

# EDUCATION MONITORING REPORT

2015-16





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# ABOUT ERG



ERG, is an independent and not-for-profit think-and-do-tank that contributes to systemic transformation in education for the benefit of the child's and the society's development through sound evidence, constructive dialogue and innovative/critical thinking. Evidence-based decision-making processes in education concerning stakeholder engagement and ensuring the access of all children to quality education are the key elements of systemic transformation. ERG, established in 2003, is a good example for the Turkish civil society, since it is an initiative supported by leading foundations in Turkey. ERG carries out its' research and education activities through ERG Education Observatory unit and Education Laboratory, a collective initiative with ATOLYE Labs.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

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<b>DGMM</b>	Directorate General of Migration Management
<b>DSD</b>	Directorate of Strategy Development (under Ministry of Education)
<b>ECHR</b>	European Court of Human Rights
<b>Eğitim-Bir-Sen</b>	Educator's Trade Union
<b>EIN</b>	Educational Information Network
<b>ETCEP</b>	Promoting Gender Equality in Education Project
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FATİH</b>	Movement to Increase Opportunities and Technology (Project)
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GDRE</b>	General Directorate of Religious Education
<b>GDSE</b>	General Directorate of Secondary Education
<b>GDSEGS</b>	General Directorate of Special Education and Guidance Services
<b>GDVTE</b>	General Directorate of Vocational and Technical Education
<b>IARFG II</b>	Technical Assistance for Increasing School Attendance Rates, Especially for Girls-2
<b>MoFSP</b>	Ministry of Family and Social Policies
<b>MoNE</b>	Ministry of Education
<b>n.d.</b>	No date
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>TEC</b>	Temporary Educational Centers
<b>TEGV</b>	Turkey Educational Volunteers Foundation
<b>TEOG</b>	Transition into Secondary Education (Examination)
<b>Turkstat</b>	Turkish Statistical Institute
<b>UNHRC</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollars
<b>TL</b>	Turkish Lira







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The major developments that transpired during the 2015-16 school year are evaluated under three main areas: governance and financing, access to education and quality of education. The topics covered include education in the new key policy documents, education expenditures; private education institutions; access to education; pre-primary education policies; the distribution of secondary education students under different types of programs; the education of children with special needs and Syrian refugee children; teacher appointments; the candidate teacher program, as well as other developments involving the quality and the content of education.

*The Ministry of Education (MoNE) 2015-2019 Strategic Plan, a document of major importance published in September 2015, discloses the general vision of the ministry's educational policies, priorities and objectives.*

*The emphasis given to disadvantaged groups and the principles of good governance are noteworthy features of this document. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement on the approach to monitoring and evaluation as well as on the performance indicators, on which the approach is based.*

The new plan, which is shorter and more succinct compared to the previously published strategic plan for 2010-2014, revolves around three main axes: access, quality and institutional capacity. It also has a more integrative approach and includes three strategic goals and seven strategic objectives (Table 1).

During the processes of creating educational policies, the adoption of good-governance strategies is imperative. Strategic objective no. 3.3 stands out for its fulfillment of this imperative and serves as a hopeful turn in the right direction with its emphasis on good governance principles, such as pluralism, participation, transparency and accountability. Strategies that involve the production of data and information as well as the sharing of these with the public are particularly significant. That being said, it should be noted that no developments materialized, in regards to the implementation of the strategic plan, during the previous school year. Furthermore, other problems that had been discussed in the previous *Education Monitoring Reports*, namely those associated with the disclosure of data on absenteeism, dropout rates, distant-learning and double-shift schools, etc., still prevail. Lastly, performance indicators need to be established in order to measure the fulfillment of strategic objective no 3.3.

TABLE 1 : MINISTRY OF EDUCATION'S 2015-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN EXPENDITURE TABLE

	Cost (Billion TL)	Ratio (%)
<b>Strategic Goal 1: To allow all individuals fair access to education</b>	<b>89.0</b>	<b>23.4</b>
1.1 Increase enrollment and graduation rates for each type and level of education by the end of the planning year, especially for disadvantaged groups.	89.0	23.4
<b>Strategic Goal 2: To facilitate the upbringing of healthy and happy individuals who are innovative and creative and open to communication and learning and who have good language abilities, entrepreneurial skills, high self-confidence and sense of responsibility by equipping them with the knowledge, abilities, attitudes and behavior required by today's world</b>	<b>102.5</b>	<b>26.9</b>
2.1 Increase all individuals' participation in activities that serve to enhance their physical, mental and spiritual growth as well as their academic success levels.	72.6	19.1
2.2 Taking a life-long learning approach, equip individuals with the skills required by the job market and thereby improve their employability.	9.1	2.4
2.3 Applying innovative approaches, increase foreign language proficiency levels and international student/educator exchanges.	20.8	5.5
<b>Strategic Goal 3: To establish an efficient and productive institutional structure, whereby access to and the quality of education will be increased, by improving on its human, financial, physical and technological structure and on its administrative and organizational structure</b>	<b>175.9</b>	<b>46.1</b>
3.1 Develop the structure and quality of human resources in order that the services of the ministry may be presented in an efficient way.	44.1	11.6
3.2 By the end of the planned year, have in place educational facilities that are in compliance with the determined institutional standards, and have established an efficient and productive financial management structure.	73.4	19.3
3.3 By the end of the planned period, have in place a pluralist, participatory, transparent, accountable and less-bureaucratic administrative and organizational structure, supported by an efficient monitoring and evaluation system.	58.3	15.3
<b>General administrative expenditures</b>	<b>13.9</b>	<b>3.6</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>381.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: MoNE Directorate of Strategy Development (DSD) 2015.

Performance indicators in the strategic plan need to be improved to ensure that monitoring and evaluation procedures are conducted in a sound manner. For instance, although the established strategies have given priority to the access of education to disadvantaged groups, there are a lack of indicators to facilitate the adequate monitoring and evaluation of this access. The same is true for the strategies related to educational, personal and occupational counseling. This lack of performance indicators for certain strategies could have adverse effects on the monitoring process. Given that the monitoring and evaluation procedures are mainly conducted on performance indicators, those objectives/strategies that fail to have indicators may ultimately be unmonitored or their results unevaluated.

The objectives and strategies listed on the *Ministry of Education 2015-2019 Strategic Plan* involve certain costs. The report estimates a budget of 381.2 billion TL to meet the objectives within the next five years. When the costs are analyzed in terms of goals, it is observed that a large majority (46.1%) of the funds are reserved for improving institutional capacity. Analyzing the costs in more detail, in terms of objectives, it is observed that a large share (23.4%) is allocated to increasing enrollment and retention rates. While it is helpful, for purposes of analysis, that the costs were shown according to each of the strategic objectives, a separate expenditure table showing the costs in terms of the strategies themselves was not made available.

**TABLE 2: THE GROWTH OF THE MONE BUDGET, 2006-2016**

Year	GDP (TL)	Central government budget	MoNE budget (TL)	Ratio of MoNE budget to GDP (%)	Ratio of MoNE budget to central government budget (%)
2006	758,390,785,210	174,958,100,699	16,568,145,500	2.18	9.47
2007	843,178,421,420	204,988,545,572	21,355,634,000	2.53	10.42
2008	950,534,250,715	222,553,216,800	22,915,565,000	2.41	10.30
2009	952,558,578,826	262,217,866,000	27,446,778,095	2.88	10.47
2010	1,098,799,348,446	286,981,303,810	28,237,412,000	2.57	9.84
2011	1,297,713,210,117	312,572,607,330	34,112,163,000	2.63	10.91
2012	1,416,798,489,819	350,898,317,817	39,169,379,190	2.76	11.16
2013	1,567,289,237,901	404,045,669,000	47,496,378,650	3.03	11.76
2014	1,747,362,376,487	434,995,765,000	55,704,817,610	3.19	12.81
2015	1,963,000,000,000	472,943,000,000	62,000,248,000	3.16	13.11
2016	2,207,000,000,000	570,507,000,000	76,354,306,000	3.46	13.38

Source: MoNE, 2016.

*Over the last years, the MoNE budget has been on the rise. The budget's ratio to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the central government budget has also increased.*

When the MoNE budget is analyzed in terms of types of expenditures, a large portion is observed to be reserved for personnel costs and social security premiums (79% in 2014 and 2015, 80% in 2016), whereas funds reserved for investments were rather limited (9% in 2014 and 2015, 8% in 2016). Within the total central government budget, the proportion for investments is approximately 8.6% (40.5 billion TL), and the proportion for MoNE investments is 1.3% (6.3 billion TL). The funds reserved for MoNE investments out of the 40.5 billion TL constitute 15.5% of the central government's total investment budget. Fulfillment of some part of the objectives, such as "establishing educational facilities in compliance with the determined institutional standards" would require an increase in the budget allocated for MoNE investments. The Ministry of Development's objective of ending double-shifting at schools, as stated in their *Medium-Term Program (2017-2019)*, would also require a major increase in the investment budget for the upcoming years.

*Of the 2015 central government budget expenditures, approximately 17.2% were used for education services. Educational spending derived from central government funds has increased by an average of 7.4% per year since 2010.*

According to 2013 data, the ratio of expenditures made using public funds for educational institutions (primary, secondary and higher education) to the GDP in Turkey (4.3%) is close to the average ratio of the OECD (4.5%)<sup>1</sup>. As per the OECD report, the spending per student in primary and secondary education has also increased between 2008 and 2013, however,

<sup>1</sup> OECD, 2016a.

