty rates for under 15s and under-fives, because variables used include occupation and level of schooling. Such analysis has also demonstrated the link between poverty among children and low education level of parents, rural location, and family size. However, Turkstat did not conduct a full analysis of poverty based on consumption expenditures for 2010, stating that it is working with local and international experts on possible new data sources, methodology and indicators. For the population as a whole, food poverty was put at 0.48%, food and non-food poverty at 18.08% and relative poverty (based on 50% of equivalised median consumption expenditure, not 60%) at 15.12%

The results of the 2010 Incomes and Living Standards Survey released in December 2011 suggest a slight improvement in income distribution with the average disposable income of the top quintile eight times that of the bottom quintile - down from 8.5 times a year earlier - and the Gini coefficient estimated at 0.402. Nevertheless, the survey gave a relative poverty rate of 16.9% (based on 50% of equivalised median disposable household income) and indicated that 18% of the population was at risk of permanent poverty. In addition, a high proportion of households reported an unmet need for home improvements and/or difficulties in paying debts and instalments. Further analysis is needed to provide data concerning the extent and depth of poverty among children.

Current OECD data for relative poverty among children (OECD Family Database - www.oecd.org/els/social/family/database) suggests that child poverty in Turkey is the highest in the OECD, at 24.6%, which is almost twice the OECD average.

In addition to the above, information on shelter, water supply and sanitation (as well as manifestations of poverty such as malnutrition) is given in the five-yearly Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) carried out by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies. In rural areas, the quality of water and sanitation is relatively low. Questions about indebtedness, receipt of social assistance and self-perceptions of levels of material well-being were also asked in the Family Structure Survey of the Ministry of the Family and Social Policies (2012). In 2009-2010, the World Bank and UNICEF supported a survey of the impact of the economic crisis on households in selected provinces which gave an indication of patterns of household vulnerability and response to adverse economic conditions.

Available indicators suffer from the drawback that they concentrate on households rather than on the needs of the individual child, equating children who live in poor households with poor children. This can be misleading as household income may not be spent in a way which benefits family members equally, meaning that women, children or girls could be experiencing poverty even in households which are not found to be poor. Moreover, children’s needs are different from those of adults and vary with age, gender and disability. Another drawback is the lack of detailed geographic disaggregation. Information on housing and environmental conditions for children is limited. While the spread of urban infrastructure, migration to urban areas, the transformation of shanty-town areas into modern settlements and the trend towards smaller families may be improving housing conditions for many children, the cost of rent and utilities may be prohibitive, or power supply may remain intermittent. Overcrowding is still 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.

3.2 The family environment: The care and support which girls and boys receive at home varies considerably depending not only on economic circumstances and household size but also on the family structure, the atmosphere at home and the education, knowledge, capacities and attitudes of parents or other caregivers. According to the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), 93% of children in Turkey live with both of their natural parents. This reflects the near-universalis of marriage, the very low incidence of children born out of wedlock, and the low divorce rate. Children in Turkey may therefore be considered more fortunate than children in countries where one-parent families are more commonplace (However, the divorce rate has risen, and many children may be affected by living with parents who quarrel but who do not divorce due to economic reasons or social pressures). Typically, children also live with one or more siblings, while perhaps a quarter of all children (more in rural areas) live in households including another relative, usually a grandparent. While the presence of an active and/or pension-receiving grandparent may be beneficial, a grandparent requiring a lot of care and attention could stretch family resources and care-givers’ attentions. Meanwhile, more than a million children arguably face a higher level of various risks, including neglect, due to living in a single-parent family, or to temporary or permanent separation from their parents. According to the 2008 DHS, 5% of children live with only one parent (usually the mother) due to the death of the other parent, separation or divorce, while two percent live with neither of their natural parents, although in most cases their parents are alive. At the age of 2-4, 97% of children are still living with both natural parents, but by the age of 15-17 this ratio falls to 86%.
Parenting: Many parents, particularly in poorer and less educated sections of society, may not be well aware of all of the rights of their children and may be ill-informed or misinformed on basic health and nutrition issues or, more generally, on what constitutes good parenting. In addition, they may not have sufficient education to understand their children’s problems or help them with school work. According to the 2008 DHS, most children of pre-school age are looked after at home, usually by their mothers (The employment rate among women over 15 was only 25.6%, on average, during 2011). Where the mothers are working, the mother is still the primary care giver for 30 per cent of the children (depending on the nature of her work). Other care-givers include the mother’s mother-in-law (25 per cent) or mother (11 per cent), a girl child (6 per cent) or another relative (5 per cent). Professional early childhood care services for the age group 0-3 have a very limited coverage. However, the same survey showed that only 30% of women aged 15-49 had completed eight years of primary schooling, and 18% had not even completed five years. These indicators were highest among the younger women – and are therefore likely to have improved in recent years - but particularly low among women in the East and in rural areas, who tend to have the most children. Less-educated parents, in particular, may fail to stimulate their children in early childhood by reading to them or playing with them (Eduser Consultancy Service Co: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices Survey in Preschool Education, 2009). The same parents may resort easily to some forms of violence. All this adds to the disadvantages faced by children of poorer, less educated parents. In addition, parents are not well equipped to guide their children through adolescence, given traditional taboos and roles and the rapid social changes which have occurred in the past generation. They often constrain the activities of girls increasingly as they grow up and expect them to play domestic roles.

By way of a response to these issues, family counselling services exist, and quality parenting education has been provided through 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, building on programmes developed by UNICEF with support from the EU. 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. Draft surveys and cost-benefit analysis conducted under UNICEF’s programme in Turkey have shown parenting education programmes to be successful and cost-effective. Feedback from the beneficiaries indicates that parents who have completed the parenting education programme are applying their new skills, talking with their children more and avoiding the use of physical discipline and corporal punishment. However, the coverage of these services is still modest compared to the number of children who could benefit. The parents of fewer than 5% of children are reached by these programmes. 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 Child Community Centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods across the country.

3.3 Social protection systems and children: 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. In practice, a variety of public institutions including social security institutions, public foundations and local administrations as well as central government bodies run a wide range of programmes for the retired, the ill, the jobless and the poor. These include pensions, conditional cash transfers (CCT) for mothers having health checks and hospital deliveries and sending their children to school, and many forms of assistance in kind. However, all these benefits are small and may not be permanent, rights-based or well-targeted. Although children are provided with free health insurance under the new general health insurance system, it is difficult to speak of a comprehensive social protection system.

Information on public social spending, and on the breakdown of social expenditures by national institutions given in the government’s Annual Programmes shows that social spending as a whole is still low by European standards at about 17% of GDP. It consists overwhelmingly of health spending, education expenditure and – despite the relatively young population - contributory pensions for those who have been formally employed. Other forms of social protection expenditure account for less than 1% of GDP. Moreover, 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.
Development of Social Expenditures (% of GDP)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011 estimate</th>
<th>2012 programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Protection</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retirement pensions &amp; other expenditures</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social assistance &amp; non-contrib. payments</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct income support (to farmers)</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<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*

According to the Family Structure Survey (2011) of the new Ministry for the Family and Social Policies, the number of families receiving any kind of assistance at least once in the past year was 10.3%, with the Social Assistance & Solidarity Foundations and municipalities as the most common benefactors. The 2010 Survey of Income and Living Conditions (SILC) carried out by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) revealed that 1.8% of household income came from social transfers.

Social protection expenditures specifically targeting families and children are especially low, as there are no substantial programmes exclusively for families with children, such as child payments, benefits or allowances, parental leave benefits or childcare support. Similarly, arrangements do not exist for monitoring the impact of social assistance spending on children on a regular basis. This is clearly not an adequate response to the high level of child poverty. 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.

**New policies:** Social assistance policy is currently in flux. The government has recognised the need for better data collection, objective measures and standards, enhanced cooperation between institutions and more qualified personnel if those in need are to be reached and supported equitably. The Social Assistance and Solidarity General Directorate of the new Ministry for the Family and Social Policies is working on a points formula for social assistance to households, and the government has promised to introduce a Family Social Support Programme (ASDEP) encompassing social assistance and social services. The consolidation within the new Ministry of responsibilities formerly carried out by several general directorates and other institutions is a positive development which could facilitate the development of a comprehensive social protection system and pave the way for a closer focus on children in social protection policy.

The Ministry is currently conducting an assessment of CCT schemes. Separately, UNICEF and the Development Ministry are cooperating on a Child Well-Being Document. It is far from certain, however, that the evolving social protection system will increase social protection for children. Emphasis has been 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. It is unclear whether the government is targeting an increase in 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 well-being and/or poverty are major topics of debate, and child benefit schemes are often universal.

**ECD option:** Any mixture of strategies for addressing child poverty would be likely to include 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. 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).
3.4 Child labour: One of the most important manifestations of poverty among children is child labour. Child labour has serious consequences for children. Working children are open to risks, may drop out of school, miss classes, or be unable to study well, affecting their socialisation, harming their physical, emotional and cognitive well-being, and compromising their prospects of enjoying an adequate income in adulthood. The worst forms of child labour expose children to 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 risks of being recruited into gangs or may turn to crime as a way of generating the income expected of them. Accordingly, 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.

The Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) is due to conduct a child labour survey in 2012. Its last child labour survey, carried out in 2006, showed that showed that 5.9 percent of 6-17 year-olds in Turkey (over 900,000 children) were engaged in some form of economic activity. One third were in the 6-14 age group. Just under half worked as unpaid labourers in family enterprises. About 40 percent were working in agriculture. Girls made up 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.

The overall decline in child labour may be continuing due to economic development, the decline in the proportion of the population primarily engaged in agriculture, longer years of schooling and the efforts of various ministries and agencies and ILO. However, exploitative child labour, including some of the worst forms of child labour – namely, street work, work in small industrial/service enterprises, and migrant seasonal agricultural labour – is known to persist. In migrant agricultural labour, tens of thousands of boys and girls migrate annually with (and sometimes without) their families to work in regions growing cotton, hazelnuts and many other crops. Living conditions can be primitive and also affect children too young or small to work who accompany their families. Migratory labour typically involves families from South and Southeast Turkey and can continue from early spring to late autumn, overlapping the school calendar (See the recent publications of the Ankara-based Kalkınma Atölyesi (Development Workshop), notably the Baseline Study concerning Children of the 6-14 Age Group affected by Seasonal Agricultural Migration in Turkey - Harvest of Hazelnuts, Sugarbeet and Cotton and Low Tunnel Greenhouse Vegetable Cultivation, at http://www.kalkinmaatolyesi.org). Many other children work long hours on the family farm or in the family business, perform menial and repetitive tasks in repair shops and factories, peddle goods, shine shoes or wipe windows for long hours on the streets of major cities, water graves, sort household waste or guide tourists. Babies and toddlers are used by beggars to attract passers-by. A Ministry of Labour and Social Security-ILO-UNICEF report (http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/ankara/areas/childrenworkinginculturalandartisticactivities.pdf) has drawn attention to conditions faced by girls and boys appearing in films, advertisements and television serials, and who may spend twelve hours or more on freezing sets or in smoke-filled studios, with nowhere to rest or play and nobody qualified to take care of them. In addition, some children, especially adolescent girls, are responsible for large amounts of housework, made necessary by large family size and/or the death, illness, injury or absence of a parent.

Besides their level of poverty, 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. Such attitudes, often but not always overlapping with poverty, may be more prevalent among certain communities, such as rural dwellers or the Roma. The acceptability of child labour to parents, communities and employers may also vary with the characteristics of local economies. Parents of child actors may turn a blind eye to poor working conditions, or
the impacts of work on their children’s social development and education, in the hope that they will become celebrities. For children unhappy at home or at school, work may appear attractive.

**Combating child labour:** In addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Turkey is a party to ILO conventions 138 (the Minimum Age Convention) and 182 (on the Prevention of the Worst Forms of Child Labour), but not to ILO conventions 79 and 90 on Night Work of Young Persons. Various laws contain provisions regarding the tasks in which children may be employed, minimum ages and the rights/protection of children in work. The Labour Law outlaws employment below the age of 15, with certain exceptions. However, the high level of informality in the Turkish economy, the large number of small enterprises and the weakness of trades unions are among the factors which add to the difficulty of applying the law. The Labour Law, moreover, does not apply in agriculture, and inspectors are few and do not have access to agricultural enterprises or small businesses. Penalties are too small to act as a deterrent. Street working is not necessarily illegal. A draft bill on occupational health and safety was criticised by NGOs and academia in early 2012 for deleting the labour law provision prohibiting heavy and dangerous work for people aged under 18.

Along with good, well-enforced laws, eliminating harmful forms of child labour requires improved child protection and prevention systems and social assistance and protection policies for alleviating poverty, and effective use of the Ministry of National Education’s systems for monitoring and responding to school non-attendance – including secondary school attendance, now that it has been made compulsory as of 2012. Above all, coordination needs to be ensured among several government sectors, business, trades unions and civil society at national and local levels. Efforts to ensure universal birth registration also need to continue given anecdotal evidence that children without birth registration are involved in child labour, and these children easily escape the attention of public authorities. Moreover, efforts to combat child labour need to be informed by adequate analysis of supply and demand-side factors, including 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.

In 2005, a Time-Bound Policy and Programme Framework for eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2015 was drawn up through a participatory process led by the child labour unit of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. 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. However, more resources, capacity and commitment are needed to implement the strategy fully.

In its Concluding Observations in June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child encouraged Turkey to “take all available means to combat child labour and eliminate the worst forms of child labour”. It recommended that the minimum age of employment should be brought into conformity with the age when children graduate from compulsory education (Secondary education was made compulsory by the law adopted by Parliament in March 2012 restructuring the education system), as well as into conformity with the regulation of employment of children in hazardous conditions, in compliance with ILO Convention 182.
4. Child Health and Nutrition

* Infant and under-five mortality has continued to decline rapidly in Turkey but a gap remains between Turkey and the most successful countries, mostly due to higher mortality rates in less developed regions. Turkey can now aim to close this gap.

* Child nutrition has improved, but serious problems remain. 10% of Turkey’s children – mainly in underdeveloped regions - are stunted, meaning that they are of low height for their age and at risk of further health and development problems. This unacceptable situation reflects the persistence of poverty, inadequate care in the family and gaps in public services. Micronutrient deficiencies are also significant.

* As part of a transformation of the health sector, Turkey has introduced free health insurance for children. With respect to public health, a more holistic service can be envisaged, focusing not only on infant survival, immunization or breastfeeding but widening its goals towards the ultimate objective of safer and healthier lives for all. This will require further refinement of the family medicine system and careful monitoring and assessment of impacts for all children everywhere.

* Many infants and young children face some kind of disability or developmental delay which needs to be detected and responded to as early as possible. While Turkey has pioneered Development Paediatric Units, much more investment needs to be made to change attitudes to developmental delays and disability within the health system, to ensure correct screening and diagnostics of all children, and to provide early intervention, special education and rehabilitation in line with best international practice.

4.1 Survival: Infant and under-five mortality has fallen dramatically in recent years (albeit from a high level) as a result of social trends, including higher incomes, better education of mothers, urbanisation and safer fertility practices, combined with improvements in the coverage and/or quality of various aspects of health services such as antenatal care and monitoring, birth attendance, knowledge of key personnel and availability of intensive care units. The UN puts under-5 and infant (0-12) mortality in Turkey at 18 per 1,000 live births and 14 per 1,000 live births respectively. These figures compare to rates of 57 and 40 for the World, 41 and 31 for the Middle East and North Africa, 23 and 19 for the Central and Eastern Europe/Community of Independent states region, and 6 and 5 for the industrialised countries (UNICEF: State of the World Children’s Report, 2012). Health officials in Turkey are confident that single figures will be achieved very soon. The story of the recent rapid progress in reducing child mortality rates is told in the publication “Decline in the Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) in Turkey: A Case Study” (http://www.unicef.org.tr/en/knowledge/detail/1035/decline-in-the-under-5-mortality-rate-u5mr-in-turkey-a-case-study, or in Turkish: http://www.unicef.org.tr/tr/knowledge/detail/1034/turkiye-de-5-yasindan-kucukler-olum-hizinda-5koh-azalma-bir-durum-arastirmasi). Achieving the low under-five and infant mortality rates recorded in the most developed countries will require a focus on risky cases (premature babies, low birthweight…) and on the first few weeks of life, when most of the babies are lost. Disparities between regions and social groups are also significant. The 2008 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) put under-5 mortality for the ten years preceding the survey at 43 in rural areas, 50 in the “East” region and 52 among mothers from the lowest wealth quintile compared to a national average of 33. Besides variations in socioeconomic circumstances, educational levels, fertility practices and geographical distances between homes and health facilities, these disparities may reflect geographical variations in the provision of infrastructure and services, and high turnover of health staff. The same survey showed that only 79% of mothers received medical guidance and care before birth in the East, which was thirteen percentage points below the national average, that only 74% of births in the East were assisted – seventeen percentage points below the national average - and that only 33% of mothers in the East receive assistance from a doctor (rather than a nurse or midwife) during birth. Similar disparities were identified between rural and urban areas. In its Concluding Observations in June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child encouraged Turkey to “eradicate regional disparities and address maternal and infant mortality targeting the Eastern regions of the
country”. The next DHS survey, to be conducted in 2013, may well confirm that the geographical disparities in infant and child mortality and in access to and take-up of mother-and-child health services have diminished with the aid of policy initiatives like conditional cash transfers linked to regular health checks and hospital delivery, the provision of transport and accommodation for women from remote areas when giving birth, and home-visiting. However, recent mortality data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) suggests that infant mortality in eastern regions remained significantly above the national average in 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infant mortality by age of death, 2010</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no. of deaths</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-6 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-4 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-8 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-11 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) as of March 31, 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infant mortality by region, 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no. of deaths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR1 Istanbul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR2 West Marmara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR3 Aegean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR4 East Marmara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR5 West Anatolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>TRA Northeast Anatolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRB Central East Anatolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRC Southeast Anatolia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All regions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) as of March 31, 2012

Deaths of children due to childhood diseases and other communicable diseases are low in Turkey, in keeping with geographical and climatic conditions, the development of the economy, education and infrastructure, urbanisation and the expansion of health services including basic public health interventions. Turkey has been polio-free since 2002, and a National Measles Vaccination Campaign carried out in 2003-2005 resulted in 95 per cent 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 per cent infant immunization look achievable. The scope of routine immunisation policies has been widened. The 2008 DHS found that 74% of children aged 12-23 months had been fully immunised (at the time, indicating one dose of BCG, 3 doses of polio and one dose of measles), compared to only 54% in 2003. However, full immunisation among two year-olds was only 60 per cent in rural areas and in the East, and this may indicate geographical variations in service provision and staff as well as demand-side factors.

According to Turkstat, 920 5-9 year-olds, 798 10-14 year-olds, 1,399 15-19 year-olds and 1,710 20-24 year-olds died in 2010. Three-fifths of the deaths among 5-19 year-olds and two thirds of the deaths among 20-24 year-olds came among males. A variety of causes are cited. The figures need to be treated with caution as it is not possible to attribute causes to all deaths.
Some causes of death of children and young people aged 1-24 by gender and age group, 2010 (no. of deaths)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause</th>
<th>1 - 4</th>
<th>5 - 9</th>
<th>10 - 14</th>
<th>15 - 19</th>
<th>20 - 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suicide and self-inflicted injury - girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicide and self-inflicted injury - boys</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>All other accidents - girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other accidents - boys</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle accidents - girls</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Motor vehicle accidents - boys</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pneumonia - girls</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pneumonia - boys</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cerebrovascular disease - girls</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cerebrovascular disease - boys</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart disease incl. ischaemic - girls</td>
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Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) as of March 31, 2012

4.2 Nutrition: The nutritional status of Turkey’s children has improved as a result of economic development, urbanisation, smaller family size and social change, as well as official policies favouring breastfeeding and salt iodisation. Nevertheless, a significant percentage of children in Turkey are malnourished or experience health conditions or risks related to deficiencies of micronutrients like iron, iodine and vitamins. This situation reflects the extent of child poverty, the inability of social protection systems and social services to compensate, and in some cases the ignorance or negligence of parents and caregivers with respect to diet and feeding. The results of a national nutrition survey conducted in 2011 have not yet been published, and statistical information about micronutrient deficiencies is limited. However, the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) showed that 10.3% of children under the age of five were stunted – down from 16.0% in 1998 and 12.2% in 2003 – and 3.2% severely stunted. Stunted children are short for their age, a sign of chronic malnutrition. Just under 1% of Turkey’s under-fives were wasted, meaning that their bodyweight was low relative to their height, a sign of acute malnutrition.

Malnutrition affects not only life chances, physical health and stature but also cognitive development. It has been described as a hidden global emergency. It persists in middle income countries as well as poor countries. WHO data cited in UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children report 2012 puts stunting at 29% for Egypt, 17% for Malaysia and 16% for Mexico but only 8% for Jordan and 7% for Brazil.

In Turkey, malnutrition shows substantial variations between regions, and between urban and rural areas, which is unsurprising given the distribution of poverty in the country. The 2008 DHS, dividing Turkey into five main regions, showed that 20.9% of children in the “East” region were stunted, compared to 7.6% in the “West” region. For specific provinces or districts, the ratio may be still higher. Separately, the survey put the percentage of households using iodised salt in the East at 61 percent - twenty-four points below the national average. In its Concluding Observations in June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Turkey “continue its efforts to eradicate malnutrition, especially stunting, as well as improve neonatal care with special emphasis on the Eastern regions”. Efforts to improve health and nutrition 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.

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 2008 DHS put this ratio at 98.5 percent. Ideally, however, babies should be exclusively breast-fed for six months – and the proportion of under-6s who are exclusively breast-fed was put at just 41.6%. This was in spite of improvements brought about by the
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 appears to be above the World average of 37% given in UNICEF’s State of the World’s Children report for 2012. Nevertheless, many babies younger than two months are fed with ready-made formula (one-fifth according to the DHS), and few babies (less than a quarter according to the DHS) are still being exclusively breastfed at 4-5 months. Although the 2013 DHS may confirm some more progress, mothers of more than half of 0-6 year-olds in all parts of the country are feeding them unsuitably. Moreover, a code on the marketing of breast-milk substitutes first drafted in 2002, in line with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes has still not been adopted due to issues of EU-compatibility, lobbying by formula manufacturers and the indecisiveness of the government. In its Concluding Observations in June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Turkey “continue strengthening its efforts to promote breast-feeding and fully enforce the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes”.

4.3 Trends in health services for children: Public health policy for children has been dominated 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 childhood cancers and lifestyle-related conditions like obesity (School canteen menus are now subject to anti-obesity rules). With respect to nutrition, complementary feeding and dietics in general may take on more importance, alongside breastfeeding and individual micronutrients.

A series of changes have been taking place in the health system which have the potential to contribute to a more comprehensive health service for children, reaching all children regardless of geographical or social background, but which also entail some risks. Most recently, in 2012, the Ministry of Health was reorganised ending the division between the general directorates of Mother and Child Health and Primary Health Care and creating new units like the Turkey Public Health Institute. In 2010, the roll-out of a system of family doctors to all parts of the country was completed, effectively setting up a new primary health care network. This was part of a structural “transformation” of the health care system, partly influenced by the World Bank, which has been going on since the early 2000s.

Assessing and monitoring the health system

According to the Government’s Annual Programme for 2012, the health service “transformation” policy has contributed to important improvements in provision of services, access to services, basic health indicators and satisfaction with health services. However, the Programme acknowledges that there are still significant disparities in the distribution of physical infrastructure and health personnel between urban and rural areas and among regions. It also notes that issues related to the financial sustainability of health services persist. Health spending has increased, reaching 5.0% of GDP in 2009, a year when GDP shrank, the Programme says, but the Government is expecting to cut costs and increase revenues in future.

Other reports which make broadly similar but more detailed assessments of the health system include the following:


While there is a widespread belief that health services in general improved in the 2000s, there is also a lack of independent monitoring of the performance of the public health and health care systems, in terms of
coverage/access and quality, particularly with respect to children, and with respect to disadvantaged groups. The establishment of think-tanks in this area and the dissemination and analysis of more of the data which is available to the Ministry of Health would be beneficial.

**Family medicine:** Family medicine doctors are expected to conduct an integrated mother-child monitoring service throughout pregnancy and early childhood, collecting information from mothers and children regularly, and closely tracking the cognitive and psycho-social development of the child will be followed closely. 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. Key factors for success include the provision of adequate compensation, training and support for family medicine practitioners, maintaining public confidence in the system, and the development of effective procedures for the collection and processing of data. 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 (According to the Government’s Annual Programme for 2012, Turkey has 16.9 doctors and only 15.7 nurses per head of population compared to 33 and 82.4 in the EU).

**Access to health care:** A single, public, compulsory, contributory general health insurance scheme is replacing both the previous fragmented contributory health insurance schemes, which covered those in regular work - or retired - and their dependents, and the “green cards” providing access to the health system for most of the uninsured. The government meets the cost of general health insurance contributions for the very poor, subject to means-testing, and for all under-eighteens and some students above eighteen. Differentiated user fees have been introduced to orient people initially towards primary health care institutions and to use the referral system. There are private, state and university hospitals; some state hospitals may be privatised. It remains to be seen what quality of service can be provided on a long-term basis and in all parts of the country. Issues include the content of the basic health insurance package, user fee levels, the use of global budgets aimed at cutting costs, paying for emergency services and the question of whether treatments and medicines will be priced so as to ensure their availability everywhere as market forces come to dominate provision. Despite free health insurance for children, access to health services for children requiring certain types of treatment may be complicated by “hidden” costs such as transport and care-givers’ time.

**4.4 Beyond survival: developmental delays and disability:** While fewer and fewer infants and young children are dying, a significant proportion are faced with some kind of disability or developmental delay which needs to be detected and responded to as early as possible in order to eliminate or minimise the consequences for the individual in terms of morbidity and physical, cognitive, emotional and social development, and to ease the resulting burden on families and society. In all countries, at least one child out of ten has a developmental difficulty that includes or places them at risk for disabilities. These children often come from disadvantaged groups such as low-income families. In Turkey, diagnosis has improved as a result of increased access to and use of health services and more screening programmes. However, the screening programmes address only limited preventable causes of developmental difficulties and disability and are neither comprehensive nor coordinated. In addition, the methods used for detecting children at risk may not be up-to-date, and there may be long waiting lists for diagnoses, particularly for cognitive and mental health problems. Health care staff are not routinely trained for developmental surveillance and do not know how to manage the cases that are identified.

Turkey has been a pioneer in its region in the development of specialised Developmental Paediatric Units (DPUs), in order to support young children with developmental delays or difficulties and their families. In cooperation with Ankara University, the Association of Developmental Paediatrics and UNICEF, the Ministry of Health has so far established DPUs with trained staff for detecting and responding early to developmental difficulties in twelve of the most important hospitals for children across the country. These innovative units served 10,000 children in 2011 alone. The DPU model supports health care providers and community workers with the monitoring of developmental delays and the counseling of caregivers on how to enhance their child’s development. It also promotes child development interventions within the health care system including the use of inclusive Growth Monitoring Child Development support cards, and provides pre-service training for pediatricians and medical students. In April 2011, Turkey held its First National Developmental-Behavioural Paediatrics Congress, and Developmental Paediatrics became an officially recognized sub-specialty within the health system. There is still work to be done to expand the DPU model, and to change attitudes to developmental delays and disability within the health system. The family medicine system has great potential for monitoring children’s development if staff - nurses as well as doctors - are suitably trained. With respect to support for disabled children within the health care system, the numbers of trained staff for 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.
5. Early Learning

* As children aged 0-3 continue to be looked after mainly by their mothers or other relatives, there is still a need to reach these caregivers – especially the least well educated or informed – with messages about the need for stimulus in early childhood.

* Child day care is starting to become a policy issue, mainly for reasons of encouraging women’s employment. Community-based models could empower mothers and make child day care services available to a wider cross-section of the population.

* The government has been expanding preschool education rapidly in recent years, mainly by opening preschool classes attached to state primary schools. It has now declared a goal of 100% enrolment for the 48-60-month age group by 2013 (As of 2012, primary school is compulsory from 60 months onwards). Full access to preschool education and an even quality of service will require a huge mobilisation of resources and intense preparations, especially given the uneven participation in preschool education across regions and socioeconomic groups at present. The Ministry of National Education’s ongoing EU-funded Strengthening Preschool Education Project, which is being conducted with UNICEF technical support, provides several useful models for scaling up in this context, including with respect to community-based models of provision.

5.1 Provision of childcare and preschool education: Early childhood is a critical period in the life of any human being. Children who are well cared for in their earliest years are more likely than other children not only to be healthy, as children and throughout their lives, but also to develop strong thinking, language, emotional and social skills. This in turn improves their prospects for performing well at school, making them less likely to drop out, and more likely to succeed. This is particularly true for children whose parents are poor or uneducated, whose home language is not Turkish or are otherwise disadvantaged. Accordingly, widespread participation in preschool education is also a way for improving equality of opportunity, which will otherwise be transmitted from generation to generation (World Bank: Turkey: Expanding Opportunities for the Next Generation – A report on life chances”, February 2010). Children who are well looked after in early childhood are also likely to display self-esteem as adolescents and to become creative and productive members of society in later life. By contrast, children who lack stimulation during the first few years of their lives, when their brains are developing most rapidly, may never achieve their full potential.

In Turkey, most children of pre-primary school age are looked after mainly by mothers or grandparents who may not have the knowledge or opportunity to stimulate their cognitive development sufficiently (See the section of this Situation Analysis on ‘Social conditions and the family environment’). The 2011 Family Structure Survey of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies reportedly puts the number of families in which mothers are the prime care-givers for young children as high as 89.6%; grandparents are the prime-care givers in most other families, while this role is taken by crèches, fathers and nannies in only 2.4%, 1.5% and 1.2% of families respectively (No more detail was available at the time of writing). It can be assumed that young children who receive day care through crèches and paid nannies are mainly the children of relatively well-off parents able to afford the fees or wages, both of whom may be working.

Formal kindergartens or creches are operated by the Ministry for the Family and Social Services Directorate General for Child Services (the former Directorate-General for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency – SHÇEK), and by private entrepreneurs under the licensing and supervision of SHÇEK. Preschool education is provided in state and private nursery schools and in nursery classes attached to state and private primary schools.

