

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

TÜRKİYE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As outlined in the European Commission's Enlargement Package 2023 Report¹, while Türkiye is a key partner of the European Union and a candidate country, accession negotiations are effectively on hold. Presidential and parliamentary elections were held in May 2023, in which the ruling coalition retained its majority in the national parliament, and the incumbent president was re-elected. The priorities of the new government include post-earthquake relief and reconstruction, financial stability and possible changes to Türkiye's constitution.

The Economic Reform Programme (ERP) was submitted on 31 January 2023, prior to the earthquakes that Türkiye suffered in February 2023. In October, the [European Parliament](#) responded by approving EUR 455 million in aid from the EU Solidarity Fund. The EU and its international partners have since then and during 2024 supported the authorities in their reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts for the benefit of the affected communities. These have focused on a range of areas, including hospitals, schools and housing.

The adoption of the Mid-term Program (MTP)² approved in September 2023 provided a policy document that covers mainly macroeconomic policies for the next three-year period. It sets out an analysis of recent global and domestic economic developments and, in line with the findings, outlines the main economic and social policies. The MTP 2024–2026 is also in line with the framework of the Twelfth Development Plan for the period 2024–2028. This includes a focus on the green transition, lowering inflation, improving the business and investment environment, and establishing a policy framework based on maintaining fiscal discipline.

According to the OECD (2023), progress is being made in terms of expanding access to education for learners of all ages, together with progress in improving the quality of education. Policies aimed at expanding access to education aim to widen participation in pre-primary and post-primary education. Efforts to improve quality are being pursued at different policy levels; initiatives at school level have focused on improving educational resources and infrastructure, such as increasing the availability and quality of equipment for science classrooms, while others have sought to achieve wider distribution of new educational tools, such as whiteboards. Important steps are also being taken at system level to improve quality.

Challenges remain so to ensure that the youngest have access to relevant education and that students remain engaged in learning as they progress through the system also to prevent drop-out. This means supporting those who are most vulnerable because of their gender, socio-economic or cultural background, or geographical location. Türkiye has a smaller share of education spending compared to fellow OECD education systems despite increases over the last 10 years.

The 2024 Annual Presidential Program. The Mid-term Programme 2024–2026 outlined measures for the reform of vocational education and training (VET), notably updating curricula and digital content³. The strategy called Education Vision 2030, which is currently being developed, aims to improve the implementation of VET through measures such as the set-up of centres of excellence, improving the responsiveness of VET to support innovation, modernising teacher training, and increasing access and inclusion.

The European Commission's Country Report acknowledges that the country has made satisfactory progress in the areas of science and research, e-infrastructure under EU acquis Chapter 25 on science and research and Chapter 26 on education and training. It notes that efforts are being made to encourage the national research and innovation community to increase participation and success

¹ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, *Communication on EU Enlargement Policy Türkiye Report*, 2023, Brussels, 8 November 2023, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_696%20T%C3%BCrkiye%20report.pdf

² Medium-Term Program and Medium-Term Fiscal Plan were combined under the name of the Medium-Term Program with the amendment made to the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018 with the Law No. 7319 dated 20.05.2021.

³ <https://www.sbb.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Medium-Term-Program-2024-2026.pdf>

rates. The key role of digital education and training in enabling innovation and technology transfer continues to be emphasised. Türkiye's has also been advised to improve⁴ and continue to bring together education and culture policies, scientists and researchers, the audio-visual and ICT industries, as well as laboratories and economic operators, SMEs and international companies. There is still no dedicated national youth strategy nor an officially recognised national youth council.

Consultations on the design of the 2023–2030 education and training strategy are underway. A more robust integration of research and innovation capacities and technology transfer activities, coupled with human capital development, is key to making this a success. In turn, cooperation and coordination between academia, industry and SMEs is promoted through Horizon Europe of which Türkiye is a full member. It is also worth noting that the Geleceğin Becerileri programme⁵ has received cross-government commitment from various ministries for the implementation of actions aimed at improving the provision, anticipation and assessment of skills data at national and regional level. This includes new measures on innovation, the links between innovative companies, universities and vocational schools in key sectors, and the development of business incubators.

During the period 2022–2024, Türkiye has worked to address technological change through various policies and actions. According to the website of the Ministry of Industry and Technology there are 1 500 research and development (R&D) and design centres, employing more than 70 000 people.

The decline in growth before the pandemic reversed the trend in poverty reduction since the early 2000s, exacerbating income inequalities. This remains unchanged. In addition, high inflation is having a negative impact on vulnerable groups and the working age population as a whole. Young people and women continue to face difficult labour market prospects. One in four young people aged 15–29 years is not in employment, education or training (NEET), including a significantly higher incidence among young women (one in three). The employment rate for women (15+ years) continues to lag behind that of men, and the gender pay gap remains significant at around 34 percentage points. The gender gap in labour market participation may be the result of barriers or even incentives related to the provision of childcare and parental leave. Such issues are linked to the design of the tax and welfare systems and addressing these barriers can help foster gender equality and respond to labour markets and labour shortages.

On 1 September 2023⁶, the Commission signed an Association Agreement with Türkiye for the Digital Europe Programme. Businesses, public administrations and other eligible organisations in Türkiye will be able to access calls under the Digital Europe Programme 2021–2027, with a budget of EUR 7.5 billion. Participants should be able to participate in projects that deploy digital technologies across the EU in specific areas such as artificial intelligence and advanced digital skills. It is hoped that this will strengthen links with the EU, develop the country's technological capabilities and support the digitalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises in particular.

⁴ European Commission, European Innovation Scoreboard 2023 – Country profile Türkiye

⁵ The World Economic Forum (WEF, 2020) is a platform that aims to create multi-stakeholder cooperation at the global and national levels for reforms which will be made in education systems and labour policies to prepare the workforce for future jobs and to increase their employability by reorganising the education and training system to eliminate talent and skill deficiencies.

⁶ https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-opens-digital-europe-programme-turkiye-2023-09-01_en

1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political developments

Economic vulnerabilities and a challenging external geopolitical environment and relations, including those with the EU, have threatened to undermine past socio-economic progress. Relations are strained by the EU's view of Türkiye backsliding on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights. In the Commission Country report, it is noted that there are deficiencies in the functioning of democratic institutions in the country (EC, 2023)⁷. Türkiye remains a key partner of the EU on issues such as migration, security, counterterrorism and the economy. Despite this, Accession negotiations have stalled. In early 2022, Türkiye submitted its eighth ERP for the period 2022–2024. During the reporting period, the government did not reverse the negative trend in reforms, despite its reiterated commitment to EU Accession.

Demographics

In 2023, Türkiye's population was 85 326 000 million, with an equal gender distribution of 50% women and 50% men. As of early 2023, 77% of the population lived in urban centres and 23% lived in rural areas⁸.

As outlined by the ILO (the International Labour Organisation), Türkiye⁹ is both a country of destination and a transit country for refugees fleeing their country as a result of humanitarian crises. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR),¹⁰ Türkiye currently hosts one of the world's largest refugee populations, with between 3.3 and 4 million refugees, including more than 3.8 million Syrians under temporary protection (hereinafter referred to as Syrian refugees). Refugees live mainly in urban areas such as Istanbul, Bursa and İzmir in the west, Konya in central Anatolia, and Kilis, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, Mardin, Hatay, Adana and Mersin, which have higher unemployment rates. Overall, 23.5% of Syrian refugees are aged between 19 and 29 years, compared to 8.6% of the Turkish population as a whole. This puts pressure on the social security system due to their inactivity or unemployment, wages or the sectoral replacement of workers, as well as on education and public employment services.

Türkiye hosts and has granted protection to refugees of other nationalities, mainly from Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Ukraine, among others. In 2023, 38 725 displaced Ukrainians were registered, of whom 3 230 applied for international protection. A total of 19 017 asylum seekers applied for international protection, most of them from Afghanistan (13 068). The number of Russians staying in the country with a residence permit has increased over the last two years¹¹.

Key economic developments

Türkiye is one of the top ten trading partners of the EU. In 2023, it ranked 5th and accounted for 4.1% of the EU's total international trade in goods (imports and exports combined). The EU is by far Türkiye's largest partner in terms of imports and exports of goods. In 2022, 26% of the goods imported into Türkiye originated from the EU and 41% of the country's goods were exported to the EU¹². With a GDP growth rate of 5.6% (USD 720 billion), Türkiye is the 19th largest economy in the world and a member of the OECD and G20. It is also a donor of official development assistance (World Bank, 2022).

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/pt/country_22_6088

⁸ [Population, total - Türkiye | Data \(worldbank.org\)](https://data.worldbank.org/population-total)

⁹ For further details of the ILO's work in Turkey please visit: <https://www.ilo.org/ankara/lang-en/index.htm>.

¹⁰ <https://www.unhcr.org/tr/en/figures-at-a-glance>

¹¹ [AIDA-TR_2023-Update.pdf \(asylumineurope.org\)](https://aida-tr.2023-update.pdf)

¹² https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/countries-and-regions/turkiye_en

According to the OECD, GDP growth in Türkiye is expected to slow down from 5.5% in 2022 to around 4.5% in 2023 due to weaker exports, while domestic demand is expected to remain the driver of growth. The earthquake in 2023 remains an issue. In the OECD Economic Outlook Note – Türkiye (OECD, June 2023), the country's economic growth is projected to moderate to 3.6% in 2023 due to weaker exports, with domestic demand remaining the main driver of growth. The devastating earthquake in 2023 caused widespread damage, but the boost from reconstruction is expected to offset the negative impact of the disruption to economic activity¹³.

Based on 2023 data, the three main economic sectors in Türkiye that employ the largest number of workers and generate the largest share of GDP were manufacturing (25% of the workforce, 19.1% of GDP), construction (8.8% of the workforce, 5.2% of GDP) and transport (5.8% of the workforce, 7.9% of GDP) (TurkStat, 2022).