Turkey is still in the lowest ranks among OECD countries in spending per student. In 2013, for which the most recent comparative data is available, public spending per primary school student was 2,894 USD in Turkey, compared to the OECD average of 8,477 USD. For secondary school students, these figures were 3,590 and 9,811 USD, respectively.<sup>2</sup>

The central government educational expenditures include all levels of public-funded education, from pre-primary to higher education. In 2015, the central government educational funds were allocated as such: 1.1% for pre-primary education, 35.4% for primary education, 8.7% for general secondary schools, 14.2% for vocational and technical secondary schools (including imam-hatip high-schools [religious vocational high-schools]), and 23.7% for higher education. Vocational and technical secondary schools received the largest increase of central government educational expenditures. In order to meet the objective of gradually making pre-primary education compulsory, as stipulated in the *Medium-Term Program (2017-2019)*, funding needs to be increased at this grade level. The practice of requiring contribution fees from parents should be discontinued, especially considering that it inhibits the provision of access to children coming from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. It also conflicts with the goal of raising enrollment rates up to 70% for pre-primary education by 2019, as stated in the *Ministry of Education 2015-2019 Strategic Plan*. It is important therefore that the strategies and objectives in this plan be synchronized with the *Medium Term Program*. In addition, the plan promises to “make amendments to decrease the cost for pre-primary education for families.” This is a positive development for creating access to education to children from low-income families. However, the *2016 Performance Program* reveals that the funds that have been reserved for fulfilling this strategy are limited. According to the program, the number of kids who will be financially sponsored for pre-primary education will rise to 3,000 from 849, and expenditures to cover financial aid, free books and support personnel will amount to approximately 3.2 million TL.<sup>3</sup>

**TABLE 3: 2015 CENTRAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATION EXPENDITURES**

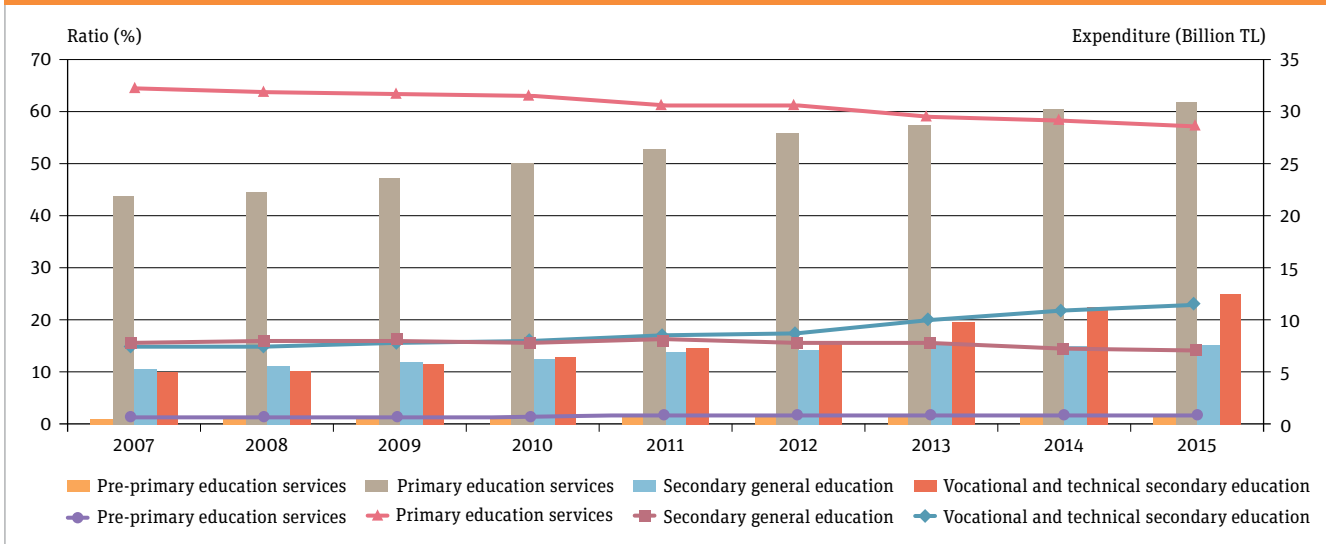
		<b>Expenditure (Thousand TL)</b>	<b>Ratio (%)</b>
<b>Pre-primary and primary education services</b>	Pre-primary education services	931,599	1.1
	Primary education services	30,691,073	35.4
<b>Secondary education services</b>	Secondary education general programs	7,561,309	8.7
	Vocational and technical education	12,367,728	14.2
	Non-classified secondary education services	19,447	0.0
<b>Higher-education services</b>	Universities and other higher-education institutions	19,440,050	22.4
	Institutions offering PHD Programs	1,160,284	1.3
<b>Other</b>	Educational services that are not classified according to grade level	2,408,980	2.8
	Educational assistance services	6,296,186	7.3
	Educational research and development services	919,200	1.1
	Non-classified educational services	5,014,300	5.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>86.810.156</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Calculated by Education Reform Initiative (ERG) using data provided by Ministry of Finance, Directorate General of Public Accounts.

<sup>2</sup> OECD, 2016b.

<sup>3</sup> MoNE Directorate of Strategy Development (DSD), 2016.

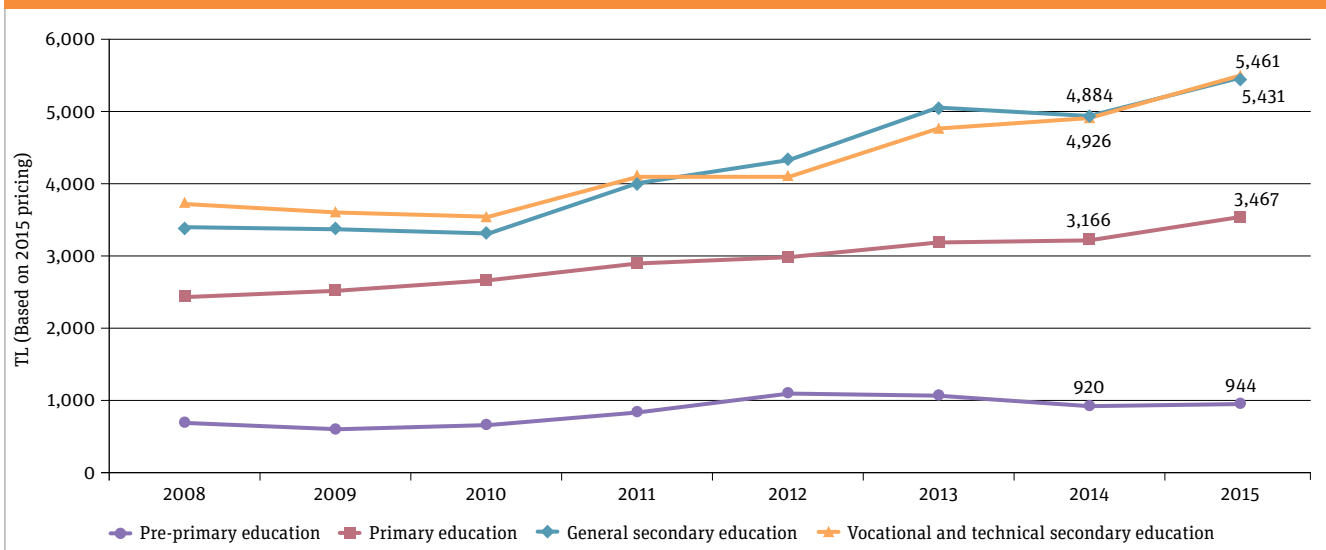
**FIGURE 1: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES, 2007-2015 (BASED ON 2015 PRICING)**



Source: Calculated by ERG, using data provided by Ministry of Finance, Directorate General of Public Accounts.

Educational expenditure per student increased in 2015 compared to the previous year. Breaking it down by grade level, this expenditure increased by 11.8% for vocational and technical secondary education, by 10.3% for general secondary education, by 9.5% for primary education and by 2.6% for pre-primary (Figure 2).

**FIGURE 2: EDUCATIONAL EXPENDITURES PER STUDENT, 2008-2015 (BASED ON 2015 PRICING)<sup>4</sup>**



Source: Calculated by ERG using data from Ministry of Finance Directorate of Public Accounts, MoNE (2008), MoNE (2010), MoNE (2011), MoNE(2012), MoNE (2013), MoNE (2014), MoNE (2015) and MoNE (2016).

4 Includes educational expenditures using central and local government funds. The number of students exclude those enrolled in private schools, or those in distant-learning and special education programs.

*Comparative data reveal that the 87% governmental contribution to education in Turkey is lower than the OECD average of 91%.<sup>5</sup>*

The data published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) show that the average educational spending per household is on the rise; in 2014, a total of 25 billion TL was spent for formal education by households.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Turkey has one of the highest rates of income inequality among OECD countries. An analysis conducted on the data provided by TurkStat on household budgets shows that 65% of the spending on education was made by the top 20% of the income groups.<sup>7</sup>

*A large proportion of the household spending on education is related to private school expenses. During the last couple of years, the share of private schools within the education system has been rapidly increasing.*

The basis for this increase is found in key policy documents. The objective of increasing the proportion of private schools was emphasized in both the *Ministry of Education 2015-2019 Strategic Plan*, as well as the *65<sup>th</sup> Government Program*. As one of the solid steps taken to increase the private sector's share in education, private school vouchers were introduced in the 2014-15 school year. In 2015-16, an estimated 777 million TL, from the governmental budget, was used to fund the voucher program. Countrywide, 6,486 private schools benefited from the voucher program.<sup>8</sup> The monetary value of the vouchers were well below the actual tuition costs. As of May 2016, average private school tuition was 15,195 TL for primary schools and 10,129 for secondary schools.<sup>9</sup> The vouchers therefore merely served as a discount to families who could already afford enrolling their children in private schools. Using public funds to benefit families in the higher economic strata, those who can afford to spend more on education, is a policy that deepens the inequality between income groups.

Increasing the share of private schools within the education sector cannot be interpreted as a factor that directly improves the quality of education. The major increase in the share of private schools in education resulted from the establishment of the new basic high-schools in the 2015-2016 academic year. A basic high-school can be described as a type of temporary school; formerly private tutoring centers that had been converted into schools, the basic high schools are exempt from providing the same physical conditions that other private schools are required to provide.

Donations made to public schools by families can also create inequalities between schools. The donations made by the parents via the parent-teacher associations are sometimes used to cover some various school expenses, such as cleaning materials or other equipment. Similarly, funds that are used to organize private events or to develop courses offered through the schools can also vary depending on the socioeconomic status of the families. The fact that no data exists for these kinds of expenditures make it harder to analyze the inequalities among public schools resulting from socioeconomic differences.