In addition to the above, some public institutions/private companies provide creche and preschool facilities for the children of their own public servants/employees. In the civil service, this type of provision has diminished dramatically. For other workplaces, labour laws oblige employers with over 150 woman employees to establish a creche, incorporating a nursery school, where employees can breastfeed their infants and where the 0-6 year-old children of the employed women (and in some cases men) can be cared for and educated, in line with the needs of their age group. However, few employers employ 150 or more women in one place and even in such cases the
obligation can be avoided. Since 2008 employers have been permitted to fulfil their obligation to establish a creche by reaching agreements with private nurseries.

More informal forms of child day care and preschool education are provided on a limited scale through the informal education centres of the Ministry of National Education, community centres affiliated to SHÇEK or the Southeastern Anatolia Project Regional Development Administration, and the efforts of some municipalities and non-governmental organisations like ACEV, TGEV and KDEV. These have included summer and mobile preschools. There are also significant programmes for the training of parents and other caretakers of young children (See ‘Social conditions and the family environment’).

Expansion of preschool education: While only a few percent of children aged 0-3 benefit from formal day-care or creche facilities, close to half of all children aged 4-5 now take part in preschool education. Participation in preschool education has quintupled in the past decade, mainly as a result of rapid expansion of provision by the Ministry of National Education. For the 2011-2012 school year, the Ministry’s Formal Education Statistics put the net preschool enrolment rate at 30.87% for 3-5 year-olds, 44.04% for 4-5 year-olds and 65.69% for five year-olds only. Boys are slightly more likely to be enrolled in preschool education than girls: among 3-5 year-olds, the net enrolment ratio is 31.23% for boys and 30.49% for girls, and among five year-olds it is 66.20% for boys compared to 65.16% for girls. Of the 1.17 million preschool pupils, about 90% are receiving education in state schools, and four out of five of these children are in nursery classes attached to primary schools.

In a 2011 policy note entitled “Improving the Quality and Equity of Basic Education in Turkey: Challenges and Options” (http://go.worldbank.org/MM9KG62GG0), the World Bank comments that “The coverage rate for pre-primary education in Turkey remains low… compared to much higher rates for most countries with similar GDP per capita, like Bulgaria or Belarus…. This problem is compounded by sharp differences in access across different socioeconomic backgrounds: although the poorest families have, on average, four more children than the richest, the latter group is 60 times more likely than the former to have at least one child enrolled in kindergarten (Aran et al., 2009)… The same note goes on to point to significant disparities in enrolment rates across regions, exacerbated by the fact that the Ministry began its 100% enrolment drive in provinces where sufficient facilities were available and enrolment was already high. To give an extreme example, the preschool enrolment rates for 4-5 year-olds is as low as 20.91% in the province of Hakkari in the Southeast and as high as 80.52% in the Black Sea province of Amasya, according to Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics for the 2011-12 school year. The World Bank’s Country Partnership Strategy for Turkey for 2012-2015 includes improving the quality and coverage of early childhood education.

Needs analysis of preschool education: The Government and Ministry of National Education have repeatedly reaffirmed their commitment to expanding preschool education. However, there is concern that the physical and human resources needed to achieve this without any decline in quality may not be forthcoming. A recent “Review of Capacity in Preschool Education in Turkey” shows that the numbers of preschool teachers and classrooms belonging to the Ministry need to be tripled by comparison with 2010-11 if 70% enrolment is to be achieved among 4-5 year-olds by 2023 while maintaining a pupil-teacher ratio of 20 (slightly better than at present, but still below the OECD average of around 15).

The Review – which was drawn up as part of the Strengthening Preschool Education Project currently being carried out by the Ministry of National Education with the financial support of the EU and the technical support of UNICEF (See below) – also identifies other key issues in preschool education. These include: the qualifications and training of management and teachers; the quality and availability of in-service training; the safety and appropriacy of physical conditions in many schools; access for disabled children and the provision of education on an inclusive basis; adequacy of financial resources, ancillary staff and spending per pupil; the need for standards, regulation and inspections. Tackling such issues would require increased cooperation between institutions and administrative and technical capacity at the central and local levels in , including in-service training of inspectors
and an increase in the numbers of pre-school education specialists among provincial/district administrators and inspectors.

In addition, the Review recommends a Pre-School Education Law setting out the responsibility of the state in preschool education and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of public institutions. It proposes that such a law should define community-based preschool education services and treat them as an integral part of the preschool education system. Without community-based services, there is a high risk that disadvantaged groups such as children from underdeveloped regions, low-income groups and Roma communities will be the last to be reached as provision is expanded, exacerbating disparities of opportunity within society and reinforcing cycles of poverty. Standards would need to be set and inspection and supervision mechanisms implemented both for institutional and for community-based services.

**Strengthening Preschool Education Project:** Many of the issues mentioned in the above paragraphs – from the setting of standards to the upgrading of school equipment – have started to be addressed through the Strengthening Preschool Education project which the Ministry is carrying out with EU financial support and UNICEF technical assistance. The 43-month project, which runs until September 2013, envisages the development and testing of a model for the broader implementation of quality, well-monitored community-based pre-school education and child day care services. This model is being piloted in selected provinces and costed. Meanwhile, all aspects of existing preschool education programmes are being reviewed and revised, and parenting education and child day care are being incorporated into the programmes. The preschool curriculum has been revised and updated by an expert team and service providers are to be trained on the upgraded curriculum. It is anticipated that necessary adjustments will be made in pre-service training programmes as a result of a dialogue with the Higher Education Council.

**Demand for preschool education:** Not all parents or guardians are enthusiastic about enrolling their children in preschool education. There is a widespread belief that care of young children – even up to school starting age - is primarily the responsibility of the mother. Some feel that it would be unkind to their children to send them to preschool education at an early age, or have doubts about their safety or the services provided. Conversely, many parents may be unaware of the benefits of preschool education for their children’s development. Such ideas may be shared to some extent by public officials, policy makers or opinion leaders. Accordingly, the Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) ran a campaign entitled “Seven is too late” in 2009. Views of this kind now appear to be on the decline.

Participation in preschool education may also be discouraged by the fees charged for preschool education (even at most state primary schools) and other hidden costs of schooling – especially as the mothers of the great majority of children do not work or are low earners. Non-governmental organisations have called for preschool education to be free of charge in state schools. The World Bank appears to favour a fee-paying system with special arrangements for disadvantaged children. The Ministry for the Family and Social Policies is understood to be considering expanding the conditional cash transfers (CCT) available to mothers sending their children to primary school to include mothers taking up preschool services.

**Preschool education and the new school starting age:** Under a law adopted by Parliament in March 2012, which restructures the education system in many ways (See section on ‘Children and the education system’), the starting age for primary schooling has been lowered from 72 months to 60 months. The change is being implemented as of the 2012 school year, albeit with some flexibility for children younger than 66 months. As primary school is nominally free of charge, this means that all children aged five will be entitled to education without fees. At the same time, however, the change has raised many new challenges for primary schools in areas like physical and human capacity, financial resources, suitability of school environments and curricula, and school-readiness of the five year-old children.
The policy of making preschool education compulsory for five year-olds has been superseded, as children in this cohort will from now on be attending primary school. According to a circular issued in May 2012, the Ministry of National Education is now aiming to achieve 100% schooling for 48-60 months by the end of 2013.

**5.2 A vision for early childhood:** At a two-day international conference organised jointly by UNICEF and the World Bank in Ankara in October 2010, and attended by the ministers of both National Education and Health, early Childhood development (ECD) experts called not only for a rapid expansion of provision but also for closer integration of services within a holistic, child-centred approach. In view of the determinant nature of early childhood in the life cycle, and the importance of investing in children at this age for the future benefit of society, it might well be beneficial for Turkey to set out its vision for early childhood, incorporating monitorable goals for the well-being and development of young children at different ages. Goals might be set in areas like nutritional status, readiness for school and successful transition to primary school. The necessary institutional and budgetary arrangements and policies for achieving and monitoring the goals could then be put in place, with special reference to disadvantaged groups such as children in underdeveloped regions and rural areas, children not living with both natural parents, and others. The existence of such goals and institutional arrangements would help to ensure that more resources were allocated to ECD, and especially to the 0-3 age group, filling a major gap in social protection (See ‘Social conditions and the family environment’). Coordination among existing policies and services - including institutional and flexible/community-based models of child day care and preschool, parenting education, the services provided in the health sector and social assistance/services - would be enhanced.

In 2009, ACEV suggested that, 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, the institutional capacity of the Ministry of National Education needed to be improved, and the General Directorate for Pre-School Education should be transformed into a General Directorate for Early Childhood Development (Mother and Child Education Foundation (AÇEV): **Türkiye'de Erken Çocukluk Eğitim: Erişim, Eşitlik ve Kalite [Early Childhood Education: Access, Equality and Quality])**. In 2011, however, the said Directorate-General was subordinated to a new Directorate General for Basic Education, with responsibility for both pre-primary and primary education.

Women's work and early childhood development: Policies for young child development need to be linked to policies for women's workforce participation and employment. In Turkey, workforce participation among women is very low, at 28.8% (including the unemployed), according to the annual average for 2011 published by the Turkish statistical Institute (Turkstat). Care of young children, or a lack of affordable child day care, may prevent mothers from joining the workforce, or force them to leave the workforce. This can have negative implications for the income of the family as well as for women's own independence and well-being, and for the economy. On the other hand, demand for professional child day care and preschool services may be limited due to the low level of female workforce participation and the consequent availability of mothers to care for their own children. Such issues are currently being explored by UNICEF in conjunction with the Ministry for Development. Meanwhile, the Minister for the Family and Social Policies recently raised the possibility of a means-tested child day care allowance for working mothers. The Strengthening Preschool Education Project includes a sub-activity envisaging the training of women for possible employment both in institutional and community-based child day care services.
6. Children and the Education System

* Turkey faces opportunities and challenges in ensuring equitable access to schooling for all children, regardless of their gender or background, improving the quality of the education offered, and reducing disparities in quality from place to place and school to school.
* Almost all children in Turkey are now receiving an eight-year primary education, which is free of charge. Efforts to ensure 100% primary education and gender parity nevertheless need to continue, since some children, especially girls, still drop out or do not attend regularly for reasons like poverty and/or child labour, conservative social norms, domestic responsibilities, low expectations or adaptation problems. The lowering of the primary school starting age from 6 to 5 as of 2012, and the division of primary education into two phases of four years each, could create a risk of non-participation due to late starting, lack of school readiness or failure to make the transition between the phases.
* Net enrolment in four-year secondary education has risen to 67% and gross enrolment to 93%. However, there are wide inter-regional, urban-rural, social economic and gender discrepancies both in enrolment in secondary education and in attendance, for reasons which include the need for children to earn income or work in the home, and discouragement. As of 2012, the government has made four-year secondary education compulsory. It will require a great effort to achieve 100% enrolment and satisfactory attendance, especially among disadvantaged groups.
* The quality of education received by most children is not of a high standard. Educational outcomes, whether measured by PISA tests, national examinations or the perceptions of academics and employers, are for the most part unsatisfactory. While a relatively high proportion of children like school, the education system suffers – inter alia - from the impact of multi-choice examinations and cramming schools, and a lack of a child-centred approach and child participation.
* There are wide disparities from place to place and school to school in the quality of education and the educational environment. Out-of-pocket spending by households, which is high, adds to the advantages enjoyed by children of parents in higher-income groups. At the same time, existing policies for monitoring and ensuring quality in all primary schools need to be pursued and further developed, and extended to secondary education.
* Despite policies in place, a large number of disabled children do not seem to be benefiting from their right to quality education. Children whose first language is not Turkish may face difficulties in the first years of primary school and fall behind from an early age. The participation of many Roma children in the education is observed to be low. There is a need for evidence-based policies to ensure that children in disadvantaged groups such as these fully enjoy their right to education.
* Public sector education expenditures have increased in real terms in recent years but have remained below 4% of GDP, notwithstanding the young age structure of the population. There are also deficiencies with respect to buildings, teacher numbers and teacher training. The restructuring of the education system of early 2012 has added to the existing need for additional resources for education. At the same time, steps need to be taken to guarantee that public resources for education are distributed more fairly.
6.1 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.

Following efforts made in the past decade, almost all children in Turkey have access to the formal education system, at least at primary level, and are therefore benefiting from their right to education to a greater or lesser degree, in line with Article No.42 of the Constitution, which states that “Nobody can be deprived of the right to education”. Most children appear to like school. The restructuring of the education system under a law approved by Parliament in March 2012 means that compulsory schooling (and hence free primary education in state schools) will henceforth begin at the age of five rather than six, and that there will be twelve years of compulsory education in all, as opposed to eight previously. The ongoing increase in net enrolment in secondary education (which is currently put at just over 67%) is therefore expected to accelerate over the next few years. Despite these achievements, children are not benefiting fully or equally from the right to education. The quality of the education provided, and of educational environments, is highly uneven. Quality of schooling and levels of educational achievement depend closely on social background, geography and gender. Some children, especially girls, are still not attending school regularly, even though they are enrolled, and may drop out at an early age. “Turkey’s educational system is currently of low quality relative to the growth and competitiveness ambitions of the country and is also significantly more inequitable than most other OECD countries,” comments the World Bank policy note “Improving the Quality and Equity of Basic Education in Turkey: Challenges and Options” (http://go.worldbank.org/MM9KG62GG0) (2011).

The restructuring of the education system of early 2012, which was carried out without extensive consultations, has added to the challenges in the short term by increasing the burden on existing resources and making necessary hurried adjustment of programmes and curricula. The division of primary education into two phases of four years each and the new emphasis on vocational and religious classes at the second phase are controversial.

6.2 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. Turkish definitions of the aim of education such as the formal definition contained in article 2 of the Basic Law of National Education and the more succinct and definition given in the Government’s Annual Programme for 2012 contain some of these elements, as well as others.

Since 2003-2004, curriculum methodology has been reformed throughout the education system so as to ensure that students contribute actively to the formation of knowledge through critical thinking, rather than being passive receivers of information. In secondary education, and especially vocational education, several projects including EU and World Bank-supported projects have been implemented to increase the quality and relevance of teaching and the curriculum. A common syllabus for technical and vocational secondary education is one innovation. The Government’s Annual Programme for 2012 mentions the updating of curricula, the effectiveness of school guidance and counseling service and the relevance of professional and vocational education as outstanding issues in education quality. Some further curriculum development will be needed following the restructuring of the education system in 2012. Already, for example, additional hours have been allocated for games-type activities in grades 1-3 of primary school. Despite all these efforts, education often still appears insufficiently child-centred, with centralised regulations, examinations and curricula - and force of habit - limiting the ability of schools and teachers to tailor the content of education to the needs, characteristics and interests of the child. Curriculum changes may not be supported by the timely updating of educational materials. Teacher training too may fail to keep up with curriculum changes. There is also a need for better assessment of the impact of changes made.

School hours and subjects and opportunities for children to pursue their own interests appear limited, at least by Western standards, although more optional classes are being introduced for grades 5-8 (the second phase of primary education) under the restructuring of the education system in 2012. The need to support schoolchildren’s participation in religious, cultural, sporting, artistic, scientific, and social activities and excursions, and to ensure the availability of trained subject teachers, is acknowledged, but policies and resources for doing so are unclear. There is a heavy reliance on multiple-choice examinations, especially for entrance to university. Partly as a result, over a million children attend fee-paying private cramming schools each year as well as their regular schools, a situation which not only exacerbates inequalities of opportunity but also negatively affects the content, aims and
process of education in the formal education system from the upper grades of primary education onwards. 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.

Educational curricula and materials may not adequately reflect the principles stated in the Convention, life skills education is limited, and while human rights and child rights education are integrated into the curriculum to some extent, their effectiveness is unclear. A renewed effort is being made in this area through the three-year EU-funded project "Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Turkey" which was launched by the Ministry of National Education in 2012 with the technical support of the Council of Europe.

The restructuring of the education system in 2012 has led to concern that curricula for the second phase of primary education, which are to be vocationally oriented for many students, may be unbalanced and prevent children from completing primary education without sufficient basic skills. Adding to these concerns, many children are to follow the second phase of primary education in religious 'imam-hatip' schools, and most others are likely to spend several hours per week on optional subjects mainly of a religious nature. The increasing religious content of education - religious education reflecting the majority current of Islam has long been compulsory in primary education and available in 'imam-hatip' secondary schools and separate Koran courses – needs to be reconciled with children’s freedom of opinion and with parental rights to bring up children according to their own beliefs.

The formal education system

**Primary education**: 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 (increased from five years in 1997). It is the responsibility of parents and guardians – and of public officials, from provincial governor to school principal - to ensure that all children within their jurisdiction continue schooling up to the end of primary education. Until 2011, children normally started primary education after reaching the age of six (Parents who feel their children are not ready for school are able to postpone school starting by one year). Under the restructuring of the education system approved by Parliament in March 2012, the age of compulsory primary schooling is to start at the end of September of the year in which the child completes her or his fifth year of age. The Ministry of National Education has clarified that for the 2012-2013 school year children aged 66 months by the end of September 2012 must begin their primary education, while children aged more than 60 but less than 66 months as of the same date may be enrolled if their parents apply in writing and they are understood to have reached a sufficient stage of development. In the 2011-12 school year, 10,979,301 children were enrolled in primary school throughout Turkey (including 607,890 “open” primary school students seeking to complete their primary education belatedly). As approximately 1.5 cohorts were due to start their primary education in 2012-13, the number of primary school children will have increased.

The restructuring of 2012 divides primary education into two separate phases of four years each. Until now, primary education has followed a single curriculum (except for schools for children with severe disabilities). Under the restructuring, however, only the first phase will follow a common curriculum, while the second phase (also referred to as “middle school”) will be conducted either in general primary schools or in other types of school with a vocational bias - similar to those available at secondary level. For the 2012-2013 school year, the only type of non-general middle school available is the religious ('imam-hatip') school. This restructuring means that among existing primary schools, some have been converted to first-phase schools, some to general second-phase (middle) schools, and some to imam-hatip middle schools, while others for practical reasons continue to provide more than one of these kinds of schooling for the time being. However, all children who had already completed grade 5 as of the end of the 2011-12 school year are continuing to study according to the general curriculum they were previously following. Separately, the restructuring envisages more optional classes including optional classes on The Koran and the Life of the Prophet in the second phase of primary education (and also in secondary education).
Secondary education: Article No. 27 of the Basic Law of National Education states that: “Each student who has accomplished the primary education and got the right to continue on to secondary education has the right to benefit from all the opportunities according to their interests, capability and abilities.” Secondary education is available either in general high schools with an academic curriculum or in various kinds of technical and vocational high schools including ‘imam-hatip’ schools. Entrance to schools designated “Anatolian” high schools (which have an additional foreign language emphasis) or to science high schools (a type of general high school) is through competitive entrance examination. Starting in 2005, the duration of secondary education was extended from three years to four years. Under the restructuring of 2012, a four-year high school education is compulsory (although a three-year fast-track for successful children is under consideration). In the 2011-2012 school year, 4,756,286 children and young people were enrolled in secondary education schools throughout Turkey, including 940,268 “open” secondary education students. Of these, 56% were in general high schools and 44% in vocational or technical high schools.

Official secondary education policy continues to favour increasing the number of students opting for technical and vocational schools while increasing opportunities for students to change direction within the system. To this end, the number of different kinds of schools has been reduced and multi-curriculum schools have been favoured. Subjects are 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 less than 3% of students at primary level and less than 4% 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 has been criticised on account of its highly centralised structure and its many vertical divisions. Substantial changes were made in 2011, partly to address these criticisms. The changes included the merger of the general directorates of primary education and preschool education into a single General Directorate of Basic Education and the consolidation of general directorates responsible for technical and vocational education. Within the Ministry units, new structures (“group presidencies”) and posts (“experts”) were established for key functions, and there was a high turnover of administrators and other staff.

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. In practice, online and electronic systems like “e-school” and “e-investment” have substantially increased the monitoring capacity of the central organisation but there have been no major gains in school autonomy. A study on school financing is currently under way as part of the cooperation between Turkey and UNICEF.

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) provide assistance and support to the education sector including school building and maintenance. A range of specialist and non-specialist Turkish academic institutions, think-tanks, private companies and non-government organisations contribute research and recommendations on education for children 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 (ÇYDD), and the Contemporary Education Foundation (ÇEV).

6.3 Financial, physical and human resources: The extent to which girls and boys in Turkey are able to enjoy their rights to education, and to enjoy all their rights in educational settings, depend to a considerable extent on the financial, physical and human resources available in the education sector. Aside from the overall level of these resources, their quality and - perhaps above all - the evenness of their distribution are problematic.

**Financial resources:** Public sector education expenditures have increased in real terms in recent years but have remained modest as a proportion of GDP, at 3-4%. In 2011, central government budget spending on education amounted to TL48.5 billion or about 3.75% of GDP. About 1.52% of GDP went on pre-primary and primary education, 0.81% on secondary education, 0.85% 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 2012 that total public education expenditures were 4.0% in 2011 and will remain at this level in 2012. Nevertheless, compared to the OECD average (around 5.8%) and the ratio which is recommended by UNESCO to developing countries (6%), 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 (ERG) based at Sabancı University estimated average 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.

According to the World Bank policy note “Improving the Quality and Equity of Basic Education in Turkey: Challenges and Options” (http://go.worldbank.org/MM9KGb2GG0) (2011), the shortfall in public sector education expenditure (compared to the OECD average) is made up for by private, out-of-pocket spending by households. Most of the private spending goes on the cramming schools mentioned above and private school fees for about 3% of children. In addition, low government allocations for non-personnel spending in schools and their ineffective distribution via provincial special administrations makes schools reliant on contributions from parents, incidentally obstructing attempts to end what are commonly known as “compulsory donations” and make school-parent relations more democratic and constructive. The drawback is that all this private expenditure is naturally made mainly by parents from higher income groups and benefits their own children, thus strengthening the strong correlation between the socioeconomic status of parents/school catchment areas and the educational attainment of the child.

The distribution of central government education finance resources is inequitable too. Citing various research, the World Bank note points out that public financial resources for education have mainly been allocated to provinces according to an input-driven system under which financial resources have not been adequately adjusted for demographic movements or for the cost of educating more disadvantaged populations. The Bank’s note recommends per capita funding, with added priority for preschool and primary education, where returns on investment are highest, and to districts where socioeconomically disadvantaged groups or girls form a high proportion of the population, as well as a review of the examination system which feeds the cramming school system.

The increase in the numbers of schoolchildren resulting from the goal of 100% participation in preschool education, the lowering of the primary education starting age and the extension of compulsory schooling to twelve years will put additional pressure on the financial resources of the education system. The government has not made any commitment to increasing financial resources for education. Instead, the Government Annual Programme for 2012 envisages reducing differences between schools by taking into account student numbers and access to non-budgetary financing, and making use of the new Financing of Education and Education Spending in Turkey Data Management System (TEFBIS) to monitor all educational spending. Encouraging private schooling, buying in services from the private sector, and using public-private partnership arrangements for school buildings are also on the agenda.

**Buildings and equipment:** Important efforts have been made in the past decade to improve school buildings and equipment, including making computers and the internet available in all schools. Following the extension of primary education from five years to eight, important progress was made with respect to the provision of classrooms using 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. Similarly, efforts are being made to reinforce schools against earthquakes. Even so, millions of children have to study in crowded classrooms, on a two-shift system (whereby they attend school either in the morning or in the afternoon), and/or in poor quality school buildings with limited facilities. Deficiencies such as these are not surprising in view of the increase in years of schooling, 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 neighbourhoods with fast-growing child populations. According to the Government Annual Programme for 2012, 51% of primary school children are being educated on a shift system – a figure which rises to 89% in the province of Şanlıurfa, which has 53 primary school children per classroom compared to a national average of 31. The Programme promises that investment plans will be made accordingly. In rural areas in less-developed regions, on the other hand, a significant proportion of children are receiving receiving multi grade teaching education in classes where age groups are mixed, due to the low numbers of children in the villages. However, the teachers are not well equipped for dealing with these kind of classes. The Annual Programme also notes wide disparities from province to province in the numbers of computers per primary school student, with a national average of 21 in primary education and 39 in secondary education. The Ministry of National Education is aiming to increase the use of technology in education dramatically, especially through the provision of smart boards, computers for teachers, printers, scanners, Internet access and individual hand-held devices for children along with related software, documents, training services and management systems under the FATİH project (http://fatihprojesi.meb.gov.tr).

Teachers: The adequacy of teacher numbers is a topic of debate. In primary education, the student-teacher ratio is about 21 as opposed to about 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 Şanlıurfa, for example, the Government's 2012 Annual Programme acknowledges that it is 34). In secondary education, student-teacher ratios are lower, but remain above the OECD average, and they have been rising with increased demand for this level of education. There is a risk that teacher-student ratios will deteriorate further in the short term now that compulsory education has been extended to twelve years.

### Numbers of students per classroom and per teacher at different levels of formal education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008-9</th>
<th>2009-10</th>
<th>2010-11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/classroom</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--urban areas</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--villages</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/teacher</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/classroom</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/teacher</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--general</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/classroom</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/teacher</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--technical and vocational</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/classroom</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students/teacher</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Annual programme 2012/Ministry of National Education

Teacher quality may be the most important school variable influencing student achievement, especially for disadvantaged girls and boys. Arguably, however, Turkey’s efforts to provide sufficient teachers for rising numbers of schoolchildren have come at the expense of teacher quality, which is perceived to be low by OECD standards (World Bank: Improving the Quality and Equity of Basic Education in Turkey: Challenges and Options, 2011 - http://go.worldbank.org/MM9KG62GG0). A relatively high incidence of incompetence among teachers and a relatively low level of motivation and professionalism may be related to the social backgrounds of teachers, the impersonal way in which candidates for teacher training are selected, the status of teachers in society, the structure of the profession/careers, cultural perceptions and low rewards. At the same time, teacher training is often inadequate, notwithstanding repeated reforms. Many teachers may not be sufficiently knowledgeable about child rights, and may lack the knowledge and abilities to teach in a child-centred way. Teachers’ training does not
equip them to work in difficult environments. Schools in Eastern parts of the country, in particular, may be staffed by inexperienced teachers who lack guidance or mentoring from more experienced colleagues, and teacher absenteeism and staff turnover ratios may be high. Teacher appointments are made through a centralised system which does not match their individual capacities to individual jobs and denies any role to officials or school principals “on the ground”. In-service training or guidance is very limited, and can do little to change attitudes and support innovation. It may also be of low quality and therefore unwelcome to teachers.

The Ministry of National Education launched a renewed effort to improve teacher quality at a participatory National Teacher Strategy Workshop in November 2011. A National Teacher Strategy Document was subsequently drafted, and a projection is being developed for teacher requirements. Among other initiatives, the Ministry has also been engaged in a process of determining teacher competencies. It is important that all these efforts should be implemented in a sustainable manner with adequate resources and in full coordination both within the Ministry and with the Higher Education Council, teachers’ organisations and other relevant actors. The implementation of the national teacher strategy should be adequately monitored so that it can be revised as necessary, and accompanied by more concrete research on factors affecting the quality of teaching. Increased performance monitoring and accountability for teachers should not run ahead of better training and support, enhanced job security and career prospects, and satisfactory incentives, especially for those working in remote areas, crowded classrooms, inclusive education, boarding schools, places where children’s first language may not be Turkish and similar difficult conditions.

6.4 Access to education: Despite all efforts made so far, some children in Turkey are still unable to complete even a primary education, and many cannot attend secondary education. Other children are not attending school regularly. 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, and to be exposed to more threats in terms of protection rights.

Primary education: Although primary education has been compulsory and free since 1924, there were always some children – especially girls in conservative, underdeveloped regions and rural areas – who never attended, or who failed to complete, primary school for reasons such as economic difficulties, child labour, distance to school, discouragement, family neglect, discrimination and social restrictions against girls. After compulsory primary education was extended to eight years in 1997, a major effort got under way to ensure 100% net enrolment among both boys and girls. The Girls’ Education campaign conducted by the Ministry of National Education with the support of UNICEF from 2003 onwards secured the enrolment of 230,000 girls and 100,000 boys who had previously been out of primary school. Parents not sending their children to school were actively sought out and persuaded with the support of other sectors and community leaders. A major programme of school building got under way, supported by the World Bank, and by private donors benefiting from tax breaks. Conditional cash transfers (CCT) started to be provided to poor parents sending their children to primary school. Payments were made to mothers and the amount paid for girls was increased. There is widespread acknowledgement in government and civil society of the benefits of CCTs, despite some criticism that the conditionality is not effectively monitored. Textbooks were made free of charge and in some cases, free school transport and meals were provided. Where necessary, all available spaces were used as classrooms. Regional boarding schools were used as a way of enabling girls from small villages to complete their primary education. The private sector, media and civil society organisations ran campaigns and projects of their own. Later, the opportunity provided by the spread of modern technology and the development of an Address-Based Population Registry System and the e-school database was seized to improve the monitoring of children’s enrolment in school. Education officials and schools were made responsible for ensuring the enrolment of all girls and boys in their provinces, districts or catchment areas. With EU and UNICEF support, an accelerated learning programme (also known as “catch-up education”) was developed to enable children in the 10-14 age group who had either never been enrolled, or who had already been out of school for long periods, to return to the education system and study alongside children of their own ages. The programme, which was introduced in the 2008-9 school year, reaches out to girls and boys from some of the most disadvantaged social groups from girls in remote villages to urban Roma children and other children, including disabled children, with impoverished family backgrounds. 31,000 children have been reached so far. The success of the programme 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 (Catch-Up Education Programme Mid-Term Review Report for the Ministry of National Education, the EU and UNICEF by Education Reform Initiative – ERG – at http://erg.sabanciuniv.edu/sites/erg.sabanciuniv.edu/files/YSOP_MidtermReview_EN_14122011_FINAL.pdf ). All these efforts coincided with demographic and social trends broadly favourable to school participation by children, such as urbanisation, declining fertility and economic growth and modernisation.