In 2023 and 2024, the impact of COVID is still being felt, as shown in the 2024 edition of the OECD's Tourism Trends and Policies. In 2022, tourism accounted for 4.4% of GDP and tourism-related employment accounted for 2.9% of the workforce or 885 000 people. This is an increase from the 2.4% share in 2021, but still below the 3.3% share in 2019. Travel exports accounted for 45.7% of total service exports in 2022, having exceeded the pre-pandemic level of 44.4%. In 2023, tourism accounted for 5.0% of GDP. In 2022, the number of international tourist arrivals recovered to 98.6% of pre-pandemic levels, reaching 51.4 million. In the same year, tourism revenue reached USD 49.8 billion. In 2023, the number of international tourist arrivals reached to 56.7 million. In 2022, Türkiye recorded 52.3 million domestic tourists, which remains 33% lower than in 2019. In 2023, the number of foreign visitors to Türkiye was 55.2 million and the country's tourism revenue reached USD 55.9 billion. Compared to 2022, the number of foreign visitors increased by 9.32% while tourism revenue increased by 12%. Türkiye aims to achieve strong tourism growth by 2028, including nearly 80 million arrivals and USD 100 billion in revenue. The country expects 60 million international arrivals in 2023 and 70 million in 2024¹⁴.

Businesses often cite inadequate skills as a barrier to further growth. Efforts have been made to address the needs of SMEs and improve their productivity and competitiveness, which now include a greater focus on digitalisation and greening, with the results of training needs assessments being used to design future support programmes.

Key social issues

According to the latest Sustainable Governance Indicator (SGI, 2022), income distribution in remains one of the most unequal in the OECD. According to TurkStat the top 20% of earners received 47.5% of income, while the bottom 20% of earners received 5.9% of total income (TurkStat, 2021b). TurkStat data also shows that if the poverty line is set at 60% of the median income, 21.9% of citizens would be below the poverty line. Poverty remains widespread among people with comparatively low levels of education. These include workers in the informal sector, unpaid family caregivers and homemakers, and the elderly.

It is recognised that young people living in rural areas and different geographical regions, people from different ethnic backgrounds or migrants face greater challenges in accessing education, employment and affordable housing. Many publicly and privately funded initiatives support policy and action frameworks for local and regional authorities to enable them to provide better support to young people in rural areas, better represent young women, young people from minority backgrounds, migrant communities and vulnerable groups, and encourage them to stay in rural areas. There is a consensus that the focus should be on better matching resources to the needs of vulnerable young people.

¹³ OECD, Türkiye Economic Snapshot, Economic Forecast Summary (June 2023),

<https://www.oecd.org/economy/turkiye-economic-snapshot/#:~:text=Economic%20Outlook%20Note%20%2D%20T%C3%BCrkiye,widespread%20damage%20in%20southern%20T%C3%BCrkiye.>

¹⁴ TOURISM TRENDS AND POLICIES 2024 © OECD 2024 [80885d8b-en.pdf](#)

In 2022, the OECD conducted an analysis of Türkiye's data from two international assessments – the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's (IEA) Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). The analysis showed that Türkiye is one of the few countries whose PISA results have improved over a period of more than 10 years in most subjects. Results appear to be roughly the same in 2018 in mathematics, down from 2018 in reading but up in science¹⁵.

To support and integrate the estimated 3.8 million Syrian refugees the country continues to implement vocational training programmes and works with the EU and international partners to support migrant families and help facilitate their integration into the labour market. Working closely with businesses and identifying their needs is part of the efforts of the İŞKUR (the national employment agency) to match supply and demand on the labour market.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Türkiye continues to make progress in the implementation of the Bologna Process, although there are still differences in quality across its 208 higher education institutions. In March 2023, the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) approved the registration of the Turkish Higher Education Quality Council on the basis of compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). Türkiye actively participates in 7 European Education Area (EEA) working groups, which promote European cooperation in education and prepare young people for the twin green and digital transition¹⁶. In addition, through its Information Management and Decision Support Department, Türkiye has put in place formalised, structured frameworks to enable regular and systematic training needs assessments (OECD, 2022). The country updates its dedicated training portal accordingly and the results of training needs assessments are used to design future support programmes.

There has been an increasing amount of private sector investment in the education and training system to support the efforts of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in the VET system. According to the same OECD report, there are many examples of social support programmes. One of the flagship policies to support the inclusion of disadvantaged groups in higher education is the diversification of quotas for university admissions. Under many EU-funded programmes, academics and researchers in Türkiye have conducted studies to analyse students' performance in different cognitive and content areas of learning. The aim is to provide evidence on the existing enrolment differences between girls and boys at secondary and tertiary levels, including in relation to VET.

The MoNE is implementing programmes for all levels of education. Distance learning modalities have been developed and are being used at all levels, while green practices are becoming more widespread. It is noted that the private sector, vocational schools and the İŞKUR (among others) are using information-based tools in their greening efforts, with business associations playing a significant role.

There are several structures and platforms that enable interaction and partnership between companies of all sizes and schools/universities, especially on the transition to a low-carbon economy and resource efficiency. Türkiye has introduced legislation on eco-labelling and environmental management systems, promoted by the KOSGEB (the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation of Türkiye) and the MoNE.

Following the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections in May 2023, changes were made to the various structures of the Ministry of National Education in June 2023. This year, Türkiye has finalised its 12th Development Plan and the MoNE's new Strategic Plan, both of which aim to outline

¹⁵ OECD (2022), "Policy options for stronger, more equitable student outcomes in Türkiye", OECD Education Policy Perspectives, No. 63, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/2c578d0c-en>.

¹⁶ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, Communication on EU Enlargement Policy Türkiye Report, 2023, Brussels, 8 November 2023, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/SWD_2023_696%20T%C3%BCrkiye%20report.pdf

the country's macro and education policy vision and strategy for the period 2024–2028. According to the 2022 Annual Report published by the MoNE's Directorate-General for Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE), vocational education and training was provided to 2 604 548 students, by a total of 130 836 teachers at 3 642¹⁷ schools, including 2 403 Anatolian secondary VET schools, 673 Anatolian secondary multi-programme schools, 368 vocational training centres, 101 fine arts secondary schools and 97 secondary sports schools. The Eurostat figures for 2022 are slightly different, with 2.4 million students, of whom about 1.45 million were male and 0.99 million were female.

First, in terms of lessons learned, the policy progress outlined above provides further evidence of Türkiye's commitment and focus on improving the quality of VET, while emphasising inclusivity and equitable access. Türkiye's National Education Strategy 2019–2023 has served as a framework that various national agencies, including the DGVTE, the Directorate-General for Lifelong Learning (DGLL) and the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA), are translating into policies and programmes.

Türkiye continues to focus on strengthening VET by working with industry, establishing model schools and centres of vocational excellence, and promoting innovation through R&D centres. Initiatives aim to transform student and teacher projects into valuable products, with more than 20 000 patent applications. Vocational schools also contribute to economic growth and the revenues they generate have increased significantly. Efforts to internationalise vocational education are reflected in the establishment of international schools. In addition, students earn higher wages and receive social assistance through the dual education programmes offered by vocational education and training centres (MEM) — a policy development that promotes and facilitates access to VET.

Türkiye's cooperation with the EU and other partners, and more specifically cooperation with the EBRD, has strengthened the country's progress in the area of VET. The contribution of the EU-funded IQVET III project 'Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training through Establishment and Operation of Sectoral Centres of Excellence' (IQVETIII)¹⁸ is particularly noteworthy. It remains to be seen how the relevant ministries will expand this investment to scale up such practices, improve teacher training and ensure that quality assurance is integrated into the work of VET providers.

Türkiye is working to align its VET policy with the EU's Skills Agenda and the Osnabrück Declaration (2020). The project 'Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training through the Establishment and Operation of Sectoral Centres of Excellence' (IQVETIII) has played a role in DGVTE's progress towards achieving national policy goals. Türkiye's cooperation with the ETF¹⁹ through the Network for Excellence (ENE) is important in promoting excellence in VET in line with EU initiatives. This promotes cooperation with partner countries to deliver skills for the labour market and promote an active approach to VET and lifelong learning, drawing on ETF's experience.

Türkiye is participating in the monitoring of the Council Recommendation on VET for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience (2020) and the Osnabrück Declaration on VET as an enabler of recovery and fair transition to the digital and green economies (2020). The monitoring exercise covered policy developments in Türkiye in 2021 and 2022 (including the first half of 2023), in relation to the five thematic priorities identified in the National Implementation Plan. The monitoring process has consistently shown the progress made by Türkiye in all five thematic priorities since 2021. While the scope of Türkiye's National Implementation Plan (NIP) was limited in terms of the country's primary measures, notable policy progress has been achieved both within and beyond this scope, indicating broader progress towards a VET system that is agile, resilient, flexible and inclusive.

The monitoring process of the Türkiye-EU framework has shown that national structures and social partners have strengthened their cooperation at all levels of policy development. In turn, the private

¹⁷ In Türkiye, MoNE governs VET along with its sub-government bodies— the Board of Education (Board of Education and Discipline), the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education, the Directorate General of Lifelong Learning, the General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services, the General Directorate of Private Education Institutions and the Strategy Development Department are all involved in the majority of governance functions.

¹⁸ <https://www.ikg.gov.tr/improving-the-quality-of-vocational-education-and-training-through-establishment-of-sectoral-centres-of-excellence-operation-iqvetiitii/?lang=en>

¹⁹ <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/where-we-work/countries/turkiye>

sector/social partners confirm the strengthening of this tripartite partnership for innovation, technology, and resources to support the implementation of government policies and objectives. The establishment of CoVEs within VET colleges and partner organisations builds on this foundation and promises to improve cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation. And there is evidence of incremental progress being made. This is demonstrated through projects such as the EU-funded IQVET – the current vocational qualifications project.