5 OECD, 2016a.

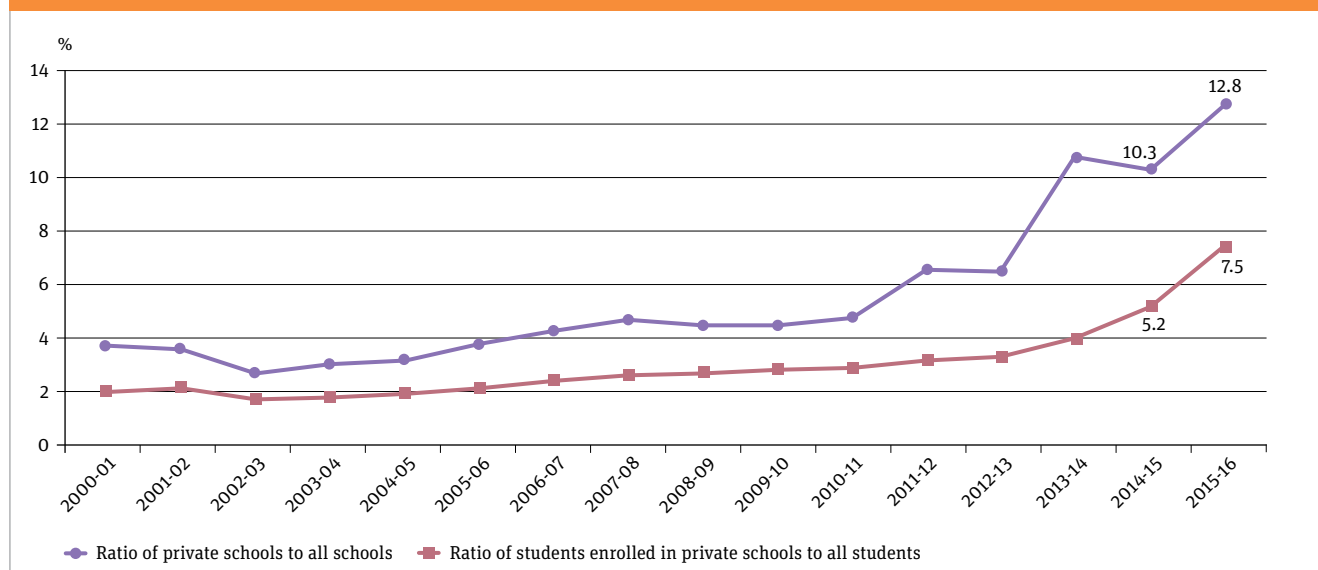
6 TurkStat, 2015.

7 Taşkın-Alp, 2016.

8 Retrieved on October 2016 from: <http://www.meb.gov.tr/egitim-ogretim-destegi-kapsaminda-217-bin-ogrenci-ilk-tercihine-yerlesti/haber/9578/tr>

9 TurkStat



**FIGURE 3: PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, BETWEEN 2000-01 AND 2015-16<sup>10</sup>**

Source: The ratios for 2015-16 were calculated using data provided by MoNE (2016); all previous years were based on ERG (2010) and ERG (2015) resources.

One concept from the strategic plan that particularly stands out in terms of governance and financing is the school-based budgeting. The plan states that “by handing the authority, duty and responsibilities over to the rural governments and individual schools and institutions, the efficiency of these entities will be increased, and by cooperating with the related institutions, a school-based budgeting system will be implemented.” In Turkey, in addition to the limited amounts of resources available for education, there are problems associated with the mechanisms responsible for overseeing the flow of these resources from central bodies to the local level.<sup>11</sup> As the school-based budgeting system materializes, it is important that attention be given to the varying socio-economic statuses in different regions and families, that special precautionary measures focusing on the elimination of inequalities between schools be developed and that resources be used efficiently, in order to fully realize the potential for this new implementation.

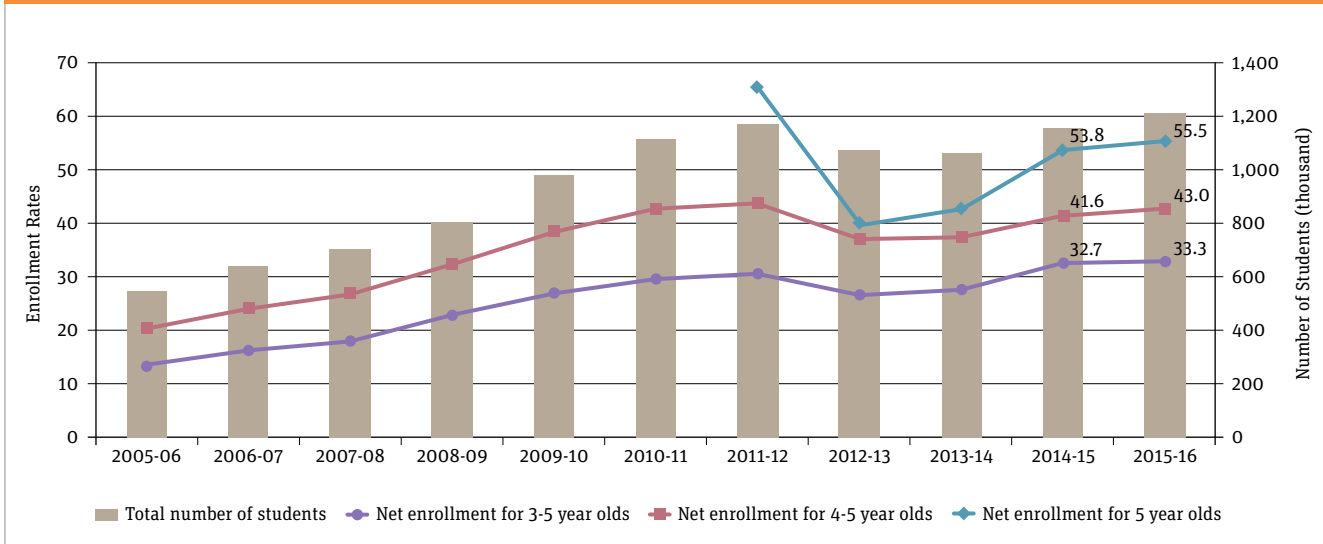
*During the 2015-16 school year, access to pre-primary education increased. Enrollment rates at the elementary school level declined by 1.4%, whereas middle school remained the same. In secondary school, the net enrollment rate slightly increased, from 79.4 to 79.8%.*

<sup>10</sup> Includes pre-primary, primary and secondary education, but excludes distance education. The most recent data used in the calculations are from the 2015-16 school year but do not reflect the changes that took place following June 2016. According to press releases, 1,029 private schools closed after this date. MoNE took over these schools and turned some of them into public schools after changing their names. Additionally, 821 private dormitories and 234 other private educational institutions were closed, though some were re-opened. For detailed information, see also <http://oogkm.meb.gov.tr/www/bakan-yilmaz-basin-mensuplariyla-bir-araya-geldi/icerik/847>.

<sup>11</sup> Köşe and Şaşmaz, 2012.

During the 2015-16 school year, the net enrollment rates reached 33.3% for the 3-5 age group and 43% for the 4-5 age group. Although the rate has not reached what it had been prior to the implementation of the “4+4+4” regulation for 5 year olds, it has been on the rise in the last three years,<sup>12</sup> reaching 55.5% in the 2015-16 school year (FIGURE 4).

**FIGURE 4: NET ENROLLMENT RATES AND TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENS IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION BETWEEN 2005-06 AND 2015-16**



Source: Rates for 2015-16 were obtained from MoNE (2016) and rates for previous years, ERG (2015).

Despite the increase in enrollment rates at pre-primary levels, these rates are still significantly below that of the OECD average and the targeted rate by MoNE and other ministries. Moreover, pre-primary enrollment rates continue to show variation in different age groups and in different regions. For instance, net enrollment rates for 5 year olds is highest in Edirne (82.6%), Nevşehir (75.1%), Bilecik (75%) and Burdur (75%), but are relatively low in Ağrı (33.6%) and Şırnak (27.3%). For the 3-5 year olds, enrollment rates are highest in Giresun (50.3%), Edirne (48.6%) and Tokat (48.6%), but drop dramatically in Ağrı (25.3%) and Şırnak (24.6%).

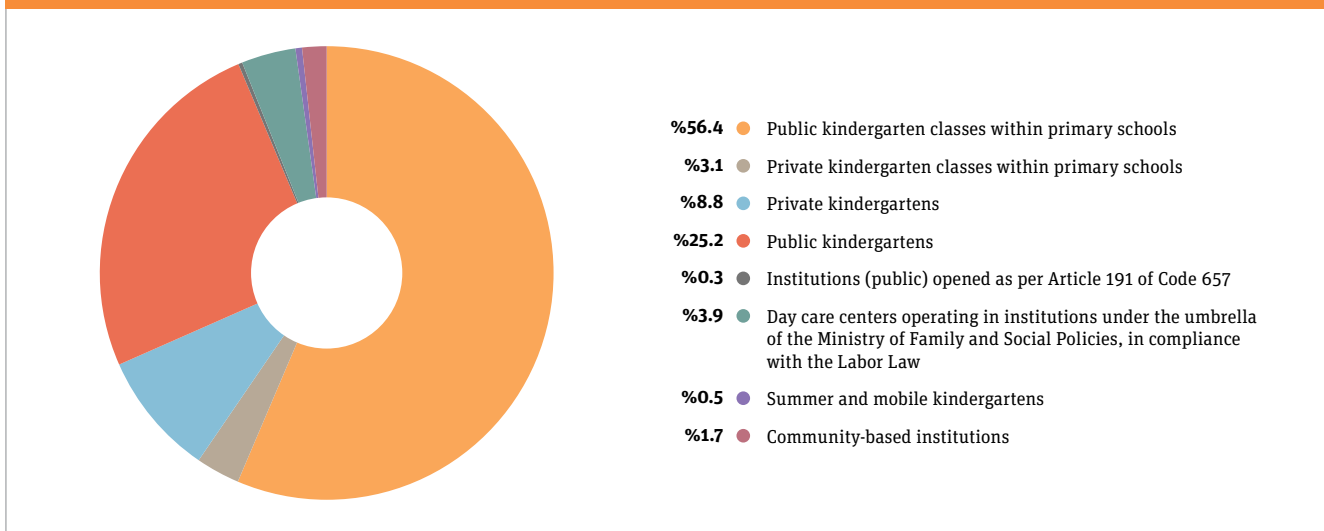
The plan to gradually make pre-primary education compulsory in the *Medium-Term Program* is a very positive development insofar as it will help to eliminate the inequalities between the provinces and regions. It is essential though, that no concessions are made on the quality of education, that priority is given to those in disadvantaged groups and that this transition is supported with a child-focused approach.