By the 2011-2012 school year, net primary school enrolment stood at 98.67%, according to Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics. The gender gap in net primary school enrolment had almost closed, with 98.77% for boys and 98.56% for girls. Among the children not enrolled, many were known to be later starters – children whose parents are not well informed about the mandatory starting age, or who take the option of postponing the child’s entry into primary education for a year on the grounds that he or she is not ready for school (The Ministry of National Education has introduced an automatic enrolment system in order to address this issue). Some children of primary school age were also understood to be attending secondary school. It is nevertheless still too early to say that 100% primary school participation has been achieved. Some girls still drop out in the upper grades of primary education due to a combination of poverty and conservative social norms, low expectations and domestic responsibilities. Only 90.5 girls graduated from primary education for every 100 boys in 2011, according to Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics, whereas there were 94.9 girls for every 100 boys in the end-year population aged 10-14, according to the official population data (Address-Based Population Registry System). The extent of this problem varies considerably by province and region. Other children do not attend school regularly for various reasons ranging from the use of child labour in agriculture to discouragement or the adaption problems experienced by children with backgrounds which in the past might have kept them out of school altogether. On average, primary school students were absent without excuse for eight days in the 2010-11 school year. Non-attendance increased noticeably between 2007 and 2011. It is commonest in the higher grades, among poor students, in Eastern regions, among boys (in most regions), in urban areas and among children with below-average school performance. (Disaggregated data on school attendance is not made public but the phenomenon has been analysed by the Education Reform Initiative – ERG). The Ministry of National Education has developed a Non-Attendance Management Model which obliges schools to identify the risks of non-attendance and to monitor and respond to non-attendance, and which guides the actions they take. Provincial education officials are also expected to act on the data collected. Commitment to implement this model is one of the preconditions for tackling the problem of children out of school. Meanwhile, there is anecdotal evidence that some children are not enrolled in school, and do not appear in the statistics altogether, due to lack of birth registration.

The reduction in the primary school starting age as part of the restructuring of the education system adopted by Parliament in March 2012 is likely to affect the figures for access to education, particularly as there is already a problem of late starting. Concern has also been expressed that the division of primary education into two phases of four years each - which will normally be provided in separate schools – will exacerbate the phenomenon of non-completion of primary education among girls by allowing them to drop out more easily.
Secondary education: Enrolment in secondary education (grades 9-12 of the education system) has been increasing quite rapidly, in line with demographic, economic and social changes, but remains well below the level of developed countries. Within the last decade, the net enrolment rate has increased from under 50% to almost 70%. In the 2011-12 school year, this rate was 67.37%, according to the Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics, while the gross enrolment rate was 92.56%. The large discrepancy between the net and gross rates suggests that many children continue 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. Net secondary school enrolment is 80-90% in many provinces in western Turkey, but falls to 30-40% in some relatively rural Eastern provinces. Poverty, the need for children to earn income or work in the home, and gender discrimination are important determinants of enrolment in secondary education. The quantity and quality of provision may also be influential. In the 2011-2012 school year, the gender disparity narrowed, so that net enrolment was 66.14% among girls compared to 68.53% among boys (For gross enrolment, the figures were 95.68% and 89.26%, respectively). In some of the richer and western provinces, girls’ net enrolment is even higher than boys’, whereas the gender gap in favour of boys remains substantial in many eastern and central provinces. Children from large families, children of parents with low incomes and low levels of education, children who have not performed well at primary school or not attended regularly, and children who have attended regional primary boarding schools are among those least likely to make the transition to secondary education despite completing primary education. 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. Net enrolment in secondary education can be expected to go on increasing over the coming four years, because secondary education has been made compulsory as part of the restructuring of the education system in March 2012. However, it will require a great effort to achieve 100% net enrolment and to combat non-attendance and non-completion. A mechanism for non-attendance management may need to be implemented, similar to the model developed for primary education, and continuous analysis of causes and trends will be required.
## Net school enrolment (%) in selected large provinces, 2010-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ankara</td>
<td>99.54</td>
<td>99.40</td>
<td>82.63</td>
<td>83.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>İzmir</td>
<td>99.13</td>
<td>99.09</td>
<td>74.11</td>
<td>76.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursa</td>
<td>99.31</td>
<td>99.08</td>
<td>77.07</td>
<td>73.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>İstanbul</td>
<td>99.60</td>
<td>99.16</td>
<td>70.64</td>
<td>70.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antalya</td>
<td>98.52</td>
<td>98.40</td>
<td>71.00</td>
<td>71.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adana</td>
<td>99.15</td>
<td>98.86</td>
<td>67.86</td>
<td>64.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaziantep</td>
<td>99.27</td>
<td>98.96</td>
<td>58.10</td>
<td>51.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konya</td>
<td>98.63</td>
<td>98.13</td>
<td>64.23</td>
<td>60.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diyarbakir</td>
<td>98.66</td>
<td>98.39</td>
<td>50.23</td>
<td>39.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>Şanlıurfa</td>
<td>97.99</td>
<td>96.66</td>
<td>40.17</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Turkey</strong></td>
<td>98.59</td>
<td>98.22</td>
<td>68.17</td>
<td>63.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics, 2011-12

### New approaches to Out Of School Children

Turkey is one of 25 countries which have been taking part in the global initiative on Out-Of-School Children (OOSC) jointly coordinated by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics since 2010 (For more information, see http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/Final_OOSC_Flyer.pdf). The initiative takes a broad view of the phenomenon of children’s non-participation in education beginning from the age of five and incorporating children who are not enrolled in school (whether permanently or temporarily), enrolled late, enrolled but not attending, frequently absent and/or falling significantly behind in their performance and therefore at risk of not completing their education. This is referred to as the “five dimensions of exclusion” or “5DE”. In view of the apparent trade-off between high rates of school enrolment and low rates of attendance - as well as the high incidence of class repetition in some provinces – this conceptual approach appears well suited to Turkey’s experiences and may open up new perspectives for the setting of goals and the measurement of progress.

Although the OOSC initiative has so far mainly addressed basic education, a similar approach, aiming to identify and support girls and boys depending on the level and nature of the risk that they will not benefit equitably from the education system, might also be appropriate at secondary level. The OOSC study is now to be carried out for upper secondary level (corresponding to the secondary level in Turkey), and Turkey is to take part in the research. This is a sign of the commitment of the Ministry of National Education to improve the current situation in Turkey.

### Five Dimensions of Exclusion (5DE) from the Out-Of-School Children Initiative

- **Dimension 1** – 5 year-olds not in pre-primary school
- **Dimension 2** – 6-10 year-olds not at school (attended, dropped out/will never enter/will enter late)
- **Dimension 3** - 11-13 year-olds not at school (attended, dropped out/will never enter/will enter late)
- **Dimension 4** – 1st-5th grade students at risk of dropping out
- **Dimension 5** - 6th to 8th grade students at risk of dropping out

Research carried out as the first stage of the OOSC initiative has adopted a conceptual approach which focuses more systematically than Turkey has done to date not only on the numbers of children - or girls – who are missing out on school, and on national systems for monitoring and intervening, but also on the backgrounds of these children, the barriers preventing their participation in school and the measures which need to be taken to address these causal factors. The forthcoming country report on Turkey includes estimates of the numbers of children who are out of school, who will never enrol, who have already dropped out, and who will drop out before graduating. Profiling the children who are out of school, it finds that “Children who live in rural areas, in provinces in the East Region, which includes the Southeastern Anatolia, Central Eastern Anatolia, and Northeastern Anatolia regions of the NUTS-1, and in low-income households are more likely to be out-of-school. Additionally, children whose parental education is low and whose first language is Kurdish – particularly when the mother cannot speak Turkish – are more likely to be out-of-school. According to Child Labour Survey data, working children are more likely to be out-of-school than non-working children. In all these groups, girls are more likely to be out-of-schools
Some sub-groups of out-of-school children are: unregistered children; children with special educational needs; children with chronic illnesses or who require long-term treatment; Roma children; children who are married off and/or become pregnant; children who are asylum seekers, refugees and foreign migrants; internally displaced, domestic migrant and nomadic children; children who are in contact with the law. The report also finds that children who are in school but at risk of being excluded from education have much the same characteristics. “Issues that stand out regarding the risk of exclusion from education are absenteeism and being behind peers in terms of progression in school, mostly as a result of legislation regulating a maximum age for attending a basic education school. As a result, children who are late-entrants, who do not attend school for long periods due to health-related or other reasons or who repeat grades are more likely to be excluded from education,” the report notes.

Among the “barriers and bottlenecks” identified by the report as causing exclusion from education are: gender and disability-related values, poverty and child labour, weakening of community ties due to migration, long periods of illness (of the child or another family member), and traumatic experiences (of crime, violence or sexual abuse). Various aspects of schools and the education system may also discourage school participation among disadvantaged groups, the report says. These include distances between school and home, problems with bussing and the boarding education provided in rural areas, crowded classrooms, the numbers, quality and training of teachers, violence and corporal punishment, poor access of children with disabilities, insufficient participation and transparency, administrative regulations related to enrolment, absenteeism and maximum age, and the lack of resources available at the school-level for taking measures to mitigate a child’s risk of exclusion from education. A child’s non-participation in education is usually the consequence of several of these factors combined.

The forthcoming OOSC country report acknowledges that government action in various areas has helped to improve school enrolment and attendance. As further steps, it, recommends that many existing policies and systems should be continued and strengthened. It argues for improvements in many areas of school quality. Its numerous recommendations also include: expanding free preschool services for children from poor households and for disabled children; implementing targeted special interventions for different groups including Roma children, nomadic children, refugee, asylum-seeker, migrant and displaced children, and children in seasonal agricultural work; evaluating alternatives to current access models in rural areas; strengthening gender equality in educational management; considering a more flexible school calendar reflecting local conditions; strengthening teacher capacity for mainstreaming education and for teaching in situations where the language of education is different from the child’s first language; reinvigorating efforts to eliminate violence from schools including corporal punishment, and revising certain administrative regulations – for example, concerning the enrolment of foreign children and children without birth registration. Among the many areas in which the report recommends additional research are: the impact on exclusion from education of socio-cultural values with respect to disability and education; figures and educational needs of children of foreign migrants living in Turkey with or without permission; educational needs of children who are in contact with the law; quantitative and qualitative studies on the educational needs of Roma children; child labour and out-of-school children; school-family unions; children’s experiences of violence inside and outside school; availability of drinking water, running water, electricity, and toilets in schools, and studies on the incidence and causes of drop out with a focus on age 11 and girls.

A drawback of the OOSC country report is that it is partly based on data from the 2008 Demographic and Health Survey and therefore does not fully reflect the developments of the last four years, and will need updating. However, the report’s profile of the children who are out of school may still be valid to a large extent. Meanwhile, the case is made strongly for a strategy which includes policies tailored to ensuring school participation among certain groups of children and to tackling specific barriers which prevent girls and boys from benefiting from their right to education. It is abundantly clear that efforts to increase school enrolment and regular attendance need to involve many actors both within the education system and beyond it. Regional development policies, social assistance, social services, policies for the disabled, policies against child labour and policies against discrimination all have a role to play. Conversely, participation in school is one of the most important indicators of social inclusion and equity for all children.
Education for Roma children

As in other fields, data on school participation is never disaggregated by ethnic group in Turkey. This makes it impossible to state the level of non-enrolment, late enrolment, irregular attendance or early drop-out among Roma children - or to monitor any improvement or deterioration over time. However, during the Girls’ Education Campaign, Catch-Up Education and similar projects, campaigns and initiatives, it has become clear that children from Roma and similar communities are among those with the lowest school participation. In addition, those who attend school have been observed to have a high probability of under-performing their peers and failing to complete their education. These impressions are in line with the findings of a 2008 study (Marsh et.al.: “Eşitsiz Vatandaşlık: Türkiye Çingenelerinin Karşılaştığı Hak İhlalleri [Unequal Citizenship: Right Violations facing Gypsies of Turkey]) cited in the forthcoming country report on Out Of School Children. Factors which contribute to non-participation in education among the Roma include poverty, child labour, early marriage (for girls and boys), Roma communities’ wariness of public authorities, their lack of experience of the benefits of formal education, and discrimination. Some children from these communities may still lack birth registration, and schools in Roma neighbourhoods may not be well staffed and equipped. Schools and teachers may have low expectations of Roma children, and Roma children and their families may have difficulty adapting to school rules and routine. The partially nomadic lifestyles of some communities and the housing issues which they face may also affect the regular attendance of girls and boys from these communities and increase the probability of dropping out. Yet ensuring Roma participation in education is important not only for the right to education but also the other economic and social rights of these often-disadvantaged children and their communities. The Prime Minister has in recent years spoken of an “opening” to the Roma population, and in 2010-2011 the Ministry of National Education developed an action plan to mitigate the risk of exclusion from education for Roma children. More recently, however, the commitment of the authorities appears to have waned, and no policies, targeted interventions or action plans have yet been developed.

6.5 Learning outcomes: 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 (Ministry of National Education: PISA 2006 Ulusal Ön Raporu [PISA 2006 Preliminary National Report]), 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. In the 2009 PISA tests (Ministry of National Education: PISA 2009 Ulusal Ön Raporu [PISA 2009 Preliminary National Report]). Also OECD (2010), PISA 2009 Results: Executive Summary at http://www.pisa.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/60/46619703.pdf), Turkish students had higher scores but still came only 32nd among 34 OECD countries in science literacy. As many as 30% 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. The diverging levels of achievement are only to be expected given the very different economic and social conditions witnessed in different locations and the modest level and uneven distribution of financial, physical and human resources in the education system. Studies suggest that a child’s educational achievement correlates closely with the level of education of her or his parents and the economic status of the family (Education Research Initiative (ERG), Eğitimde Eşitlik: Politika Analizi ve Öneriler [Equality in Education: Policy Analysis and Proposals], 2009; World Bank: Turkey: Expanding Opportunities for the Next Generation – A report on life chances, February 2010).

Many business organisations have commented unfavourably on the relevance of the skills taught in technical and vocational schools to labour market needs. In addition to the reform efforts of the Ministry in this area, some
individual companies and local and sectoral business organisations are seeking to contribute to solutions to this problem – for example, by constructing new schools or cooperating with existing ones. The “Meslek Eğitim ve Memleket Meselesi” [Vocational Education: A National Issue] project started by the Koç Group in order to support vocational education schools and their students was taken over by a wider group of private companies in June 2012.

6.6 The school experience: Regardless of the quality of education provided or their individual achievements, the experiences of children at school are a major determinant of the happiness of their childhoods, and can continue to affect them throughout their lives. In this sense, the school environment comprises not only the buildings and facilities provided, the curriculum and materials, the teaching methodology, extra-curricular activities and counselling services, but also on opportunities for participation, school-community links and many other factors such as travelling distances, friends, exam pressures, perceived disaster risk 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.

Limited evidence is available about all these aspects of the school experience. Children’s participation mechanisms (“school councils”) nominally exist in all schools, but they do not operate effectively and democratically, and so do not equip children with basic participation skills. In the WHO’s European Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) survey for 2009-10 (http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/163857/Social-determinants-of-health-and-well-being-among-young-people.pdf), in line with the broad pattern in other countries, satisfaction declined with age, and girls seemed to enjoy school more than boys. Thus while 75% of 11-year-old girls in Turkey liked school, only 25% of 15-year-old boys did so. Strikingly, liking school a lot was less common among children – both boys and girls – from families with higher socioeconomic status. However, the survey also contained less favourable information about Turkish children’s experiences in specific areas of school life, such as examination stress. Children in Turkey were more likely to feel pressured by schoolwork than children in any other country. Some 55% of 11 year-olds and almost 70% of 15 year-olds felt pressured. The frequency of examinations and the importance placed upon them by schools and parents sometimes brings children to the point of suicide. The survey also found that the proportions of girls and boys in Turkey who thought their classmates were kind and helpful was below-average. Further research on the reasons why girls and boys like or dislike school and on the perceptions of school of boys and girls from different regions and backgrounds could yield interesting results. More information is also needed on the extent of discrimination towards and among children on grounds of gender, ethnicity, social background or disability. Children themselves would be well placed to conduct research on these issues.

Violence: Violence is widespread in Turkish society and the media and not necessarily condemned. It also occurs in and around schools, and may include bullying, gang-like behaviour and the use of weapons among children themselves. 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 the psychological impacts of violence, abuse or neglect which the child himself suffers at home or elsewhere. In addition, although corporal punishment is banned, children – especially boys - complain quite frequently of physical violence and/or verbal abuse by teachers and school officials, whether acting out of anger or habitually as a form of discipline or control. In 2006-7, a parliamentary inquiry was held into violent tendencies among children and young people and violence in and around schools (http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/arastirma_onergesi_gd.ongere_bilgileri?kanunlar_sira_no=491). In response, police officers were allocated to schools, and the Ministry of National Education developed 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. However, the impacts of these policies have not been fully assessed, and in its Concluding Observations in June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child continued to recommend that Turkey “strengthen its programs on violence in schools, including both strict adherence to the prohibition of corporal punishment as well as fostering a spirit of non-violence amongst children.”

School health: Most schools are able to provide a safe clean physical environment and proper sanitary facilities (However, this is not true for all schools, especially in underdeveloped regions and areas at high risk of earthquakes). Schools also support children’s right to health by conforming to regulations for healthy food in
canteens (where relevant), encouraging physical exercise (where possible) and providing health education (insofar as it is included in the curriculum). Long-life milk has been provided free to primary schoolchildren starting in 2012. However, facilities and services for children who become unwell at school could be improved in many cases, and schools could sometimes do more to protect children from accidents and environmental dangers in and around the school, or to support children with chronic health problems. School health policies could be better codified, cooperation between the education and health sectors could be strengthened and legal changes might be considered to conduct regular health screenings and development monitoring in schools so as to protect and improve children's health and diagnose health problems and risky behavior. A proposal to use the e-school database for the body-mass index, so to combat stunting, is one initiative in this direction.

6.7 Monitoring systems: Monitoring systems are necessary in order to determine the situation in schools in all areas from enrolment and attendance to the quality of education and the school environment, assess the implementation and impact of policy initiatives, generate evidence for further policy steps and guide the allocation of resources where they are most needed. A system of Primary Education Institution Standards (İKS), incorporating UNICEF Child-Friendly School criteria, has been developed in recent years. The İKS system defines goals which all schools should aim to achieve and processes for achieving each of them. Under these headings it envisages the collection of data for a large number of objective and subjective indicators of each school's existing situation and progress. The information collected is to be used to draft school development plans and to guide allocations of resources at the district and provincial levels. The system was rolled out to all primary schools in 2011, following the necessary training activities, and enabled an initial 32,797 primary schools to monitor their performance against common quality standards, including their efforts to ensure enrolment and attendance for 535,522 girls and 580,296 boys of primary school age.

Given the wide differences in the challenges faced by schools and the resources available to them, it is important that the standards and monitoring process should be seen as self-assessment tools and a means for measuring progress, rather than as performance indicators for use in identifying weak schools or rewarding or punishing management. Confusion needs to be avoided between these standards and other monitoring instruments which exist or may be introduced including performance management indicators and the Financing of Education and Education Spending in Turkey Data Management System (TEFBİS) for monitoring educational spending. The İKS indicators and directions for their use may need to be clarified, simplified or refined depending on the results of the implementation so far. Education managers and other duty-bearers will need to internalise the standards and be equipped to achieve them. Based on these experiences, there is a need for a similar process to make secondary schools more child-friendly. Schools and the education system as a whole could also be more open to independent monitoring and external consultation.

6.8 Education of children with disabilities and/or special needs: Despite improvements, many children with disabilities or special educational needs may not be benefiting, or benefiting fully, from their right to education for reasons including access issues, inadequate arrangements within the education system, and low parental and societal expectations. In its concluding observations of June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern “that a large number of school age children with disabilities do not enjoy their rights to education and a high percentage of children with disabilities remain in special education programs” and recommended that the State further encourage the inclusion of children with disabilities in society and their integration into the regular educational system, “including by providing special training to teachers and by making schools more accessible”.

Inclusion policies: The Ministry of National Education has a policy of including those children who are identified as having special needs in the education system either through special education schools or by integrating them into regular schools. However, definitions used and procedures followed may differ from those in other countries with good practices in this area. Within the Ministry, the Directorate of Special Education, and Counselling Services and its provincial and district units are responsible for managing the education of children with special needs. The Special Education Decree-Law (No. 573) of 1997 emphasises that children with special needs 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 with special needs. Some disabled children receive free school transport, among other forms of social assistance/services.

Policies to prevent the exclusion from education of children with disabilities have so far focused on the school environment, with little reference to socio-cultural barriers. However, it is likely that households themselves contribute to the exclusion of children with disability in their efforts to conceal and/or protect them, and through low expectations. In this context, a study of household decision-making process about the education of disabled children might be enlightening.

Physical Access to Education: Law number 5378 of 2005 requires all buildings belonging to public institutions and agencies, including schools to be made accessible to people with disabilities by May 2012. However, this deadline was later postponed by one year. No administrative data exists about the current situation and outstanding needs regarding the accessibility of classrooms and common spaces. In the specific case of boarding education services provided for children living in rural areas, the physical structures where boarding education services are provided were not planned to ensure their accessibility for children with orthopaedic, visual and hearing disability, and no comprehensive renovations have been made to ensure accessibility. In its Concluding Observations, the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged Turkey to ensure that people with disabilities have physical access to all schools as well as official buildings, parks, hospitals and public services.

Preschool education: According to Special Education Services regulations, mandatory schooling of children with special learning needs starts at the age of 3. Thus the state has the obligation to ensure that 3-to 5-year-old children with special learning needs have access to pre-primary education free of charge. In practice, enrolment in preschool education among children with disabilities appears to be lower than enrolment among the general population of children. The available information may be misleading due to issues of definition and identification. However, it may also reflect issues of access, expectations, hidden costs or the disadvantaged circumstances of their families. Only 890 children were enrolled in pre-primary classrooms in special education schools in the 2011-12 school year, according to the Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics. Moreover, the forthcoming country report drawn up under the international Out-Of-School Children (OOSC) initiative, jointly coordinated by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics suggested that only 588 children are enrolled in mainstreamed education at the pre-primary education level, although it is estimated that more than 20,000 of the 1,225,563 5-year-olds in Turkey have one or more disabilities. Based on these figures, it can be concluded that despite a legislative framework that makes pre-primary education mandatory for 5-year-olds with special learning needs, a high proportion of these children are either excluded from education or are not able to access education that takes their special needs into account.

Primary and secondary education: At primary level, the numbers of children identified as having special needs has been increasing, according to the Ministry’s statistics. The majority (137,893 in the 2011-12 school year) are educated alongside their peers. Others (20,958 in the 2011-12 school year) are educated in special education classes in regular schools, while a significant number (20,813) still attend special education schools of various kinds. Attendance and completion rates are not published but disabled children are among those who have benefited from catch-up education, and it is suspected that disability is a factor causing children to be “out of school”. At secondary level, it seems that a high proportion of children with special needs are unable to continue their formal education. In the 2011-12 academic year, 10,860 boys and girls were mainstreamed in secondary education and 8,099 were enrolled in vocational schools for children with special needs. Education including vocational education is also available for some groups of disabled children in non-formal education, public and private.
### Numbers of children in special education schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools/ institutions</th>
<th>Total students</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Classrooms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRIMARY EDUCATION</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>18,141</td>
<td>11,370</td>
<td>6,771</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary school for the mildly mentally impaired</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2,792</td>
<td>1,785</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>1,189</td>
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<td>Primary school for the visually impaired</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1,362</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary school for the hearing impaired</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3,804</td>
<td>2,157</td>
<td>1,647</td>
<td>1,121</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary school for the orthopaedic impaired</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>110</td>
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<td>Autistic children training centre</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2,066</td>
<td>1,629</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>683</td>
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<td>2,860</td>
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<td>65</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>Private</td>
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<td>2,672</td>
<td>1,618</td>
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<td><strong>SECONDARY EDUCATION</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public</td>
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<td>8,099</td>
<td>5,378</td>
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<td>937</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special education vocational high school for the hearing impaired</td>
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<td>2,053</td>
<td>1,282</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special education vocational high school for the orthopaedic impaired</td>
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<td>97</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training school for the mildly mentally impaired</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>5,949</td>
<td>4,027</td>
<td>1,922</td>
<td>545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of National Education, Formal Education Statistics 2011-12

*Quality of integration in general schools:* A paper published by the Education Reform Initiative (ERG) based at Sabancı University in Istanbul in 2011 (Türkiye’de Kaynaştırma/Bütünleştirmeye Yoluyla Eğitimin Durumu [Situation of Education through Mainstreaming/Inclusion in Turkey]) finds that more needs to be done to integrate children into regular schools fully and effectively. It notes that the necessary support services are not being provided to children with special needs, that teachers, school administrators, families and students need to be better informed, that the skills of educators and students need to be developed further, and that changes need to be made in the schools with respect to the physical environment and education programmes. Individualised education programmes were not being prepared for most of the children concerned, and there were not enough school counsellors and special needs teachers in the schools. ERG has continued to conduct research and develop policy proposals on inclusive education, with the support of the Sabancı Foundation, and in partnership with the ‘Tohum’ Autism Foundation (See http://erg.sabanciuniv.edu/yayinlar).

*Emerging challenges:* The law adopted by Parliament in March 2012, restructuring the education system, will significantly increase the number of disabled children and children with special needs within the scope of compulsory education, further adding to the need to find ways of monitoring whether all these children are in school, to take steps to prevent their exclusion form the education system, and to increase capacity, skills and resources for inclusive education. Meanwhile, although there are 53 hospital primary schools, more information is needed on the rights to education of children of all ages and in all parts of the country who suffer from illnesses,
especially those with chronic illnesses or who need long-term treatment, and who may therefore have difficulty attending school regularly and/or participating actively in learning processes.

6.9 Children using other languages: There are many children in Turkey whose home language is not Turkish. Most of these are children from families living in, or originating from, Southeast Turkey, with Kurdish or Arabic as their home language. 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. However, the medium of instruction in the education system is Turkish. Exceptions are made only for the schools of the minorities (in effect, the Greek Orthodox, Armenians and Jews) which are officially recognized under the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 (the treaty by which Turkey gained international recognition), and for a small number of secondary schools and international schools which use English or other European languages. Moreover, children whose mother tongue is not Turkish do not receive any additional support at school. The danger is that the extra challenge which these children face when they begin primary school (or preschool, if they attend preschool) may prevent them from benefiting fully from the education provided, leaving them at a disadvantage throughout their schooling and in later life. Only limited research has been done on this politically sensitive issue. However, 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 (Fatatoş Gökşen et al.: Türkiye'de İlköğretim Okullarında Okulu Terk ve İzlenmesi ile Önlenmesine Yönelik Politikalari [Dropping out and policies for its monitoring and prevention in primary education schools in Turkey], ERG, ACEV & KADER, 2006). In addition, analysis based on TIMMS data (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) showed that, other characteristics being constant, a child scores lower in the examination when Turkish is used less in his or her home (Ebru Erberber, presentation delivered at Bogazici [Bosphorus] University, 2008).

In today’s world, education in the mother tongue is regarded not only as beneficial but as a fundamental right. UNESCO, for example, takes the view that “Mother tongue instruction is essential for initial instruction and literacy and should be extended to as late a stage in education as possible” (Education in a Multilingual World, 2003). In its most recent Concluding Observations, in June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed concern about the “unavailability of education in languages other than Turkish, except for languages of recognized minorities, presenting educational disadvantages to children of non-recognized minorities whose mother tongue is not Turkish” and recommended that the government “consider means of providing education in languages other than Turkish, particularly in primary school in areas where other languages, in addition to Turkish, are widely spoken.”

Despite a tendency to lift some of the restrictions concerning the use of native languages in broadcasting and other areas, no policy initiative has yet been taken in the area of education. Education in these languages remains unavailable even at preschool level. Arrangements would have to be made to train teachers and produce educational materials, and account would have to be taken of the variety of languages used by local populations and the need for all citizens to be able to use the majority language Turkish. The Education Reform Initiative (ERG), an NGO specialising in education policy, has sought to unlock debate on mother-tongue education by reference to the concept, also employed by UNESCO, of multilingual education (Dr Müge Ayan Ceyhan & Dilara Koçbaş: Çiftdillilik ve Eğitim [Multilingualism and Education], 2009 - http://erg.sabanciuniv.edu/sites/erg.sabanciuniv.edu/files/ciftdillilik.22.12.10.pdf).

In a separate development, preparations are under way for the introduction of Kurdish language classes as an optional course during the second phase of primary education (grades 5-8), depending on demand and availability of teachers. This may help to avail children of their rights to enjoy their own culture and use their own language mentioned in Article 30 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
Sources of information on education
There is a large body of information, statistics, research, analysis and debate which can be used to inform policies and assess progress in achieving the right of children to education. The Ministry of National Education publishes annual statistics covering enrolment ratios and numbers of students, teachers and classrooms disaggregated by province, age group, gender, level of education and type of school (http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/istatistik/). The Ministry also collects detailed information through the electronic e-school database (although question marks have been raised about the comprehensiveness and quality of this data), some of which may be shared with researchers.

