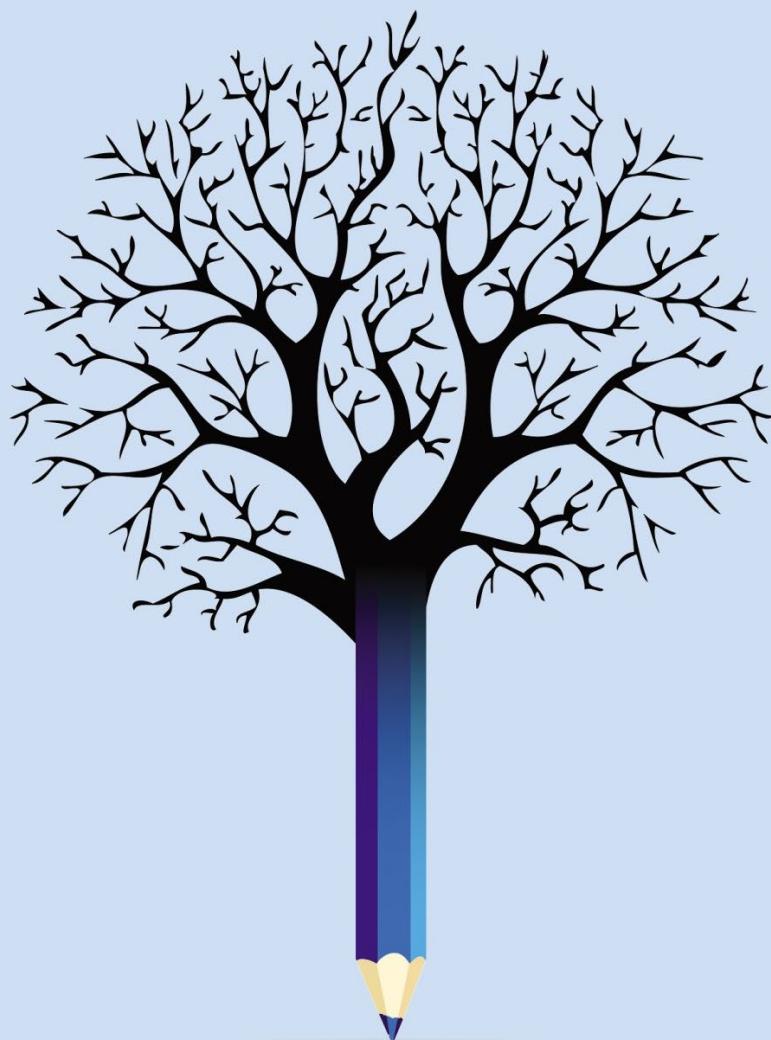




## EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK IN TURKEY



## EDUCATION POLICY OUTLOOK

This **policy profile on education** in Turkey is part of the *Education Policy Outlook* series, which presents comparative analysis of education policies and reforms across OECD countries. Building on the OECD's substantial comparative and sectoral policy knowledge base, the series offers a comparative outlook on education policy. This country policy profile is an update of the [first policy profile of Turkey](#) (2013) and provides: analysis of the educational context, strengths, challenges and policies; analysis of international trends; and insight into policies and reforms on selected topics. It is an opportunity to take stock of progress and where the education system stands today from the perspective of the OECD through synthetic, evidence-based and comparable analysis.

In addition to country-specific profiles, the series also includes a recurring publication. The first volume, [Education Policy Outlook 2015: Making Reforms Happen](#), was released in 2015. The second volume, [Education Policy Outlook 2018: Putting Student Learning at the Centre](#) was released in 2018. Its complement, [Education Policy Outlook 2019: Working Together to Help Students Achieve their Potential](#) was released in autumn 2019. Designed **for policy makers, analysts and practitioners** who seek information and analysis of education policy taking into account the importance of national context, the country policy profiles offer constructive analysis of education policy in a comparative format. Each profile reviews the current context and situation of a country's education system and examines its challenges and policy responses, according to six policy levers that support improvement:

- Students: How to raise outcomes for all in terms of 1) equity and quality and 2) preparing students for the future;
- Institutions: How to raise quality through 3) institutional improvement and 4) evaluation and assessment;
- System: How the system is organised to deliver education policy in terms of 5) governance and 6) funding.