During the 2015-16 school year, both the number of kindergartens and the number of students at kindergartens have increased sharply, while at the same time the number of kindergarten classes and the number of students per kindergarten classes has decreased. The 13% increase in kindergarten enrollment, compared to last year, is due to the number of students enrolled in private kindergartens, as the number of private kindergartens has increased by 22% compared to last year, and the number of students in private kindergartens by 20.3%. By contrast, the number of public kindergartens increased by 3%

<sup>12</sup> This increase may be due to the bylaw change that came into effect in summer 2013, which made it easier for 60-68 month olds to enroll in pre-primary education. For more information, also see ERG (2015).

and the number of students registered by 8.9%. The main reason behind the decrease in kindergarten classes can be attributed to the decrease in the number of public schools.<sup>13</sup> With the decrease of kindergarten classes, the number of students enrolled in kindergarten classes also decreased. A couple of the reasons private pre-primary institutions had a higher enrollment rate than public ones can be attributed to the fact that kids older than 48 months were also eligible for the private school vouchers and that some parents who worked outside of the home preferred the full time option offered at private schools as opposed to the half day option offered at some public schools.<sup>14</sup>

**FIGURE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS IN PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, 2015-16**



Source: Calculated by ERG using data provided by MoNE (2016).

### Another subject concerning access to pre-primary education is community-based institutions.

The percentage of children enrolled in a community-based pre-primary institutions for the 2015-2016 school year is 1.7%. The “Community-based Early Childhood Education Centers will be popularized”<sup>15</sup> objective found in the *Tenth Development Plan 2016 Yearly Program* suggests that this rate will increase in the upcoming years. There are stated to be 692 of these institutions, which were included for the first time in the formal education statistics in 2015-16. They include the courses governed by the Religious Affairs Directorate offered to 4-6 year olds and the day care centers that are established by municipalities and associations. There needs to be an evaluation to determine if the services offered here are in compliance with the framework and principles laid out in the *Community-Based Early Childhood Education Services Guidelines for Local Governments, NGOs, Public Institutions and Businesses* compiled in 2013 as part of the Strengthening

13 The reason for the decrease in the number of public schools may be due to the fact that some schools converted their kindergarten classrooms to elementary and middle-school-level classrooms to meet the demand caused by the increased number of students after the “4+4+4” system was implemented. See also, ERG (2015).

14 Oral, 2016.

15 Ministry of Development, 2016a, p.86.

Pre-Primary Education Project, led by MoNE, with the technical support of UNICEF. In addition, it would be beneficial to reevaluate the courses offered by the Religious Affairs Directorate in light of child development principles and children's freedom of faith.<sup>16</sup> Finally, there is insufficient information about the "sıbyan mektepleri", informal pre-primary Islamic institutions, which drew great media attention last year. The prevalence of these off-the record institutions, which are not part of the MoNE, as well as their effects on the children, need to be investigated.<sup>17</sup>

According to MoNE statistics, net enrollment rates at the elementary level were 96.3% in 2014-15 but fell to 94.6% in 2015-16. For male students, the rate fell from 96.0% to 94.5% and for female students, from 96.6% to 95.2%. One of the reasons enrollment rates have been decreasing at the elementary level since 2012-2013, the first year the "4+4+4" regulation was implemented, could be that families have been preferring to send their children to pre-primary school instead of primary school.<sup>18</sup>

While the number of students decreased at the elementary level in public schools, it increased at the elementary level in private schools. Private school enrollment increased by 14% compared to last year, whereas it decreased by 2% in public schools. Similarly, there was a 15% increase in the number of private schools and a 5% decrease in public schools. These rates point to the fact that more and more families are choosing private schools to public ones. Two factors may have affected this: the change in the starting age for school after the "4+4+4" regulation and the vouchers offered for private schools.<sup>19</sup>

During the 2015-16 school year, net enrollment rates for middle school levels remained the same as the previous year (94.4%). This rate is the same for male and female students. There have been some differences, although minor, in the net enrollment rates for elementary and middle school levels in different regions. When analyzed in terms of provinces, net enrollment rates are highest in Şanlıurfa (98.4%) Şırnak (98.1%) and Van (98.1%). This rate drops to 73.1% in Gümüşhane, 87.3% in Çankırı and 89.3% in Tokat. As for secondary school net enrollment, Bartın ranks first with 99.2% and Gümüşhane last, with 72.1%.<sup>20</sup>

At the secondary education levels, the number of private schools increased by 40% and the amount of students in these schools by 33%. Another fact that stands out in the secondary education levels is the increase in the ratio of imam-hatip middle school students to all the formal middle school students. According to MoNE's statistics, imam-hatip students constituted 10.8% of all the formal middle school students in 2015-16.

For the 2015-16 school year, the net enrollment rate in secondary education was 79.8%. In the Central Anatolia, Northeast Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia regions, enrollment rates were lower than other regions just as it had been in previous years. Across Turkey, enrollment rates in secondary education were 80.2% for women and 79.4% for men. Although the overall rates do not reveal any major difference between the sexes, some regions do show a gap (Figure 6). The enrollment rates have the most marked differences between women and men in the Southeast Anatolia region.

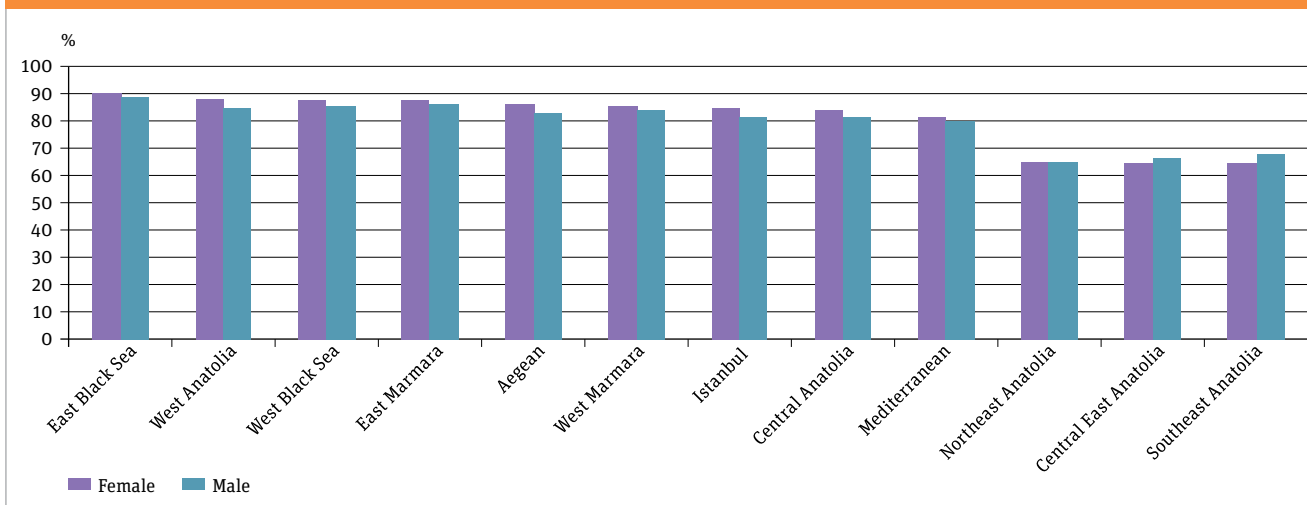
16 For Prof. Dr. Sevda Bekman's evaluation of religious education during early childhood, see <http://www.diken.com.tr/erken-cocukluk-doneminde-din-egitiminde-gozardi-edilen-gercekler/>

17 Taşkın-Alp, 2016.

18 For detailed analysis, see ERG (2015)

19 For detailed analysis, see *ibid.*

20 MoNE, 2016.

**FIGURE 6: SECONDARY EDUCATION NET ENROLLMENT RATES BY REGION AND GENDER, 2015-16**

Source: Compiled by ERG using MoNE (2016) data.