Among international organisations, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, the OECD and the Council of Europe take a close interest in various aspects of children’s education in Turkey, conduct research and make available international comparisons. Turkey has participated in international initiatives such as the PISA tests and the UNICEF/UNESCO Out Of School Children Initiative. The Education Research Initiative (ERG), an education policy think-tank based at Sabanci University in Istanbul, is a rich source of informed analysis and commentary. In addition to its wide-ranging annual Education Monitoring Report, the ERG has in recent years published studies and papers on almost every topical issue including equity in education, vocational and technical education strategy, mainstreaming/inclusive education, religious education and multilingual education. Several of the ERG publications have been consulted during the preparation of this Situation Analysis. Better use could arguably be made of the wealth of data and studies in the education sector if there were a culture of dissemination, informed public discussion and meaningful policy consultation. One lacuna is the absence of data concerning the participation and performance in education of girls and boys from specific social backgrounds such as Kurdish and Arabic-speakers, the Roma, children living in institutions, children from low-income families, working children and migrants.
7. Adolescence and Youth

* Adolescents and young people are often not well understood and trusted by parents or society. They are not brought up to express opinions or take decisions for themselves and may be severely discouraged from doing so. Turkey has been slow to develop a youth policy through a participatory process. An ideal youth policy would inspire a more positive and empowering attitude to these age groups, who make up at least a quarter of the population, and sponsor their engagement in civic affairs, as well as drawing resources and policy-makers’ attention to the services which they need.
* Opportunities for personal and social development, leisure, sport and information are unevenly spread. Girls, young people in rural areas, the poor, the disabled and other groups may face obstacles in participating in beneficial free-time activities of their own choosing. There are socioeconomic and gender disparities in access to the Internet. Young people are not supported in making full use of the benefits of the Internet and empowered to protect themselves from related risks.
* For many young people, the transition from school to work is a difficult and drawn-out period. At any one time, about 30% of young people in Turkey are neither in work nor in school. This is a very high proportion by international standards. The ratio is highest among girls, many of whom never join the workforce at all. Secondary education has been made compulsory, and enrolment in tertiary education is increasing. Efforts have also been made to increase vocational education and make it more relevant to labour market needs. Nevertheless, educational opportunities remain very uneven, and some young people have no choice but to enter casual or low-paid work. In addition to further improvements in the education system youth-friendly labour market and social security policies are desirable.
* The average age of marriage is rising and young people are playing a greater role in choosing their own partners. However, implementable evidence-based policies are still urgently needed to combat early and forced marriage among teenage girls, which infringes their reproductive health rights, paves the way for risky fertility practices like early childbirth and multiple pregnancies, causes them to withdraw from education and begin to labour as housewives at an age when they have not completed their physical, emotional and social development, exposes them to domestic violence, and exacerbates the cycle of poverty.
* There is a case for prioritising adolescent health as a public health issue. Available information suggests that the health condition of adolescents and young people is only about average by international standards. Information about forms of risk behaviour other than smoking is limited. Provision for recovery and rehabilitation for drugs addictions may be insufficient. Adolescents’ knowledge of reproductive health appears to be very limited, partly due to social taboos.

7.1 Lives in transition: The transition from childhood to adulthood is a process which, in its various aspects, may begin in the child’s early teens, or even earlier, and which usually extends far beyond the age of eighteen – the age at which the person becomes legally of age and so acquires full civil rights under the law while ceasing to enjoy the special protection of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Conventionally, adolescence is defined as the ages of 10-19, with further sub-divisions into early, middle and late adolescence (UNICEF: The State of the World’s Children 2011 – Adolescence, An Age of Opportunity). Youth is usually considered to span the ages of 15-24, although this definition is sometimes extended further nowadays in view of longer years of education, later marriage and the rising age of entry into one’s first job.
The importance of adolescence and youth in the life of any individual is hard to overstate. In its General Comment of 2003 on “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 defined 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.” Oral communication skills, control of emotions, and knowledge about how to access public services, for example, are gained during adolescence and early youth. Adolescents and young people need time and space for leisure, learning, thinking and socialisation, coupled with access to information so that they can avoid the risks attached to social, physical and reproductive maturation, and decent opportunities to participate in adult life, including economic activities. It is during these years that young people are most likely to develop habits, undergo experiences and/or make choices which determine their future health, well-being, careers, relationships and roles in society. The right kinds of attention and services can maximise the opportunities and minimise the risks.

In Turkey, it is hard to say that young people have received sufficient attention and support. Official and public attitudes towards young people once emphasised their ideal roles as protectors of the Republic and catalysts of modernisation, then stressed the need to protect them from divisive ideologies, and later regretted their perceived apolitical and consumerist habits (Halil Naçaoğlu: Gençlik ve Yeni Toplumsal İletişim Ethos'u: Yanılsamalar, Bulgular ve Spekülasyonlar [Youth and the New Social Communications Ethos: Illusions, Findings and Speculations], in Umut Sarp Zeylan, ed.: Eğitim ve Gençlik [The Value of Education and Youth], 2007, pages 91-93). In recent years, the government has been moving towards the adoption of a policy on youth but progress has not been rapid.

The extent to which parents assist, or complicate, the transition to adulthood varies with factors like the survival of the parents, their relations with one another, and their level of education. Many parents are not well educated and may 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. The WHO European Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) survey for 2009-10 (http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/163857/Social-determinants-of-health-and-well-being-among-young-people.pdf) suggests that children of lower socioeconomic status may have the most difficulty communicating with their mothers (p.15) and that by the age of 15 girls’ ability to talk to their fathers about important issues is quite low (p. 25). 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 from adolescence onwards. 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 university, or perceived disobedience or irresponsibility, and may respond with verbal abuse, excessive discipline or loss of interest.

Numbers and status of young people: A high proportion of the Turkish population is currently passing through these critical phases of the life cycle. As of the end of 2011, within a total population of 74.7 million, there were 6.2 million 20-24 year-olds, 6.3 million 15-19 year-olds and as many as 6.6 million 10-14 year-olds. This last cohort constituted the largest single tranche of the population. Adolescents and young people can therefore be said to make up at least a quarter of society, and it will be several years before this situation starts to change significantly. The circumstances in which young people find themselves during these critical years of their lives vary greatly, and depend to a large extent on their social backgrounds (sections 2 and 3), and their experiences of the primary and secondary education system (section 6). Gender is also a very important determinant of the experience of adolescence and youth, since common cultural values distinguish heavily between the expected roles and behaviour of girls and of boys in this age group.

Turkey’s official employment statistics suggest that 36% of the non-institutional population aged between the ages of 15 and 24 were in full-time education or training in 2011, while 32% were in work and 32% were neither in work nor in education or training. The proportion of young people in education or training may rise in the years ahead as secondary education becomes compulsory and university places continue to expand. Naturally, it is those at the younger end of the age group who are most likely to be in education. Similarly, it is those at the older end of the age group who are most likely to be in work. These figures slightly exaggerate the number of young people who are neither in education nor in work - particularly for men - since the non-institutional population does not include military personnel (mostly conscripts, aged 20 and above) or students living in dormitories or student.
hostels. Nevertheless, the number of young people who, at any one time, are neither studying full-time nor engaged in a full-time job is very high. Eurostat, the statistical arm of the European Union, puts the proportion of 15-24 year-olds Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs) in Turkey in 2011 at 29.6%. This figure is the highest in Europe and more than double the EU average of 12.9% (Macedonia and Bulgaria also have rates above 20%, while Greece, Ireland, Spain and Italy have rates of 17-20%). Many of these “invisible” young people may be excluded from opportunities, information and social interaction to a greater or larger extent, with potentially significant consequences for their future lives.

Source: calculated from Turkstat Household Labour Force survey (2011 annual data)

The national employment statistics referred to above indicate clearly that 15-24 year-old women are less likely than men of the same age to be in education, much less likely to be in work – and much more likely to be neither in work nor in education or training. While most of the young men who are not working describe themselves as unemployed or at least in some sense available to work, as many as 28% of all young women declare themselves to be out of the workforce because they are engaged in domestic chores, presumably either as young housewives or as “ev kızı” (house girls). It is likely that the proportion of women who are neither in work nor in education increases towards the age of 24 while the proportion of men declines, as more men join the workforce than women. In addition, more young women than young men remain out of the workforce for personal reasons, possibly including caring for other family members. The proportions of young men and young women who are in education, in work, or neither, can be assumed to vary significantly between regions, rural and urban areas, and different social groups.
### Workforce status of 15-24 year-olds (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>21.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available for work but not actively seeking employment due to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--discouragement</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--other reasons</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in workforce because only taking part in seasonal work</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in workforce because engaged in domestic chores</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in workforce because in education or training</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in workforce because disabled or ill</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in workforce for family or personal reasons</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not in workforce for other reasons</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: calculated from Turkstat Household Labour force survey, 2011 annual data

Poverty and migration: Based on its 2010 Survey of Income and Living Conditions, Turkstat has calculated that 26.9% of persons aged 15-24 fall below the poverty line compared to 18.3% for the adult population (Turkstat: Youth in Statistics, 2011, p.91). Youth poverty is especially high among the rural population, the lower educated and the unemployed. For reasons such as study and job-seeking, the youth population is also a relatively mobile population. Using data from the Address-Based Population Registration System (ADNKS), Turkstat has calculated that 5.6% of the population aged 15-24 migrated between provinces between 2010 and 2011 – more than twice the rate for the adult population. On a net basis, Istanbul, the Marmara region in general and Ankara are attracting young people while other regions are losing them.

### 7.2 Personal and social development, leisure, sport and information:

From early adolescence onwards, the development in physical, cognitive and social capabilities accelerates. Adolescents and young people develop their personalities, interests, skills and competencies through cultural and artistic activities, physical activities/sports and social interaction. Such activities can also contribute to the physical and mental health and intellectual abilities of the individual, the quality of life of others, and the strength of communities and society. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child regards play and leisure as a right for all people up to the age of 18. These needs are partially provided for within the education system. The Ministry of Culture is responsible for public libraries, museums and state theatres. Although its main focus is on sporting achievement, the Ministry of Youth and Sports provides sports facilities and youth camps, which to some extent target young people from poor backgrounds or in poor areas. Other opportunities and facilities for adolescents and young people in Turkey to take part in free-time activities – separately from, or together with, adults - are provided by registered youth clubs, municipalities, voluntary organisations and the private sector.

In practice, the most common leisure-time activities of adolescents and young people in Turkey appear to be watching TV, listening to music (including radio), and chatting with friends - whether in cafes and shopping malls or on the Internet. The amount of time which young people spend reading, attending cultural performances, exhibitions and events or engaging in physical activities is noticeably lower, and surprisingly high proportions of young people may not take part in these activities at all.
### Participation in cultural activities outside the home in the preceding month (population aged 15-24) (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Men Participated</th>
<th>Men Not participated</th>
<th>Women Participated</th>
<th>Women Not participated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going to the cinema</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>86.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to the theatre, ballet, opera etc</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>96.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting museums and art galleries</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to a library</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>91.6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting activities</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to the WHO European Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) survey for 2009-10, two-thirds of fifteen year-olds watch more than two hours of television per day on weekdays, including DVDs and videos, which is slightly above the European average. Watching television (mostly Turkish soap operas, followed by news, sports and other types of programmes) also emerged as young people’s most common free time activity according to the reported initial results of a research project on “Turkey’s Youth Profile” conducted by the think-tank SETA among 15-29 year-olds in conjunction with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2012. Watching television scored 56.8% and was followed by reading books, magazines or newspapers (40.8%), using social media (37.2%), taking part in sports (29.6%), going to the theatre/cinema and concerts (15.6%), and spending time with friends in cafes, tea-shops and similar places (13.4%).

In the 2007 Turkey Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey conducted by the Population Association and UNFPA among young people aged 15-24, 75% of young people named going to shopping malls as one of their favourite leisure time activities. Going to the cinema (20%), going to concerts (around 24%) and playing a musical instrument (around 15%) - all activities with a higher potential for improving physical and mental capabilities - were far less common. Shopping malls appear to be places which adolescents – and especially their families – find safe and secure, and where it is possible to come together without spending too much money.

Participation in sports is a minority activity and mostly restricted to men. According to the reported initial results of the 2012 SETA survey, 41% of the young population never take part in sports. Participation varies considerably with geography, gender, age, marital status and level of education. Football is easily the most popular sport. The 2009-10 HBSC Survey indicated that only 9% of girls and 18% of boys aged 15 in Turkey engage in at least one hour of medium-to-vigorous physical activity daily as recommended by the medical profession.

The available surveys cover only some activities and age groups, and are not repeated regularly. More data is needed on the extent to which young men and women of different age groups, social backgrounds and places of residence take part in various cultural, sporting, leisure and social activities. Analysis is also needed to identify the factors which affect the participation or non-participation of young people in beneficial free-time activities of their own choosing. These are likely to include: costs (ticket prices, entry fees, travel expenses, costs of equipment and training, etc.); pressure to study or long hours spent working; cultural expectations or constraints (particularly for girls); disability, and the limited or uneven provision of events, venues, facilities, equipment or services.

With respect to socialisation, it is clear that young people of higher socioeconomic status, particularly boys, enjoy better opportunities. The HBSC survey showed that among 15 year-olds in Turkey those of higher socioeconomic status spend significantly more time out with friends and also have more electronic and mobile communication with them. While 7% of girls spend four or more evenings per week out with friends this percentage is 28% for boys.

### Children, young people and the Internet

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. The Turkish government, especially the Ministry of National Education, is actively promoting computer and Internet usage by children. For the time being, at least, few 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 exposure to malicious software and sharing of personal information. An EU Kids Online survey (http://www.unicef.org.tr/contentEdit?id=547 - _ftn2 (Livingstone, S, Haddon, L, Görzig, A, and Ólafsson, K, Risks and Safety on the Internet: The Perspective of European Children. Full Findings, LSE, London: EU Kids Online, 2011) showed that many children shared private information freely on the Internet, and most did not know how to change their privacy settings. In the same survey, 13% of 9-16 year-olds reported seeing images containing sexual content on the Internet. 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. Exposure to malicious software

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.

In its Concluding Observations of June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child commended Turkey for addressing the potential harmful effects of information and communication through the Internet, but also encouraged it to ensure that policies and tools such as filters to block certain information on the Internet does not have a negative effect on the child's right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds through any media of the child's choice.

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. The study reviews and refers to a range of surveys and academic work.

7.3 Health of young people: Adolescents and young people benefit from the same health facilities and services as the general population. Under the new General Health Insurance system, the government pays the health insurance costs of children up to the age of 18 and of some young people above that age while they are in full-time education. The impact of the new arrangements on access to health advice and treatment has not yet been measured. Provision of and access to health facilities and services may show geographical or other variations. From a public health perspective, adolescent health and well-being has arguably been overlooked as Turkey has concentrated its efforts in the areas of mother and child health and young child health. This is understandable but
at the same time regrettable, since adolescence is a time when boys and girls have many questions about their health, and when life-time health habits are formed. The introduction of the family medicine system may present an opportunity to improve the monitoring of the health of populations of different age groups, and to provide more advice and information where it is needed – for example, to adolescents. However, this requires additional capacity building and resources. There may also be a need to pay more attention to age-specific issues in higher education institutions where future health personnel are educated.

As for health outcomes, more data and analysis is needed to identify trends in the state of health of young people, and to compare the health status of young people of different backgrounds. It would be useful for the Ministry of Health to improve its screening, monitoring and recording processes as and where required, and to ensure a regular supply of objective, comprehensive, disaggregated information to the public about nutrition, communicable and non-communicable diseases, chronic conditions, accidents and injuries, mental well-being, positive health behaviour, risk behaviour and similar matters. Greater public discussion of health issues is also desirable, together with the creation of independent think-tanks in this field.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes of death among 15-24 year-olds, 2008 (% of deaths)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neoplasma</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulatory system disorders</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digestive system disorders</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symptoms &amp; ill-defined conditions</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other diseases</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide &amp; self-inflicted injury</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>13.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Available information suggests that about 70% of young people are of normal weight. Problems arising from malnutrition appear to persist in poorer parts of the population. Young people in the more affluent parts of the population are likely to enjoy more varied diets, and to engage in positive health behaviour such as deliberate physical exercise and sufficient personal care. In the WHO European Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) survey for 2009-10, children aged 15 in Turkey achieved a moderate score for eating fruit and regularly eating breakfast but a low score for tooth brushing. Likewise, the Turkstat 2010 Health Survey shows that 37.6% of 15-24 year-olds brush their teeth less than once a day (Turkstat: Youth in Statistics, 2011, p.34). However, the HBSC Survey also suggests that problems of excessive weight gain or obesity, which are relatively low for the population as a whole, are commonest among these more affluent groups – at least for the time being.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Body mass index of individuals aged 15-24 (%)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Underweight</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Young persons’ perceptions of their health and well-being: There is conflicting information as to how young people in Turkey perceive their own health. The 2007 Youth Sexual Health Survey conducted by the Population Association and UNFPA showed that only 65 percent of young people aged 15-24 assessed their health as “very good” or “good in general”. Turkstat’s Health Survey for 2010 gives a much higher figure of 84.9% - 87.1% for men and 82.9% for women (Turkstat: Youth in Statistics, 2011, p.28). At the same time, however, 16.3% of young men and 15.8% of young women responding to this survey said they were “nervous” most of all the time and 14.5% of men and 17.8% of women said they were “tired” most or all the time (Turkstat: Youth in Statistics, 2011, p.29). The 2010 HBSC Survey shows that 65% of girls and 54% of boys aged 15 in Turkey had had multiple health complaints in the last week – well above the averages of 44% and 26% respectively for the mainly European and Western countries included in the survey (http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/163857/Social-determinants-of-health-and-well-being-among-young-people.pdf)
In Turkstat’s Life Satisfaction survey for 2011, 87.2% of men aged 15-24 and 88.2% of women in the same age group said that they were satisfied with their health (Turkstat: Youth in Statistics, 2011, p.97). In this survey, 63.0% of young men and 75.6% of young women indicated that they were generally happy ((Turkstat: Youth in Statistics, 2011, p.92). These figures make clear that a perception of health is not sufficient for a perception of happiness among young people, especially men. In the 2010 HBSC survey, only 58% of boys and 63% of girls aged 15 in Turkey reported “high life satisfaction”.

Addictions and other unhealthy behaviour: Alcohol consumption is much lower in Turkey than in Western countries, but both high personal consumption and drunkenness are familiar in various parts of society. There is limited age-disaggregated statistical data about high alcohol consumption and drunkenness, or about trends and causal factors. The 2007 Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey conducted by the Population Association and UNFPA found that both alcohol consumption in general and “binge” drinking were more common among young people in urban areas and (especially for women) among those from more affluent socioeconomic groups – although there was also some suggestion of heavy consumption among drinkers in the poorest socioeconomic group. According to the reported initial results of the “Turkey’s Youth Profile” survey conducted by the think-tank SETA in conjunction with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in 2012, just 21.7% of respondents said that they took alcohol, with variations by region, gender, age, marital status and level of education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alcohol drinking behaviour within last three months among 15-24 year-olds (%)</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>have drunk alcohol</td>
<td>have binge-drunk</td>
<td>have drunk alcohol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 15-19</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 20-24</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>5.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest household welfare level</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low household welfare level</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle household welfare level</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>7.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High household welfare level</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest household welfare level</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Use of tobacco - mostly in the form of cigarettes, but also water pipes - is very common in Turkey, including among young people, notwithstanding widespread awareness that tobacco poses serious health risks. Turkey ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2004 and legislation has been progressively tightened. Rules governing the content of tobacco products, their packaging, health warnings, sale to children and smoking in public places are now similar to those in Europe. Smoking in enclosed public spaces was banned in 2008-9. There is some evidence that these efforts may be having an impact on smoking among young people. In Turkstat’s 2010 Health Survey (cited in Turkstat: Youth in Statistics 2011, pp.35-8), 27.1% of men and 6.1% of women aged 15-24 reported that they were daily smokers, compared to 42.3% and 14.0% for the adult population. This appears to point to a decrease since 2008, when the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (http://www.who.int/tobacco/surveillance/en_tfi_gats_turkey_2009.pdf), which Turkstat carried out in conjunction with WHO, indicated that 34.9% of males and 9.1% of females in the same age group were daily smokers, compared to 43.8% for all men over 15 and 11.6% for all women over 15. However, further data is needed to confirm the decline in smoking, especially as other surveys - such as the 2007 Turkey Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey conducted by the Population Association and the UNFPA, and the reported initial results of the SETA “Turkey’s Youth Profile” research in 2012 - paint different pictures.

Some of the studies mentioned also examine issues such as the age at which young people start to smoke, their exposure to tobacco smoke and other aspects of tobacco usage (See also the World Tobacco Atlas - http://www.tobaccoatlas.org/uploads/Images/PDFs/Tobacco_Atlas_2ndPrint.pdf). All this evidence suggests that young people smoke less than the adult population as a whole, that among adolescents and young people themselves the prevalence of smoking increases with age, that “passive smoking” is common in the home, and that young men (a) are more likely to smoke, (b) smoke more heavily and regularly, (c) start to smoke at an earlier age and (d) become regular smokers at an earlier age, than young women. Particularly among women, smoking is lower in rural areas and increases with education.
According to the Turkstat 2010 Health Survey, young people who had smoked at least once reported that their first experiments with tobacco came at the age of under 10 for 7.1% of males and 1.4% of females, 10-14 for 29.2% of males and 26.5% of females, and 15-19 for 58.1% of males and 64.3% of females. It follows that children need to be informed about the damage done by smoking from an early age, and that there may be an opportunity to encourage teenagers to give up smoking while they are still intermittent smokers due to financial reasons or family disapproval. However, more knowledge may need to be gathered together about the factors affecting smoking among young people of specific age-groups, gender and social backgrounds in order to determine the most effective ways of preventing and ending addiction.

No national survey has been carried out to estimate the number of persons, especially adolescents and young people, who use or abuse drugs and similar substances. Occasional small-scale studies, press reports, information gleaned from local drug prevention officials or treatment centres and anecdotal evidence all suggest that while substance use, especially in its most problematic forms, is not as widespread as in some neighbouring countries, it is by no means uncommon, at least in certain cities, including Istanbul, Adana and some other southern or southeastern cities. Cities like Ankara and Antalya have districts with a reputation for drug-dealing (and, typically, other forms of crime and prostitution). Cannabis, mainly from Southeast Turkey, appears to be quite widely available — and not least to high school and university students. Among more problematic, entirely-imported drugs, cocaine and amphetamine-type substances may be used more frequently by higher-income groups and tourists. Heroin has been the main source of demand for treatment. However, few young people 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. Aside from “commercial” drugs, the use of addictive substances such as adhesives and solvents is a familiar problem, especially among adolescents living on the streets or working in industry. For this reason, children living on the street are frequently referred to as “tinerli” — a reference to their addiction to paint thinners — and considered dangerous or anti-social.

The ESPAD (Council of Europe/Swedish Council for Information on Alcohol and Other Drugs - The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs) survey conducted in six cities in 2003 by the Ministry of Health and UNODC suggested that 4% of high school students in Turkey had used cannabis, compared to a European average of 21%, while 3% had used other illicit drugs, 4% had used inhalants, and 3% had used tranquillisers and sedatives without a doctor’s prescription. 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 or in 2011. Without such frequent and timely monitoring of drug use - and further analysis of trends and causal factors for different types of drug-taking among young people in different cities and of different ages, gender and social groups - it is difficult to design well-targeted strategies to counter the phenomenon, or to advocate for the necessary resources and capacity building for prevention and treatment. In 2011, the Turkish Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (TÜBIM) conducted surveys among the general and youth populations, apparently overcoming the objections of the Ministry of National Education by using “open questions” (A pilot study of the general population in Ankara province showed 0.8% cannabis use within the last 30 days). The results of these surveys are awaited.

TÜBIM (www.tubim.gov.tr), a branch of the Smuggling and Organised Crimes (KOM) department of the General Directorate of Security, is the body which coordinates government efforts to combat drug use in Turkey and is also the national focal point for the EU’s European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addictions (EMCDDA). Its annual report is the main source of information on drug use in Turkey. TÜBIM drew up Turkey’s first national policy and strategy document on combating drugs and addiction in 2006, and this has been followed by two national action plans, the current one covering the years 2006-12. With a view to prevention, awareness raising is carried out among young people and information is provided to professionals by TÜBIM and the provincial coordinating committees through which it works, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Health, other government ministries and departments and municipalities. 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 there has been no assessment of the impact of these studies or of the overall level of knowledge and awareness of adolescents and young people concerning drug-related issues.

In-patient and out-patient treatment services for addicts of drugs (or alcohol) are available in the health sector and at universities. Adolescents, parents or young people may apply of their own accord or may be directed there through the juvenile justice system or by social services. There are 22 centres in 13 provinces with inpatient facilities. A few specialise in children and adolescents or have separate departments dedicated to them. Costs are covered in the same way as the costs of other kinds of health care. Lack of capacity or distance to the centres...
may, however, hinder access to treatment, and the provision of post-treatment rehabilitation services is extremely limited. A parliamentary committee formed to investigate problems regarding substance-addiction, especially drug addiction, and to make recommendations reported back in 2008. Its report, entitled “Madde Kullanımı ve Bağımlılığı ile Kaça面貌ığıünün Önlenmesi alanlarında tespit edilen Sorunlar ve Çözüm Önerileri” [Problems determined in the area of substance use and dependence, in the prevention of drug trafficking and recommendations offered], contains many pieces of information as well as numerous recommendations for increasing and improving services, including the upgrading of TÜBIM to the level of a general directorate. The report also notes that substance addiction is perceived by society as a moral problem, leading to a stigmatising approach rather than a caring one. It points to disincentives for doctors and psychiatrists to work in this area.

Aside from the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, adolescents and young people are known to engage willingly in other risk-taking or self-damaging behaviour including self-mutilation, fighting, games with firearms, traffic or chemicals, driving at speed or deliberate avoidance of safety precautions in various contexts. Self-mutilation may be common among adolescents who have been abused or neglected or worked from an early age, lived on the streets and/or come into contact with the law (A rare article on the subject is: Ögel K., Aksoy A.: Kendine Zarar Verme Davranışı Raporu. Yeniden Yayın no:18 [Self-Damaging Behaviour Report Yeniden Publications No. 18], İstanbul 2006.

Reproductive health and sex education: Officials and parents in Turkey tend to take the view that any discussion of sexual intercourse with or among young people is not only embarrassing but also likely to encourage sexual activity at an early age and/or before marriage, which for cultural reasons they consider undesirable, especially for girls. In the WHO’s Health Behaviour of School Children (HBSC) surveys, for example, the module which includes questions about sexual activity has not been implemented in Turkey. This attitude appears to have led to an unwillingness on the part of the state to provide adolescents with adequate access to sexual and reproductive information, as foreseen in General Comment No. 4 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, so as to ensure their healthy social and physical development. Likewise, parents are rarely cited as sources for knowledge on sexually transmitted diseases suggesting that sexuality cannot be discussed freely in the family context. As a result, 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. In the 2007 Youth Sexual Health Survey conducted by the Population Association and the UNFPA, 39% of people aged 15-24 reported that they do not know where babies grow. 40% of young women gave the answer “I don’t know” when asked about male reproductive organs. Only 42% of respondents were aware of the existence of a specific period for a woman to become pregnant, and among those only 27.4% had the correct knowledge. The proportion of 15-24 year-olds with correct knowledge about HIV/AIDS was 11.2% among males and 9.6% among females. This lack of knowledge may also lead to discriminatory behaviour towards people with HIV/AIDS. Aside from a general increase in the level of education, there is little reason to believe that the level of knowledge of young people in this area has improved since 2007.

Information sources of young people (15-24) about sexually transmitted diseases
Almost all young people favour the provision of reproductive and sexual health services. When asked about their preferred source of information, respondents to the 2007 Survey cited doctors (49.3%) and counsellors (11.7%). Although the school is the preferred place for services to be offered, teachers were cited by only 6% of young people as their preferred source of information. This situation points to a need for cooperation between educational institutions and health institutions for information and counseling services. Information needs to be included in the formal education curriculum in line with the needs of children of different age groups, beginning at a sufficiently early age. Sex education should not be limited to schools: campaigns and parental education services are also needed to increase the transmission of correct information on reproductive and sexual behavior from parents to their children. For adolescents out of school, youth centres, non-governmental organizations and peer education may be appropriate channels.

In its Concluding Observations on Turkey issued in June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child reiterated its concern about “the lack of comprehensive adolescent and reproductive health policy in the State party and insufficient knowledge of reproductive health, sexually-transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, and frequent involvement in sexually risky behaviours among young people”. It recommended “that the State party adopt a comprehensive adolescent and reproductive health policy and take necessary measures to educate children on reproductive health and the measures to prevent STDs and HIV/AIDS.”

7.4 Marriage and early marriages: Adolescence and youth is for many people a time when long lasting relationship are formed and life companions are chosen. This process is rarely devoid of anxiety and sometimes traumatic. For example, TurkStat demographic data shows that 23% of suicides among 15-24 year-olds girls and 24% among 15-24 year-old boys are due to “emotional relationships and not marrying the person wanted” (TurkStat; Youth in Statistics 2011).

In the 2007 Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health Survey of the Population Association and the UNFPA, 69% of the 15-24 year-olds questioned said that they had had a boyfriend or girlfriend at some time and 52% said that they currently had one, with the first experience of having a boyfriend or girlfriend typically coming at the age of 13-15. However, the proportion of young people with experience of having a boyfriend or a girlfriend worked out significantly lower for girls, in rural areas, in lower socioeconomic categories and for young people with lower levels of educational achievement status. This suggests that there are some limitations on having, or reporting having, a boyfriend/girlfriend in certain parts of society especially for girls.

Formalised, heterosexual marriage is a strong social norm, and is almost universal. The majority of young people live with their parents (or other guardians or relatives) right up until they get married, unless away from home for reasons of study, military service or work. According to the reported initial results of the 2012 “Turkey’s Youth Profile” survey carried out by the think-tank SETA, some 80% of unmarried 15-29 year-olds questioned live with their parents (The remainder lived alone, with friends, in student hostels or with other relatives).

The legal age of marriage is 17 for both boys and girls. 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. By tradition, marriage has come early, especially for women. The mean age of those getting married for the first time in 2011 was 26.6 in the case of men and 23.3 in the case of women, according to official administrative data published by TurkStat. These figures represent increases of about one year by comparison with 2001 (They may slightly exaggerate the age of first marriage since they encompass only civil marriage ceremonies - See below for religious ceremonies).

According to the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) conducted by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies, the median age of first marriage (including religious ceremonies) among married women and men aged 25-9 in 2008 was 22.1, compared to 20.4 for 35-39 year-olds. The gradual increase in the average age of marriage is related to social change, especially longer years of schooling for girls, and may therefore continue. However, the typical age of first marriage remains significantly lower than average in rural areas, in the lowest socioeconomic groups and among less-educated women. There may also be local, ethnic or other variations. The 2008 DHS indicated that while 22.7% of women aged 25-9 had never been married, 17.1% had been married by the age of eighteen and 2.3% by the age of fifteen. According to the initial reported results of the Family Structure Survey carried out by the Family and Social Affairs Ministry General Directorate for Family and Community Services in 2011, 9.3% of women who got married between 2006 and 2010 were under 18 at the time. Even the official administrative data for 2011 shows that 22.0% of all brides were aged 16-19 (For all grooms, the percentage is 2.4%). This ratio rises to 35-43% in a number of central, eastern and southeastern provinces.