Regarding the ETF's Network for Excellence (ENE), the Ministry of National Education/DGVET and ACVT have been members of the network since its launch in late 2020. This approach is in line with the EU Skills Agenda and the work under the Osnabrück Declaration (2020). Indeed, 57 VET and higher education centres from Türkiye are already participating, contributing to and benefiting from the country's participation in the ENE and the international dimension of the Erasmus+ programme. Policy makers promote excellence in VET as a key driver in supporting VET and Lifelong Learning (LLL). CoVEs have participated in a self-assessment tool (ENESAT) to support network members in self-assessing excellence in order to develop, improve and/or transfer excellence. Turkish partners cooperate with more than 40 countries.

During the period covered by the next Mid-term Plan (MTP) for the period 2024–2026, Türkiye plans to implement VET initiatives with industry involvement to design specialist programmes, update VET curricula in partnership with the private sector, improve early labour market entry for VET graduates, and forge partnerships for the development of a skilled workforce (continuing VET-CVET) in key sectors. Efforts are also being made to equip individuals with earning or income generating skills and promote lifelong learning for adaptability. There is also a focus on raising young people's awareness of future occupations and addressing skills gaps in the green and digital transition.

Further efforts are needed to improve coordination between the MoNE's DGVT, other DGs and social and private partners. The pursuit of improved quality and the need for qualitative and substantive evaluations of policy developments against the actual impact of these policy/practice advances is crucial.

2.1 Trends and challenges

Education strategy and legal framework for education

As part of the implementation of Türkiye's Education Strategy 2023, policies and actions aim to provide young people and adults in need of upskilling or reskilling with adequate skills for the labour market. Many multi-country initiatives, EU-funded projects and national initiatives have been introduced to implement innovative education and training policies and practices.

The Ministry (MoNE) has developed innovative projects for teacher training and professional development; tools and methodologies are being developed (together with many European partners) to advance pre-service and in-service teacher training and equip teachers with the skills necessary to better recognise learner progress and achievement in the 'hard-to-reach' entrepreneurial and green learning outcomes in different learning contexts, for example Design Skills Labs, robotics and coding workshops, or activities such as those in Deneyap Türkiye²⁰, providing experimental technology training to students in 81 provinces²¹.

A changing world of work underlines the importance of VET in developing the skills needed in today's labour markets and societies. Structural change highlights the need to redesign parts of the VET systems in some countries to make them more resilient and ensure that they can make the most of the opportunities offered by ongoing change. Lessons could be drawn from the development and practical training provided by EntrComp Europe, involving Türkiye's Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) and the national government.

²⁰ <https://www.deneyapturkiye.org/deneyap-EGITIM-AMACI-5.html>

²¹ <https://www.deneyapturkiye.org/Kurumsal-DENEYAP-TURKIYE-13.html>

The above initiatives are complemented by research and work is underway to explore the best ways to track and evaluate the implementation and quality of entrepreneurial skills in compulsory education, including the potential to demonstrate this through a range of practical entrepreneurial experiences. Türkiye has been piloting the SELFIE tool since 2022 and is considering developing a tailored national approach to ensure that progress and recognition of entrepreneurial competences are better understood by educators and learners.

According to the OECD Reviews of Vocational Education and Training *Building Future-Ready Vocational Education and Training Systems* (June 2023) and analyses conducted by other partners, including the ETF, Türkiye needs to focus on four key dimensions to ensure its VET systems are future-ready: (i) their responsiveness to changing skills needs; (ii) their flexibility to make VET work for all; (iii) their ability to support the transition to a changing labour market and further learning; and (iv) the potential of digital technology to innovate the design and delivery of VET. For each of these, public and private institutions in Türkiye, together with their partners (including the ETF), have organised many policy option discussions involving policymakers, providers, the private sector, civil society, researchers and other VET stakeholders to share ongoing work on policies to transform VET and make it more sustainable. Many discussions in the context of ongoing work focus on data-based evidence and EU and international examples of policy and practice.

Education expenditures

According to the latest available data, in 2022 total public spending on education (as a percentage of GDP) was estimated to be 2.6%. This represents a decrease (based on available data) by 0.2% (in 2021 spending on education stood at 2.8%). Public spending (as a percentage of total public spending) from 2021 to 2022 remained stable at 8.8% (based on the latest available data set out in the annex below).

Across all levels from primary to tertiary education, Türkiye spends USD 5 352 per full-time student equivalent per year (adjusted for purchasing power and including spending on research and development) compared to the OECD average of USD 12 647. Spending per student is equivalent to 19% of GDP per capita, which is below the OECD average of 27%²².

Access, participation and early school leaving

Türkiye's trajectory of improvement over the last two decades has been sustained. Gender disparities in primary education have been progressively reduced and in some parts of the country the trend has even been reversed, with more girls than boys enrolled in primary school. However, Türkiye still faces significant skills challenges and labour market inclusion remains weak, despite some progress in improving access to education.

According to the OECD country note *Education at a Glance 2023 | In Türkiye*, 34% of 15–19 year olds are enrolled in general upper secondary education and 25% in vocational upper secondary education. A further 1% are enrolled in lower secondary education and 11% in tertiary education. By comparison, the OECD average is 37% of children enrolled in general upper secondary education, 23% in vocational upper secondary education, 12% in lower secondary education and 12% in tertiary education. 11% of 25–34 year olds have upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary VET as their highest level of educational attainment. According to ETF KIESE, the proportion of students enrolled in VET programmes at upper secondary level is 33% for females and 42% for males.

Although the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) is operational, the training provided by VET institutions remains poorly adapted to the needs of National Qualification (NQ) candidates. This is related to the fact that candidates do not demonstrate full competence, nor do they aspire to a higher qualification or move horizontally/vertically between qualifications in the relevant occupation. In order to improve the functioning of the TQF, university continuing education centres, in addition to existing VET institutions, should develop modular VET for specific occupational levels, in cooperation with the

²² [Education at a Glance 2023 | Country Note |](#)

authorised certification bodies, in line with the expected NQ learning outcomes. This may be linked to weaknesses in basic learning skills.

According to the same OECD note (*Education at a Glance 2023 | In Türkiye*), the distribution of spending between general and vocational upper secondary programmes depends on other factors, notably the number of VET students, the fields of study within VET programmes and the importance attached to VET relative to general programmes. In Türkiye, 14% of total funding for educational institutions is spent on general upper secondary education, and 14% on vocational upper secondary education (the OECD average is 11% and 10%, respectively).

Although upper secondary education is often the minimum requirement needed for successful participation in the labour market, 33% of 25–34 year olds in Türkiye have not completed this level of education, which is higher than the OECD average (14%). In the country workers aged 25–34 years with vocational upper secondary education earn 30% more than their peers without upper secondary education, while the earnings advantage for workers with general upper secondary education is 20%.

More efforts are therefore needed to increase the accessibility and attractiveness of VET, especially for the most disadvantaged and in the regions with low provision. As highlighted in a previous OECD report, conducting a comprehensive evaluation as part of the *One Thousand Schools in Vocational Education and Training* project will enable Türkiye to identify and mainstream key elements that improve learning environment and outcomes in disadvantaged VET schools (OECD, 2022). In addition to improving infrastructure, it is crucial to ensure the relevance of the training offer so that it contributes to preparing students for the next stages of their education or career.

Engineering, manufacturing and construction VET programmes enrol the largest number of students in Türkiye, with 23% of upper secondary VET students having graduated in these fields in 2020. The second most common VET field in Türkiye is health and social work, accounting for 21% of upper secondary VET graduates (OECD, 2022).

In Türkiye, 18% of teachers in general upper secondary programmes are aged 50 years or over, compared to the OECD average of 39%. Teachers in vocational programmes are on average younger than their counterparts in general programmes, with 17% aged 50 years or over (the OECD average is 43%). The proportion of pupils in religious education increased to 13.7% at lower secondary level, up from 10.1% five years earlier, but remained broadly stable at just under 11% at upper secondary level.

The number of university graduates has also increased. Since 2023, the proportion of women enrolled in universities has exceeded that of men. However, despite all efforts, the quality of higher education is sometimes low, with programmes that are not relevant to the labour market. There are significant differences between men and women in terms of the fields of study chosen. The enrolment of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM disciplines) remains low. The main barriers are stereotypes and prejudices that perpetuate the belief that boys have greater innate ability than girls in these fields and are better suited to careers that make use of the skills taught (OECD, 2022). This educational segregation has long-term consequences as it affects the status of men and women in the labour market and in all spheres of life – economic, political, and private. It directs men studying STEM subjects towards dynamic, productive and well-paid sectors that benefit from the digital transformation, while women tend to be concentrated in sectors such as wholesale and retail or food and accommodation services (ILO, 2022).

Concerted efforts are being made by public and private actors to address this gap. Analyses show that stereotypes and biases are key drivers of the gender gap in STEM, and Türkiye's analyses recommend addressing the gender bias in learning materials, involving parents, encouraging participation in STEM-related extracurricular activities, promoting role models and partnerships with the private sector. There has been an increase in the number of workshops, national and international forums featuring female role models. These provide examples of what can be achieved. It is noted that the private sector (supported by various international partners) has stepped up involvement by providing financial support to non-profit STEM initiatives, facilitating exposure also to female role models and providing internship opportunities for girls in secondary school. Emphasis is placed on career and educational guidance and the promotion of pathways that address these differences.