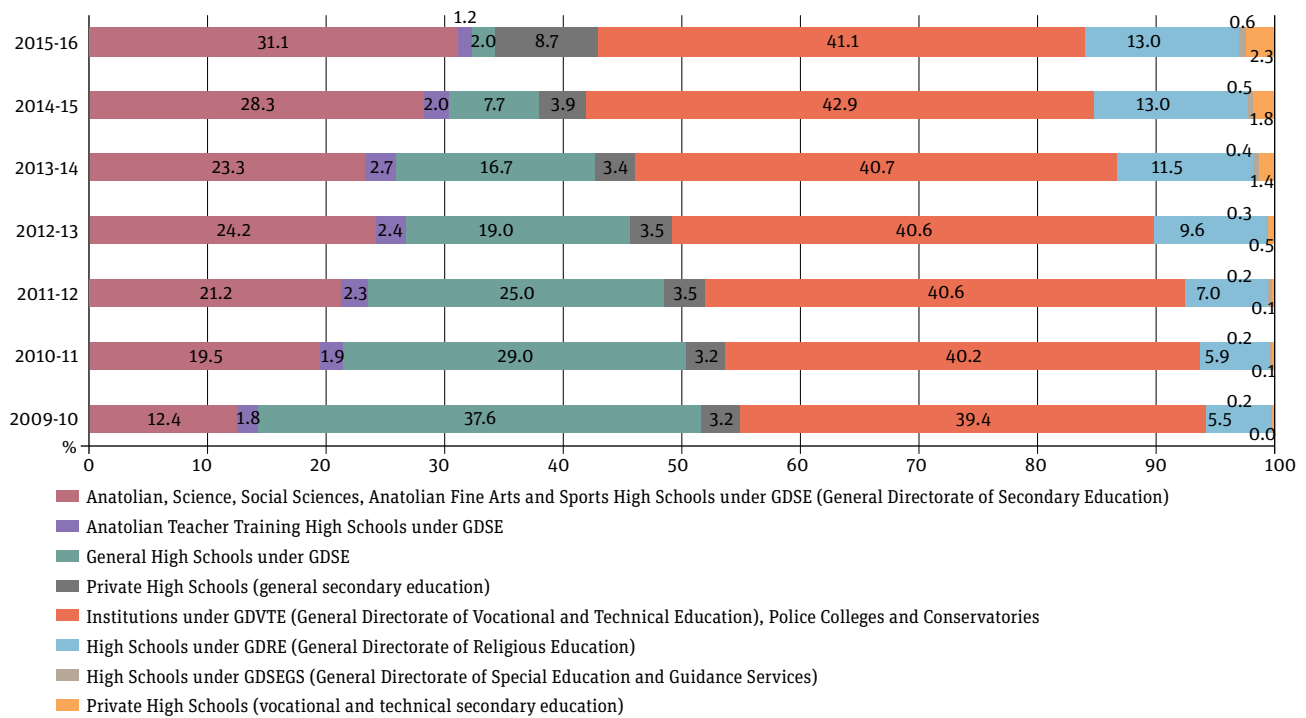
*In secondary education, the most apparent change is the increased number of general secondary schools, which has risen from 3,954 to 5,310. This increase is mainly due to the transformation of former private tutoring schools into basic high schools.*

According to the data obtained from the MoNE Private Education General Directorate, there are 1,197 basic high schools throughout Turkey, most of which were established during the 2015-16 school year.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it would be correct to assume that the main reason behind the sudden jump in the rate of private high schools from 3.9% to 8.7% is the establishment of basic high schools. (Figure 7)

*When secondary education schools are broken down into types, it is observed that the percentage of private schools is on the rise, that the percentage of imam-hatip high schools remain steady at 13% and that the percentage of Anatolian high schools, which provide general education, also continues to increase.*

21 Oral, 2016.

**FIGURE 7: DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS IN FORMAL SECONDARY EDUCATION BY SCHOOL TYPE BETWEEN 2009-10 AND 2015-16**



Source: The rates for 2015-16 were calculated using the data provided by MoNE (2016); for previous years' data, the Education Monitoring Report (2015) was used.

At the secondary education levels, there is an accelerated rate of increase in students who enroll in private institutions, whereas this rate is either decreasing or showing a very slow increase at public institutions. For example, in general secondary education, the number of students enrolling at private schools has increased by 127%, whereas in public schools the number has declined by 9%. A significant reason for this increase is, as mentioned earlier, the recently established basic high schools that emerged following the closing of private tutoring centers. According to a written parliamentary question response in April 2016, the number of students registered for basic high schools is 183,090.<sup>22</sup>

When analyzing access to education, school attendance rates should be considered as an influential factor affecting enrollment rates. According to the 2014 data provided in the *Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2015-2019*, non-attendance rates at the middle school and secondary school levels were 35%, and dropout rates were 38%.<sup>23</sup> In an amendment made to the secondary-school-institution bylaw in 2015, acceptable non-attendance dates were brought down to 30 from 45, and in cases where 30 additional days are missed, students are expelled from the school and must continue their education through distance-education.<sup>24</sup> Unless precautionary measures are taken to address this subject, the rates of non-enrollment in formal education can be expected to increase.<sup>25</sup> The lack of data on non-attendance prevents the public from knowing about this issue.

<sup>22</sup> Oral (2016) using the source <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d26/7/7-1113sgc.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> MoNE SGB, 2015, p.34

<sup>24</sup> Taşkın-Alp, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

*Despite the efforts, access to education for children with special needs is not at the desired level, especially at pre-primary and secondary education levels.*

The number of children benefiting from special education services has risen to 286,080 in the 2015-16 school year, from 257,347 last year.<sup>26</sup> As was the case in 2014-15, the number of students who obtained special education services was significantly lower at the secondary education level, compared to the primary school level.

**TABLE 4: NUMBER OF STUDENTS BENEFITING FROM SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION, 2015-16**

	Inclusion	Special Education Class	Special Education School*	Total
<b>Elementary School**</b>	81,380	17,849	10,213	109,442
Male	50,922	11,183	6,372	68,477
Female	30,458	6,666	3,841	40,965
<b>Middle School**</b>	92,032	18,893	11,174	122,099
Male	56,446	11,592	7,142	75,180
Female	35,586	7,301	4,032	46,919
<b>Secondary Education</b>	27,730	0	26,809	54,539
Male	17,144	0	17,118	34,262
Female	10,586	0	9,691	20,277
<b>Total</b>	<b>201,142</b>	<b>36,742</b>	<b>48,196</b>	<b>286,080</b>

Source: Compiled by ERG using data provided by MoNE (2016).

\*Includes applied education centers.

\*\*Includes private educational institutions.

In the Access to Education for Children with Disabilities in Turkey report prepared by ERG in 2016, a significant number of parents are not aware of their rights and/or the services provided by the state. Children with disabilities may experience enrollment problems due to the lack of special education classrooms or schools. Moreover, some principals and teachers discriminate against them by not accepting them to the school. There are various problems related to when students move up to higher grade levels, especially in creating inclusion education. For example, special education students who were able to score high enough points on the Transition into Secondary School (TEOG) examination to attend the school they wanted, were de facto transferred into distance education programs.

In MoNE's recent strategic plan, children with special needs are included in all three strategic goals: access, quality and institutional capacity. Among the strategies planned are the development of an efficient scanning and diagnosing system, the training of administrators and teachers on inclusion education, the improvement of the quality of counseling and research centers, the increasing of the spatial quality of schools, the development and updating of teaching programs, the improvement of the physical

conditions of educational institutions and the expansion of supportive education rooms.<sup>27</sup> According to this plan, MoNE aims to increase the percentage of “institutions or schools that are made suitable for the use of disabled persons” from 42.3% (2014) to 100%.<sup>28</sup> As mentioned in the first part of this report, performance indicators need to be established to measure the fulfillment of the strategic objectives regarding children with special needs.

*In 2015-16, positive steps were taken with regards to the education of refugee children. In order to render sustainable these steps that focused on access, new initiatives centered on quality need to be taken.*

According to data provided by the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), Turkey hosts over 2.7 million Syrian refugees.<sup>29</sup> It is estimated that among them, there are 934 thousand children of school age (5-17), of which only 37% were enrolled at school prior to the 2016-17 school year.<sup>30</sup> According to the road map devised by MoNE, the temporary education facilities where Syrian children have been educated in Arabic will gradually close, and these children will be integrated into the Turkish education system and emphasis will be placed on educating them in Turkish.<sup>31</sup> Within this framework, it is estimated that 450 thousand Syrian students have been enrolled at school for the 2016-17 school year.<sup>32</sup> Although this increase in numbers and the efforts that have been put forth to increase the access rates are noteworthy, there are still initiatives that need to be taken on subjects that have not yet been discussed at length, like preparing and equipping the schools and educators to be able to respond to the needs of these children, monitoring school attendance, and developing intervention plans to prevent non-attendance and dropping out.

In 2015, education at times had to be interrupted in the Southeast Anatolia region due to armed conflict and curfews. MoNE has responded with a number of measures, including the implementation of make-up programs for students transitioning to secondary school or higher education (8<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade-levels), the preparation of school transfer documents for students migrating to other provinces and the initiation of efforts to re-open buildings that had been damaged during conflicts. In order to minimize the effects of the negative events and the loss of rights, amelioration efforts should continue, all grade levels should be added to the make-up programs, and extensive, high-quality psycho-social support programs should be put into place as an addition to academic programs.<sup>33</sup>

27 MoNE, DSD, 2015.

28 Ibid, p.57

29 According to DGMM data, as of October 19, 2016: [http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/gecici-koruma\\_363\\_378\\_4713](http://www.goc.gov.tr/icerik3/gecici-koruma_363_378_4713)

30 UNHCR, 2016.

31 Retrieved on October 2016 from: <http://www.meb.gov.tr/suriyeli-cocuklarin-egitimi-icin-yol-haritasi-belirlendi/haber/11750/tr> and <http://meb.gov.tr/suriyeli-ogrenciler-turk-egitim-sistemine-entegre-edilecek/haber/11815/tr>

32 Of these students, 150 thousand are estimated to be enrolled at schools governed by MoNE, with the remaining enrolled in Temporary Educational Centers (TEC). Retrieved on November 2016 from: <http://haydikizlarokula.meb.gov.tr/turkiyede-450-bin-suriyeli-ogrenci-egitim-goruyor/haber/12158/tr#>

33 For more information and further discussion see Taşkın-Alp (2016) and Oral (2016).



*It is very significant that in its 2015-2019 Strategic Plan, MoNE has added the objective of “increasing enrollment and graduation rates for each level and type of education, especially for disadvantaged groups”. To fulfill such objectives, it is essential that interventions be made that go beyond the pilot phase and that these interventions be based on inclusive and lasting policies that respond to children’s changing needs.<sup>34</sup>*

For example, the Milk Distribution and Raisin Distribution programs, although temporary, stand out as projects that would increase access and support learning processes. However, such projects need to be transformed into a more comprehensive and lasting nutrition policy, especially during the transition into the full-day school programs. In a similar vein, the projects MoNE has developed to neutralize the disadvantages of female students<sup>35</sup> should all be gathered under an “integrative policy for gender equality” and made sustainable.<sup>36</sup> Some positive examples of recent sustainable policies include the conditional educational vouchers given out to low-income families with children in pre-primary, primary and secondary education<sup>37</sup>, as well as services that provide educational access, such as transportation services for students in remote villages and the establishment of public dormitories.<sup>38</sup>

*Despite the general improvement in the number of students per classroom, significant differences between private and public schools, between different types of schools and between different regions still persist.*

Last year, there were noticeable increases in the number of classrooms at certain grade levels and types of schools. The increase in the number of classrooms, especially in private schools, is noteworthy. In private kindergartens, the number of classrooms increased by 23%, by 29% in private elementary schools, by 67% in private middle schools, by 25% in private vocational and technical high schools and by 155% in private general high schools. The increase in the number of classrooms, although meager, was also observed at public institutions, with the only exception being the imam-hatip high schools, where the number increased sharply, by 52%, from 10,385 to 15,792.

