

# Approach to the NEETs in Turkey

## Summary

- ⇒ The 2019 OECD data shows that Turkey has the highest rate of NEETs among OECD countries.
- ⇒ NEET rates among young women makes Turkey have the highest NEET rate among OECD countries.
- ⇒ Early leavers from education and training are of great importance regarding the composition of NEETs in Turkey.
- ⇒ The causations of being in a disadvantageous situation in education, labour and social life is widely affected by gender in Turkey.
- ⇒ Meeting the psycho-social needs and promoting into education and employment/entrepreneurship is crucial to tackle the problems faced by young women, who compose the two third of the NEET population.

## What's the issue?

Youth unemployment gained a great importance in the labour market force of both developed and developing countries, and it is widely affected by the fluctuations in the economic activities as well as global recessions than adult unemployment is.

The concept of NEET (young people not in employment, education or training) has been used in order to define and tackle the problems regarding the youth unemployment. Education is the prominent factor in school-to-work transition; thus, the EU policies and agenda have been focused more on NEETs in recent years.

Taking the NEET category into account together with different identity categories such as gender, race, class, age, employment statue, sexual orientation, physical ability makes the issue more comprehensible. Importantly, gender-focused policies for NEETs are highly needed since the situation of being in economically or socially disadvantageous is significantly affected by gender.

An effective way to decrease youth unemployment and thus NEET rates is to make descriptive, inclusive research focusing on need analysis. This policy brief is based on the National Baseline Study of Turkey within the scope of the Western Balkan and Turkey for Employouth Project funded by UN. The policy brief focuses on the needs of NEETs in Turkey who are aged between 15-29 and are in vulnerable positions with the consideration of intersectionality approach.

## Why is this important for Turkey?

In Turkey, high levels of unemployment and inactivity characterize the youth labour market. The 2019 OECD data shows that Turkey has the highest NEET rate (29,5%) among OECD countries. Unemployment rate among young people (22,1%) is high in 2019 comparing to the previous 4 years. Youth employment rate is another important economic indicator that increased from 2016 to 2019 by approximately 7%.

In fact, NEET rates among young women makes Turkey the country which has the highest NEET rate comparing to other OECD countries. In 2019, the NEET rates among young women in Turkey (41%) is the highest one among the OECD countries whereas the NEET rate among young men (18%) is less than in Italy (22%). Moreover, employment rate of young men (54%) is nearly twice as much as young women (28%).

Low-level educational attainment is a challenging issue in Turkey regarding the NEETs. The rate of early school-leavers among young men is decreased by 5% whereas this rate is 10% for young women between 2014-2018 in Turkey. Gender gap is narrowed; policies, programs, and strategies driven by either the state, NGOs, public institutions or international non-governmental organisations have observable impact on decreasing the rates of school-drops among young population in recent years.<sup>1</sup> However, early leavers from education and training are of great importance regarding the composition of NEETs in Turkey since low-level educational attainment affects the school-to-work transition and thus entrance into the labour market for young population.

## Needs of NEETs in Turkey & Recommended Solutions

Intersectionality as a concept and comprehensive approach is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences on the basis of discrimination and oppression. Thus, a fundamental need of NEETs is descriptive, inclusive research focusing on need analysis. By taking various representatives of NGOs and public institutions as well as statistical data into account, needs of NEETs are classified into three different classes which have soft boundaries between each other, as shown below.

### Financial Needs

- ◆ A young person needs a fixed income in order to meet their social life and basic needs. A young person who is studying at a university applies to the state for a scholarship, receives a loan and gets borrowed. Within the bounds of possibility, these can be given to the young people including NEETs as a non-refundable scholarship.
- ◆ Vocational training programs as well as supportive courses which make young people keep up with the continuously developing features of technology should be provided for young people free.

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<sup>1</sup> Eđitim Reformu Giriřimi (Education Reform Initiative), Education Monitoring Report 2016-17, retrieved from: [http://en.egitimreformugirisimi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EIR2016-17.ENG\\_29.06.18.web\\_.pdf](http://en.egitimreformugirisimi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/EIR2016-17.ENG_29.06.18.web_.pdf)

- ◆ A bilateral solution is needed from the private and public side of the employment. The average age of those working in the public sector is very high, and those who are of age should retire so that space should be opened for young people. Also, in the private sector, employers should start to give priority to young people who volunteer or work in an unpaid job in Turkey. Considering together, rearrangement of employment policies, improvement of internship opportunities in terms of sustainability and inclusiveness seems to be crucial for young people who do not have financial capabilities.