According to the OECD's *SME Policy Index: Western Balkans and Turkey 2022*, Türkiye continues to promote and support entrepreneurial careers for university students through the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation (KOSGEB), the Scientific and Technological Research Council (TUBITAK) and a network of university business incubators and government-supported technology parks. Efforts have been made in recent years to develop entrepreneurial skills and careers in vocational education. The involvement of VET schools in the production of various medical materials needed by the hospitals/clinics during the COVID emergency is clear evidence of this. VET students in Türkiye now have access to entrepreneurship courses and business start-up training through the KOSGEB. They are eligible for business start-up loans and have access to help with key processes, such as patent applications. Through the National Youth Employment Strategy, there is an innovative commitment to support entrepreneurship development through practical training and opportunities for business cooperation (OECD, 2022).

PISA results

The government's education policies have contributed to an improvement in educational outcomes, including curriculum reform, the gradual modernisation of teaching and learning materials and practices, and a greater focus on measuring learning outcomes through large-scale national and international assessments and improved monitoring and evaluation systems. Despite this success, challenges remain²³.

The OECD Report 21st-Century readers: *Developing literacy skills in a digital world*, PISA highlighted some key issues regarding the performance of 15 year olds in Türkiye in PISA 2018: students scored 466 points in reading literacy compared to an average of 487 points in OECD countries. Girls outperformed boys with a statistically significant difference of 25 points (OECD average: 30 points higher for girls). On average, 15 year-old pupils scored 454 points in mathematics compared with an average of 489 points in OECD countries. Boys outperformed girls, with a non-statistically significant difference of 5 points (OECD average: 5 points higher for boys)²⁴.

Türkiye participated in PISA 2022²⁵, the results of which were published on 5 December 2023 and are available at [Türkiye | Factsheets | OECD PISA 2022](#) results. Boys and girls performed at similar levels on average in mathematics, but girls outperformed boys in reading by 25 score points in Türkiye. Globally, boys outperformed girls in mathematics in 40 countries and economies and girls outperformed boys in another 17 countries or economies, with no significant difference in the remaining 24 countries or economies. In reading, girls on average outperformed boys in all but two countries and economies that participated in PISA 2022 (79 out of 81). In Türkiye, the share of low performers is similar among boys (38%) and girls (39%) in mathematics, but the share is higher for boys in reading (23% of girls and 35% of boys scored below Level 2 in reading). Among the top performers, the share of boys (7%) is higher than that of girls (4%) in mathematics, but the share of girls is similar in reading (2% of girls and 2% of boys scored at Levels 5 or 6).

The analysis suggests that the main areas where further improvement is needed are encouraging earlier school entry, improving teaching methods and reducing inequalities in upper secondary education.

Some of the areas where improvement will be pursued focus on (1) a future research agenda to improve response through policy measures and support; (2) an assessment of current teacher practice and classroom dynamics in Türkiye's schools; and (3) a diagnosis of teacher career management to assess current teacher management structures at central, provincial and school level. A number of policy recommendations have emerged from the studies: (a) encouraging earlier school

²³ World Bank, "Promoting Excellence in Turkey's Schools," <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/944721468110943381/pdf/777220REVISED00B00PUBLIC00Egitim0EN.pdf>

²⁴ OECD (2021), 21st-century readers: Developing literacy skills in a digital world, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=TUR&treshold=10&topic=PI>

²⁵ [Türkiye | Factsheets | OECD PISA 2022 results](#)

entry; (b) improving teaching methods and promoting the use of effective learning strategies; and (c) reducing inequalities in upper secondary education²⁶.

Türkiye participated in PISA 2022²⁷, the results of which were published on 5 December 2023 and are available at [Türkiye | Factsheets | OECD PISA 2022 results](#).

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

Türkiye has a young population, with almost half under the age of 30 years and a quarter aged between 15 and 29 years. In 2023, 25.8% of the population 15-29 years was not in employment, education or training. There were almost twice as many female NEETs (36.4%) compared to male NEETs (15.5%) in this age group. Young women, especially in the age group 25-29 years, face greater barriers to transiting to work but, above all, very low employment rates.

Türkiye is among the countries with the highest gender gap in NEET rates. Gender roles and family care, as well as the inadequacy of State-supported childcare services and the decline in childcare support from extended families, all contribute to pushing women into the NEET category. A recent UNDP study on female NEETs in the south-eastern region of Türkiye found that the most commonly cited reasons for leaving work are low wages and lack of adequate social security. The second most common reason is family disapproval and responsibilities related to childcare and housework. An important observation is that NEET women have remarkably low levels of trust in both institutions and individuals. This lack of trust is related to a variety of dimensions, such as ambiguity in job definitions and working hours, disrespectful communication and sexual harassment. The private sector elicits the lowest level of trust. Equally significant is the expressed sense of insecurity in crowded places, on public transport and on the streets, which contributes to the reluctance of female NEETs to engage in activities that could lead to employment opportunities²⁸.

In response to rising youth unemployment and the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), in 2021 Türkiye launched the National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan (2021–2023), which is due to be updated. With the adoption of the National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan (2021–2023)²⁹, Türkiye aims to improve vocational training and reduce the NEET rate to 20% by the end of 2023. The strategy and action plan are based on three main pillars: strengthening the link between education and employment; increasing the employment of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs), and preparing them for future jobs. In 2023, early school leavers had a share of 19.6% of young people aged 18-24 years, this being (20.1.2% for men compared to 19.0% for women). Further measures are planned under the Twelfth Development Plan (2024-2028).

2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

In recent years, Türkiye's public and private education and training institutions have sought to address the provision of skills for the changing world of work. Vocational education and training (VET) has been brought to the fore to meet the challenges of the development of skills needed in today's labour market and society.

Through research, policy papers and discussions some challenges have been raised regarding structural changes in the system. Some efforts have already been made through Türkiye's Education Vision 2023. The assessment of the work done over the last three years has highlighted the need to redesign certain parts of the Turkish VET system to make it more resilient and ensure that it can make the most of the opportunities offered by ongoing changes. The discussions focus on four key

²⁶ World Bank, "Promoting Excellence in Turkey's Schools", <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/944721468110943381/pdf/777220REVISED00B00PUBLIC00Egitim0EN.pdf>

²⁷ [Türkiye | Factsheets | OECD PISA 2022 results](#)

²⁸ [Eleleyiz-INGEV-Need-Analysis-of-NEET-Women-2023.pdf](#)

²⁹ Türkiye National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan (2021-2023) <https://www.eu4youthdays.eu/t%C3%BCrkiye>

dimensions of future-ready VET systems: (i) responsiveness to changing skills needs; (ii) the flexibility to make VET work for all; (iii) the ability to support the transition to a changing labour market and further learning; and (iv) the potential of digital technology to innovate the design and delivery of VET. Decisions have been taken and research is now underway on each of these dimensions. All the work done to date raises a number of key issues that policymakers and other VET stakeholders should consider when redesigning VET to make it more future-ready. The OECD and Türkiye's public and private education and training institutions are currently engaged in a joint assessment exercise to address some of these challenges.

A detailed description of Türkiye's VET system can be found on the Commission's Eurydice website³⁰. VET in Türkiye is provided at the upper secondary and post-secondary education levels and is targeted at both young people and adults. Upon completion of lower secondary education, students, usually at the age of 14, may continue with upper secondary education in general or vocational programmes. Both general and vocational upper secondary education last 4 years.

Adult education in Türkiye (formal education) includes all types of learning activities that contribute to the development of the skills and competences in the formal education system and the continuous lifelong learning system. (Regulation on Lifelong Learning Institutions of 2018). Efforts are being made and policy discussions are taking place on the importance of adult learning with a focus on reskilling and upskilling for new jobs. According to the Adult Education Survey (AES) conducted in 2022, only 21.7% of adults (25–64 years old) participated in lifelong learning opportunities, compared to the EU average of 46.6%. Despite this, Türkiye registered a slight increase from previous AES conducted in 2016 (20.9%). A gender discrepancy is also present, with a gap of approximately 5 percentage points compared to the more gender balanced LLL participation on average in the EU. According to the Labour Force Survey, the other main data source for LLL participation, Türkiye registers a steady increase from 5.7% in 2019 to 7.4% in 2023, but remains far behind the EU average of 12.8% (Eurostat, 2023).

The Directorate-General of the Ministry of Employment, Social Affairs and Family develops national occupational standards and qualifications. It is also Türkiye's National Agency for the Erasmus+ Programme and provides funding for adult education and VET projects implemented under the Active Labour Market Programmes (Ministry of Family Affairs and Social Services, Annual Reports). The İŞKUR has launched several programmes aiming to increase adult learning³¹. The coverage and quality of adult education varies, and the private sector in Türkiye is conducting research and analysis to better understand the skills needs in each sector. A number of 'Skills for the Future' platforms have been established in which the public and private sectors in Türkiye have called for joint action, suggesting that the workforce needs to significantly upgrade its skills. The underlying conclusion is that reskilling and upskilling efforts would be key to achieving a sustainable change in the workforce.

According to the Regulation on Lifelong Learning Institutions³², formal adult education in Türkiye includes all types of learning activities that combine the development of skills and competences in the formal education system and continuous education and training in a lifelong learning setting by public and private providers. The Directorate-General for Lifelong Learning of the MoNE is responsible for many adult education institutions, including public education centres, open education schools and distance learning providers. There are also vocational and technical secondary schools affiliated with the Directorate-General for Vocational and Technical Education and vocational training centres. The secondary education programme in the fields and sectors specified in the relevant Act, which provide training and issue certificates to adults which are also specified in the Vocational Education Act No 3308).