In one way and another, parents or other elders continue to play a significant role in the selection of marriage partners in many parts of society, especially in those parts of society where marriage comes earliest, and in the case of girls. While 75% of men aged 15-24 and 58% of women responding to the 2007 Population Association/UNFPA survey said that they believed that decisions about marriage should be taken by young
people themselves – and not together with their families – this does not appear to be the case in practice. The marriages of their sons and daughters – the economic or social status of their partners, the amounts spent on receptions and so on – are an important source of prestige for parents. Parents may maintain an effective right of veto over sons’ or (especially) daughters’ choices of partner – a veto right enhanced by tradition and economic power, and which many young people may never question. Young people often internalise traditional rules or assumptions about suitable partners (same religion, same sect, same ethnic group, same social circle, compatible level of education etc.).

Many parents exert (and are expected by their communities to exert) careful control over their sons’ or (especially) daughters’ socialisation, making it difficult for possible partners to meet one another independently. It is very common for parents or other elders to introduce young people to perceivedly suitable marriage partners. More than half of currently-married couples are thought to have met one another by introduction. Social and family pressure and tradition, and lack of other options, may limit the extent to which young people are able to oppose such ‘proposals’.

In some parts of society, young people’s sexuality and marriage rights are effectively owned by elders and parents (Honour crimes are discussed elsewhere), and may be used to cement family ties, prevent the division of property through inheritance, avoid payment of a bride price (See below) or for other similar purposes. This leads to forms of arranged marriage such as exchanges of brides and grooms (e.g.: where a girl is obliged to marry the brother of the girl whom her brother marries, or where brides and grooms are exchanged to end blood feuds), or the marriage of young people to the widows or widowers of their elder brothers or sisters. Most marriages between relatives (typically cousins) are likely to be arranged marriages too. The bride price is a fairly widespread tradition whereby parents expect to receive a payment in return for their daughters’ hands in marriage. A counterpart to the strong influences which parents, elders and the community exert over marriage is the tradition of “elopement”, in which young lovers defy their families’ wishes and “escape” together - or the girls are “kidnapped” by the boys – often forcing the (disgraced) families to accept marriages they opposed or would have opposed.

The 2006 Family Structure survey found roughly equal numbers of existing marriages where the partners (a) decided by themselves to get married and secured the approval of their families, (b) met by görücü usulü and decided to get married themselves and (c) met by görücü usulü and married by decision of their families. Only about 8% of couples had been married in spite of or without the knowledge of the families. 16.8% of marriages involved the payment of a bride price, and although this practice appears to be dying out over time, it still occurred in 10.2% of the marriages of married persons aged 18-24, which may be a significant finding with respect to early marriage (see below). 20.9% of all existing marriages were between relatives, rising to 40.4% in Southeast Anatolia. According to the reported initial results of the 2011 Family Structure Survey, 44.2% of first marriages were by “görücü usulü and own decision”, 38.7% by “own decision with family approval”, 9.4% by “görücü usulü without own opinion being asked”, 4.3% by elopement, 2.9% by own decision without family approval and 0.5% by exchange (berdel), while marriages between relatives declined from 19% in 1996-2000 and 20% in 2001-5 to 17.3% in 2006-10.

Early marriage: NGOs and the media have raised concern in recent years that early marriage, including very early marriage, usually for girls, persists or may even be increasing. Many cases have been reported from numerous regions, including poorer and less educated social groups, particularly those living in rural areas or of rural origin (Early marriage for both girls and boys also occurs among the Roma). Early marriage is in most cases a infringement of a girl’s reproductive health rights and denies her the chance to choose her own partner and future; it is also likely to lead to her withdrawal from education and so increase her risk of poverty. It turns girls into housewives at an age when they have not completed their physical, emotional and social development, and should be learning and playing. It paves the way for early childbirth and for multiple pregnancies and high fertility, which can have negative health consequences for both mother and child, and further exacerbate the cycle of poverty. In addition, girls who marry early are likely to face domestic violence due to their lack of status and in some cases legal rights. Early marriage sometimes has secondary consequences as well, such as the non-registration of babies born, or the prosecution of the ‘husband’ for sexual assault (and of others for aiding and abetting).

Data on the prevalence of early and very early marriage in Turkey is mixed. The 2008 Demographic and Health Survey showed that 9.7% of women aged 18 had either given birth or were already pregnant with their first child. The age was 4.4% for 17 year-olds, 2.2% for sixteen year-olds and 0.4% for fifteen year-olds. 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.

Under-age marriages take the form – at least initially - of unofficial religious marriages, since living together without a marriage ceremony of any kind remains very rare. The provision of the Penal Code forbidding religious marriages in the absence of a parallel civil registration has not been enforced. Under-age marriages may or may not be formalised through civil ceremonies when the under-age bride (or groom) reaches the legal age of marriage (This complicates the interpretation of data on forms of marriage. According to the 2008 DHS survey, the percentage of couples who had been married via a religious ceremony only was 3.7% in 2008, rising to 5.1% in rural areas and 16.1% in Southeast Anatolia. The Family Structure Surveys yield slightly different results).

In May 2009, the 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. Nevertheless, the causes and consequences of early marriage in Turkey may not have been fully expounded. The fact that the marriage of children - especially girls - before the age of 18 was commonplace in the past - and is still regarded as acceptable, normal or even desirable in many parts of society - helps to create a climate favourable to early marriage. However, early marriages may not merely reflect the persistence of this and other harmful traditions; they may also point to their revival or reinvention under new social conditions. Families in economic difficulties, including urban families of rural origin, 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. This potentially paves the way for daughters to be sold into marriage. Marriages of young girls from southeast Turkey to men from central Turkish cities and of young girls from neighboring Syria to men on the Turkish side of the border have occasionally come under the spotlight in the press. In some cases, “demand” may come from older men who are already married, possibly signifying increased acceptability or tolerance of polygamy in some parts of society. Families with traditional values finding themselves in new urban surroundings may see marriage as a way of safeguarding their daughters’ safety and/or their own family honour by preventing premarital sex and out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Early marriages, including very early marriages, may also be linked to the various forms of arranged marriage mentioned above: not unusually, for example, the only member of a family “available” for an exchange marriage, for example, may be a child.

All efforts to reduce poverty and gender disparities, to establish the rights of women, to ensure full participation in secondary education and to empower the most vulnerable groups in society are likely to reduce early marriage. In order to tackle child marriage more specifically, the current situation may need to be mapped and analysed further, since causal factors may vary from place to place and social group to social group. It may also be necessary to increase commitment among politicians and opinion leaders, to raise awareness among public officials, professionals, parents, men and others, as well as among children and adolescents themselves, and to ensure the support of all government sectors, community leaders, community-based NGOs and the media. There is also a need for debate on the existing legislation and its enforcement, including how the law on religious marriages should be enforced without harming the young people concerned, and how religious officials can prevent rather than facilitate early marriages. The possibility of abolishing or combating the bride price needs to be considered. Meanwhile, girls and boys who are already in union and married before the age of 18 need to be supported.

7.5 School to Work: Young people in Turkey perceive finding employment, or decent employment, as their major challenge. 49% of respondents to the survey carried out by the About Life Foundation (YADA) for the 2008 UNDP National Human Development Report entitled “Youth in Turkey”, when asked what they most desired, cited being able to find a decent job. Social status (18%) and love (17%) were given much lower priority. Finding work - or regular or acceptable work - may not be a major priority for some young women in rural or underdeveloped areas, or with lower levels of education, due to their own and others’ low expectations of their participation in the workforce. But for most young people, and for boys in almost all social groups, finding acceptable work is a key issue for reasons of income, security, self-image and social status.

Young people are right to see employment as a major challenge. Among those 15-24 year-olds who have already joined the workforce, the annual average unemployment rate in 2011 was 18.4%, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute, compared to a general level of unemployment of 9.8%. This is in spite of government steps to reduce the costs of employing young people (as well as women). In 2009, a year of economic crisis, the youth unemployment rate was as high as 25.3%, compared to 14.0% general unemployment. The problem of youth unemployment is, of course, a global issue which is also affecting some of the world’s most developed countries. The ILO report “Global Employment Trends for Youth 2012” (http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/youth/2012/lang--en/index.htm) puts youth employment in 2011 at 12.6% for
the world, 18.0% for the developed countries and European Union, and even higher for the Middle East and North Africa. The report also notes that “many youth are trapped in low-productivity, temporary or other types of work that fall short of their aspirations and that often do not open opportunities to move to more permanent, higher-productivity and better-paid positions.” This is certainly true for Turkey where, even among the adult population, a high proportion of the employed are in unpaid family employment, especially in agriculture, and other forms of irregular and informal employment, where conditions may be harsh and exploitative, and are not contributors to any pension scheme. It may be added that Turkey’s rates of unemployment would be much higher if it were not for low workforce participation among women: if the workforce participation rate had been as high among boys as among girls, the youth unemployment rate in 2011 would have been not 18.4% but 38.7%, for the same level of employment.

There is little reliable statistical information on how young people in Turkey find work, at what age, and how long it takes. Most young people compete for jobs by entering formal or informal labour markets and taking government examinations. For many, there is no other way of finding work - or, at least, of finding regular work with decent working conditions. For a significant number of young people, however, there may also be the option (and occasionally the obligation) of working in family businesses, ranging from agricultural smallholdings to giant enterprises. Some young people receive support from their families in setting up some form of business of their own. Others obtain assistance in finding formal or informal work or going into business formally or informally from relatives, friends and social networks of various kinds. Unemployed persons can also apply to the government job agency Iskur to find a job.

Some young people who do not find acceptable work can remain unemployed for a considerable time, mainly due to family support. However, there is only a very limited system of unemployment benefit, and this only targets people who have been made redundant following a period of formal employment. Accordingly, the poorest young people, if unable to find regular work, are obliged to undertake marginal tasks on an informal, low-paid, insecure and irregular basis - such as street peddling, seasonal work in agriculture, construction and tourism, home cleaning or casual manual labour.

**Access to education:** For most young people, education plays an important role in determining the kind of work which they find. A certain level of education and/or certain professional or vocational qualifications are a precondition (albeit insufficient) for most kinds of formal paid employment and for working independently in many fields. Educational provision for young people has been expanding rapidly and young people have been participating increasingly in education. As of the 2011-12 school year, net enrolment in four-year secondary education was 67.37%, according to the Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics, and gross enrolment was 92.56%, although not all enrolled were necessarily attending regularly. About 44% of secondary education students were in technical and vocational education. Four-year secondary education was made compulsory starting with the 2012 intake. The Ministry put net and gross enrolment in tertiary education, for 2010-11, at 33.06% and 58.45% respectively. According to the Government’s Annual Programme for 2012, 50 new state universities were established between 2006 and 2011 and 37 new foundation (private) universities were opened between 2006 and 2011. As a result, there are 103 state universities and 62 foundation universities. The number of university places available to new students each year was increased by 65.5% between 2006 and 2010, reaching about 800,000. About a third of these places are for full-time undergraduate courses, normally lasting four years (excluding prep years devoted to learning a foreign language at some universities teaching in English or another foreign language). The remainder of the available places are for two-year vocational courses and/or for places in open education (distance learning) and second education (night school).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Universities</th>
<th>Total New Entrants 2011-12</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total Current Students 2011-12</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total Graduates 2010-2011</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Vocational training (2-yr)</td>
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Source: Student Selection and Placement Centre (OSYM)

Despite the increase in the coverage of secondary and tertiary education, access remains restricted, and opportunities are extremely unequal. According to the Lisbon goals of the EU, member states should strive to increase the percentage of people with upper secondary diplomas to 85. This will take some time for Turkey to achieve, even with the introduction of compulsory secondary education. Currently, net secondary school enrolment rates fall as low as 30-40% in some relatively rural Eastern provinces, and non-attendance is also commonplace. Poverty, the need for children to earn income or work in the home, and – particularly in many central and eastern provinces - gender are important determinants of participation in secondary education. The uneven quality of provision and varying experiences of primary education may also be influential factors. Low incomes and low levels of education among parents are underlying predictors of non-participation in secondary education.

Among secondary school graduates, a high proportion are unable to enter tertiary education. According to the Annual Programme of the Government for 2012, 1.76 million individuals took the centralised university examinations in order to find a place in higher education in 2011. Less than half obtained a place on any kind of course. Of the applicants, 768,000 were in their final year of secondary school. The remainder were mostly secondary school graduates from previous years attempting the examination for the second or third time, as well as some university graduates wanting to do a second course of further or higher education in a subject of more interest or benefit to themselves.

Besides having to compete for limited places, young people completing secondary school may be unable to access higher education for reasons of cost. Those who cannot afford to attend private cramming schools are at a disadvantage in the university examination. Families may need their sons or daughters to contribute to the household income. They may be unable to meet university fees, which are relatively modest at state universities but very high at foundation universities, or they may be unable to pay for living costs, particularly if the young person needs to move to another city to study. While the state, universities, civil society and the private sector offer full or partial scholarships and grants, and provide student hostels offering a varying quality of education at various prices, these do not reach all students. For this reason, poorer students not only in open education and second education but also in full-time education - particularly in big cities – have to work in order to
pay for their studies. The work they do is often informal and insecure – for example in cafes and bars – and may put them at a disadvantage in their studies.

Quality and relevance of education: Problems of university education include inadequate physical capacity and teacher numbers, particularly in new universities and universities outside the three largest provinces, as well as many administrative and financial issues. A relatively small number of universities and departments have a high reputation for quality and these are generally attended by young people from the most educated and more affluent families. Despite some initiatives, most universities could considerably improve access for the disabled. The entrance examination results in a very high proportion of students taking subjects which they have not chosen. Given that some students only find places after attempting the university examination several times – and that university education often lasts longer than the prescribed period of time (Hence the wide gap between net and gross enrolment rates in tertiary education) - a high proportion of young people completing secondary education may be spending one or many years of their lives unproductively and unsatisfactorily before, during and/or after their university education.

In 2008, the World Bank report “Investing in Turkey’s Next Generation: The School-to-Work Transition and Turkey’s Development” noted that “While the best of Turkey’s young people can compete with youth anywhere in terms of skill levels, proficiency varies significantly by gender, region, family income, and type of school. Overall, in terms of both attainment and quality, Turkey’s education system tends to perform at or somewhat below the level of lower middle-income countries but lags well behind the standard of most countries in the EU and elsewhere in the OECD.” These comments are still valid. Besides the highly uneven quality of the education provided to youth, both at secondary and tertiary levels, there is a continuing mismatch between the knowledge and skills which the education system aims to impart and those required in the labour markets or at the next level of education. Provocatively, it could therefore be argued that the expansion of high school and (especially) university education – while it has not yet resolved issues of discrimination and exclusion - has served mainly to “park” a larger number of young people in full-time education for a longer period; they have been kept occupied to some extent, partly at the expense of their own families, and prevented from swelling the unemployment statistics. While Turkey has been “overproducing” not only arts graduates but also engineers and other professionals for some years, private enterprise often complains of the lack of technical personnel with specific vocational training.

When asked which services they would like to make use of if they could access them, respondents to the 2012 “Turkey’s Youth Profile” study conducted by the think-tank SETA in 2012 reportedly showed most interest in foreign language classes (55.8%), and vocational courses and seminars (54.5%), followed by various other cultural and self-development or career-oriented activities. Foreign languages are an area of competency in which the education system is widely perceived to fail (See, for example, the policy note by the think-tank TEPAV at: www.tepav.org.tr/.../1324458212-1.Turkey_s_English_Deficit.pdf). Most young people, particularly those who come from undeveloped regions, do not speak any foreign languages, and few speak more than one, although prevalence of foreign language skills does seem to improve with level of education. For some, this leads to out-of-pocket spending on language courses in Turkey or abroad.

Military service and the transition to work
All young Turkish men in good health are in principally obliged to do fifteen months of unpaid service in the army, navy, air force, gendarmerie or coast guard. Military service is usually shorter for university graduates. The obligation to perform military service starts at the age of 20 but is postponed for students in full-time education, unless they have reached the age of 29. Military service can include involvement in action against the PKK. Life skills training, such as information on birth control or AIDS, is sometimes given to conscripts along with their military training. It is not uncommonly argued that military service should be abolished in favour of an entirely professional army, that it should be extended to include women, or that it should be possible to do some other form of public service as an alternative to military service. Opportunities have been offered from time to time for men above a certain age (as well as Turks resident and working abroad) to buy out of military service, although
this is too expensive for most citizens, and morally controversial. Depending on their backgrounds and their experience under arms, military service can be assumed to have many and various impacts on young people – for example, with respect to their physical and mental health, their knowledge and skills, their socialisation and social integration, and their attitudes and behaviour. However, such issues are somewhat taboo and have not been studied scientifically. Society regards military service as a kind of rite of passage, completion of which confers a certain prestige and is often considered a precondition for marriage by young women or their families. With respect to the school-to-work transition, it may be observed that: (a) 440,000 men were absent from education and/or the labour market as of July 2011 because they were in military service, alleviating unemployment; (b) military service can interrupt and extend the transition from school to work, especially as men may spend time both waiting for their military service to begin and seeking work; (c) the desire to postpone military service may be a reason why some students are slow to complete university or register for higher degrees; (d) most private employers seek completion of military service as a precondition for appointment to a job, partly because those who leave formal employment to do their military service are entitled to their jobs back or to payment of compensation.

School-to-work policy: The issue of the relevance of education to the labour market is frequently referred to both by politicians and officials and by the private sector. Many initiatives are in place to address it, ranging from the establishment of specialised vocational high schools in conjunction with private companies, private sector organisations and industrial zones to an increase in the support, guidance and training offered by İşkur to job-seekers in the framework of its “active labour market” policies. More generally, the government aims to increase the weight of vocational education at the secondary level - which may require further improvements in the public image of vocational and technical education. It may be useful to pursue all these efforts within the context of an overall strategy or vision, involving collaboration between the authorities responsible for trade & industry, employment/labour markets and education. Links between the education system and employers may need to be strengthened, and room should be made for the initiatives of the private sector, civil society and individual institutions, especially for responding to local conditions. However, the government will also need to commit additional resources. In principle, the syllabus and the quality of schooling should prepare all young people with the skills needed to qualify for good jobs after leaving school. The education system also needs to provide more scope for individual choice, for horizontal and vertical transitions and for second-chance opportunities for education and training in a spirit of life-long learning. Better career counselling services beginning from an early age, and more effective job search assistance could be useful. Arrangements should be made to monitor progress not only in general but also for men and women separately, for the most disadvantaged regions and districts, for young people with disabilities and for other social groups. In this context, research into the economic, cultural or other causes of non-participation in education and work may be needed, and 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 young people find themselves. Against this backdrop, the assumption that employment is the sole aim of education needs to be avoided: it will also retain its importance for socialisation, social inclusion, access to other services and information, social integration and the development of general knowledge and basic skills and competencies for citizenship and daily life.

In ensuring a smooth transition from school to work for all young people, better and more relevant education and training is only one side of the coin. An assessment might also be made of the youth-friendliness of labour market policies including such issues as the availability and quality of on-the-job training and work experience schemes, the appropriacy of different types of contracts which do not infringe the labour rights of new or existing workers, public sector employment practices, and the kind of support available to young persons wishing to set up their own businesses. Last but not least, youth unemployment will not be eliminated easily, as it reflects the failure of the economy to create enough employment to offset the rapid growth of the workforce, particularly given a structural decline in employment in agriculture. Accordingly, policy alternatives need to be considered for job creation, for sharing available employment opportunities between and within generations, and for mitigating the impacts of periods of unemployment on young people’s economic conditions, physical and psychological well-being and long-term prospects.  

7.6 Participation, civil rights and civic engagement: Adolescents and young people are at a time of life when they increasingly expect to have their privacy respected, to be able to take decisions about their own affairs, to obtain information from their own preferred sources, to have and express their own identities and opinions, to try
to influence the world around them, and to join with people of similar views or interests to achieve common goals. From the perspective of society, it is a time when individuals must learn how to co-exist, co-operate and contribute within ever-larger social systems and structures.

In Turkey, as in many other countries, boys and girls are frequently ill-prepared for this stage of their lives. The provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the child's freedom of opinion, expression, thought, conscience, religion, association, peaceful assembly, and privacy are not well known. There is little tradition of seeking and respecting the views of children including adolescents in matters affecting themselves, whether in the family environment or in institutions and the community. Families are mostly patriarchal and hierarchal, and children are discouraged from an early age from having views and expressing opinions, even on issues directly affecting themselves. Decisions about children's schooling are taken for them, not with them. Children are rarely even aware that they are being deprived of their right to a hearing, and come to 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 (A similar situation exists in universities). 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.

Legally, too, children may not be regarded as individuals with freedom of choice. A child’s religion is inscribed in his or her identity card immediately after birth. Relevant laws, such as the Civil Code, the Code of Criminal Procedures and the Law on the Practice of Medicine, do not 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. 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. In its Concluding Observations of June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child called on Turkey to strengthen its efforts to realize the right of the child to be heard, including in the family, in institutions, in legal and administrative proceedings, and in the community. It also recommended awareness-raising and educational programmes on the implementation of this right in order to change traditional perceptions of children as objects rather than subjects of rights.

As adolescence turns to youth, parents may continue to seek to control the professions their children aim at, the friends they bring home and the partners they eventually marry. A survey carried out among 15-24 year-olds by the About Life Foundation (YADA) for the 2008 UNDP National Human Development Report, entitled Youth in Turkey, suggested that only 55 percent were able to participate in decisions about the TV channel to be watched, and only 43 percent had a say on economic matters. The ratios fall significantly for younger age groups and families of lower socio-economic status.

According to the Family Structure Survey carried out by Turkstat and the Directorate General for the Family and Social Research in 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.

The frequent suppression of the right to participation during childhood, adolescence and youth may deprive families, institutions and communities of the support of young people and of the benefit of 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 – may 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.

According to Turkstat's 2010-2011 Life Satisfaction Survey (cited in Turkstat: Youth In Statistics, 2011 pp.124-6), only 22.0% of men and 9.7% of women aged 15-24 declared themselves unequivocally interested in politics. Interest in the economy was put at 26.0% and 16.0% respectively, and interest in environmental issues at 31.0% and 26.0%. Only 5.0% of men and 2.0% of young women had a clear interest in the activities of trades unions or associations. The particularly low level of interest in these issues shown by young women is unsurprising given
the low level of engagement of women of all ages in political and social life - a part of the discrimination and gender inequity which characterises society as a whole.

For those adolescents and young people who nevertheless seek to express themselves on wider platforms and/or influence society – for example, due to their family or social backgrounds - opportunities can be limited. 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 and/or youth assemblies, but these are not well known and vary in their functioning. Political parties and NGOs may also be hierarchical and unaccustomed to reaching to and involving young people while bureaucratic procedures make it difficult for them to establish their own organisations. University students collectively engaging in almost any form of political activity, identity expression or self-defence have faced disciplinary measures including expulsion or even prosecution and imprisonment as terrorists.

Under-eighteens were only given the right to form their own associations under a legislative change made in 2004, and the Law on Associations makes children's membership of associations dependent on parental permission, limits memberships of children to child associations only, and restricts the fields of activity of child associations. In its Concluding Observations of June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child drew attention to the minimum age of 19 to form an organisational committee for outdoor meetings and the extensive bureaucratic procedures in establishing associations, and advised Turkey to amend legislation and procedures so as to remove remaining obstacles to the full enjoyment of the freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Provincial child rights committees, made up of children themselves, constitute an exception to the overall picture of low child participation. These were established with UNICEF support by the General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK – now under the Ministry for the Family and Social Services). 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. They have formed a strong link with the Child Rights Monitoring Committee in Parliament. However, more needs to be done to strengthen their membership and communications, to activate children's clubs in schools, to mainstream adolescent participation and engagement in all sectors and to change the ways in which adults regard these processes. A national strategy for child participation in Turkey was drafted in 2009 under the leadership of SHÇEK, but there has been little progress since then. All in all, a change of attitude is needed if children are to be brought up as holders of civil rights, and if adolescents and young people are to be enabled to play an influential and constructive role in public life.

7.7 Youth policy: 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 provide 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 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. Nevertheless, the UNDP's National Human Development Report for 2008, entitled “Youth in Turkey” and drawn up in close consultation with young people, 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”. 
Youth in the Constitution, Ninth Development Plan and 2012 Annual Programme

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.

2012 Annual Programme:

Problems in the social field such as the weakening of the sense of social belonging and solidarity, the dissolution of families and identity conflicts affect young people the most. Harmful habits such as cigarettes, alcohol and narcotics, violent tendencies and misinformed use of the Internet continue to pose risks to young people… Services for young people need to be more varied and to be provided in such a way as to enable them to take part actively in social life and develop as individuals, and to strengthen their feelings of self-confidence and belonging to society. To this end, the need persists to develop and implement policies and services and to increase coordination among the institutions concerned… In the processes of developing and implementing policies for youth, it is important to develop an approach which takes into account the demands and participation of young people and which emphasises collaboration with youth NGOs… With the establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, it is aimed to improve the services provided to young people in terms of their scope and quality and the number of beneficiaries. The basic aim is to bring up our young people as individuals who possess national and moral values, are equipped with knowledge and experience, have a strong sense of self-confidence and social belonging, take an active part in social life and are aware of their basic rights and freedoms.

Unlike in most other countries, there is as yet no single policy document or other mechanism which would help to coordinate public work for young people. Ideally, a youth policy would set measurable targets for ensuring that all young people including the most disadvantaged have a certain minimum level of well-being, information, work and leisure opportunities, access to social security and all services they may need, and benefit fully from human and civil rights, and so make a healthy transition to adulthood. It would set out the strategies and activities - from awareness raising to the provision of facilities or services, that are needed to achieve these targets, allocate responsibilities and make institutional and budgetary arrangements. Such a policy would need to be developed through a participatory process. This would 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 would also facilitate the collection of the necessary additional data on adolescents and their needs and concerns. However, according to the 2008 UNDP National Human Development Report, Turkey and Poland were the only countries in Europe which did not have national youth councils.

The government’s Annual Programme for 2012 takes both a protective and an empowering approach to youth. It foresees closer coordination among various ministries, local government and civil society organisations in the provision of youth services, notes the need for more opportunities in sports and arts, and aims to strengthen “quality-improving” services, headed by guidance and informal education, for those who are neither in education nor in work. However, the Annual Programme also falls short of promising to develop a youth policy –
notwithstanding earlier expectations of the development of a comprehensive national youth policy under the leadership of the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

In February 2012, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan proposed the goal of a “devout youth” (dindar gençlik), apparently with the vision of religion as a force with which young people can the risks - and possibly the difficulties - which they face. This approach seems to be influencing the nature of activities for young people organised by the Ministry of Youth and Sports as well as the Department of Religious Affairs.

In May 2012, the Ministry of Youth and Sports held a week-long “Youth Assembly” in Ankara – the culmination of a series of regional workshops involving thousands of young government supporters. The Assembly was addressed by the Prime Minister and was to lead to a concluding statement concerning youth policies.
8. Risks and child protection

* Children in Turkey face the risk or reality of many forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, depending partly on their age, sex and social background. The Child Protection Law of 2005 introduced a rights-based approach to child protection, and considerable efforts have been made to implement the Law. However, important deficiencies persist in areas like institutional, financial and human resources, coordination and monitoring. Child protection services are mainly geared to intervention when a violation has occurred, while prevention and early warning systems are undeveloped.

* Most children encounter some form of violence from adults or other children, whether at home, in and around school, or in the community. Girls in particular face a significant risk of sexual abuse and sexual violence. Honour killings and forced suicides continue to be reported. The development of policies against violence has proceeded slowly, with limited monitoring. A renewed effort is needed to ensure that all forms of violence against children are unacceptable throughout society, to ensure identification, reporting and follow-up with the help of better information-sharing and coordination, to empower children and activate complaints mechanisms, and to expand services for victims.

* Turkey has made significant efforts, particularly in recent years, to bring its laws, regulations and practices in the area of justice for children into line with the highest international standards. In terms of implementation, however, the results have been patchy. Many children are still tried in adult courts. A significant number still face very long periods of pre-trial detention. Alternative measures – where used – are not implemented effectively. Conditions in detention still give cause for complaint, and services for child victims require developing further. A greater sense of urgency is required about these issues.

* Some 14,000 children without parental care are living in residential institutions. This figure indicates that policies of deinstitutionalisation through support for families, foster parenting and adoption have made some progress in recent years. Meanwhile, standards have been set for residential institutions and children are being moved to smaller, friendlier types of home. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recommended that Turkey: (a) continue its efforts to improve conditions for children deprived of parental care, in particular by providing more qualified professionals and effective monitoring of conditions for such children; (b) consider an impartial evaluation of the child care system and the de-institutionalization process so far, with a view to identifying both good practices and areas where adjustment may be necessary.

8.1 Child protection challenges and systems: There is ample evidence that a large number of children in Turkey face the risk or reality of one or more form of exploitation, violence, abuse and neglect. Details of some of these forms are provided below or in other sections of this Situation Analysis. A large body of information, ideas and references on missing children, sexual abuse and forced prostitution, children living and working on the street, working children and children in contact with the law, the causes of these problems and the legislation, institutions and systems in place for responding can also be found, for instance, in the report of the Parliamentary Research Committee Established with the Aim of Studying Missing Children and other Problems of which Children are the Victims and Determining the Measures which Need to be Taken (Kayıp Çocuklar Başta Olmak
The risks that girls and boys will be exposed to some form of violence, exploitation or abuse, or to other damaging or unpleasant experiences, are related to social conditions as well as their personal circumstances. While the growth of the economy, the consumer society and the state, the spread of technology and the concentration of the population in urban areas through migration have provided many children and young people with unprecedented access to services, knowledge and opportunities, they have also led to fragile livelihoods, created highly visible inequalities of income and status, weakened family and neighbourhood ties, juxtaposed value systems and created new and unfamiliar physical and digital environments. Life is increasingly competitive and new forms of crime and exploitation have emerged. In some parts of Turkey, social strains are exacerbated further by the effects of ongoing political tensions, violence and terrorism. The phenomenon of children living and working on the street, which drew public attention in the late 1990s and early 2000s, leading to a parliamentary enquiry and the development of new services for children, shows the impact of social factors (internal migration, urban poverty etc.) on the types of risk which children face. It follows that social policies and even political and security policies are of great importance for protecting children.