Compared to the previous school year, an improvement was observed in 2015-16 in terms of students per classroom. This improvement was most apparent in middle schools and high schools. In public middle schools, the number of students per classroom decreased from 34 to 31, in private middle schools from 20 to 16, and in imam-hatip middle schools from 31 to 29. When public and private secondary schools are analyzed collectively, the number of students per classroom in general secondary education decreased from 26 to 20, in vocational and technical education from 30 to 28, and in imam-hatip high schools from 26 to 23 (Table 5).

34 For further discussion see Taşkın-Alp (2016).

35 Projects such as the *Promoting Gender Equality in Education Project (ETCEP)*, *Technical Assistance for Increasing School Attendance Rates, Especially for Girls-2 (IARFG II)*, *Project “Ben de Varım” (“Me, too”)*, and *Project Yurtta Genç Var (Youth in Dorms)*

36 Taşkın-Alp, (2016)

37 As of September 2015, 2,044,533 students benefit from the Conditional Educational Vouchers Program (Taşkın-Alp, 2016).

38 Ibid.

**TABLE 5: STUDENTS PER CLASSROOM AND PER TEACHER AT EACH GRADE LEVEL AT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS, 2014-15 AND 2015-16**

Grade Level		Public/Private/ Total	Students per classroom		Students per teacher	
			2014-15	2015-16	2014-15	2015-16
Pre-primary education*	Kindergartens	Public	28	27	18	19
		Private	13	12	10	10
		Total	20	19	14	15
	Kindergarten Classrooms	Public	24	23	20	19
		Private	11	11	12	12
		Total	23	22	19	18
Primary Education	Elementary Schools	Public	24	23	19	19
		Private	11	10	9	9
		Total	23	22	18	18
	Middle Schools	Public	34	31	17	15
		Private	20	16	9	9
		Total	33	29	16	15
İmam-hatip ortaokulu**	Public	31	29	19	19	
Secondary Education	General secondary educational institutions	Public	29	26	16	14
		Private	12	11	7	7
		Total	26	20	14	12
	Vocational and technical secondary education institutions	Public	32	29	14	13
		Private	13	14	10	12
		Total	30	28	14	13
	İmam-hatip high schools	Public	26	23	15	14

Source: Calculated by ERG using MoNE (2015) and MoNE (2016) sources.

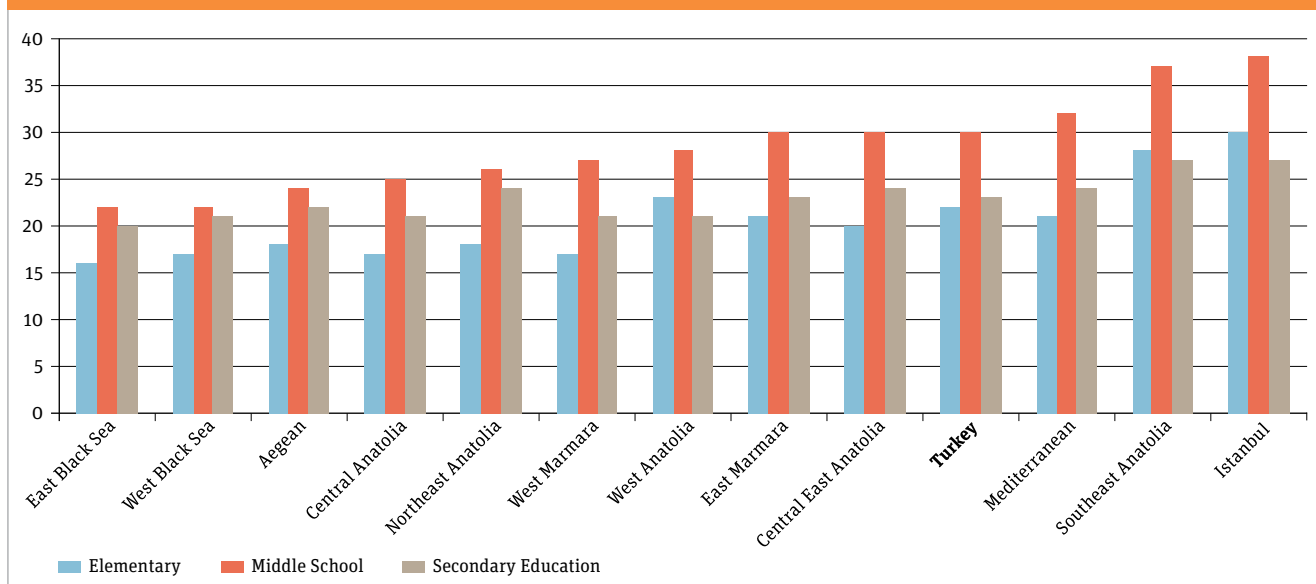
\* In addition to public and private kindergartens, kindergartens include institutions established as per article 191 of Code 657, community-based institutions, day care centers under Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP) and other day care centers that are part of businesses as stipulated by the Labour Law. Kindergarten classrooms include public and private kindergarten classrooms, summer kindergartens and mobile kindergartens.

\*\* Because the imam-hatip middle schools that are integrated into an imam-hatip high school do not have their own classrooms or teachers, the calculations for classrooms or teachers were only made for the independent imam-hatip middle schools.

Despite the improvements in the number of students per classroom, significant differences exist between public and private schools, different types of schools and different regions. First, for all grade levels, the difference between public and private schools are hard to ignore. Secondly, compared to other secondary education institutions, imam-hatip high schools seem to hold a privileged position. In 2015-16, the number of students per imam-hatip classrooms was 23, whereas it was 29 for (public) vocational and technical secondary education institutions and 26 for general (public) secondary education institutions.

The number of students per classroom is also one of the main areas of inequality between different regions. Southeast Anatolia and Istanbul have the highest number of students per classroom in primary and secondary education. The figures change for pre-primary education. The country average for classroom size is 21 students, and the Southeast Anatolia and Mediterranean regions rank highest in this area, with 23 and 24 students per classroom, respectively.

**FIGURE 8: NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER CLASSROOM IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION BY REGION, 2015-16**



Source: The number of students per classroom were calculated by ERG using the data obtained from MoNE(2016). The figures for secondary education were obtained from Table 1.10 in the same source. Public and private schools were analyzed collectively.

*The objective of ending double-shift schools by 2019 is a great opportunity to improve on the nutrition programs, rest times and extracurricular activities provided by the schools.*

Another important indicator of students' school experience and the quality of education is the percentage of double-shift schools and of students enrolled in these schools. As per MoNE's 2015 data, which is shared with the educators' trade union Eğitim-Bir-Sen, 50.5% of elementary students, 40.8% of middle-school students and 10.2% of secondary education students are enrolled in double-shift schools. The regions with the highest percentage of double-shift schools are Istanbul and Southeast Anatolia, and there are significant regional differences, especially in primary education.<sup>39</sup>

According to the statement made by the Minister of Education following the public disclosure of the *Medium-Term Program 2017-2019*, the implementation of which is to end double shifting, the transition into full-day schooling requires 77 thousand additional classrooms, which are expected to be constructed by 2019 with the support of the private sector.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Eğitim-Bir-Sen, 2016.

<sup>40</sup> Retrieved on October 2016 from, <http://www.haberturk.com/gundem/haber/1306528-milli-egitim-bakani-ismet-yilmazdan-tam-gun-aciklamasi>

The objective for the transition into full-day education, also mentioned in the Governmental Program, requires MoNE to update its strategies in the 2015-2019 strategic plan to include the resources needed and performance goals. It is also essential that the transition into full-day schooling is accompanied by more comprehensive policies for nutrition and extracurricular activities.

**TABLE 6: DOUBLE-SHIFT EDUCATION IN THE MoNE 2015-2019 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Performance Indicator		Previous Years			Goal
		2012	2013	2014	2019
Ratio of double-shift schools	Primary Education	%29.2	%26.0	%23.5	%10.0
	Secondary Education	%14.8	%10.7	%8.5	%5.0