There are other institutions and funding and cooperation modalities that provide lifelong learning courses such as the Public Employment Service (İŞKUR), which provides (re)training courses to jobseekers, workers and other groups. The National Agency for Erasmus+ provides funding for adult

³⁰ [Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary Education | Eurydice \(europa.eu\); Teaching and learning in vocational upper secondary education | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#)

³¹ <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/en/job-seeker/on-the-job-training-programs/>

³² <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-education-systems/turkey/developments-and-current-policy-priorities>

education and VET projects implemented under the Active Labour Market programmes. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry conducts training activities in the sector in cooperation with the MoNE and other relevant institutions and organisations. Special training activities are also carried out by private institutions with the approval of the Directorate-General for Private Educational Institutions (Private Educational Institutions Act No 5580).

Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

The main strategy for the sector is the Education Vision for a Strong Future 2023, which defines the main objectives in the field of education. The strategy sets out the objectives/targets of the Turkish government in the area of lifelong learning. For VET, these are to improve the perception of VET, update VET content, infrastructure and equipment, increase training opportunities for teachers, and strengthen cooperation between education and businesses. As mentioned above, the new strategic framework for education and training is currently under discussion and preparation.

Türkiye's current Economic Reform Programme 2023–2025 provides the basis for progress in the form of measures for technical and vocational education and training (VET). These include the development of digital content and skills-based programmes, the updating of vocational and technical curricula and the establishment of a protocol for cooperation with the private sector on vocational education and skills development. This builds on the policies and measures previously put in place to improve education and skills provision with a focus on improving the quality and equity of educational outcomes at all levels, as evidenced by the latest EU benchmarks and recognised in the OECD's policy report (OECD), 2021³³.

As mentioned above, the analysis shows that the country's main human capital challenges include the need to improve the access to and quality of initial education and training, provide career opportunities for a large youth population, and reskill and upskill the adult workforce, including a large number of refugees.

Pupils' academic performance varies between schools and by socio-economic background. There are disparities between the capital, major cities and more peripheral areas. However, the government continues to support VET, both financially and through policies and partnerships. VET provides skills development in a wide range of occupations through school-based and work-based learning.

VET governance and funding arrangements

At national level, the main actors in VET governance are the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), which is responsible for higher vocational schools (post-secondary VET is under the Council for Higher Education), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS), the Ministry of Development (MoD) and the Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology (MoSIT). The MoNE is involved in six out of the seven VET governance functions, while the MoD and MoLSS in four each.

Other strategic actors are the directorates of the MoNE, notably the Education Board, the Directorate-General for Vocational and Technical Education, the Directorate-General for Lifelong Learning and the Directorate for Strategy Development, each of which is involved in a number of governance functions. The Vocational Education Council (VEC) plays a crucial role, being involved in six out of the seven governance functions. It comprises representatives of the competent ministries, trade unions and employers' organisations, public institutions and agencies and other key social partners who decide on the planning and implementation of VET programmes.

NGOs and social partners participate in the decision-making process. The most active organisations are Türkiye's Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB), business federations and associations, and other trade and employers' unions and associations. They are involved in many governance functions through public bodies such as the VEC or through public-private partnerships for skills development or capacity building.

³³ [Türkiye Economic Snapshot - OECD](#)

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

The private sector in Türkiye invests in education and training.

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

The main sources of funding for education are the central government budget, the budgets of private provincial administrations and metropolitan municipalities, loans, scholarships, donations and protocols signed with foreign countries and institutions, personal and institutional donations for education, and income from the school-family union. Early childhood education and primary and secondary education are mostly financed by the State.

Qualifications, validation and recognition

Türkiye's Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (TQF)³⁴, which was adopted in 2015, is designed as a single structure that integrates all qualifications obtained through education and training programmes, including primary, secondary and higher education, special needs education and continuing training. It also recognises the learning outcomes gained through experience in the workplace or other non-formal or informal settings. The TQF has eight levels and covers all types and levels of qualifications and certificates.

At the VET level, the Vocational Qualifications Agency has initiated a project to identify the skills sets required for the greening of the economy. Green skills sets have been identified for a total of 45 occupations in 5 sectors. These are not yet finalised and the Agency plans to organise a series of workshops to validate them with representatives of the different sectors to try to come up with sets of generic and sector specific green skills. Work is underway to develop curricula (in early pilot stages) for VET levels, including level 5, in close cooperation with the Turkish Ministry of National Education and the private sector. It is recognised that there is an urgent need for the Ministry of National Education and higher education institutions to further develop curricula and provide training for the skills needed at all levels of education.

The framework has been developed and implemented jointly by the MoNE, the Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) and the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). The VQA has established various expert groups and is working closely with research institutions on the sustainability of education to define national occupational standards with the aim of developing job profiles and competencies. The TQF legislation stipulates that all qualifications obtained through education, training or other learning pathways must be quality assured. TQF qualifications are published in the Official Gazette after approval by the TQF Coordination Board³⁵. The principles of quality assurance are modelled on those of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). All diplomas, certificates and vocational qualifications certificates issued in Türkiye must meet these criteria³⁶.

Implementation structures, main working methods and tools have been established and the TQF is a reference point for the use of learning outcomes, the continuous revision and renewal of qualifications and for the classification of qualifications at different levels. To date, 29 000 qualifications have been registered in the TQF database. Most of them are outcome-based, but the implementation of the TQF is progressing at different rates in the different sub-sectors of the education system. Türkiye is a member of the EQF Advisory Group and participates in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA–

³⁴ [Turkish Qualifications Framework](#).

³⁵ [TQF Coordination Board, TQF Coordination Board \(tyc.gov.tr\)](#)

³⁶ For more details, see: [Quality assurance | Eurydice \(europa.eu\)](#).

Bologna process). In 2017³⁷, the TQF was referenced to the EQF and self-certified to the Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area (QF–EHEA).

In 2022, the TQF Principles and Procedures for Recognition and Quality Assurance of Prior Learning (TQF RPL Principles and Procedures) were published. These Principles and Procedures use the four stages of validation as the basis for the framework of RPL requirements that should apply to all TQF qualifications. The RPL requirements for TQF qualifications are set out in the TQF RPL Principles and Procedures. The validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) was one of the six priorities of the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014–2018. The MoNE has adopted a national framework, procedures and operational guidelines and has implemented processes to validate non-formal and informal learning for qualification levels 1 to 5. The Ministry has also implemented an increasing number of pilot projects on VNFIL³⁸. Türkiye is now in the third phase of the development of its qualifications system, which includes an ‘implementation phase,’ a ‘preparation phase’ (2010-2015) and an ‘improvement/further development phase’ (2016–2020). With the actions set out in the Turkish Qualifications Framework (TQF) Action Plan 2016–2018, either completed or in the final stages of completion, and with the necessary TQF ‘infrastructure’ in place, the implementation phase of the TQF will focus on putting the framework ‘on the ground’ (TQF Strategy Paper, 2021). The priorities of this phase are quality assurance (QA), including qualifications in TQF, and tools for widening access to VNFIL qualifications (validation of non-formal and informal learning) and credit transfers to make TQF a reality. Within this process, the implementing systems of the VNFIL have been a priority. The system is operated by the VQA, a powerful platform that brings together the State, and workers and employers in the country. The main aim of the system is to equip the workforce with up-to-date qualifications and ensure that learning is recognised in the workplace. The European Qualifications Framework (EQF) referencing criterion 3 refers specifically to the relationship between national qualifications frameworks and arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning. EQF referencing ensures the accountability and validity of all qualifications, whether formal, non-formal or informal³⁹.

Quality and quality assurance

The heterogeneity of VET programmes and academic degrees poses a challenge in terms of quality and quality assurance. To address this, Türkiye has embarked on the development of a nationwide quality assurance system for VET institutions. A directive on quality assurance in vocational and technical education institutions was adopted in May 2019. This includes self-assessments to be conducted once a year by all vocational schools, with the results to be made available to the MoNE.

Since the 2016–2017 academic year, all VET institutions in Türkiye have conducted regular self-assessments and undergone external evaluations. The MoNE’s assessment of progress, conducted in 2018, showed some results: labour force participation and employment rates were higher for vocational college graduates than those for general upper secondary school graduates in 2018. A national review in the context of COVID-19 (2020) reported a 17% increase in the number of students opting for vocational upper secondary education between 2018 and 2019. However, challenges remain in most fields of study. Less than 10% of VET graduates are employed in the field in which they graduated. Other priorities identified include reducing the intensity of academic courses for VET students and facilitating the transition to higher education (OECD, 2020).

Work-based learning arrangements

Türkiye has strengthened employer engagement and apprenticeship at both national and local level. Employers’ associations in Türkiye play a crucial role in skills development, both through their own funding and the implementation of EU or other donor-funded projects. Most large employers’ organisations have VET departments that interact directly with public institutions, and work-based learning (WBL) is an important part of Türkiye’s VET system. Depending on the age of students and

³⁷TQF (Turkish Qualifications Framework), Strategy Paper, Ankara, VQA, 2021.

³⁸ For more details, see Akkök, F (2022), The role of career guidance in the VNFIL.

³⁹ For more details, see Akkök, F (2022), *The role of career guidance in the VNFIL*.

the type of VET institution, WBL ranges from work experience placements during the holidays to three-day-a-week in-company training periods to full-time in-company training. An increasing number of students in Türkiye are participating in VET programmes. In 2017, the country introduced the concept of 'master craftsman' as part of its apprenticeship system within the scope of compulsory education. To support cooperation between education and businesses, the MoNE has established integrated online e-platforms, such as Türkiye's VET Map and the 'My Job My Life' platform.

More detailed information is available on the portal of the Ministry of National Education⁴⁰.

Digital education and skills

The development of digital skills for students and teachers in Türkiye has been the focus of several policy documents even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The main policy document is the MoNE's Education Vision 2023. The pandemic has brought the issue to the fore and all stakeholders recognise the critical importance of digital skills and competences. Digital Content and Skills-based Transformation of the Learning Process', two main objectives are identified: (1) to create an ecosystem for the development of digital content and skills; and (2) to develop content and train teachers to improve their digital skills.