At the same time, the development of child protection policies, together with new practices and positive social change, can and does enhance children’s protection and resilience. Efforts are being made to improve and expand child protection mechanisms in Turkey not only by developing specific responses to each type of violence, abuse or neglect, but also by integrating and coordinating these systems and linking them to currently-underdeveloped prevention and early identification efforts.

Child protection is not a sector like education or health. The steps taken to protect children and young people from risks, to intervene to stop the infringement of rights and to support those whose protection rights have been infringed may be taken or overseen by authorities in the fields of social services, security, justice, education, health or other sectors. Efforts to protect children and young people nevertheless need to be coordinated to ensure that they are comprehensive, to prevent duplication, and to establish mechanisms whereby services available in one sector can be provided in response to risk situations or individual cases identified by another sector.

The Child Protection Law of 2005 is the major piece of legislation in this area. It sets out procedures for directing children in need of protection to counselling, health services, child care, educational programmes and/or shelter, and makes arrangements for the implementation of such measures. Children in need of protection are defined as those whose physical, mental, moral, social and emotional development and personal security are at risk, who are neglected or abused, or who are victims of crime. The Child Protection Law essentially leaves in place the provisions of the Social Services Law governing matters related to the provision of child care including responsibilities and procedures for the identification of children who may be in need and for the obtention of protection orders. The Child Protection Law also deals with the establishment, duties and authorities of child courts, and security measures to be taken for children forced into crime. In these contexts, it determines the roles and duties of the related government agencies, social workers and probation officers.

A meeting held by the Ministry of Justice at the end of 2009 with the participation of relevant experts in order to evaluate the implementation of the Child Protection Law revealed, in addition to a large number of outstanding issues specifically related to judicial matters (See below), that the envisaged provincial coordination bodies were not meeting regularly or with full participation by all members, that provincial social services directorates lacked resources to carry out new responsibilities including responsibilities for monitoring children at risk, providing counselling and care and issuing social investigation reports, that there was insufficient exchange of information between public agencies, that an early warning system was needed and that social services needed to be
organised at the neighbourhood level (English: http://www.unicef.org.tr/en/knowledge/detail/1117/child-protection-law-4-year-evaluation-meeting-december-2009-meeting-report; Turkish: http://www.unicef.org.tr/tr/knowledge/detail/1116/cocuk-koruma-kanunu-nun-4-yillik-degerlendirme-toplantisi-aralik-2009-toplanti-raporu). More generally, it can be stated that there is a need for more resources, facilities and qualified, fully specialised professionals to implement properly all existing and newly-developed child protection arrangements.

Deficiencies in the implementation of the Child Protection Law have been acted on to some extent. For example, a coordination strategy has been adopted, and an early warning system has been piloted. The establishment of a local-level network of social services centres and experts encompassing all vulnerable families is high on the agenda of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies, which was established in 2011. This Ministry incorporates the former Directorate General for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK, which had previously been responsible for child care and various other social services under Law No.2828 of 1982 – now known as the Social Services Law) -as well as some other state bodies with important roles in social assistance and social issues. It published a regulation on Family Counselling Centres in September 2012.

8.2 Violence and abuse: 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 (UN Study on Violence against Children/World Report on Violence against Children, 2006; UNICEF/Inter-parliamentary union: Eliminating Violence against Children). 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.

In Turkey, as in other countries, violence against children and young people occurs in many contexts including homes, schools, child care institutions, the policing and justice systems, and public places. It is inflicted by children and young people themselves, by adults with responsibilities to children or by strangers. It takes many forms, ranging from physically and emotionally violent discipline in the home to child abuse and sexual violence. Violence and abuse against children and young people cannot be quantified exactly as only a small proportion of cases – usually incidents leading to death or severe injury - are reported and investigated. The summary report of the Research Study on Child Abuse and Domestic Violence in Turkey conducted under the programme of cooperation between the Government of Turkey and UNICEF and published in 2010 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 (http://panel.unicef.org.tr/vera/app/var/files/c/o/cocuk-istismari-raporu-eng.pdf). Aside from violence, child neglect – in some cases linked to factors such as the low level of education of parents and the burden of work on both parents - may be responsible for many accidents and injuries in and around the home and for gaps in the physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of children.

The types of violence encountered vary with age and gender. While boys are more likely to face physical punishments and gang behaviour, for example, girls have a higher risk of sexual abuse and, as they grow older, begin to encounter gender-based domestic violence. Violence against children and young people exists in all parts of society and it is not easy to define those who are most at risk. However, parents with low levels of education may, on average, be quickest to resort to violence against their children. In addition, factors such as unemployment, income poverty, poor housing, disability, family separation and migration may contribute to pressures which put children and young people at greater risk of violence in the family. The same factors may also cause children and young people to spend more time on the street or in informal employment, where they may be exposed to violence from other children, employers or strangers. According to the results of a survey conducted in 2008, 51% of 7-18 year-olds said that they had been subject to emotional violence, 43% to physical violence, 23% to neglect and 3% to some form of sexual abuse within the past one year. The survey (http://panel.unicef.org.tr/vera/app/var/files/c/o/cocuk-istismari-raporu-eng.pdf) 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.

Home and school-based violence: According to the 2006 Family Structure Survey conducted by Turkstat and the Family and Social Research General Directorate (now part of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies), 17% of fathers and 35% 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. In a 2008 survey (UNICEF Turkey/Genar: Türkiye Etkili anne Babalık Eğitimi üzerine bilgi/tutum/beceri araştırması kantitatif sonuçları taslak raporu (draft report on quantitative results of Knowledge-Attitude-Practices survey on Effective Parenting Education), 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”. Turkish proverbs extolling the benefits of violence in disciplining children and apprentices remain in popular use.

Awareness raising and education of parents appears to be one effective way of reducing violence against children in the home. 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.

In schools, corporal punishment is banned but the scope of the ban may need to be made more explicit, and/or its enforcement may need to be improved, since school administrators and teachers are widely believed to resort to varying degrees of violence as a form of discipline, assertion of control or expression of anger. Teachers are not trained in positive disciplining. Cases of violence by teachers and school officials are sometimes reported in the press, but in many cases children and parents may feel unable to complain.

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 2006-7, a parliamentary inquiry held into violent tendencies among children and young people and violence in and around schools found that many children found school environments unsafe (The report is available in Turkish at: http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/arastirma_onergesi_gd.onerge_bilgileri?kanunlar_sira_no=491).

A Strategy and Action Plan for Preventing and Reducing Violence in Educational Environments was adopted by the Ministry of National Education in 2006, covering the period 2006-2011. Various activities were foreseen involving schools, parents, children themselves and members of the local community such as traders and internet café owners. A protocol aimed at ensuring a safer environment in schools was later signed between the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of the Interior, Directorate General of Security (police). In 2012, the Government of Turkey informed the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that there had been a 32% decline in incidents of violence since 2006. It is important to ensure effective monitoring of all kinds of violence in and around primary and secondary schools.

Sexual violence and abuse: In the National Research on Violence against Women in Turkey published in February 2009 by the Directorate General for the Status of Women (now part of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies), 7% 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 Study on Child Abuse and Domestic Violence in Turkey suggests that at least 10% of children between 7 and 18 have been witnesses to some form of
sexual abuse, with at least 1% forced to look at pornographic material and at least 0.5% forced to engage in sexual behaviour such as touching or being touched. More and more cases of child abuse – typically perpetrated by fathers or other older relatives – have been reported in recent years. In 2009, the UNFPA and the Population Association published a report entitled Understanding the Problem of Incest in Turkey giving insights into this phenomenon. 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. As in other countries, incest and child abuse are abhorred – there have been attempts to lynch suspected abusers – yet they appear to occur not infrequently in all parts of society.

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. There have also been allegations and formal complaints of sexual violence and abuse in boarding schools and in detention. The effects of abuse and other forms of sexual violence 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, below). When criminal charges are brought, victims may face disturbing legal proceedings including repeated medical examinations and confrontations with their assailants (see also juvenile justice, below). Babies born as a result of rape or incest may be killed or abandoned or may grow up in very difficult circumstances.

Gender-based violence, honour crimes and forced suicides: Domestic violence against women is widespread. There has been much publicity in recent years about the need for more – and safer - women’s shelters, and about the failure of public authorities to prevent what appears to be a wave of killings by ex-husbands or ex-partners of women who have in many cases left them in order to escape from domestic violence. Girls who marry early, or at a relatively early age, and who lack education and economic independence, may be particularly likely to find themselves affected by domestic violence. A related issue is the custom of honour killings and forced suicides, whereby immediate family members kill women and girls suspected of being unchaste, or force them to commit suicide. Both the victims and the perpetrators of these crimes may be minors. Since 2004, honour killings have been classified 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. Several relevant studies have been conducted. A Population Association/ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/United Nations Development Program (UNDP) study of 2005, although no longer up to date, provides valuable insights into patterns of honour killings. In 2006, Yakın 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. Although data on honour crimes and forced suicides is not collected systematically, a report on the issue published by the Prime Ministry Human Rights Presidency 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% involved children (probably all girls, although this is not specified in the report). 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. There may be a link between urbanisation and the incidence of honour killings, as young women interact more freely with strangers while men seek to hold onto traditional privileges in the face of new hardships.

In spite of tougher sentencing, increased commitment and greater academic attention, honour killings and crimes continue to be reported, with girls under-eighteen among the victims. Particularly alarming are cases, not infrequently reported, where women and girls under threat of honour killings take refuge with public authorities but
cannot be protected or are simply returned to their families. In 2006, the General Directorate for the Status of Women in the Office of the Prime Minister was given responsibility for coordinating the struggle against violence against women. In 2011, the General Directorate later became part of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies. In March 2012, a new Law on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence against Women was adopted setting out roles and responsibilities for protecting women applying to the authorities for protection, and envisaging new protection centres, social assistance and detention for men not abiding by protection orders. Women’s NGOs. Considered the law insufficient (For a brief evaluation, see: http://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/1333026809-1.6284_Sayili_Ailenin_Korunmasi_ve_Kadina_Yonelik_Siddetin_Onlenmesine_Dair_Kanun_Ne_Getiriyor.pdf). In 2011, Turkey also signed and ratified the new Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

**Overall strategy against violence:** The 2006 UN Study on Violence against Children recommended that each state should: explicitly ban all forms of violence against children in all settings and develop a national comprehensive gender-sensitive strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against children, in addition to collecting, analysing and disseminating data and conducting research in this area. The Council of Europe programme “Building a Europe for and with Children” (www.coe.int/children) has drafted guidelines for national strategies in the area of violence against children.

Following a Prime Minister’s directive issued in 2006 on violence against women and children, including honour crimes (Official Gazette No. 26218, July 4 2006), the General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency (SHÇEK) was made responsible for coordinating actions to prevent violence against children given the task of developing an action plan for the prevention of violence against children. In 2011, SHÇEK was restructured under the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies.

Recent research conducted for UNICEF on system responsiveness to violence against children in 2012 identified a number of challenges faced by the child protection system in responding to violence against children ranging from the high social acceptance of violence against children to a lack of standard guidelines for identification, reporting and follow-up, and from reactive (rather than strategic) policy-making to a lack of services for victims. The research also points to gaps in coordination, information management, complaints mechanisms and monitoring. It makes a series of recommendations in all these respects.

**8.3 Children in contact with the law:** The number of children coming into contact with the law appears to have increased rapidly in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and seems still to be increasing, according to the available records. The statistics published by the Judicial Record (Adli Sicil) department of the Ministry of Justice suggest that the number of children going on trial in all kinds of penal courts reached 1,723 per 100,000 head of the child population in 2010 compared to an average of about 1,530 in the preceding five years and 890 as recently as 2001. In 2010, according to the same source, 48,997 12-15 year-old boys, 5,583 12-15 year-old girls, 72,623 16-18 year-old boys and 5,998 16-18 year-old girls went on trial. Records of children received into security units for any reason published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) in cooperation with the ministries of the Interior, Justice and Development suggest a steady increase from 132,592 in 2008 to 203,040 in 2011. Of these, the number alleged to have committed an offence – overwhelmingly boys – rose from 62,430 in 2008 to 84,916 in 2011, while the number of victims – the majority girls – was up from 44,153 to 88,582. Among the juveniles received into security units and alleged to have committed crimes, 51% had been received into security units before, usually more than once, according to the records (http://www.tuik.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT_ID=12&KITAP_ID=46). All these records may require expert interpretation. While more information about the backgrounds of the children in conflict with the law would be welcome, they are observed to come mainly from urban low-income groups. Among these children, there is a relatively high incidence of poor school performance, exposure to violence and/or street life, or substance addiction.
Juvenile justice is an area in which international standards are well developed. In addition to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, relevant standards include the Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), the Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (the Havana Rules), and the Vienna Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System. In 2077, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a general comment (No. 10) on the rights of children in juvenile justice. There is also a United Nations Inter-Agency Panel on Juvenile Justice. The Council of Europe, of which Turkey is a member, adopted the European Rules for Juvenile Offenders subject to Sanctions or Measures in 2008, and has adopted a number of recommendations related to juvenile delinquency and juvenile justice. Between them, these documents set out detailed ground rules for criminal responsibility, the sanctions which may be imposed on children, the procedures to be followed, conditions in detention and all other relevant issues (See, for example, the 2009 Council of Europe document “Children and juvenile justice: proposals for improvements” by Commissioner for Human Rights Thomas Hammarberg at https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1460021#P99_12369).

Since 2005, Turkey has adopted or amended a series of basic laws (Child Protection Law, Penal Code, Law on Criminal Procedures, Law on Enforcement of Criminal and Security Measures and Law on Probation and Help Centres) in such a way as to include more child-specific provisions for juvenile offenders and child victims/witnesses of crime in line with international standards. New child courts and prosecutor offices have been established, and special alternative measures and mediation opportunities have been introduced. Provision has been made for the assignment of experts for child offenders/victims, social inquiry reports and compulsory legal aid. (For more comprehensive analysis, see UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS: Assessment of Juvenile Justice Reform Achievements in Turkey, July 2009 at http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/UNICEF_JJTurkey08.pdf). The age of criminal responsibility has been raised from 11 to 12. For children aged 12-14, criminal responsibility varies depending on the levels of their capacity to perceive the legal meaning and repercussions of their actions and of their ability to control their behaviour. The protective/supportive measures defined by the law may be applied to children under 12 as “child-specific security measures”, and are compulsory for children aged 12-14 found not to be criminally responsible. In 2006, after violent incidents in Southeast Turkey, amendments were made to the Anti-Terrorism Act depriving children aged 15-17 charged under the Act of their rights to benefit from child-specific judicial procedures including trial in child courts and reduced commuted sentences. However, this amendment was effectively reversed in 2010. The Judicial Reform Strategy prepared by Ministry of Justice on 2009 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.

Efforts to protect children’s rights in the justice system are continuing. Under a two-year EU-funded project “Justice for Children”, UNICEF is supporting the Ministry of Justice and the Justice Academy of Turkey to implement fair trial principles, prevent secondary victimization, ensure that deprivation of liberty is used as a measure of last resort, implement specialised and institutionalised in-service training programmes for juvenile justice professionals, and provide individualized quality rehabilitation services to all children deprived of their liberty.

Judicial procedures: Progress has been made in putting all of the recent legislative improvements into effect. In addition, the child units of the Turkish Police and Gendarmerie have continued to operate in a broadly child-friendly manner. There are also an increasing number of active Child Rights Commissions in local Bar Associations. Nevertheless, there remain significant bottlenecks in the implementation of juvenile justice. One of the most obvious of these is the insufficient number of juvenile courts. As of May 2011, there were 59 child courts and 12 child heavy penalty courts in a total of 33 of Turkey’s 81 provinces. The lack of child courts results in children being judged before general courts. In such cases, these courts follow child-specific procedures, but the courts lack specific expertise in juvenile justice and children may not be fully separated from adults. In the east of Turkey, only 8 provinces have at least one child court with a total of 11 child courts and 1 heavy penalty court. In the same way, there are many provinces in which child prosecutor offices have not been established, meaning...
that the specialisation of child prosecutors has not been achieved. Likewise, the role of social workers under courts is not yet fully institutionalised. Further, while the assignment of a lawyer is compulsory for juvenile offenders/victims, incentives for lawyers are insufficient, and the quality of service is not as high as expected, due to a lack of in-service training.

Alternative sentences and probation: The alternative sentences and judicial control remedies foreseen by law are executed by probation services, sometimes in coordination with other government institutions providing relevant services. As of May 2011, 7,179 children were benefiting from probation services including alternative sentences and judicial control. However, the lack of follow-up to court orders concerning minors means that the full potential of alternative measures cannot be experienced and demonstrated nationwide.

Detention periods and numbers of children in detention: The large proportion of children in pre-trial detention is a major source of concern. On the one hand, it has not been possible to implement widely the mediation system and other diversion mechanisms foreseen in the new Criminal Procedures Law and the Child Protection Law. On the other hand, the duration of trials remains very long. The average duration of trial was 414 days in child courts and 502 days in child heavy penalty courts in 2009. As of December 2011, a total of 2,334 children (overwhelmingly boys) were in detention. Of these, 1,924 were in pre-trial detention, 195 were awaiting the results of appeals and 215 had been convicted.

### Distribution of children in prisons and detention houses by age, sex and stage of trial (December 2011)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-trial detention</th>
<th>Awaiting appeal</th>
<th>Convicted</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 12-15</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age 16-18</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1,715</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>1,838</td>
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Source: Written replies of the Government of Turkey to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, April 2012 (http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC_C_TUR_Q_2-3_Add1.pdf)

In addition to children suspected or convicted of crimes, about 300 small children of imprisoned women live in women's prisons along with their mothers. The rights of these children, including the rights to health and development, may be significantly compromised as a result of unmet physical needs and limited opportunities for learning and socialisation. Some of these children are able to attend crèches or child day care centres within or outside the prisons. In December 2011 a protocol was signed between the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of National Education for the provision of free preschool education to children aged 3-5 living in prisons with their mothers.

Conditions in detention: Conditions in detention vary from institution to institution. In some cases, there are complaints of poor physical conditions, overcrowding and understaffing. The government has an ambitious construction programme of detention centres for minors, to avoid current overcrowding and promiscuity – with the risk that better physical infrastructure will lead to an increased resort to detention.

The development and implementation by the Ministry of Justice of various training programmes in recent years has increased understanding of international human rights norms among administrators, wardens and professional staff and enhanced their ability to implement them, thereby improving the treatment of children in detention – although it cannot yet be said that every staff member in contact with children has received such training. In addition, the Ministry has developed a case management model for children deprived of their liberty. This model, now known as the “Individualized Treatment System” (BISIS), aims to specify the individual needs of
every child and should be used to develop and implement an individual plan based on this needs analysis. The system has been piloted in four institutions since 2008, covering approximately 15 per cent of the children who are in detention, and is planned to be expanded nationwide.

Detention centres and penal institutions are visited and inmates are interviewed by Prisons Monitoring Boards and representatives of Bar Associations, in addition to regular administrative inspections and ad hoc inspections by members of provincial and district human rights boards and Parliament’s Human Rights Committee. Nevertheless, reports of violations of the rights of children are not uncommon, and there is a lack of safe and secure channels for reports of abuse, torture or other complaints from children in custody (or under the responsibility of state officials in other contexts). Conditions for children in detention became a major public concern in February 2012 after the media focused on sexual abuse among boys in a detention centre in Pozanti, Adana. As a result, the centre was closed and the boys were transferred to an Ankara detention centre.

Victims and witnesses: To avoid child victims having to testify repeatedly, it is envisaged that children should be asked to make a statement only once, with an expert (medical doctor, psychologist or teacher) present, and that their statements should be recorded on video. The infrastructure needed to implement these procedures is not yet available at all court rooms or police stations where it may be needed, but will be largely developed in 2013-2014 as part of a nationwide EU supported Justice for Children project. Over the past decade, seven university-based child protection centres have been modelled and established throughout Turkey in order to conduct multi-disciplinary examination, expertise and referral of child victims, including as part of judiciary processes. A network of Child Examination Centres (ÇIM) is also being extended, as part of the public health sector’s contribution to these child protection efforts.

8.4 Children without parental care: The care of children deprived of parental care is a leading child rights issue in many countries, where it has been common for children to be brought up in institutions. The rights of children without parental care are set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. In 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (http://www.unicef.org/protection/alternative_care_Guidelines-English.pdf). The Guidelines encourage efforts to maintain children with their families, where possible. When this is not in the child’s best interest, the State is responsible for protecting the rights of the child and ensuring appropriate alternative care: kinship care, foster care, other forms of family-based or family-like care, residential care or supervised independent living arrangements.

Recourse to alternative care should only be made when necessary, and in forms appropriate to promote the child’s wellbeing, aiming to find a stable and safe long term response, including, where possible, reuniting the child with their family. Evidence shows that the quality of alternative care is critical to child well-being. Children in long-term residential care are at risk of impaired cognitive, social and emotional development (particularly for those below the age of three).

In Turkey, children whose parents are deceased or who are unable, unwilling or unfit to look after them, and whose care is not undertaken by suitable relatives, may be placed in residential institutions attached to the Child Services General Directorate of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies (prior to 2011: the Prime Ministry General Directorate for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency). About 14,000 children are currently in the residential care of the General Directorate (Current statistics are available via http://www.cocukhizmetleri.gov.tr). This figure includes about 600 children receiving residential rehabilitation in institutions for children who have been victims of crime, or dragged into crime (but not children detained or sentenced to custodial sentences by courts, who are in Ministry of Justice institutions). According to data provided by the Government of Turkey to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC_C_TUR_Q_2-3_Add1.pdf), the main reasons why children were taken into care in 2011 were “multiple reasons”, “physical and emotional abuse”, “social and economic poverty”, “sexual abuse”, “missing child”, “divorce”, “loss of a parent” and “juvenile delinquency”, in that order. Conditions, facilities and opportunities for children in residential care institutions have
been a source of concern in the past. In recent years, 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”. In addition, it 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 starting to implement these. 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 (including in the affection homes and child houses) - 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. Under the legislation of 2011 establishing the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies, child care services are to be decentralised to the provinces within the next five years.

De-institutionalisation, foster care and adoption: Society has regarded- and to some extent continues to regard - residential child care as a satisfactory way for the state to fulfil its duty towards orphans and towards 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. However, 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. Aware of this, the General Directorate has for several years aimed at reducing the number of children living in institutions both by supporting families so that they can care for their children at home, and by promoting foster care and adoption. There are approximately 10,000 adopted children in Turkey and over 1,000 in paid or voluntary foster care. Clear rules for adoption are set out in the Turkish Civil Code. 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 it is not immediately thought of as an alternative for parents unable to have children of their own. In the case of foster-parenting (paid and voluntary), relations between natural and foster parents can be problematic. 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.

Outstanding issues: 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. Although a system is in place for finding jobs, concern is sometimes expressed about the problems faced by children without parental care who leave residential institutions upon reaching maturity or completing their education. The issue of children who go missing from institutions, and may then find themselves at risk of violence, abuse or exploitation, is raised in public opinion from time to time. 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. More information disaggregated by age group is needed on the reasons why disabled persons are in institutions and the quality of care they receive. These matters may be particularly critical for the mentally disabled.

In its concluding observations of June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Turkey should: (a) continue its efforts to improve the conditions for children deprived of parental care, in particular by providing more qualified professionals and effective monitoring of conditions for such children; (b) consider conducting an impartial evaluation of the child care system and the de-institutionalization process so far, with a view to identifying both good practices and areas where adjustment may be necessary. It also drew attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children annexed to the United Nations General Assembly resolution 64/142 of December 20, 2009.
9. Disadvantaged child and youth populations

* Children and young people belonging to certain population groups face an especially high risk of rights abuses, deprivation and/or social exclusion. A greater policy focus on these groups could be the quickest way to ensure more equitable access to rights and opportunities.

* Despite commitment from the government, boys and girls at risk of disability – and especially those from poor backgrounds - are still often unable to benefit fully from their rights in the same way as, and alongside, their peers. Key requirements are: changes in social norms and attitudes concerning the rights and potentials of persons with all kinds of disability and their integration into society; improved systems for identification, data and monitoring; more comprehensive social services and social protection; a renewed drive for inclusive education, and improvements in physical access in all settings.

* Children and young people in underdeveloped regions and rural areas are clearly disadvantaged with respect to nutrition, health and education outcomes, services and opportunities. They may also be deprived or at risk in other ways. However, no specific policies have been devised for ensuring their rights and well-being.

* In addition to poverty and lack of social security, children and young people in poor urban areas face a series of disadvantages, threats and risks specific to city life and the urban environment. The needs of children and young people may vary significantly from one poor urban area to another.

* Children and young people from Roma populations live in difficult conditions and face especially high barriers in accessing their rights and fulfilling their potentials. As experience in neighbouring countries has shown, their social inclusion will require a major, multi-sectoral effort. However, Turkey has remained reluctant to adopt specific policies or collect specific data for any ethnic group.

* Children and young people living amid the political tensions and violence in Southeast Turkey experience psychological stresses and a significant risk of physical injury, in addition to material deprivation and inequity in public services. Many come into conflict with the law and some are recruited by the PKK, which frequently leads to a violent death. Only piecemeal activities are being carried out to improve the lives of these children and young people.

* Some children and young people among those applying to the UNHCR for refugee status receive social assistance and health care and are able to attend school, but opportunities and conditions for others are much less favourable. Children and young people also make up a high proportion of the irregular migrants who are frequently intercepted - and sometimes lose their lives - seeking to enter Europe via Turkey.

It is clear from all sections of this Situation Analysis that not all children and young people have the same chances of enjoying their rights. In many respects, girls are disadvantaged compared to boys. They are less likely to enjoy their rights to education, leisure, information, and full participation in society, and more vulnerable to all forms of sexual violence. Boys are more likely to face some other forms of violence and exploitation and to be involved in accidents, addictions and conflict with the law. This section focuses on the situation of specific populations of children and young people the members of which are especially unlikely to benefit from some or all of their rights. These are: children and young people with disabilities; children and young people living in rural areas, underdeveloped regions or poor urban settings; children and young people growing up amid political violence;
Roma children and youth, and young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. These populations overlap, and children and young people who fall into more than one of them are likely to be especially disadvantaged. Prioritising the rights of these populations would be the quickest path to the more equitable achievement of child and youth rights and well-being. In most cases, however, specific policies and programmes are not currently in force, at either sectoral or cross-sectoral level.

9.1 Children and young people experiencing disability: Today, it is recognised all persons can experience disability at some time in their lives, and that persons are disabled as much by environmental and social conditions and perceptions as by their own personal characteristics. The 2011 ‘World report on disability’, produced jointly by WHO and the World Bank, (http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/en/index.htm) suggests that more than a billion people in the world experience disability. People with disabilities have generally poorer health, lower education achievements, fewer economic opportunities and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities. This is largely due to the lack of services available to them and the many obstacles they face in their everyday lives. In Turkey, too, many people experience disability, although statistics may be old or incomplete. Congenital malformation due to consanguinal marriages is just one of the causes. According to the Disability Survey conducted by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) in 2002, which focused mainly on severe forms of disability, 2.6 per cent of the population was disabled and 9.7 per cent had a permanent illness. Of the persons included in the National Disabled People Database in 2010, 29% were intellectually disabled, 26% had chronic illnesses, 18% had multiple disabilities, 9% were orthopedically disabled, 8.4% were visually disabled, 6% had hearing impairments, 3.9% were mentally and emotionally disabled and 0.2% had language and speech impairments. Males made up 58.6% of the registered disabled individuals and females 41.4%.

Legislation and provision: Article 61 of the Constitution states that “The State shall take measures to protect the disabled and secure their integration into community life”. Turkey is also a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which sets out the rights of disabled persons in detail (http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=14&pid=150). Article 7 of the Convention states that state parties should take all necessary measures to ensure the full enjoyment by children with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other children. Parliament ratified the Convention in December 2008. Accordingly, Turkey is obliged to report periodically to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on measures taken to uphold the rights of disabled persons and progress made in this regard. In addition, Turkey has signed, but not ratified, the optional protocol to the Convention, which permits citizens to contact the UN Committee directly if they feel they have been victims of a violation of the Convention.

Legislation on services for children with disabilities was first passed in 1997. This legislation was updated in 2005, through Law No. 5378, making special education and rehabilitation services available for children with or without health insurance, and providing for the provision of such services by the private sector, subsidised by the state. In practice, the education and health systems provide for children, young people and other persons with disabilities in various ways. Very significant provision is available in some cases - such as life-long medical expenses for some severe congenital conditions resulting in disabilities. Meanwhile public offices and large workplaces are obliged to employ a certain proportion of disabled persons. The Ninth National Development Plan foresees that “Social and physical environmental conditions will be improved to increase the participation of the disabled in the economic and social life. In this regard, special education opportunities and protective work places, where the working environment is organized accordingly, will be developed.” In 2011, the national government department for the disabled, the Disability Administration (Özida) was included in the new Ministry for the Family and Social Policies along with the Directorate General for Social Services and the Child Protection Agency and the Social Assistance and Solidarity General Directorate. Accordingly, a single ministry is now responsible for the various social services for disabled persons and their families – such as home and residential care for disabled persons and Care, Rehabilitation and Family Counselling Centres in most provinces - and for social assistance, which includes assistance for disabled persons and carers. One of the five general directorates of the Ministry is the Directorate General for Services for the Disabled and the Aged. This restructuring has given disabled persons
including children a stronger champion in government and raised the profile of social assistance and services for the disabled. Turkey is currently participating in the International Inspiration project, linked to the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, which aims to use high quality and inclusive physical education, sport and play to enrich the lives of children and young people including those facing disability.

**Outstanding issues:** Despite these favourable factors, provision for the disabled - whether in social services and assistance or in other sectors - may not be adequate or may not reach children and adolescents with all kinds of disability everywhere. Moreover, the avowed goal of integrating the disabled into the community (e.g.: through home care and mixed schooling) may not be sufficiently attained. One problem is with the certification of persons with disabilities, including children and young people, so that they and their families can be provided with assistance, services and care. Screening for some conditions is routinely carried out at birth, but children with less severe forms of disability or developmental delay may be diagnosed late or not at all, due to insufficient capacity of primary health care providers in this area. The standard Disability Form/Report is only notionally based on the International Classification of Functioning (ICF), is categorical rather than functionally oriented, and has not been designed for children.