### **Social and Emotional Needs**

- ◆ The status of being NEET can be resulted from the feeling of despair after looking for work for a long time. This can be due to lack of respect to the private life in working place, feeling secure in the working places as well as the quality of jobs in terms of job description and employee profile that make young people can feel satisfied while working.
- ◆ The rate of self-employed young women (2%) is three times more than the one of young men (0,6%). This can be considered as a result of an employment area lacking anti-discrimination policies and the wage-gap between those who have the same profession in the labour market.
- ◆ NEETs have their social circle in which other NEETs are also around. Also, they spend time where there are difficulties in socializing with the working youth. Therefore, they cannot have the same social and financial opportunities for networking, consulting, and widening their aspects. Educational institutions can be considered in this case as an environment in which NEETs can get to know each other in a feeling of solidarity, cooperation which can provide a motivation that makes them more active in the process of entering labour market.
- ◆ Especially for those who are socially disadvantaged, psycho-social support is needed. Empowerment of those who have lost hope, have given up looking for a job, have an education, has potential plays great role in providing youth necessary motivation to enter into labour market as well as to complete an education. They also must leave the family. Invisible groups have trouble in access to their rights due to multiple disadvantages. Psycho-social needs, psychological empowerment of the youth and then the social sphere as well as ability of dreaming are among the most mentioned by the NGOs regarding the support mechanisms for socially disadvantaged groups among youth. By these means, mobility in the educational and employment life is considered to be maintained.
- ◆ Regarding the socially excluded groups among youth population, definitional inclusion of LGBTI+ individuals in the legislative framework, therefore in the policies, programs, plans, strategies of public institutions and NGOs can be considered as an action that is needed to tackle discrimination and to provide the necessary materials for the researches on young people which lack the perspective of gender identity and sexual orientation, recognition of the vulnerability of LGBTI+ people within the policies has a big role in LGBTI+ friendly approach to address the needs of young LGBTI+ people

who are socially excluded, in need of psychological support and thus have big potential to be NEETs.

- ◆ Early and/or forced marriage, especially for young women in Turkey, results in exclusion from education, learning and employment opportunities for the rest of their lives. Meeting the psycho-social needs and promoting into education and employment/entrepreneurship is crucial to tackle the problems faced by young women, who compose the two third of the NEET population.
- ◆ Finally, it is significant to mention that gender-based perspective is a crucial need in preparation of policies regarding NEETs.

### **Educational Needs**

- ◆ Education is perceived as the fundamental element for transition to work for young people, however, NGOs who work in the educational framework with children as well as young people, perceive educational institutions in Turkey as they are places where education takes time, yet it does not pay off outside.
- ◆ In 2018-2019, 44% of young people enrolled in tertiary education. Young women have the higher graduation rate (13%) while lower enrolment rate (21%) comparing to young men who have 10% graduation and 46% enrolment rate in tertiary education. Increasing the number of universities is not seen adequate, the sustainability of opportunity areas in which young people can use the vocational knowledge they received from educational institutions should be provided.
- ◆ The world of education is also changing; the structure of formal education needs to change. Young people need an education/training system where more useful information can be obtained in a shorter time, with having the motto “Teach learning”.
- ◆ Guidance and support mechanisms including mentorships after the education/training period can be provided for young people by develop their soft skills, such as writing a CV, learning about how to work as a team, and most importantly ability of self-education. These are seen to have big potentials to make young people get into employment with the feeling of self-confident and self-awareness of what they need to improve in accordance with the application requirements for a profession/job.
- ◆ Learning environments outside of schools are also seen as a crucial need to smooth the transition from work to school for those who are not ready or able to make the move straight from the workplace to formal school. Supporting the next step after the education/trainings is also a requirement in order to keep young people up-to further improvement of their skills or job-seeking process.
- ◆ Non-formal education has a big potential to meet the educational needs of people of all ages as well as young population who needs to be qualified in accordance with the jobs they want to have. They need vocational training programs and supportive courses to keep up with the features of technology which are continuously developed and updated. These courses should be free.