The MoNE's Directorate-General for Innovation and Educational Technologies has fully implemented the Educational Information Network (EBA)⁴¹. The EBA is an online social education platform that provides digital educational materials for free use by students anywhere, at any time, ensuring the integration of technology in education. It provides videos, educational software and educational games to ensure that education is delivered beyond the school premises. The EBA is constantly evolving, providing reliable digital educational content tailored to each grade and following innovations in education and technology. It is enriched with digital content provided by leading educational companies in Türkiye and worldwide. International organisations are studying its content and massive outreach.

In response to COVID-19 and looking beyond, the World Bank provided a USD 160 million (EUR 143.8 million) loan to be invested in innovation, digitalisation and outreach to all students. The funds and the innovative measures deployed have helped to cover all grades of primary and secondary school, including vocational training. They consisted of a package of academic, social, and psychological support delivered through online lessons, radio, television, and other media.

The pandemic outbreak affected educational staff and this remains one of the main challenges, as reported in the assessments of the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) of Türkiye conducted in 2022. Another challenge is that experienced educational staff lacked training in digital skills, digital pedagogy and IT tools before the crisis. Action is needed to train teachers, members of the academic community and other educational staff in the use of ICT tools, digital technologies and media to promote inclusion in education. I

It is recognised that innovative technologies could also be of significant help in implementing inclusive education.

In 2020–2021, Türkiye piloted the EU tool Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the Use of Innovative Education (SELFIE) for WBL. The MoNE has been rolling out a further developed version of the tool in the country.

Türkiye has improved its performance in terms of individuals' digital skills. However, only one third of people aged 16–74 years have basic or advanced digital skills (Eurostat 2022). This is another vulnerability of the youth workforce. Further tailor-made reskilling and upskilling would be of great benefit to workers affected by the changing world of work.

⁴⁰ <https://www.meb.gov.tr/vocational-high-schools-made-export-agreements-with-5-different-countries-within-11-months/haber/28132/en>

⁴¹ <http://www.eba.gov.tr/eicerik>

Statistics on education and training

Türkiye's Statistical Institute (TurkStat)⁴² is the source of data and analysis on the education and training system, the labour market, etc. The Institute also shares data and analyses with the European Commission, the ETF and international organisations.

Türkiye's Ministry of National Education (MoNE) conducts assessments and analyses on the status of the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Reviews have been carried out on the current state of MoNE information systems in terms of interoperability with other information and data sources. The Ministry has some operational features in terms of both intra- and interorganisational interoperability, but it cannot fully exploit the opportunities arising from the use of the Central Education Management Information System (EMIS). Some areas need to be further developed in terms of interoperability. With regard to intra-organisational interoperability, proposals have been made to ensure a possibility for the transfer of data in the Education Information Network (EIN) to the e-school module, the transfer of a greater volume of student data between educational levels, and the transfer of data expected from management levels through information systems by pre-defining interoperability requirements. In terms of interorganisational interoperability, it is recommended that interoperability be ensured between the information systems of the MoNE and those of the Ministry of Health, higher education institutions and social security institutions (Boz, M., & Simsek, I., 2022).

⁴² [Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu \(TÜİK\) \(TurkStat.gov.tr\)](https://turkstat.gov.tr)

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Trends and challenges

Labour market characteristics

According to the European Commission, the labour market has shown signs of recovery and efforts have been made to address skills mismatches and shortages (EC, 2024). The potential of women in the labour market remains untapped. In 2023, the activity rate for men was 71.2% compared to 35.8% for women (improving after a decline to 30.9% in 2020). Low participation rates in early childhood education and care have a negative impact both on women's participation in the labour market and on the educational foundation of children later in life. This remains a challenge.

In terms of employment, the labour market situation in Türkiye has improved. The employment rate (age group 15+ years) was 48.3% in 2023, compared to 47.5% a year earlier. The unemployment rate (age group 15+ years) decreased from 10.4% in 2022 to 9.4% in 2023. Despite an increase, the employment rate for women (age group 15+ years) remained low at 31.3%. The youth unemployment rate (age group 15–24 years) continued to decrease from 22.6% in 2021 to 19.4% in 2022, and to 17.4% in 2023. The youth unemployment rate for women decreased from 28.7% to 25.2% and to 23.2% in 2023. The rate of young people aged 15–29 years not in employment, education or training decreased slightly from 27.2% in 2022 to 25.8% in 2023 but remained particularly high for women (36.4%). Overall, the NEET rate is one of the highest in Europe.

The overall gender unemployment gap in 2023 was around 5 percentage points (7.7% for men and 12.6% for women in 2023), but was higher at around 9% for youth unemployment in the age group 15–24 years (males 14.3%, females 23.2%) in the same year.

Despite some economic recovery, the labour market remains characterised by structural imbalances, including the lack of integration of Türkiye's young population, the underutilisation of women's potential in the labour force and the high share of the informal economy.

According to Eurostat, Türkiye has the highest rate of overqualification in Europe (35.7% compared to an EU average of 22% in 2023), with 41% of its younger workers (aged 20–34 years) exposed to overqualification (23.8%, Eurostat, 2023). Such an incidence of vertical mismatch among workers with tertiary education reflects a need for stronger correlation between education and labour demand and incentives to increase the demand for higher levels of skills and competences through value-added, technology and knowledge-based economic activities in Türkiye.

Despite current prioritisation, active labour market policies and opportunities for upskilling and reskilling remain limited in scope to address the risks of labour market disengagement, inactivity and the workers in need of new skills and competences in the face of continuous changes in technology and labour demand.

Number of registered unemployed⁴³

The data presented refers to the registered unemployed. In Türkiye, this category is defined as 'persons in active records who are of working age, and are able and willing to work, but did not have a job with a minimum wage at the time of applying to the institution and have not been able to find a job through the institution.' When those looking for a job with better conditions, those looking for a job after retirement and those wishing to work in a specific workplace are excluded from the registered labour force, the rest are the formally unemployed⁴⁴.

⁴³ Source for this and subsequent sections on registered unemployed data: ISKUR and ETF ALMP data collection

⁴⁴ Source: 2019 -2022, Statistical Tables, Iskur (<https://www.iskur.gov.tr/kurumsal-bilgi/istatistikler/>)

Note: The data refers to the monthly stock of registered unemployed at the end of December 2022.

Over the period 2019–2023, the number of registered unemployed fell from 3.8 million to 2.4 million persons. In 2023, the number of unemployed men and women was relatively equal. Almost one million of the registered unemployed are under the age of 29 years old confirming the need to address the difficult transition from school to work and labour market integration of young people in Türkiye. The educational profile of the registered unemployed also confirms a higher likelihood of being employed among those with tertiary education, with the share of highly educated unemployed in the total unemployed only around 13%. Jobseekers with a low and medium level of education are equally represented among the unemployed, reflecting a significant need for investment in upskilling and reskilling.

Participants in counselling activities and services

In 2023, the number of participants in vocational education and career counselling services, such as individual interviews, reached 2.76, a decrease compared to 2021 and 2020 against the background of a lower total number of unemployed persons. This service is provided face-to-face by career counsellors to job seekers and those who are in the process of choosing a career, in order to prepare them for vocational training and/or the labour market and finding a job. Out of the total number of participants, 2.72 million unemployed received job counselling (the process of providing regular assistance in solving problems relating to the choice of a career best suited to the individual's wishes and situation, work placements or job adaptation by comparing the applicant's interests and abilities with those of people who have the necessary qualifications and meet the conditions for employment in various occupations), and 44 143 received vocational (career) counselling (the process of regularly assisting individuals in choosing a career that best suits their wishes and situation so that they can benefit from the training opportunities related to their chosen occupation by comparing the applicant's interests and abilities with those of people who have the necessary qualifications and meet the conditions for employment in various occupations).

In recent years, the participation of women in labour market services has been lower than that of men.

By level of education, the figures for 2021, 2022 and 2023 show that counselling services are provided more or less equally to people with a low and medium level of education and much less to those with higher education, which is consistent with the overall structure of the registered unemployed (who mostly have a low or medium level of education).

In 2023, İŞKUR staff conducted 690 000 workplace visits, i.e. job interviews with employers directly at the workplace. These visits are part of İŞKUR's strategy to improve its cooperation with employers and collect information on labour demand and job expectations in order to better inform career guidance services and jobseeker orientation.

Other forms of career guidance, orientation and job matching included job fairs, including virtual job fairs, job clubs, group interviews and career days.

Participants in labour market measures

The İŞKUR has reported that almost 50 000 jobseekers participated in training and skills development activities, a significant decrease compared to the previous year when over 150 000 people benefited from such support. Women and people with medium qualifications are more likely to participate in (re)training measures, and young jobseekers (up to the age of 29 years) are strongly represented in the number of participants in on-the-job training.

Another important activation measure implemented by the İŞKUR are public work programmes with almost 300 000 participants in 2023, compared to 115 480 in 2022. Women represent more than 60% of the participants in this type of labour market measure.

In 2023, 51.1% of the registered unemployed moved from unemployment to employment, a steady increase compared to 2020. Fewer women (38%) seeking jobs moved into employment compared to men (64.5%), while by age group, the transition into employment was twice as high for young people (70.1%) compared to those aged 29 years and over (38.1%).

In terms of educational attainment, the percentage of registered unemployed who moved from unemployment to employment in 2022 was the lowest for people with higher education (39.5%), and the highest for those with medium education (54.5%).

Number of job vacancies

The İŞKUR reports data on the job vacancies from January to December each year. In 2023, the total number of vacancies was 2 677 006, an increase of more than 300 000 vacancies compared to the previous year.