**Identifying development delays**

With the rapid decline in under-five mortality, it is likely that a significant proportion of the extra children who are surviving infancy are under high biological risk for developmental delays. UNICEF, WHO and other international organizations recognize that developmental difficulties in children are a leading cause of morbidity and impose economic and social burdens on families, countries and societies. As in other high and middle income countries, approximately 15% of all young children in Turkey are thought to have a developmental difficulty that places them at risk of suboptimal functioning or disability.

The health care system includes preventive efforts targeting, for example, iron and iodine deficiencies and screening for metabolic and endocrine disorders. However, these are uncoordinated and non-comprehensive, and the methods used may be out of date. Moreover, health care staff are not routinely trained for developmental surveillance and are not equipped with information on the management of cases that are identified.

The diagnosis of disabilities does not follow a comprehensive “medical home” model, and developmentally based, functional assessments that include family-centered approaches and issues related to activities and participation are not in use. The current standard diagnostic framework International Classification of Functioning Children and Youth (ICF-CY, WHO 2007) is also rarely used. Following diagnosis, many children are given centre-based, professional-driven special education and rehabilitation based on out-dated behaviour-modification techniques. Families are rarely included and empowered by the training. Waiting lists for diagnoses particularly for cognitive and mental health problems are extensive and may delay children and families as long as six months.

Nevertheless, pioneering work is being carried out to detect disabilities and developmental difficulties at an early age and respond to them. Development paediatrics has been acknowledged as a sub-specialisation in the medical system, and development paediatric units, initially piloted by Ankara University, have been established in the seven largest hospitals, with the provision of corresponding training. These units seek to identify and address outstanding or emerging health issues through comprehensive, innovative and holistic approaches. This work needs to be expanded and fully integrated into the health care system.

In education, official policy is to mainstream but despite improvements children with disabilities may still not be integrated into the education system to the maximum extent possible, for reasons including poverty and physical access issues, a measure of continuing separation within the education system, and low parental and societal expectations. Most children identified as having special educational needs (76,204 children in the 2009-10 academic year) are educated alongside their peers – although teachers may need more training and support. Others (15,712 in the 2009-10 academic year) are educated in special education classes in regular schools and
about 26,000 attend special education schools or are educated in special education classes within primary education schools (Education Reform Initiative (ERI): Türkiye'de Kayınlaştırma/Bütünleştirmeye Yolculuğum Estimin Durumun [Situation of Education through Mainstreaming/Inclusion in Turkey], and Ministry of National Education Formal Education Statistics. See also section 6 of this Situation Analysis, on education). Data on the numbers of disabled children attending special education schools is not disaggregated by age. Another issue raised from time to time is the quality of care of the mentally disabled in institutions, which serve both adults and children.

Issues of physical access raise serious problems for disabled persons of all ages, especially in crowded and chaotic urban areas. This issue is one of those clearly raised in the Turkstat survey on “Difficulties and Expectations of Disabled Population” in 2010. In 2005, a deadline of 2012 was set for public buildings and public transport to meet certain standards in respect of access for the disabled, but the deadline was later postponed until 2013 after it appeared unlikely to be met in most cases.

Social norms and attitudes: Social norms and the attitudes and limited knowledge of families can also prevent disabled children from reaching their full potential. In extreme cases, there is anecdotal evidence of families seeking to conceal their disabled children; in many more cases, they are likely to have low expectations, and/or to be over-protective. Girls especially may risk being excluded from educational, social and leisure opportunities for these reasons. According to reports published in July 2012, 70% of respondents to a survey do not want to have neighbours with any disability, 57.3% prefer disabled children to attend separate schools and 80% supported home-based employment for the disabled. The reports were based on a survey carried out with the support of the Sabancı Foundation, which has conducted and sponsored much work on disability. The findings indicate that people discriminate against the disabled even while trying to imagine favourable arrangements for them.

Responding to an Özida survey in 2010 (http://www.ozida.gov.tr/ayrimciliklamucadele/eng/report_full.pdf), many disabled persons complained of discrimination, including by public officials (See also Istanbul Bilgi University Human Rights Implementation and Research Centre: Türkiye’de Engelliğin İzlenmesi Raporu [Monitoring Report on Discrimination on the Basis of Disability in Turkey, 2010]). Although the survey did not include children, both children and young people are undoubtedly among those affected by these attitudes.

Policy development: The Ministry for the Family and Social Policies is aware of the need to address disability from a social inclusion perspective. One of its aims is to bring about attitude change through evidence-based communications activities aimed at fighting misperceptions and promoting inclusion on individuals/children with disabilities. Research is therefore envisaged on the current status of disabled children in social life including the knowledge, attitudes and practices of duty-bearers. Meanwhile, the Ministry will be holding a Disability Congress in December 2012, and various studies are to be made of disabled children in education and of links between child poverty and disability. As a result of these efforts, it is anticipated that the authorities will be able to identify barriers which families with children with disabilities experience in accessing quality services and assistance, and develop policies for overcoming them, as well as enhancing the inclusion of children with disabilities in all areas of life. The implementation of these policies within a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach will require appropriate budgeting, effective and open monitoring and strong coordination among various sectors headed by health, education and social services. Communication and social mobilization efforts will also need to be pursued further.

9.2 Children and young people in underdeveloped regions and rural areas: It is no secret that Turkey displays striking inequalities among its regions, and between urban and rural areas. What is less frequently recognised is that children are among the worst affected by these inequalities.

Underdeveloped regions: Turkstat data for the 26 “level 2” statistical regions shows that per capita national income in 2008 ranged from US$14,591 in Istanbul to US$3,419 in the Eastern region comprising Van, Muş, Bitlis and Hakkari. Employment and social security data also indicate that a far smaller proportion of the population are in regular employment in the Eastern and Southeastern provinces than in western provinces. In general, people
have a relatively low level of education, and dynamic elements among the population may have left for other parts of the country. Although the state has brought infrastructure and basic services to all parts of the country, differences in the quantity and quality of these appear to accentuate the regional differences in economic conditions. Power cuts may be more frequent, for example, streets less well surfaced and lit, and turnover among teachers or health staff higher.

The 2008 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), dividing Turkey into five regions, put the infant mortality rate at 16 per 1,000 live births in the “West” region and 39 in the “East” region (For the 1998-2008 period, under-five mortality was 50 per 1,000 live births in the “East” compared to a national average of 33). The rate of stunting (significantly low height for age) among young children was 20.9% in the “East” compared to 7.6% in the “West”, while only 60% of two year-olds in the “East” were fully immunised compared to a national average of 74%. The same survey showed that only 79% of mothers received medical guidance and care before birth in the “East”, which was thirteen percentage points below the national average, that only 74% of births in the “East” were assisted – seventeen percentage points below the national average - and that only 33% of mothers in the “East” receive assistance from a doctor (rather than a nurse or midwife) during birth. These statistics are following an improving trend, but discrepancies undoubtedly remain today. For 2010, the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) put infant mortality in 2012 at 14-16 per 1,000 in three of the twelve “level three” statistical regions: Northeast Anatolia, Central East Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia. Indicators for children’s education generally point both to lower provision and lower performance in eastern regions. Teachers may be inexperienced and teacher absenteeism high. Net secondary school enrolment in the 2010-11 school year was 80-90% in many provinces in Western Turkey but as low as 30-40% in some Eastern provinces, with enrolment among boys often running much higher than enrolment among girls. Eastern provinces have tended to produce fewer candidates for the university entrance examination, relative to their populations of young people, and have lower success rates. Young people growing up in these regions are clearly disadvantaged in terms of professional and other opportunities.

Rural areas: Based on official population data, just over 16% of the population lives in places outside municipal boundaries, as of the end of 2011. The proportion is probably slightly higher for children (but not for young people over 18). In these rural areas, employment is concentrated in agriculture where rewards are low and few people earn pensions. Turkstat’s annual Household Budget Survey for 2011 indicated that average monthly consumer expenditure per household was TL2,364 in urban areas but only TL1,547 in rural areas (defined in this case as towns or villages with a population of up to 20,000). Levels of education are below the national average, young people may be migrating to urban areas, and infrastructure and services may be limited or may not always reach the more remote settlements. The 2008 Demographic and Health survey shows that almost a quarter of rural households still use unimproved sanitation facilities. Half (50.15%) of under-fifteens living in rural areas were in “food and non-food poverty” in 2009, according to Turkstat. In the 1999-2008 period, under-five mortality was 43 per 1,000 in rural areas, according to the 2008 DHS, compared to a national average of 33. Full immunisation among two year-olds was 60% compared to a national average of 74%. Ensuring de facto access to health services and formal education remains a challenge, notwithstanding conditional cash transfers, the “green card”/universal health insurance systems, the use of bussing and weekly boarding schools and other efforts of relevant government ministries and local authorities.

The boundaries between rural and urban areas are not always easy to define, and some rural areas may be relatively prosperous due to intensive agriculture, tourism or proximity to major cities. Nevertheless, a needs assessment of rural children and young people might well find a fairly common profile for each gender and age group. Key elements would probably include poor diet or malnutrition, imperfect parenting and lack of ECD services, problems of housing, hygiene and infrastructure, a variety of risks specific to rural areas (such as the risks of drowning in lakes, rivers or irrigation canals, or diseases associated with animals like Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever), family labour in agriculture from an early age, and limited opportunities for education, socialisation, technology use or personal development through arts, sports, leisure, travel etc.
Public policy: 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 are primarily geared towards infrastructure or promoting private enterprise, and they do not highlight child poverty or other children's issues, or the problems of young people. On the other hand, improvements in national policies affecting children and young people tend to reach the underdeveloped regions last. This is very likely to be the case, for example, with compulsory secondary education, which has been introduced for the first time in the 2012-13 school year.

Policy options: The needs of children in underdeveloped regions are diverse, as these regions differ among and within themselves with respect to climate and geography, population density, distance from major centres, ethnic and cultural factors, fertility rates, migration trends, the degree of urbanisation and similar indicators. Accordingly, ways need to be found to integrate goals, indicators and programmes related to children and young people into the work of regional development administrations and provincial, municipal and village authorities, and to spread good practice in this area. At the same time, national government ministries with responsibilities for health, education, social assistance and services, youth, development etc. need to increase their focus on equity as a guiding principle, and in this light review existing policies and establish new procedures for ensuring equitable access to protection and services for families and children in those places where these are least available.

For children and/or young people in rural areas, special programmes might be considered, given the common issues which they face and their otherwise very low claim on resources. Although the Ministry of Agriculture and Village Affairs was renamed the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock in 2011, it remains coordinator of the multi-sectoral Rural Development Plan for 2010-2013, and the Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution (TKDK), which manages EU “IPARD” funds earmarked for this purpose, continues to operate under this Ministry.


Children or young persons in poor urban areas of Turkey face some of the same difficulties as poor children in rural areas, as well as many different ones. Their parents too are likely to have low incomes and low levels of education, and may not always be able to meet their basic needs, including adequate accommodation and a balanced diet. Employment in poor urban areas is often casual and unpredictable, creating an additional dimension of insecurity; the Turkey Welfare Monitoring Study sponsored jointly by TEPAV, UNICEF and the World Bank during the 2009 recession showed that the income of poor urban households had fallen, that they were reducing food expenditures and that a significant number had become indebted and/or lost access to gas, electricity and water supplies due to unpaid bills (http://www.unicef.org.tr/en/content/article/319/2009-09-29-economic-crisis-affecting-the-welfare-of-families-in-turkey.htm or, in Turkish, http://www.unicef.org.tr/tr/content/article/318/2009-09-29-ekonomik-kriz-turkiye-de-ailelerin-refahini-etkiliyor.html).

Although most parents place a high value on education, some children are still obliged to work from an early age in family enterprises like shops or restaurants, on the street or in small workshops and similar places (As a result of migration to the cities, a part of the seasonal migratory agricultural labour force, including children, is also now normally resident in urban areas). While sanitation, utilities, public transport, ECD services, leisure facilities and access to the Internet, for example, are more widely available in poor urban areas than in rural areas, poor children and young people are unable to benefit, or unable to benefit fully, due to the costs involved. Safe places to walk and play may be hard to find due to traffic and construction work. Pollution and noise may pose health risks. Such environments are particularly unsuitable for disabled persons. Urban infrastructure and public services have not always kept pace with the growth of the population, particularly in districts affected by rapid migration.
from rural areas or other parts of the country. Accordingly, while children in rural areas may attend school in classes made up of children of different grades (which teachers are generally not well prepared to teach), children in poor urban areas may find themselves in classes of 50 or more children, and in schools which operate on a two-shift system, with some attending in the morning and others in the afternoon. Depending on their age and gender, children and young people from poor urban areas face the greatest risk of street life, conflict with the law, addictions and other risk behaviour, and violence and abuse by strangers.

Most districts of cities and towns in poor regions and provinces, and many districts of even the most prosperous cities can be described as poor urban areas. Physically, they may consist of shanty-town dwellings, older houses or apartment buildings, or even new but cheap and/or overcrowded blocks of flats. They may be run-down inner-city districts facing demolition under the government’s giant “urban transformation” project, or districts far removed from the city centre. In some cases, the populations still consist largely of relatively new migrants who are still learning to adapt to urban conditions. The populations of poor urban districts also differ in terms of their ethnic composition, family size and sources of income, all of which affect the challenges which the children and young people face. In view of all these variations, policies for supporting poor urban communities and their children are best determined by local authorities on the basis of local and participatory needs analysis.

9.4 Roma children and young people: As population data (like most other data) in Turkey is never broken down by ethnic group in Turkey, the total numbers of the Roma are unknown. They have been estimated at anywhere between 0.5 million and 2.5 million. Some of the Roma may still lead a partly rural and/or nomadic life, working in agriculture or other often-seasonal work, or moving from place to sell various goods. The great majority, however, appear to have a settled life-style, making up a section of the urban poor in Edirne, Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Ankara and numerous other Turkish cities. For the most part, at least, they speak Turkish and espouse Islam, but still retain, to a degree, their own customs, habits, values and tastes. There are also understood to be communities of Dom and Lom in southeast and northeast Turkey respectively.

Typically, the Roma are concentrated in those neighbourhoods of the cities where they live, either central or outlying, with the worst reputations for crime and disorder. Here, housing may be overcrowded and unsanitary, roads and other infrastructure may be poor, and public buildings and services may be limited and of low quality. Some of these neighbourhoods have been - and more are likely to be - affected by urban renewal projects.
causing displacement and new patterns of hardship. An early urban redevelopment scheme resulted in the displacement of an old Roma community from Istanbul’s Sulukule neighbourhood from the late 1990s onwards.

The exclusion of the Roma is compounded by the fact that many of their traditional skills have been made obsolete by modern technology or life-styles, adding to their impoverishment and trapping them in marginal professions like dealing in scrap metal and plastic, collection of paper and other waste, street-hawking, shoe-shining, portering, casual labour in small businesses like bakeries or tanneries, flower-selling, cleaning and housekeeping or performing music in bars.

Roma have difficulty leaving their neighbourhoods, entering into public life, taking up public services and approaching public authorities due to their poverty and low levels of education, lack of information and social skills and the likelihood of discriminatory treatment by public officials, professionals, potential employers and others. The Turkish word çingene (gypsy) has numerous negative connotations. Citizens frequently assume others living in the same neighbourhoods as the Roma, as well as beggars and thieves, to be çingene. Those members of Roma communities whose circumstances improve may tend to leave their communities and conceal their identities.

These conditions have serious implications for Roma children and young people. They may be at extra risk of missing out on birth registration, timely school enrolment, immunization or basic health care. The poverty of Roma children may be compounded by large family size, and they may be expected or obliged to work – often on the street and/or after dark – in order to earn income for their families. In some cases, their living and working conditions may increase the risk of health problems and addictions. Childhood and adulthood are not clearly separated among the Roma, and work and marriage traditionally come early, especially - but not exclusively - for girls.

Roma have little experience of the benefits of formal education and may not, in the last resort, be able to prioritise it for their sons and daughters. Outside the entertainment industry, they have no successful role models. In education, as in other areas, data is not collected on the basis of ethnic group in Turkey, which makes it impossible to state the level of non-enrolment, late enrolment, irregular attendance or drop-out among Roma children - or to monitor any improvement or deterioration over time. Nevertheless, Roma children are believed to be among the children with the lowest school participation. This has become clear during efforts to ensure 100% enrolment in primary education – for example, with the aid of catch-up education. The forthcoming country report on Turkey drawn up under the international Out Of School Children initiative coordinated by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute of Statistics cites a field study conducted from July 2006 to January 2008 (Marsh et.al., Eşitsiz Vatandaşlık: Türkiye Çingenelerinin Karşılaştığı Hak İhlalleri [Unequal Citizenship: Right Violations facing Gypsies of Turkey], 2008) to the effect that the Roma are the group with the lowest levels of educational attainment, school enrolment and literacy rates. This is attributed to inadequate financial resources, prejudices and low expectations in schools. Early marriage and child labour are other likely causes.

Ensuring Roma participation in education is important for realising not only the right to education but also the other rights of these children. However, Roma children may have more difficulty than other poor children when it comes to fitting in with school rules, socialising, attending regularly and on time, passing classes and transiting to the next level of education (Displacement by urban renewal schemes may also affect school enrolment and attendance). School managers and teachers are not sensitised to these issues. Some may themselves be prejudiced and discriminate against the Roma children. Schools in Roma neighbourhoods may not be well maintained and equipped.

In recent years – and especially with the Sulukule affair - Roma associations and other organisations have been drawing attention to the Roma and the issues which they face. 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. This would require Turkey to adopt and implement a plan for tackling the
problems of exclusion in the areas of health, housing, employment and education (The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies encourages non-EU countries including Turkey to develop a similar strategy and action plan with concrete targets). However, the government has not replied positively. Although the Prime Minister addressed a large gathering of Roma citizens in Istanbul on March 14th 2010, promising a “Roma opening”, no government programmes were developed as a result.

In 2011, the Ministry of National Education held two participatory workshops to identify the bottlenecks Roma children face in education systems and accordingly develop an action plan to mitigate the impact of poverty on the participation and performance of Roma children in education. This was an innovatory step which followed on from work on access to education, supported by UNICEF, which highlighted the likelihood for Roma children to be out of school. However, the action plan was not then clarified, finalised or implemented.

In these circumstances, the limited efforts which are being made to raise Roma issues, improve the daily living conditions of the Roma and assist their children to study are mainly carried out by local municipalities, neighbourhood officials (muhtar) or civil society. Most Roma associations have very limited resources and capacity.

There is limited data, especially quantitative data on the Roma and similar groups in Turkey, and on the issues which they and their children face. However, existing studies include: (i) Edirne Roma Association (EDROM)/European Roma Rights Centre/Helsinki Citizen’s Assembly: We are here! Discriminatory exclusion and struggle for rights of Roma in Turkey, 2008, and (ii) Başak Ekim Akkan, Mehmet Baki Deniz, Mehmet Ertan & Başak Erel: Poverty and Social Exclusion of Roma in Turkey, November 2011 (available at http://www.szf.boun.edu.tr/content_files/Roman_Kitap_ENG.pdf, or in Turkish at http://www.szf.boun.edu.tr/content_files/Roman_Kitap_TR.pdf), published by Edirne Roma Association (EDROM), Bogazici (Bosphorus) University Social Policy Forum and Anadolu Kültür as part of the EU- and Sweden-supported Project for Developing Comprehensive Social Policies for Roma Communities.

9.5 Children and young people growing up amid political violence: Children growing up in those provinces, cities, districts and neighbourhoods of East and Southeast Turkey which are most intensively affected by terrorism, military and police activity and/or civil unrest face specific risks, and experience specific disadvantages, which seriously threaten their access to almost all of their rights and are likely to have long-term effects on their well-being.

Physical risks which children in urban and/or rural areas face include bomb explosions, cross-fire, landmines and accidents involving unexploded munitions. Incidents of these kinds which result in death or serious injury are reported in the Turkish media at least once a month. As state institutions, schools are occasionally targeted in acts of terrorism, putting children’s lives at risk. Several of the 34 civilians killed in the Uludere incident of December 2011, in which Turkish jets attacked villagers engaged in border trade/smuggling, apparently after mistaking them for terrorists, were reported to be boys under the age of 18. Children in these most-affected locations are also more likely than children in other regions to witness acts of warfare, terrorism, violence during demonstrations or other kinds of violence at first hand, to live lives circumscribed by security concerns, to suffer the loss of loved ones – or be separated from them for one reason or another - and to be exposed to heated political debate, hatred, political funerals and similar disturbing discourses and events. All these circumstances have potential implications for their psychological well-being. Children of, or related to, security and other personnel employed in the region may experience similar cases.

Among all Turkey’s children, boys and girls growing up in the places most affected by political violence experience some of the deepest poverty and deprivation. Economically, the conflict has contributed to the loss of countless rural livelihoods since the 1990s. Investment has been discouraged, exacerbating development deficits caused by geography and history, low levels
of education and high fertility rates. Public services are affected too. In the case of education, some schools have been targeted by the violence; others have had to be closed from time for security reasons. Teachers are often inexperienced, unprepared or absent, and there is a high turnover of staff. Economic conditions, poor school performance and inadequate facilities may combine to reduce incentives for continuing with one’s education. Yet a strong basic education system is vital for children in a region where preschool education is generally inaccessible, where children may start school with minimal knowledge of the language of education, and where girls face discriminatory norms, and in some cases early or forced marriage and the threat of honour crimes.

Children and young people in the same areas frequently take part in demonstrations/riots (the so-called “stone-throwing children”). This exposes them to accidents and injuries, police violence and possible detention and trial on heavy charges with long periods of pre-trial detention. There have been cases of children dying as a result of missiles used by one side or the other during demonstrations. Adolescent boys are most likely to be involved. A high proportion of children in conflict with the law in Turkey are apprehended on such occasions. Prosecutors may regard the children as terrorists and demand very long sentences. Conditions during arrest and detention may also be worse than in other parts of the country.

Young people in the places most intensively affected by the political violence can also be recruited into the PKK. A study of the backgrounds of 1,362 PKK militants who lost their lives between 2001 and 2011 suggests that recruitment begins before the age of eighteen (contrary to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on Children in Armed Conflict, to which Turkey is a party), and that while the majority of recruits are boys, some of the youngest are girls. The study (http://www.tepav.org.tr/upload/files/haber/1330518344-5.RESEARCH_RESULTS.pdf) was carried out by Nihat Ali Özcan, an analyst with the Ankara-based think-tank TEPAV, and presented to the Human Rights Committee of Parliament in early 2012. Recruitment into the PKK brings with it a very high probability of death in action. Children can also be used as bombers, couriers and human shields.

Of the above issues, those related to political tensions, violent demonstrations and PKK recruitment may additionally affect children who live in neighbourhoods with high concentrations of Kurdish migrants in cities and towns outside the East and Southeast. Such migrants are in some cases politically radicalised and/or regarded with suspicion or enmity by other citizens or groups.

There is a lack of research concerning how these challenges are experienced and how families and children try to overcome or mitigate them. Security agencies and other public authorities have responded with information campaigns, cultural and social activities, trips and excursions and outreach to families (See the written replies of the Government of Turkey to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child of March 2012, paragraphs 106-110 at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC_C_TUR_Q_2-3_Add1.pdf). However, the impact of such activities and the effectiveness in this regard of other public services has not been measured.

Children were also among the first to be affected by tensions on the Turkey-Syria border. Four children from the town of Akçakale in Şanlıurfa were killed by Syrian artillery in September 2012.

9.6 Young migrants, refugees and asylum seekers:
As of March 2012, there were 211,473 foreign citizens living in Turkey with residence permits. Of these, 20,740 held work permits, 31,282 were students and the remainder were allowed to live in Turkey as spouses, relatives, dependents, retirees and so on. 48% of the resident permit-holders were from “Europe” and 44% from “Asia”.
However, these foreign residents make up only a small part of a large and fluctuating foreign population. In 2011, over 29 million foreigners entered the country at ports, airports and border crossings, and a similar number departed. While the vast majority were foreign holiday-makers on short-term visits, the figure also includes business and commercial travellers, people from neighbouring and other countries with relatives and friends in Turkey, and an unknown number of foreigners from the Caucasus, Russia, other parts of the former Soviet Union and other countries who work temporarily and/or informally either as domestic servants or in industry, construction, entertainment and other service sectors (Press reports of June 2012 gave figure of 200,000 such workers, citing a report of the Istanbul Chamber of Certified Public Accountants – İSMMMO; Turkey does not require visas for short term visits by citizens of many countries, including countries in Europe, the Middle East and Asia). Foreigners also travel to Turkey to escape political or economic conditions in their own countries, sometimes without using official border points, and often with a view to eventual residence in other countries. Under international law, Turkey is responsible for upholding the human rights of all these foreigners permanently or temporarily on its territory. In the case of children, 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”, as well as to provide special protection and humanitarian assistance to refugee children including those separated from their families.

**Children among mass migrants – the Syria crisis**

In the past, Turkey has generously opened its borders and supported very large population groups fleeing violence or persecution in neighbouring Bulgaria and Iraq. From May 2011 onwards, tens of thousands of Syrians fleeing the violence in Syria have been allowed to enter Turkey. While some are staying with relatives or otherwise fending for themselves, the great majority are being accommodated in specially-constructed camps in several border provinces. As of October 2012, the total number of Syrians accommodated in a total of fourteen camps in seven provinces had surpassed 100,000, and another two camps were under construction. About a third of the inhabitants of the camps were children. Thanks to the efforts of the Prime Ministry Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency (AFAD), line ministries and other government organisations, and the Turkish Red Crescent, the “guests” were being provided with accommodation in the form of containers or tents, complete with sanitary facilities, adequate food and drink, health care facilities, schooling for children and other services. Turkey was also distributing food and other basic needs to thousands of Syrians gathered on the Syrian side of the border. Turkish spending on the emergency so far was put at over 500,000 US dollars.

**Irregular migration and trafficking:** Foreigners working in Turkey informally cannot benefit from social security and the protection of labour laws, and may be unable to access health services or other public services. Language barriers affect their access to information and culture. The population of informally-employed foreigners can be assumed to include a high proportion of young people, as well as parents who have left children behind in their countries of origin.

Hundreds of young women are known to be trafficked to Turkey annually, mainly from ex-Soviet countries, as forced prostitutes. Girls under eighteen are sometimes involved. The International Organisation for Migration works with the General Directorate of Security (police) and other Turkish institutions (such as the Ministry of Health) to prevent human trafficking and identify and assist victims. Human trafficking is specifically prohibited by the Turkish Penal Code.

Young people and children make up a significant proportion of the irregular migrants who cross Turkish territory each year in a bid to enter Europe as a way of escaping poverty, conflict or oppression in other countries, mostly in south and southwest Asia and East Africa. These young people and children are extremely vulnerable, having no access to social services or assistance, health or education services, protection or participation in community life. Many lose their lives in sea or road accidents or due to the poor conditions in which they live and are transported. In one incident in September 2012, 61 irregular migrants including 31 children died when their boat...
capsized soon after setting sail for Greece from Ahmetbeyli in the Menderes district of Izmir. Smuggling of migrants is specifically prohibited by the Turkish Penal Code and sentences were increased in 2010.

Irregular migrants who are intercepted are provided with basic shelter and food and may be permitted to apply for asylum. However, even the children among them do not benefit from other rights, such as education. Moreover, large numbers, including children, may be turned back at the border, summarily deported, prosecuted, detained in poor conditions in removal centres and/or not informed about their rights to apply for asylum (Amnesty International: Stranded: refugees in Turkey denied protection, April 2009). The detention of some irregular migrants, including children, in removal centres and in the “transit zone” of Istanbul’s main airport, and the conditions in which this take place, have been criticised roundly by Francois Crepeau, special rapporteur on the human rights of migrants to the UN Human Rights Council. Mr Crepeau, who visited Turkey in June 2012 as part of a study on the human rights of migrants at the borders of the European Union, reported overcrowding, inadequate food and hygiene, and insufficient access to medical care. He pointed to long detention periods - especially for Iranian and Afghan detainees, whose countries will not take them back. He found that detainees, including women and children, were often locked in their rooms or wards, and that boys aged over 12 were separated from their mothers and placed in orphanages. He expressed concern about the lack of human rights monitoring and the limited opportunities for detainees to contact their families, to obtain legal assistance, to benefit from consular services, or to lodge an application for asylum. The rapporteur called on UNICEF to support migrant children who are detained with a view to securing their quick release, as well as to work for access to school and health services for irregular migrant children (http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=12307&LangID=E).

In 2011, 44,415 irregular migrants were intercepted by the Turkish security authorities, either for illegal entry into the country or for overstaying, according to the General Directorate of Security (http://www.egm.gov.tr/icerik_detay.aspx?id=232). The number of foreigners deported – mostly for infringing laws on passports, travel and residence – was 26,889. In addition, 13,621 foreigners were turned back from ports, airports and border crossing points. A few NGOs including the Human resources Development Foundation (İKGV) and Amnesty International have assisted and/or advocated on behalf of trafficked persons and irregular migrants.

Refugees and asylum seekers: Turkey is a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 protocol but with a geographical limitation, under which it does not process requests for asylum except from Europeans. In practice, most foreigners in Turkey who seek to be recognised as refugees - unable to return to their own countries for fear of persecution on account of their beliefs, opinions or identities – are non-Europeans. Most of them have arrived in the country from parts of southern and southwest Asia, including neighbouring Iraq and Iran, or from parts of Africa. These can apply to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) mission 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 and, where necessary, appeals. If their applications are accepted, and they are given refugee status, Turkey also grants them the right of residence pending resettlement procedures. All these procedures may take several years. The Turkish authorities do not necessarily expel by force those asylum-seekers whose applications are rejected. According to the UNHCR (www.unhcr.org.tr), the total population of asylum seekers and refugees in Turkey was 28,791 as of August 31, 2012. Of these, 24,181 came from Iraq, Afghanistan and Iraq. The figure includes 10,008 children – 35% of the total. Turkey also has communities of political exiles from Europe (such as Chechens), who are permitted to reside in Turkey in practice, but who do not go through an asylum process and do not acquire full rights as refugees.