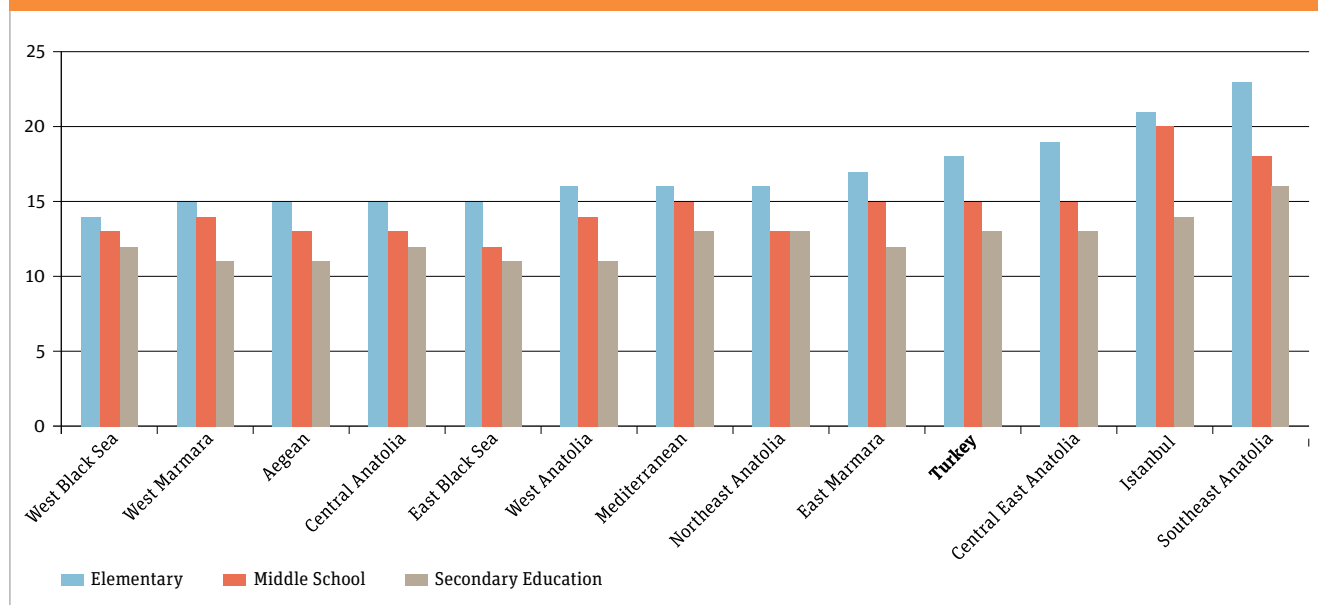
Source: MoNE, p.57

“According to a research on school experiences of children in Turkey, conducted by ERG and the Turkey Educational Volunteers Foundation (TEGV), the two main areas that most negatively affect children at double-shift schools are those concerning meals and participation in extracurricular activities. When compared to full-time students, children enrolled in the morning shift have lower rates of breakfast consumption, and children enrolled in the afternoon shift have lower rates of lunch consumption. Double-shift students also have lower rates of participation in school clubs. In summary, rearranging school times and improving students’ nutritional sustenance and participation in extracurricular activities are essential (...). There is also an increase in classroom hours, which when added up becomes the equivalent of a full school day, compared to the times established prior to the implementation of the “4+4+4” system. This led to very early start hours and very late dismissal times for the double-shift schools, left no time for extracurricular activities, shortened the break times and created block scheduling of classes, which led to very long class periods (...). Most children who participated in the *Life at School from Children’s Perspective* research reported that the break times provided failed to give them enough time to get in line to buy a snack and eat it before break time was over, to use the bathroom, or to play with their friends in the school yard.”

Source: ERG and TEGV, p. 2-3

Another indicator area wherein Turkey showed improvement but still has inequalities in different school types and regions, is the number of students per teacher.

Last year, the school types that showed improvement in the rate of teachers are the private middle schools, imam-hatip middle schools and general education high schools. However, since there has also been a spike in the number of students in these schools, the ratio of teacher to students has remained the same. Public middle schools and general education high schools were the types of schools that the ratio of teachers to students showed a significant decrease. In public middle schools, the ratio dropped from 1:17 to 1:15, and in general education high schools, from 1:16 to 1:14 (Table 5). The reason behind this change, however, was not due to a change in the number of teachers at schools, but the decrease in the number of students.

**FIGURE 9: NUMBER OF STUDENTS PER TEACHER IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION, 2015-16**

Source: Compiled by ERG using data provided by MoNE (2016).

While the numbers of students per teacher are relatively similar in different regions for secondary education, regional inequalities become more apparent at the elementary and middle school levels. At the elementary school level, the number of students per teacher is 14 in the West Black Sea region, and 15 in the West Marmara, Aegean, Central Anatolia and East Black Sea regions; whereas it is 21 in Istanbul and 23 in Southeast Anatolia. At the middle school level, the number of students per class is 12 in the East Black Sea region, and 13 in the West Black Sea, Aegean, Central Anatolia and Northeast Anatolia regions, while it is 18 in Southeast Anatolia and 20 in Istanbul.

*MoNE's effort to prioritize Southeast Anatolia and Central East Anatolia in the first appointments of new teachers, just as it has done throughout the years, is a significant, yet insufficient effort to narrow the discrepancy between regions. The fact that these teachers are less experienced and that teacher reassignments are mainly made to the Mediterranean, Aegean, West Anatolia and Istanbul regions, are issues that still prevail.*

Of the first appointments made for the 35,161 teacher candidates in September 2015, 38% were assigned to the Southeast Anatolia region and 22% to Central East Anatolia. During the next rounds of appointments in February 2016, of the 11,777 candidate teachers, 33% and 11% were appointed to these regions, respectively.<sup>41</sup> In January 2016, among the teachers that were reassigned with approved requests, approximately half (48.6%) were placed in the Mediterranean, Aegean, West Anatolia and Istanbul regions.

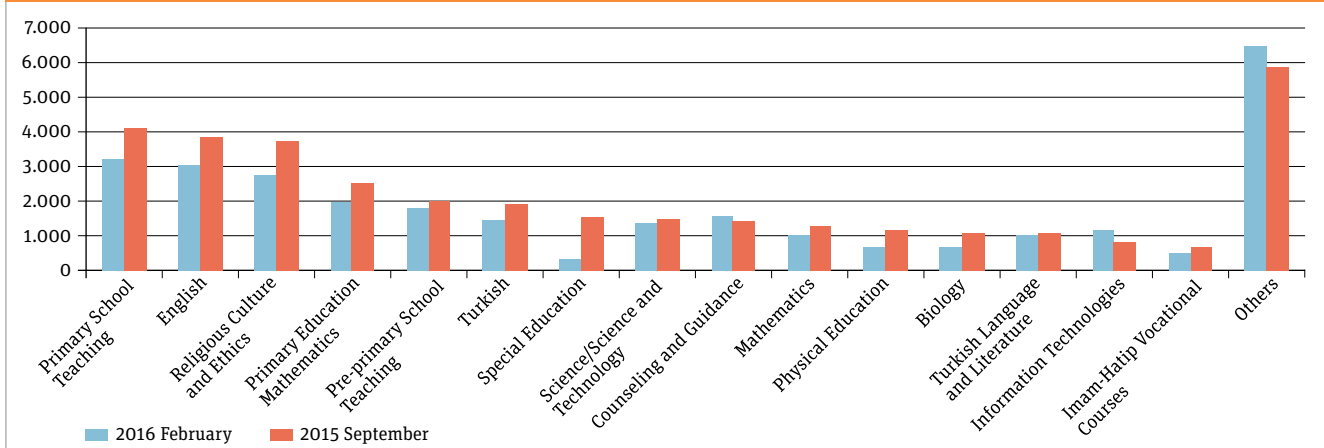
41 Koyuncu, 2016.

The bylaw that was published in the Official Gazette on August 3, 2016 regarding the Employment of Contract Teachers stipulates that contracted teachers serve in the same location for six years (four years at the first appointed location and two more if they have a permanent position at that school).<sup>42</sup> This bylaw seems to have the potential to decrease the high turnover rate for teachers, an issue of which has resulted in students being faced with frequent change of teachers in the southeastern and eastern provinces. However, to find a more sustainable solution, one that is acceptable to both teachers and students, it is necessary to tackle the problems that make the regions less preferred in the first place, to improve the conditions at these places and to provide the support for the teachers they need.

*When the first appointments are broken down by subject, English, and Religious Culture and Ethics rank first; however, the appointments of counseling and guidance teachers, who have the potential to create a real difference for at-risk kids by providing preventive guidance, seem to be limited.*

As in the first appointments made in September 2015 and February 2016, the subjects that ranked highest in the appointment of October 2016<sup>43</sup> were primary school teaching, English, and Religious Culture and Ethics. Of the 18,506 teachers, most were appointed in the Southeast Anatolia and Central East Anatolia regions. The ten provinces that received the most teachers in order of highest to lowest are Şanlıurfa, Van, Mardin, Gaziantep, Erzurum, Şırnak, Diyarbakır, Ağrı, Muş and Bitlis.

**FIGURE 10: FIRST APPOINTMENTS BY SUBJECT, SEPTEMBER AND FEBRUARY 2016**



Source: Compiled from the data on the first-appointments table retrieved from [http://ikgm.meb.gov.tr/sayisal\\_veriler.asp?ID=207](http://ikgm.meb.gov.tr/sayisal_veriler.asp?ID=207)

<sup>42</sup> The topic of contract teachers, which has been criticized and brought before the court by educational unions, and the oral test they are subjected to, need to be discussed in a comprehensive manner with the participation of representatives who have different perspectives. This implementation, which came about during the preparation-for-publishing phase of the *Education Monitoring Report 2015-16*, will be discussed at length in the next report.

<sup>43</sup> According to the statement by the Minister of Education, İsmet Yılmaz, following the attempted coup of July 15, 28,163 people, mainly teachers, were dismissed from work and 20,088 were put on suspension. However, 5,078 were later allowed to return to their positions. In a second wave, another 10,453 were put on suspension. To compensate for the shortage of teachers, MoNE first appointed 15,000 contract teachers and after the second wave, another 5,000 contract teachers were selected among private tutoring centers. Retrieved on October 2016 from: <http://www.meb.gov.tr/bakan-yilmaz-basin-mensuplarinin-sorularini-yanitladi/haber/12148/tr>

**TABLE 7: CONTRACTED TEACHERS' FIRST APPOINTMENTS BY SUBJECT, OCTOBER 2016**

Primary School Teaching	4,344
English	1,562
Religious Culture and Ethics	1,480
Mathematics	1,325
Mathematics (Primary Education)	1,004
Turkish Language and Literature	927
Pre-primary School Teaching	775
Science/Science and Technology	698
Turkish	585
Physics	556
Counseling and Guidance	505
Special Education	502
Biology	479
Physical Education	464
Chemistry/Chemistry Technology	458
History	398
Geography	322
Other	2,122
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,506</b>

Source: Compiled from the data found on the first-appointments table retrieved from [http://ikgm.meb.gov.tr/sayisal\\_veriler.asp?ID=207](http://ikgm.meb.gov.tr/sayisal_veriler.asp?ID=207); includes teachers who were previously employed at private tutoring centers and appointed as contract teachers.