By economic activity, the vacancy profile remains constant with the highest number of vacancies available in (i) manufacturing; (ii) wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; and (iii) administrative and support services.

In terms of major occupations (national classification), the highest demand is for unskilled workers (elementary occupations); services and trade; craft and related occupations; and plant and machine operators.

3.2 Employment policy and institutional settings

Employment policy strategy and legal framework

The strategy and legal framework for Türkiye's employment policy are developed by the Presidency and shaped by the government's policy on employment and social inclusion. The system is governed by a multi-institutional structure: the Constitution, the Presidential Administration, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the National Youth Council and many policy documents.

The [İŞKUR](#) was established by [Law No 4904 of 25.6.2003](#) to facilitate activities related to the protection, improvement and mainstreaming of employment, the prevention of unemployment and the provision of unemployment insurance services. İŞKUR plays a leading role in upgrading the skills of jobseekers and facilitating their access to productive employment through the provision of vocational training and other employment support services. The Agency currently offers a range of programmes to help workers access jobs through support for on-the-job training (wage subsidies) and other subsidised forms of employment, including hiring subsidies (covering the social security contributions and other non-wage costs for new employees). In addition to financial support, there are also programmes that aim to foster links between companies and university research centres in activities such as training, skills exchange programmes and joint ventures.

Initiatives to boost employment

The İŞKUR portal⁴⁵ is the platform that helps to match labour supply and demand. The İŞKUR has also invested in its career guidance system and increased the number of career counsellors.

Public authorities, in particular the İŞKUR and the MoNE, also provide skills development programmes. In addition, non-governmental organisations target both host and refugee communities. Women's potential in the labour market remains underutilised. Policies aimed at integrating women into the labour market have so far had limited results.

The İŞKUR is the institution implementing the main policy initiative to increase women's participation and employment through a subsidy system as an incentive for employers to hire women.

Initiatives to strengthen the capacity of the public employment services

Support has been provided to strengthen the employment policy-making capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, İŞKUR EU financial support, together with government programmes, has

⁴⁵ www.iskur.gov.tr

aimed at strengthening the institutional capacity of İŞKUR's administration at central level, but also that of its provincial directorates, to deliver better public employment services in the provinces within the framework of the 'model offices' approach. Monitoring reports and analyses⁴⁶ suggest that, as a result of the support provided to İŞKUR, the Agency has improved its labour market information system, its guidance services on occupations, careers and jobs, and the public employment services it provides at regional level⁴⁷.

In Türkiye, guidance services are provided in different contexts by the MoNE, the İŞKUR, universities, the private sector and trade unions, and employers' associations. Most of the regular services are provided by the MoNE and the İŞKUR. There are two main guidance and counselling systems in Türkiye: one in the education sector (primary and secondary education, vocational schools, guidance and research centres at provincial level, tertiary education, and career planning centres), and the other in the employment sector (primary and secondary education, vocational schools, tertiary education and adult learning). In the education sector, the practitioners are counsellors, classroom teachers and specialists in career guidance centres, while in the employment sector the main practitioners are career and vocational counsellors.

The İŞKUR has put in place a system for monitoring ALMPs in order to increase their efficiency and effectiveness. Extensive support has been provided to further strengthen the functioning of the Provincial Employment and Vocational Training Boards and to design, implement and monitor tailor-made employment policies in all NUTS II regions. These efforts have resulted in increased access to the services of the İŞKUR. The services provided by the Agency are integrated into the infrastructure of Türkiye's e-government portal. The website³⁴ is fully developed and regularly updated. Significant investments have been made in infrastructure and staff capacity has been made to improve the service delivery of the İŞKUR. Needs for the development and implementation of new policies have been identified, and capacity development plans and digital transformation roadmaps have been developed accordingly.

The İŞKUR is an active member of the network Centres of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries (CPESSEC)⁴⁸.

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⁴⁶ <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentlist?qterm=Turkey%20ISKUR>

⁴⁷ World Bank Support for Transition to Labour Market Project, [Support for Transition to Labor Market Project \(worldbank.org\)](https://documents.worldbank.org/ocds/docid/344970711000000000), Turkey: Employment Support and Activation of Work-able Refugees and Turkish Citizens (P171471)

⁴⁸ <https://www.iskur.gov.tr/en/news/members-of-centre-of-public-employment-services-of-southeast-european-countries-cpessec-gathered-in-north-macedonia/>

STATISTICAL ANNEX – TÜRKİYE

The Annex includes annual data from 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 or the last available year.

	Indicator	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	Total population (in thousands) ⁽¹⁾	78218.5	82579.4	83384.7	84147.3	84979.9	85326.0
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15–24 years and denominator age 15–64 years, %) ^{(1) c}	25.3	23.5	23.1	22.6	22.2	21.8
3	GDP growth rate (%)	6.1	0.8	1.9	11.4	5.5	4.5
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	6.9	6.4	6.7	5.5	6.2
		Industry	27.8	27.3	28.0	31.1	28.3
		Services	53.5	56.3	54.2	52.8	54.0
5	Public expenditure on education (as% of GDP)	4.3	4.5	4.0	2.8	2.6	M.D
6	Public expenditure on education (as% of total public expenditure)	11.8	11.2	9.3	8.8	8.8	M.D
7	Adult literacy (%)	95.6	96.7	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	68.9	63.9	62.1	60.5	57.3
		Medium ⁽³⁾	17.5	19.2	19.8	20.8	22.9
		High ⁽⁴⁾	13.6	16.9	18.1	18.8	19.9
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18–24 years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	36.6	28.8	26.6	23.0	19.6
		Male	35.4	29.0	27.5	23.8	20.1
		Female	37.9	28.6	25.8	22.2	19.0
10	Total Net enrolment rate (%)	Lower secondary	99.3	99.9	99.9	99.9	M.D.
		Upper secondary	85.7	89.7	90.9	92.1	M.D.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	49.0	42.5	39.4	38.0	37.5	M.D.
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%) ⁽⁶⁾	Reading	40.0	26.1	N.A.	N.A.	29.3
		Mathematics	51.4	36.7	N.A.	N.A.	38.7
		Science	44.5	25.2	N.A.	N.A.	24.7

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
13	Activity rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	51.3	53.0	49.3	51.4	53.1	53.3
		Male	71.6	72.0	68.2	70.3	71.4	71.2
		Female	31.5	34.4	30.9	32.8	35.1	35.8
14	Inactivity rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	48.7	47.0	50.7	48.6	46.9	46.7
		Male	28.4	28.0	31.8	29.7	28.6	28.8
		Female	68.5	65.6	69.1	67.2	64.9	64.2
15	Employment rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	46.0	45.7	42.8	45.2	47.5	48.3
		Male	65.0	63.1	59.8	62.8	65.0	65.7
		Female	27.5	28.7	26.3	28.0	30.4	31.3
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	39.4	38.4	35.0	37.0	38.7	38.6
		Medium ⁽³⁾	52.5	50.0	46.8	49.5	52.9	54.0
		High ⁽⁴⁾	71.0	68.4	65.4	67.0	68.6	69.9
17	Employment by sector (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Agriculture	20.6	18.2	17.6	17.2	15.8	14.8
		Industry	27.2	25.3	26.2	27.5	27.7	27.5
		Services	52.2	56.5	56.2	55.3	56.5	57.6
18	Incidence of self-employment (%) ⁽⁵⁾		33,0	31.6	30.2	30.1	29.5	28.8
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%) ⁽⁵⁾		28,6	27.1	25.7	25.5	25.0	24.1
20	Unemployment rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	10.3	13.7	13.2	12.0	10.4	9.4
		Male	9.2	12.4	12.3	10.7	8.9	7.7
		Female	12.6	16.5	15.0	14.7	13.4	12.6
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	9.7	13.0	12.6	11.0	9.1	8.0
		Medium ⁽³⁾	11.3	15.7	15.0	13.5	12.1	11.2
		High ⁽⁴⁾	11.0	13.7	12.8	12.4	11.3	9.8
22	Unemployment rate (age group 15–24 years) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	18.5	25.4	25.3	22.6	19.4	17.4
		Male	16.5	22.5	22.6	19.4	16.4	14.3
		Female	22.2	30.6	30.3	28.7	25.2	23.2
23	Proportion of people aged 15–24 years not in	Total	24.0	26.0	28.3	24.7	24.2	22.5
		Male	14.3	18.3	21.2	17.4	16.4	15.6

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	employment, education or training (NEETs) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Female	33.8	34.0	35.7	32.4	32.3	29.8
	Proportion of people aged 15–29 years not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	28.0	29.5	32.0	28.4	27.2	25.8
		Male	14.4	18.4	21.3	17.7	16.5	15.5
		Female	41.6	40.8	42.9	39.4	38.2	36.4
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64 years)	Total	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
		Male	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
		Female	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.
25	Human Development Index		0.821	0.842	0.835	0.841	0.855	M.D.

Last update: 29/08/2024

Sources:

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: The World Bank, World Development Indicators database

Indicators 10, 11: UNESCO, Institute for Statistics

Indicators 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24: TURKSTAT (LFS- Household Labour Force Survey)

Indicator 12: OECD PISA 2018 Results (Volume I) Annex B1; OECD PISA 2022 Results (Volume I)

Indicator 25: UNDP

Notes:

(1) Estimation.

(2) Low – ISCED 0-2

(3) Medium – ISCED 3-4

(4) High – ISCED 5-8

(5) In HLFS, the series is not comparable to previous years due to the adjustments in the definition, scope and design of the survey since 2021.