Child refugees and asylum seekers in Turkey by age group, gender and country of origin (August 31, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>0-4</th>
<th>5-11</th>
<th>12-17</th>
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</thead>
</table>

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Asylum-seekers and refugees awaiting resettlement are typically obliged to reside in given provinces of central Anatolia - a condition which is always tough, and sometimes intolerable. UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur Crepeau recommended the abolition of this system. Besides restricting their freedom of movement, residence in designated cities can distance the asylum-seekers and refugees from potential sources of solidarity, support or information. Adequate housing may not be available, and opportunities to earn a living and take part in social life may be very limited. In any case, asylum-seekers and refugees are not normally allowed to work, although they may apply for work permits if they are able to find formal jobs. Public awareness of asylum-seekers and refugees is limited. Attitudes are generally sympathetic, some groups among them may face prejudice and discrimination.

Various efforts are being made to provide asylum-seeker children with some of their basic rights, such as access to health and education services. NGOs like the Association for Solidarity with Asylum-Seekers and Migrants (SGDD/ASAM) and the Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation (TEGEV) have also carried out some much-needed social and cultural activities with and for children of asylum-seekers, and provided them with assistance in kind (such as schoolbooks). Asylum seekers are covered by the universal health insurance scheme, which provides free health cover for children. In some provinces the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations provide various kinds of assistance. In evidence provided to the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child in early 2012 (http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC_C_TUR_Q_2-3_Add1.pdf), the government stated that provincial social services units, municipalities and the Red Crescent also provide aid in kind to refugees and asylum seekers in need “who can also benefit from all other available aids and benefits on the same conditions with Turkish nationals”. It put health spending by the Directorate General of the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation for applicants for refugee/asylum-seeker status at TL160,406 for 2,208 people in 2009, TL155,271 for 2,129 people in 2010, and TL132,036 for 1,864 people in 2011. In addition, the government said, the Directorate General of the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation had spent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
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<tr>
<td>Asylum-seekers</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>714</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>1,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Afghanistan</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Iran</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Iraq</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Somalia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Other</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>1,099</td>
<td>1,252</td>
<td>876</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Afghanistan</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>332</td>
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<tr>
<td>--Iran</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>101</td>
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<td>--Iraq</td>
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<td>533</td>
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<tr>
<td>--Somalia</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>127</td>
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<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--Other</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNHCR

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TL2,183,833 for 17,378 refugees and asylum-seekers in 2009; TL1,244,336 for 16,358 people in 2010, and TL 1,250,662 for 17,947 people in 2011. It is not clear how far these amounts benefited children or families with children.

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 to obtain primary school certificates (until and unless their appeals are finally rejected). As an incentive, residence permit fees have been waived for the children who enrol. The UNHCR has provided cash assistance to children documenting their school attendance. According to the forthcoming Turkey country report of the global Out of School Children Initiative undertaken by UNICEF and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 77% of 6 to 11 year-old asylum-seekers and refugees and 53% of 12 to 17 year-old asylum-seekers and refugees reported to the UNHCR that they were attending school in the 2010-11 school year. However, it warns that these percentages may be misleading. In its evidence to the UN Committee mentioned above, the government indicated that 983 asylum-seeker and refugee children were continuing their education in 2011-12 – less than a quarter of the total number in the relevant age group. Possible reasons for non-attendance are: schooling imposes an additional financial burden on families; the families are in any case are hoping to move on soon; families may not be residing in the province to which they have been assigned; identity documents may be incomplete or bureaucratic procedures may lead to long waiting periods, and (particularly for older children) language barriers may be insurmountable. Some groups of asylum-seekers may try to educate their children themselves.

(Citing the Ministry of National Education’s e-school database, the forthcoming Out of School Children report states that 9,461 children were registered in basic education (grades 1-8) with a foreign identity number during the 2010-11 school year. Most of these children are presumably children of regular residents rather than asylum-seeker and refugee children. The report notes that the number of children enrolled declines from 1,465 in grade one to 1,097 in grade seven and only 269 in grade eight. It also points out that there are only 87 girls enrolled for every 100 boys. These figures require further explanation.)

Unaccompanied asylum-seeker children benefit from the care services of the Directorate General of Child Services of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies, 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 (Gizem Alanyalioğlu: Report on Unaccompanied Minors and Social Services and Child Protection Institutions (SHCEK) in Istanbul, 2008). 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. Efforts to locate the families of unaccompanied children are carried out by the UNHCR and the Turkish Red Crescent.

In its Concluding Observations of June 2012, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child referred to reports of difficulties experienced by asylum-seeking and refugee children in receiving residence permits, which is a requirement for basic assistance such as health and education, and of detention with adults and lack of interpreters. It recommended that Turkey should conduct an assessment of the challenges experienced by asylum-seeking and refugee children in access to health, education and social services and urgently address such challenges. In accordance with the UNHCR Guidelines on Protection and Care of Refugee Children, it also recommended that every effort be made to identify children who require special support upon their arrival in the State party, and consider providing adequate psychological assistance to them.

Policy trends: As well as calling on Turkey to remove its geographical limitation on the Geneva Convention, advocates for the rights of migrants and refugees have often stressed the need for specific legislation on migration and the establishment of institutions dedicated to this issue. In 2012, a detailed bill on Foreigners and
International Protection was submitted to Parliament and debated in committee. The bill brings together and updates existing legislation on foreigners’ entry into Turkey and terms of stay, including matters like residence permit procedures and deportation. It specifies and amplifies some of the rights of migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees and the benefits and opportunities available to them, including work permits. It also makes arrangements for the processing by Turkey of applications for various forms of international protection, including refugee status, asylum and temporary protection. In addition, the bill sets up new institutions – notably a new General Directorate for Migration within the Ministry of the Interior. Some of the responsibilities of this general directorate will be: to implement policies and strategies on migration; to ensure coordination among other bodies and institutions with responsibilities in this area, and to support their efforts; to supervise the entry of foreigners into Turkey, their stay, their departure and their deportation; to implement procedures for international protection, temporary protection and the protection of victims of human trafficking; to struggle against irregular migration, and to contribute to the development of legislation, policies, strategies and institutional capacity with respect to migration.

The bill does not eliminate the geographical limitation – third-country homes will still be sought for non-European asylum-seekers found to qualify for refugee status. Nor does it completely eliminate administrative detention for irregular migrants. The authorities will retain the option of obliging asylum-seekers and refugees to reside in certain places. Nevertheless, the provisions of the bill are closely in line with international standards and EU norms. If the bill is adopted, its effective implementation will require considerable effort in terms of secondary legislation, resources and institution and capacity-building. There are also plans for a new law on border management, setting up a border management authority to take over roles currently carried out by the gendarmerie, police and coastguard.

The EU requires Turkey to sign a readmission agreement, under which Turkey would agree to take back irregular migrants from third countries who have been apprehended in the EU after entering its territory via Turkey. Any such agreement would raise the issue of the treatment of the readmitted persons, including children and young people.
10. National climate for child rights

* Turkey has a large economy and plentiful resources and infrastructure for upholding children’s rights. Besides, the government, civil society, academia, international organisations and the private sector can contribute to child rights and youth empowerment through research, advocacy and field work. However, their contributions are not systematically sought and integrated into the predominantly State controlled system of child-related services and rights monitoring.

* Turkey is already a party to most relevant international treaties. Many of the country’s laws are in line with child rights principles. The current process of constitutional change provides an opportunity to increase guarantees of child rights in the Constitution, and subsequently to make necessary updates to those pieces of legislation which are not fully in line with child rights principles – for example with respect to child participation.

* The creation of the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies, the establishment of a Child Rights Monitoring and Assessment Board and the adoption of a First Turkey Strategy Document on the Rights of the Child may improve coordination and overall policy towards the achievement of child rights, while the establishment of an ombudsperson institution including an ombudsperson for women’s and children’s rights can be expected to improve child rights monitoring.

* However, if these new institutions and mechanisms are to have an impact, they will need to be strong, functional and well-focused. In addition, more data is needed in some areas of child rights, and allocations of public resources for children, including the most vulnerable, need to be increased and carefully monitored.

* While positive attitudes towards children predominate in society and everyday life, there remains a need to instil a culture of child rights, so that children are always perceived as individuals with rights, and never as the properties of parents or others - and so that parents, professionals, officials and policy-makers acknowledge their full obligations and work to ensure that every boy and girl everywhere benefits from a satisfactory level of well-being and protection. The stance of the mass media and the training of professionals are important in this context.

* Disasters, environmental degradation and climate change pose a substantial threat to child and youth well-being. Preventive efforts and preparedness plans in these areas need to be pursued energetically with a specific child focus.

10.1 Knowledge of child rights: Public awareness of child rights has been increasing as a result of many initiatives taken by government, non-government and international organisations and children themselves. For example, campaigns to promote girls’ education have led to wider acknowledgement of the right to education. Parenting programmes have also been instrumental in increasing knowledge of child rights. Child rights have been mainstreamed into school curricula to some extent, and members of several professions, from media workers to those working in the justice system, have received child rights training, either pre-service or in-service, albeit usually non-mandatory. Nevertheless, a culture of child rights is not widespread throughout society and parents, professionals and administrators often seem to regard them as elements of the family, the education system or society rather than as individuals in their own right. In this context, the government’s emphasis on the family as children’s natural environment needs to be balanced out with a rights-based approach. While children’s rights to education and health services are quite readily understood, their right to protection may be viewed narrowly, permitting violations such as corporal punishment and child labour. Children’s rights to family care, to an adequate standard of living and to the freedoms of opinion, expression, association, religion and assembly are not
well internalized. The same is true of minority and cultural rights, the rights of the disabled child and the rights to information, privacy, leisure, participation and child-specific judicial procedures.

Besides raising awareness of child rights in society in general, and reinforcing the integration of child rights into school curricula, with a sufficient emphasis on protection, it would be beneficial to include child rights education in a wider range of professional training curricula. Such training should be compulsory for key professionals working for children – for example in the justice and child care systems. Teachers’ capacity for child rights education will be greatly enhanced if the Ministry of National Education and the Higher Education Council make full instruction in child rights a compulsory part of all teacher training programmes (pre-service education). The child rights curriculum used in several communications faculties could serve as an example for other disciplines and faculties.

10.2 International conventions, constitutional and legal framework for child rights: The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is an integral and indisputable part of domestic law, taking priority over domestic laws in matters of fundamental rights and freedoms (Article 90 of the Constitution, as amended in 2004). Turkey has made a declaration of reservations concerning Articles 17, 29 and 30 of the Convention, which it interprets and applies subject to the letter and spirit of its Constitution and its founding treaty, the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923. Turkey continues to reserve 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. This means that Turkey does not acknowledge the obligation to accord any minority rights, with some exceptions for the Armenians, Greek Orthodox and Jews. Kurdish and other languages other than Turkish which are traditionally used by Turkish citizens in daily life are not used or taught in the formal education system at any level.


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. In 2011, Parliament ratified the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. Turkey was also the first State to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) in 2011. There are some exceptions: For example, Turkey is not a party to 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.

Constitution: The Constitution enshrines most basic rights and freedoms – although the recognition of these rights and freedoms for children is not made explicit – while at the same time warning against abuse of such rights and indicating the ways in which they may be circumscribed by law. Amendments made to the Constitution in September 2010 strengthened constitutional safeguards for children, introducing the term “child rights” for the first time. 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 “support children dependent on protection over for society”. This article expresses an obligation of the state to support children in difficult circumstances and to ensure that they grow up to make a positive contribution to society. All in all, 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.

Children and child rights NGOs have taken part in the consultative process held by the all-party committee drafting the new Constitution under the chairmanship of the speaker of Parliament. It is therefore hoped that the new Constitution will treat the child as an individual in his/her own right, incorporate all the basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and refer specifically to children in all relevant articles, making clear the duties of the state in upholding these rights.

**National law:** Numerous Turkish laws contain provisions for the protection of children and upholding their rights. The relevant provisions of the Turkish Civil Code, updated in 2002, and the Child Protection Law of 2005, closely parallel the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. 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. 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, however, Turkish legislation - which has been drawn up and amended at various times - is less favourable to children and inconsistent in upholding their rights. Relevant laws, such as the Civil Code, the Code of Criminal Procedures and the Law on the Practice of Medicine, for example, do not 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. 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. Meanwhile, 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.

Further legislative change would therefore be beneficial to expand the scope of the protection envisaged for children, make proscriptions and the duties of the State more explicit, close loopholes and ensure that the best interests of the child and children’s own opinions are taken into account. One way of achieving this would be to enact a child rights law following changes in the Constitution. In this respect, use may be made of the review of legislation “A Comparative Analysis on UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Turkish Legislation” conducted by the government, UNICEF and the Union of Turkish Bar Associations in 2008. The Child Rights Monitoring Committee of Parliament could take an active role.

**Non-discrimination:** The Constitution and other important laws prohibit discrimination and prescribe equal treatment for all citizens regardless of race, gender etc. The Constitution also specifies that positive discrimination is not to be regarded as contrary to this prohibition. However, some of the laws do not encompass all types of
discrimination mentioned in the Convention. Moreover, discrimination is only addressed within the context of relations between the state and the individual, and generally without specific reference to children. The definition of discrimination does not extend to acts which, while not specifically discriminatory, lead to discrimination in practice. Cases of discrimination are difficult to prove as the burden of proof rests with the plaintiff, and the acts which constitute discrimination have not been spelt out in law.

Definition of the child: With respect to the definition of the child, Turkish law and practice is broadly in line with the Convention. 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. The minimum age to vote is also 18. Labour laws and the justice system make special arrangements for under-eighteens. Despite the provisions of the Civil Code and other laws, children who are old enough to have completed compulsory primary education are not always regarded as children by parents and other adults in society – for example, when it comes to their responsibilities and capacities to work, undertake responsibilities in the family, meet their own psychological needs or be held responsible for their actions. The justice system differentiates between children up to the age of 15 and children older than 15, providing much more protection to the former than to the latter.

10.3 Institutions, coordination and planning for child rights: There has been a lack of continuity in overall child rights policy development and implementation. The institutions responsible have also suffered from limited influence and capacity constraints. Implementable strategies and plans have not been developed. However, there have been some recent developments in this area.

Following the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MFSP) in 2011, this Ministry and its General Directorate for Child Services have inherited responsibilities for child rights coordination, monitoring and reporting on child rights as well as for providing and supervising some child services. The Ministry intends to establish a dedicated child rights monitoring unit to take responsibility for reporting obligations to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In April 2012, a new inter-sectoral Child Rights Monitoring and Assessment Board was established which has a potential to improve strategic planning and coordination for child rights. Details of the Board were set out in a Prime Ministry circular published in the Official Gazette on April 4. The circular began with references to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on the Implementation of Child Rights and arrangements previously made by Turkey for the implementation of these documents, including the Child Protection law of 2005. The Board is to be chaired by the minister or undersecretary of the MFSP. The General Directorate for Child Services will act as secretariat to the Board and follow up on the implementation of its decisions. The Board is to work on administrative and legal arrangements related to the preservation, use and development of children’s rights, to evaluate work done to inform public opinion on progress made in this area, to recommend measures to be taken on children’s rights, to commission and approve strategic documents and action plans, and to ensure cooperation and coordination between public bodies. The ministries of Justice, Family & Social Policies, Labour & Social Security, Environment & Urbanisation, Foreign Affairs, Youth and Sports, the Interior, Development, National Education, Health and Transport, Shipping and Communications are to be represented on the Board, together with the Department of Religious Affairs, the Radio & Television High Board, the Information Technologies & Communications Board, the Higher Education Board, the Union of Bar Associations, the Prime Ministry Human Rights Presidency and institutions and NGOs working with children. The national coordinators of the children’s provincial child rights committees established in the provinces are also to take part in the meetings of the Board, ensuring child participation. The Board will have the authority to establish sub-committees, advisory groups or working groups. Universities, professional associations and the private sector may be invited to take part in the activities of the Board or of these committees and groups. Provincial and district bodies may be established to ensure that Board decisions are implemented at local level.
Under the umbrella of the General Directorate of Child Services, a First Turkey Strategy Document on the Rights of the Child has been drawn up to cover the period of 2012-2016. This document was developed in 2010-11 mainly by the Çocuk Vakfı (Child Foundation), an NGO, which held a series of consultations, surveys and workshops, culminating in a First Children’s Rights Congress held in Istanbul in February 2011 under the auspices of the Speaker of Parliament. According to the MFSP, the document was approved by the Child Rights Monitoring and Assessment Board at its first meeting in May 2012. The Strategy Document incorporates the general principles of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child although it is not solely inspired by the Convention. Its main headings are “culture of respect for the child”, “child participation”, “civil rights and freedoms”, “teaching of children’s rights and science, art and sports education”, “health and social security of the child”, “special protection services for the family and the child”, “the juvenile justice system”, “child-friendly media” and “an efficient supervision, monitoring and evaluation system”. Under each are listed a series of aims and areas for action. Some relevant bodies, academics and NGOs felt that the process of consultation by which the document was drawn up was largely symbolic and that children’s participation was closely controlled. An Action Plan related to the Strategy Document was to be developed under the leadership of the General Directorate in 2012.

10.4 Budgeting for children and young people: Public social expenditure has been increasing, including in education and health. However, public spending for children is still not high by international standards. For example, public spending on education, including higher education, has not yet surpassed 4 per cent of GDP, and there are no major social support programmes for families. World Bank estimates (World Bank Europe and Central Asia Region Human Development Report “Turkey: Expanding Opportunities for the Next Generation – A report on life chances”, February 2010) suggest that spending on children of pre-school age is particularly low. Besides education and early child development, additional resources are one of the preconditions for improvements in other areas like social protection for families, child protection, public health and youth services.

Public financial systems do not generate information on amounts allocated or spent for children, families or young people, and there is no regular, detailed monitoring by universities or NGOs. It is also unclear to what extent budgetary allocations in favour of children, families or young people benefit the most vulnerable groups. Expert, detailed, regular monitoring of the amounts and impact of public spending for children at various levels (national, local, sectoral), using all available and obtainable information, would significantly enhance policy debate and decision-making. Responsibilities in this respect may fall to the Ministry of Development, the Ministry of Finance, the Budget & Planning Committee of Parliament, the Child Rights Monitoring Committee of Parliament and/or think tanks, universities or civil society organisations. This would also facilitate the role of the newly established Ministry for the Family and Social Policies.

10.5 Child rights monitoring: Regular monitoring is essential to ensure that child rights violations and issues are noticed, recognised and addressed. The legislature, judiciary, academia, non-government and professional organisations, the children’s child rights committees established in the provinces, and the media are all involved in monitoring the implementation of child rights in a broad sense and drawing attention to deficiencies, insofar as their priorities, their power or influence, their independence, their resources and their capacities permit. Numerous non-government organisations and platforms regularly monitor or report child rights violations, along with individual lawyers, journalists, parents and others. The Turkish Bar Association and provincial bar associations are working to set up complaints mechanisms for children which will contribute to making child rights violations and issues more visible, as well as to ensuring that grievances are addressed. In general, however, independent child rights monitoring in Turkey is limited.

Ombudsperson for women’s and children’s rights: The establishment of an ombudsperson institution under legislation approved by Parliament in June 2012 may help to ensure that child rights are systematically monitored. Following years of debate, one of the constitutional amendments of September 2010 made possible the establishment of an ombudsperson institution - and hence also, by implication, of a child ombudsperson institution which could fulfil the role of independent child rights monitor. A law establishing an ombudsperson institution was
then submitted to Parliament and eventually approved in June 2012. Answerable to the speaker of Parliament, the institution is to investigate complaints about the legality and fairness of the acts, procedures, attitudes and behaviour of the public administration within a human rights-based concept of justice, and to make recommendations to the public administration accordingly. The chief ombudsperson is to be elected by Parliament and will be responsible - inter alia – for the preparation of annual reports and reports on specific issues and for making these public. The chief ombudsperson is to be assisted by five ombudspersons, one of whom is to be specifically responsible for women’s and child rights. In many respects, these arrangements are broadly in line with best international practice (Over 60 countries - almost half of them in Europe - have found it desirable to set up child ombudspersons or child commissioners). Ideally, however, there would have been separate ombudspersons for women’s rights and for children’s rights, to ensure that each receive specific attention. The political independence of the chief ombudsperson and the five ombudspersons whom s/he will appoint, will be important for the credibility of the institution. It is also important that the ombudsperson for women’s and child rights should maintain close contact with children themselves, who know best what is happening in their own lives and worlds. It is to be hoped that this ombudsperson will maintain relations with child ombudspersons in other countries and that, while acting on individual complaints, also conducts the necessary research and makes recommendations for the creation of a positive climate for children’s rights in Turkey and for the full implementation of all children’s rights in law, policy and practice.

Parliamentary committee: Pending the establishment of a child ombudsperson, a Child Rights Monitoring Committee was set up in Parliament at the end of 2008. The multi-party committee of eight Members of Parliament aims to ensure that Parliament, through its key roles of law-making, budgeting, oversight and representation, effectively reflects the rights of children. The Committee has served as the central resource/space for children’s issues within Parliament, and acted as a bridge between Parliament and key external actors such as the children’s child rights committees, other children, professionals working with children and civil society. 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 will continue to receive all kinds of communication from the public, especially children, even after the establishment of an ombudsman institution and an ombudsperson for children’s and women’s rights.

The Child Rights Committee of Parliament operates as an informal sub-committee of the Health, Family and Social Affairs Commission. The possibility of institutionalising it as a permanent committee with its own budget and its own resources has been discussed. This would make the Committee much more powerful, and it could also be accorded the mandate and capacity to review all draft laws to ensure their compatibility with children’s rights and other policies for children, and to ensure sufficient resources for children in annual government budgets.

UN Committee: States which are signatories to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols are obliged to report periodically (every five years) 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. The Committee discussed Turkey’s combined second and third periodic report on its implementation of the Convention in Geneva in June 2012. This was followed by the publication of its Concluding Observations (See http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs60.htm for the Concluding Observations and other related documents. More information including Turkish translations has been published by the International Children's Centre, a Turkish NGO, at http://www.cocukhaklarizleme.org/turkiyenin-ikinci-periodik-raporu). Turkey was represented in Geneva by a large multi-sectoral delegation headed by Minister for the Family and Social Policies Fatma Sahin. Through its General Directorate for Child Services, the Ministry for the Family and Social Policies (MFSP) has plans to follow up on the recommendations but it remains to be seen how widely these are distributed in Turkey and how far they influence future policies and actions.
National Human Rights Institution: A law of June 2012 establishes a Human Rights Institution of Turkey. This will be an autonomous institution under the Prime Ministry with responsibilities which include investigations of alleged human rights violations. This Institution is expected to serve as a broad-based independent national human rights institution in the sense envisaged by the UN Paris Principles and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, with close links to UN treaty bodies. It will replace the existing Prime Ministry Human Rights Presidency, which does not meet the UN criteria.

10.6 Civil society, the private sector and international organisations: In addition to the capacity of the government, there are many institutions and organisations in Turkey which aim to improve the well-being of children and young people and uphold their rights - either in general or in specific areas - and/or which command resources that can be mobilised to these ends. Turkey’s universities and research centres have substantial research, education/training and implementation capacities, which are only just starting to be tapped for purposes of child rights and child and youth well-being. According to the Higher Education Council, Turkey has 103 state universities, 65 private (foundation) universities, 7 private (foundation) vocational colleges and 13 other institutions of higher education. Innumerable research institutes in various specialisms operate within the universities or are attached to other public and private sector organisations. There are also some significant private research foundations or “think tanks”; as well as private companies providing services such as field surveys and data analysis. Turkey’s non-government organisations, mostly national rather than international, display great variety in their aims and their organisational structures. They include: foundations and charities; business, labour and professional organisations; NGOs engaged in advocacy, service provision, research and/or education; and community-based organisations. Education and human rights are among the most prominent fields of civil society activity. Most non-government organisations are affected by issues such as low membership, resource/capacity constraints, reliance on EU projects, close political or ideological affiliations and official, public or mutual distrust. Nevertheless, many organisations – especially but not exclusively the more deep-rooted with the wealthiest sponsors - are playing a significant role in advocacy for child rights and youth engagement, as well as in areas like social mobilisation, training programmes and service delivery. 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 and young people, often within the context of corporate social responsibility. The potential of the media for raising awareness and disseminating information is not yet fully realised.

Turkey is also a member and/or partner of numerous international organisations (G-20, OECD, Council of Europe, Islamic Conference etc.). As Turkey is involved in an EU accession process, the EU is influential in almost all areas of governance and development. Under the accession process, Turkey aims to meet the EU’s membership requirements (stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities; a functioning market economy, and the adjustment of legislation and practices in line with the body of EU legislation known as the acquis communautaire) and receives Pre-Accession funding. The EU is paying more and more attention to children and child rights, and monitors progress in this area through its annual progress reports on Turkey’s performance in achieving the membership criteria and adopting the acquis. The World Bank is effective in Turkey both as a major lender, with new commitments of about US$500m each year, and as a source of influential research and policy advocacy. Turkey is one of the Bank’s largest clients and the largest in the Europe and Central Asia Region. The Bank has competencies in health, education, social policy, youth and early childhood development. ‘Improved Equity and Public Services’ is one of the three core objectives of the World Bank’s Country Partnership Strategy with Turkey for 2012-2015. This is to be achieved through (a) improved quality and coverage of early childhood education; (b) a more effective and financially sustainable health system; (c) progress made toward gender equity; (d) improved public services and governance. Eleven UN agencies are active in Turkey (FAO, ILO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNIC, UNICEF, UNIDO, WFP and WHO). The work of several of these, including all of the work of UNICEF, is directly related to children and youth. The programmes of the various UN agencies contribute to the UN Development Cooperation Strategy (UNDCS) with Turkey for 2011-2015 which prioritises three strategic areas: Democratic & Environmental Governance; Disparity Reduction, Social Inclusion & Basic Public Services, and Poverty & Employment.
10.7 Data availability: Reliable and meaningful statistics are a precondition for healthy debate and for the design, implementation and assessment of initiatives for securing children’s rights and the well-being of children and youth. The Turkish Statistical Institute (Turkstat) is the main state body responsible for economic, environmental 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. In 2008, Turkstat 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. Turkstat plans to regularise the statistics gathered about children by state institutions and to include them in a single database. 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.

DHS: Another major regular survey is the five-yearly Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) carried out by the Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies, at Hacettepe University, 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 survey was last conducted in 2008 and will be repeated in 2013. The results of the first national nutrition survey for 35 years conducted by the Ministry of Health were awaited in late 2011.

Occasional 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, such studies are not usually done on a regular basis. Moreover, 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. The relevant government, non-government and international agencies and academic institutions should consider undertaking policy-oriented surveys of the needs of specific groups of children such as disabled children, children in poor rural areas, and Roma children.

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 have been 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. The future of the Turkstat poverty studies is unclear. 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 only once every seven years, and these do not make use of international definitions, nor are they fully disaggregated by age group and geography. Turkstat has conducted only one disability survey and one on
perceptions of disability. 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. Household survey questionnaires could be up-dated in line with internationally accepted indicators, especially in the area of education.

**Publication:** 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. Data obtained through the Ministry of National Education e-school database - for example on school attendance - is not yet available to the public (However, Turkey is taking part in the UNESCO/UNICEF Out of School Children Initiative and more data on education is being made public and analysed in conjunction with the Education Reform Initiative based at Sabanci University). The Ministry of Health has information about health services, public health interventions and outcomes which is not regularly shared with the public. This may also be true of other ministries with respect to children in institutions, children in conflict with the law, and child refugees and migrants. 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.

**10.8 Child rights and the media:** Despite competition from electronic media, the mass media – especially television - remains an important influence on the children and young people and their surroundings. The impact of mass media content and of the activity of watching television on the physical, cognitive, emotional and social development of children of different ages. Article 17 of the UN 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. Turkey has a significant advertising industry and a large number of media channels and organs, including some using languages other than Turkish. There is a Radio and Television Board (RTÜK) for regulating and supervising broadcasting. Debate has tended to focus on the harmful impacts of television, rather than on how to ensure quality information and entertainment services for children, young people and parents.

The mass media can help to spread a culture of children’s rights and a positive attitude towards youth by – for example - paying adequate attention to the issues facing children and young people, respecting their rights when reporting about them, reporting positive news about them, and making it possible for their voices to be heard. The print media, in particular, can be said to have played a significant role in highlighting child rights issues in recent years - especially prominent protection issues. In addition, news reporting about children seems to have become more sensitive - 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. Nevertheless, reporting on
children is still frequently sensational and they continue to be represented mostly as victims of tragedies like violence, accidents, natural disasters or family feuds. Their own voices are rarely heard. The mass media shows little obvious concern to empower young people or to highlight the issues which they face.

10.9 Environment and emergency preparedness: Environmental issues increasingly affect Turkey's children and young people. In future, it is they who will have to live with the consequences of the environmental degradation being carried out today in the name of economic growth, including global warming and the loss of green space, soil and agricultural land. In the present, they are faced with environments, including crowded urban environments, which offer few spaces accessible, safe and attractive for children. Home environments are often overcrowded or unsafe and some, particularly in rural areas, are without adequate water and sanitation. By and large, these issues are not recognized as problems and there is a lack of policies for addressing them.

A high proportion of the population, including children and young people, is at risk of death, injury and hardship due to disaster — especially the combination of earthquakes and unsound buildings, which killed some 30,000 people in the Marmara region in 1999, and over 600 in the province of Van in 2011. Most cities face a significant risk of major earthquakes. Past quakes have hit school buildings badly. In Istanbul, the World Bank-supported Istanbul Seismic Risk Mitigation and Emergency Preparedness Project is being carried out to raise awareness, build capacity, and assess and reinforce buildings. Several hundred school buildings have been reinforced against earthquakes but a similar number still await reinforcement, according to engineers. Urban renewal schemes involving the demolition and rebuilding of large areas of urban space are being used to improve the building stock, but these have been criticised on diverse grounds, and inspection of new buildings does not appear to be adequate. The environment and emergency preparedness have been mainstreamed into the primary and secondary school curricula, but no impact assessment has been made.