The first appointment figures imply that guidance and counseling are not considered to be of great importance, despite it being essential for providing preventive guidance and for supporting children at risk. Guidance and counseling teachers constituted 4.1% of the teacher appointments in September 2015, 5.4% in February 2016, and 2.7% in October 2016. The data from January 2016 show that the need for guidance and counseling is equal to 25.8% of the net need for teachers.<sup>44</sup> Many of the events that took place during the 2015-16 school year have brought to light the importance of counseling and guidance services in facilitating prevention, intervention and rehabilitation activities. Moreover, the need has arisen to have psycho-social support programs and a sufficient number of competent psychological counselors and guidance experts to address sexual abuse cases at educational institutions<sup>45</sup>, the violent conditions and consequent intermittent halting of education<sup>46</sup>, as well as the experiences of Syrian refugee children, along with other issues.

44 Referenced by Oral (2016) from <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d26/7/7-1118spc.pdf>

45 For detailed information, see Diker Coşkun (2016).

46 For detailed information, see Oral (2016).

***The main development concern is to a very limited degree in MoNE's teacher program. This program has an emphasis on applied learning.***

"In 2015, many amendments were made to the MoNE's Appointment and Evaluation Regulation. [With MoNE's Appointment and Evaluation Regulation] teacher candidates are expected to pass a performance evaluation. In addition to being required to pass a performance evaluation (KPSS) before being appointed, they are also required to pass an evaluation and pass a written test. After the performance evaluation, a written examination following the written test is conducted.

(...) The performance evaluation is conducted once during the first semester. The evaluation is a positive development. As a result of the performance evaluation, all of which correspond to abilities that teachers would actively use in their teaching. Also, the indicators concerning the areas of evaluation are very clear.

(...) The first two evaluations are conducted by the school principal and the consulting teacher, while the third one involves the addition of the school inspector. The applied weight of the evaluations are as follows: 10% for the first one, 30% for the second and 60% for the last one. After all evaluations are completed, teachers who score at least 50 points out of 100 will be eligible to take the written test, of which 50% of the questions cover educational processes, and the other 50% educational legislation.

(...) Candidate teachers who score at least 60% on the written test will not be subjected to an oral exam, unless found necessary, and will be appointed to their main post. For those who couldn't pass the written test, the entire evaluation process, including the performance evaluation, will need to be repeated at a different school.

(...) It has been observed that some of the evaluation fails to evaluate the teacher [for example, the test questions on the legislation], consist of repetitive evaluations. Therefore, a general reconfiguration is needed to make the evaluation process more functional, efficient and productive for the ministry and the candidate teachers."

*Source: Koyuncu, p.16-18.*



*Some outstanding developments that took place concerning the quality and content of education during the 2015-16 school year are developments on vocational education, Promoting Gender Significant Equality in Education, Movement to Increase Opportunities and Technological Contents, the new or updated teaching programs, New Course: Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy and with regards to the Religious Culture and Ethics course.*

The Ministry of Education 2015-2019 Strategic Plan features many strategies pertaining to vocational and technical education, with the goal of enhancing “employability”. These strategies, which involve increasing the quality of vocational and technical education, serve as a sound response to Turkey’s needs. As emphasized in previous ERG studies, the objectives should not be based on student rates but rather on the goals of rendering the educational system more equal as a whole, tearing down the walls between general and vocational education and enhancing the quality education. Some of the more significant developments in vocational and technical education in 2015-16 include the updates on framework teaching programs and weekly class schedules, the initiatives to help students retain what they have learned, and the self-evaluations conducted by schools. Turkey has also declared that, among the objectives related to vocational and technical education announced by the EU for the 2015-2020 period, priority would be given to teacher development and lifelong learning. A pre-impact assessment has been conducted to test the different policies applied by Turkey in these two areas.<sup>47</sup>

ETCEP, finalized in September 2016 with a Closing Conference, was a significant project that focused on the enrollment of female students, but also on the gender equality in the country as a whole.<sup>48</sup> Through the project, which encompassed different grade levels, over one-hundred teachers were able to benefit from the gender equality training, and teachers received awareness training, and participated in the leadership training. In addition, social mobilization campaigns were run to raise awareness. A resource called *A Gender Equality Assurance* was developed through ETCEP were the reevaluation of textbooks, in terms of gender equality. In addition, the project will extend it to include more provinces, and the results need to be shared with the public and the government. The legislation, policies and textbooks.

act\_assessment\_validation\_workshop\_in\_Turkey?opendocument  
 v.tr/; to view the situational analysis and need-analysis conducted  
 ons/assets/admin/uploads/userfiles/arastirma\_raporu.pdf

49 Retrieved on October 2016 from: <http://ogm.meb.gov.tr/www/egitimde-toplumsal-cinsiyet-esitliginin-gelistirilmesi-etcep-projesi-uluslararası-kapanış-konferansı-1-eylül-2016-tarihinde-basladı/icerik/480>

As part of the FATİH Project, whose completion date was extended from 2015 to 2019, 84,921 interactive boards were set-up in the first phase, and 347,367 in the second phase of the project. As of 2015, 1,437,800 tablets have been distributed.<sup>50</sup> During the second phase of the project, 47,336 educators benefited from the in-classroom and out-of-classroom training sessions held on Using Technology in Education.<sup>51</sup> Over 424 thousand teachers are stated to have attended an introductory or educational seminar and training.<sup>52</sup> During the first six months of 2016, the registered users on the Educational Information Network (EIN), one of the main features of the project, increased by three million, reaching approximately 12 million users. Teacher trainings, another key component of the project, are pivotal to effectively bringing the infrastructure and the content of the project to life. In the recently conducted studies related to the project, the main problem was found to be the limited technology literacy of the teachers.<sup>53</sup>

In the 2015-16 school year, many efforts were put into evaluating and updating curriculums and class schedules. It was observed that the explanations for updated and new curricula were generally more succinct, compared to other years, and educators reported that the explanations on the structure of the curricula were helpful.<sup>54</sup> Workshops were held with the participation of educators to discuss weekly schedules, curricula and textbooks. With these workshops, the educators were given a platform to provide feedback on these subjects, which was a positive development.<sup>55</sup> Nevertheless, in order to create a more transparent and participatory model, such dialogues need to be systematized and their outcomes shared with other educators and the public.

*With regards to the Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy courses, the focus on teaching values through fairy tales, the domination of the idea of “us” as opposed to a narration of the “individual” and the lack of discussion on current issues weaken the potential of the course.*

In 2012, a mandatory course for 8th graders, Citizenship and Democracy, was removed from the curriculum, and a new course, Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy, was added to the curriculum for 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Prepared as part of the Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education Project that ended in 2015, the course was presented for the first time during the 2015-16 school year. As mentioned in the background report titled Content of the Course, this course is “an important step towards giving students an identity of citizenship, while maintaining the individual conscience.”<sup>56</sup>

The background report for the course can be summarized in the following points: The class encompasses the appropriate knowledge and abilities for a fourth-grade level and aims to teach concepts such as “anthropocentrism”, “active citizenship”, “peace”,

50 Retrieved on November 2016 from: <http://fatihprojesi.meb.gov.tr/etkilesimli/tahta/>

51 Retrieved on November 2016 from: <http://fatihprojesi.meb.gov.tr/ogretmen-egitimi/>

52 Ibid.

53 Diker Coşkun, 2016.

54 Ibid.

55 For some sample studies, see: <http://tegm.meb.gov.tr/www/ilkogretim-kurumlari-ilkokul-ve-ortaokul-haftalik-ders-cizelgesinin-degerlendirilmesi-calistayi-gerceklestirildi/icerik/358>; <http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/www/ders-kitaplarini-degerlendirme-calistaylari-yapildi/icerik/260>; <http://ogm.meb.gov.tr/www/ortaogretim-genel-mudurlugu-stratejik-plan-hedefleri-ve-mufredat-analizi-calistayi-gerceklestirildi/icerik/488>

56 Diker Coşkun, 2016, p. 19.

“reconciliation”, “pluralism”, “co-existence”, “diversity” and “rule of law”. According to the analysis made by Coşkun on the subject, courses that focus on knowledge and abilities need to be applied courses, and the curriculum does not specify clearly what teaching methods are used and how. “When the textbook is analyzed (...) it is observed that there are many fairy tales and that much of the teaching about values involves answering questions on these tales. However, the Human Rights, Citizenship and Democracy course is an important course, where knowledge, abilities and values need to be taught together, using inside and outside-the classroom activities.”<sup>57</sup> He stated that most of the subjects dealt with in the textbook are examined through old-fashioned stories, which can make it difficult for children to connect the concepts of human rights, citizenship and democracy with their daily life. In addition, the discussion questions emphasize an idea of “us”, rather than featuring “a narration based on the individual”.<sup>58</sup> The author believes that it would be more compliant with the general principles of learning that the child know themselves first and then learn about concepts of group, community and society, and that current events concerning the issues of our day be incorporated into the textbooks.

*The action plan presented to the European Council of Ministers following the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the Mansur Yalçın and others v. Turkey case, does not contribute to the solution in the short term.*

Following the judgment made on the Mansur Yalçın and others v. Turkey case on February 26, 2015, Turkey presented its action plan to the European Council of Ministers on December 21, 2015. The action plan stated that a comprehensive commission would be established to present an advisory opinion; that the commission would include representatives from various public institutions, academicians of different disciplines and representatives from non-governmental agencies; and that the commission would begin its work in March 2016 to complete it by the end of the same year.<sup>59</sup> The action plan did not take into consideration the emphasis made by ECHR that an exemption mechanism should urgently be put into place that protects individuals from being forced into declaring their faith or facing discrimination. In the studies that develop the status and the content of the course, a model that would contribute to the tolerant and respectful coexistence of individuals with different denominations, religions and faiths should be adopted.

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57 Ibid, p.20.

58 Ibid.

59 Information on the invited academicians or non-governmental agencies to the commission was not shared with the public. For the complete action plan, see: <http://tm.coe.int/coERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentID=09000016805acc71>

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