(6) PISA: 2019 refers to 2018

Legend:

C = ETF calculations

N.A. = Not Applicable

M.D. = Missing Data

ANNEX: DEFINITIONS OF INDICATORS

	Description	Definition
1	Total population (in thousands)	The total population is estimated as the number of people having their usual residence in a country on 1 January of the respective year. When information on the usually resident population is not available, countries may report legal or registered residents.
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15–2 years) (%)	This is the ratio of the youth population (aged 15–24 years) to the working-age population, usually aged 15–64 years (or 15–74 years, or 15+ years).
3	GDP growth rate (%)	Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2010 US Dollars. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy, plus any taxes on products and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for the depreciation of manufactured goods or the depletion and degradation of natural resources.
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	<p>The share of value added from Agriculture, Industry and Services.</p> <p>Agriculture corresponds to ISIC divisions 1–5 and includes forestry, hunting, and fishing, as well as cultivation of crops and livestock production. Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. The origin of value added is determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), revision 3 or 4.</p> <p>Industry corresponds to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) tabulation categories C–F (revision 3) or tabulation categories B–F (revision 4) and includes mining and quarrying (including oil production), manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas, and water).</p> <p>Services correspond to ISIC divisions 50–99 and they include value added in wholesale and retail trade (including hotels and restaurants), transport, and government, financial, professional, and personal services such as education, health care, and real estate services. Also included are imputed bank service charges, import duties, and any statistical discrepancies noted by national compilers as well as discrepancies arising from rescaling.</p>
5	Public expenditure on education (as% of GDP)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of GDP. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
6	Public expenditure on education (as% of total public expenditure)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of total public expenditure. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
7	Adult literacy (%)	Adult literacy is the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write a short simple statement on his/her everyday life and understand it. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy' – the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.
8	Educational attainment of total population (age group 15+ years) (%)	Educational attainment refers to the highest educational level achieved by individuals expressed as a percentage of all persons in that age group.

	Description	Definition
		This is usually measured in terms of the highest educational programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification. Recognised intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level than the programme itself.
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18–24 years) (%)	Early leavers from education and training are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18–24 years with at lower secondary education at most who were not in further education or training during the four weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0–2 and 3C short (i.e. programmes lasting under two years) for data up to 2013 and to ISCED 2011 levels 0–2 for data from 2014 onwards.
10	Total NET enrolment rate	Total number of students of the official age group for a given level of education who are enrolled in any level of education, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education (in this case, upper secondary), expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level.
12	Low achievement in reading, maths and science – PISA (%)	Low achievers are the 15-year-olds who are failing to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics and science.
13	Activity rate (age group 15+ years) (%)	The activity rate is calculated by dividing the active population by the population of the same age group. The active population (also called 'labour force') is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
14	Inactivity rate (age group 15+ years) (%)	The inactivity/out of the labour force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
15	Employment rate (aged 15+ years) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed people by the population of the same age group. Employed people are all people who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated.
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (age group 15+ years) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated. Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0–2), Medium (ISCED level 3–4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5–6, and ISCED 2011 level 5–8).
17	Employment by sector (%)	This indicator provides information on the relative importance of different economic activities with regard to employment. Data are presented by broad branches of economic activity (i.e. Agriculture/Industry/Services) based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). In Europe, the NACE classification is consistent with ISIC.
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)	The incidence of self-employment is expressed by the self-employed (i.e. employers + own-account workers + contributing family workers) as a proportion of the total employed.
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	The incidence of vulnerable employment is expressed by the own-account workers and contributing family workers as a proportion of the total employed.
20	Unemployment rate (age group 15+ years) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or

	Description	Definition
		unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–64 years or 15+ years who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months).
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (age group 15+ years) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work (had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months)). Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: low (ISCED level 0–2), medium (ISCED level 3–4) and high (ISCED 1997 level 5–6, and ISCED 2011 level 5–8).
22	Unemployment rate (age group 15-24 years) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–24 who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months).
23	Proportion of people aged 15–24/15-29 years not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15–24 who meet the following two conditions: first, they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Data are expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and gender, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question on participation in education and training.
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% age group 25-64 years)	Participants in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25–64 who stated that they received education or training in the 12 months preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on participation in education and training. The information collected relates to all education or training, whether or not it is relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job. If a different reference period is used, this should be indicated.
25	Human Development Index	The index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living.

KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) is the most important donor investment. It supports people-to-people contacts, civil society, fundamental rights, the good functioning of the EU-Türkiye Customs Union, and the green and digital agendas. The Commission pays particular attention to young people, education and innovation in Türkiye in its programmes and policies. Cooperation between Türkiye and the EU in the field of science, technology and innovation is ongoing. Under the IPA Human Resources Development Operational Programme, implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, 431 projects have been implemented to date. The EUR 486 million programme is implemented with EU funding and provides support in a number of areas from women and youth employment to girls' enrolment in school. With projects ranging from promoting formal employment to providing lifelong learning opportunities, it has made a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of people, particularly from disadvantaged groups: [Publications – İnsan Kaynaklarının Geliştirilmesi Program Otoritesi \(ikg.gov.tr\)](#).

The increased participation of VET and universities in the EU's Erasmus+ Programme and other EU programmes has enabled exchanges and cooperation among Türkiye and its EU partners. Emphasis has been placed on digital education and training to enable innovation and technology transfer. Industry views on the future and the ongoing digital transformation have also been identified as an area of cooperation.

As an eligible country, Türkiye is fully integrated into the European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus (EFSD+). This means that Türkiye can benefit from a wide range of budget guaranteed mechanisms that facilitate public and private investment. The recently established Türkiye Investment Platform (TIP) has become the main vector for identifying and selecting investment opportunities that reflect the EFSD+ priorities — the Green Deal, Global Gateways, Jobs, and Growth. This new mechanism aims to support innovative investments proposed by the EU financial institutions in areas such as decarbonisation, digitalisation, access to finance, innovation and green investment.

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

The EU Facility for Refugees in Türkiye provides EUR 6 billion in support for refugees and host communities. In 2020, an additional EUR 535 million in humanitarian aid outside the Facility ensured the continuation of two Facility flagship programmes. In 2021, EUR 3 billion was made available to ensure the continuation of support under the Facility.

In Türkiye, the European Investment Bank [Türkiye and the EIB](#) of the EU and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) are increasingly active. The EBRD focuses on strengthening financial resilience, promoting the knowledge economy, fostering inclusion and skills for inclusion, and accelerating the transition to a green economy: see '[The EBRD in Türkiye](#)'.

The World Bank has an important presence in Türkiye in terms of its monitoring and analytical work, in addition to its substantial programme and lending work. This is outlined in the [Türkiye - Country Partnership Framework for the period FY24-FY28 \(worldbank.org\)](#).

The *International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Türkiye* works with the government, employers' and workers' organisations, and other international organisations to promote decent work conditions for all, ensuring that the ILO's core priorities, standards, interests and policies are promoted, and its

experience is disseminated. For more information, see '[About the ILO Office in Ankara \(ILO-Ankara\)](#)'. The ILO Office in Türkiye has provided many programmes and studies on skills development. The most recent is the Work-based Learning Programme (locally known as ISMEP), which continues to create productive environments in which everyone is protected and empowered through access to decent jobs. The ISMEP is currently being implemented in Adana, Ankara, Bursa, Denizli, Gaziantep and Istanbul and has expanded its cooperation in Ankara with the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality. Through ISMEP, Syrians under temporary protection and Turkish citizens receive technical and vocational training at their workplaces and are formally employed from day one: [Applications started in Ankara for Work-Based Learning Programme \(ISMEP\) with Ankara Metropolitan Municipality \(ilo.org\)](#). All jobseekers aged 18 years and over can apply to the ISMEP programme, with women, young people and persons with disabilities particularly encouraged to apply and supported by additional financial incentives.

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

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

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

There are numerous cooperation protocols on the skills agenda in Türkiye, implemented jointly with UN bodies, through bilateral arrangements, and in collaboration with EU counterparts

ABBREVIATIONS

ACVT	Advisory Committee on Vocational Training
ADDAP	Adolescent Development and Participation
ALMP	Active labour market policy
CoHE	Council of Higher Education
CoVE	Centres of Vocational Training Excellence
COVID_19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
CPESSEC	Centres of Public Employment Services of Southeast European Countries
DG LLL	Directorate-General for Lifelong Learning
DGVET	Directorate-General for Vocational Education and Training
DGVT	Directorate-General for Vocational and Technical Education
EBA	Educational Information Network
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
EEA	European Education Area
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EFSD+	European Fund for Sustainable Development Plus
EHEA– Bologna process	European Higher Education Area
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ENE	ETF Network for Excellence
ENESAT	Self assessment for Centres of VET excellence
EntrComp	Entrepreneurship Competence Framework
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ERP	Economic Reform Programme
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HLFS	Household Labour Force Survey

ICT	Information and communications technology
IEA	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IQVET	Improving the Quality of Vocational Education and Training
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
İŞKUR	Turkish Employment Agency
ISMEP	Work-based Learning Programme
KIESE	Key indicators on education, skills and employment
KOSGEB	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation of Türkiye
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MEM	Vocational education and training centres - Türkiye
MoD	Ministry of Development
MoLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
MoSIT	Ministry of Science, Industry and Technology
MTP	Mid-term Program
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQ	National Qualification
NUTS II	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
QA	Quality Assurance
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
R&D	Research and development
SELFIE	Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the Use of Innovative Education
SGI	Sustainable Governance Indicator
SGI	Sustainable Governance Indicator
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics

TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TIP	Türkiye Investment Platform
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye
TQF	Türkiye's Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning
TQF RPL	TQF Principles and Procedures for Recognition and Quality Assurance of Prior Learning
TUBITAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council
TurkStat	Türkiye's Statistical Institute
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VEC	Vocational Education Council
VET	Vocational education and training
VET-CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
VQA	Vocational Qualifications Authority
WBL	Work-based learning
WEF	World Economic Forum

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