Some country policy profiles contain spotlight boxes on selected policy issues. They are meant to draw attention to specific policies that are promising or showing positive results and may be relevant for other countries.

**Special thanks** to the Turkish Government and, in particular, the Ministry of National Education, for its active input during consultations and constructive feedback on this report. We also thank the European Commission for its valuable financial support for the update of this country policy profile.

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**Sources:** Subject to country participation, this country policy profile draws on OECD indicators from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC), the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) and the annual publication Education at a Glance, and refers to country and thematic studies such as OECD work on early childhood education and care, teachers, school leadership, evaluation and assessment for improving school outcomes, equity and quality in education, governing complex education systems, school resources, vocational education and training, and tertiary education. This profile also draws on information in the OECD Education Policy Outlook National Survey for Comparative Policy Analysis completed in 2016 by the Government of Turkey, as well as information provided by the Ministry of National Education between 2018 and 2020 as part of the Education Policy Outlook's activities with countries.

Most of the figures quoted in the different sections refer to Annex B, which presents a table of the main indicators for the sources used throughout the country policy profile. Hyperlinks to the reference publications are included throughout the text for ease of reading, and also in the References and further reading section, which lists both OECD and non-OECD sources.

More information is available from the OECD Directorate for Education and Skills ([www.oecd.org/edu](http://www.oecd.org/edu)) and its web pages on the Education Policy Outlook ([www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/policyoutlook.htm)).

In the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, some information is provided about initial responses.

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## HIGHLIGHTS

**Note:** Most of the content in this profile was written before the COVID-19 outbreak. As such, this document offers insight into pre-existing conditions that may influence the system's responsiveness in the context of the crisis and help inform longer-term efforts to strengthen resilience. Spotlight 1 summarises Turkey's initial responses to the crisis. Its structure is based on work by the Education Policy Outlook in 2020 to support countries in these efforts.

### Turkey's educational context

**Students:** In PISA 2018<sup>1</sup>, Turkey's mathematics scores had increased by 4.1 score points per cycle and science by 6.1, since earliest participation. This has occurred alongside rapid expansion in participation. Between 2003 and 2018, Turkey doubled the number of students eligible for PISA and considerably reduced the share of young people not employed or in education or training (NEET), although levels remain more than double the OECD average. Additionally, enrolment rates in early childhood education and care (ECEC) among 3-5 year-olds more than tripled between 2005 and 2017. The impact on educational attainment has been positive; Turkey's growth in the share of young adults with an upper secondary qualification was the second largest among OECD countries between 2008 and 2018 and the largest at tertiary level.

**Institutions:** With growing participation, Turkey has successfully recruited sufficient numbers of teachers while strengthening qualification levels; in TALIS 2018, much larger shares of school leaders and teachers in Turkey held a bachelor's degree than in 2008. Since 2016, support for novice teachers is reinforced through formal induction and probation. Turkey has increased the quality and range of evaluation and assessment information available at system level, and strengthened institutional capacity to handle that information. School evaluation, both internal and external, and teacher appraisal are common practice in Turkey, and occur more regularly than on average across the OECD; efforts to make these processes more development-focused are underway.

**System:** Turkey has a comparatively large and highly centralised education system. Within the Ministry of National Education (MoNE), strategic planning practices are in place at central and local levels, directed by a five-year vision. Some established structures encourage stakeholder participation, particularly in the vocational sector where broad multi-stakeholder bodies at central and local level meet regularly. The tertiary sector has grown considerably in recent years, thanks to efforts to ensure one university per province; this appears to have had a positive impact on regional development. Nascent efforts to improve the quality of tertiary provision through stronger quality assurance are evident. Turkey dedicates a higher-than-average share of national wealth to education, particularly at tertiary level, in part due to tuition-free provision in public institutions. Some funding initiatives are in place to reduce the cost of education for disadvantaged families.

### Key policy issues:

Turkey has made considerable improvements in educational performance over recent years. Going forward, maintaining and extending such improvements, while strengthening inclusiveness so that all students can access quality and engaging education regardless of the pathway they follow, will be critical. Enrolment, particularly at ECEC level, and attainment across the system remain below average. Similarly, although student performance has improved, a smaller share of students in Turkey achieve baseline proficiency (PISA level 2) in reading, mathematics and science than on average across the OECD. Within vocational education and training (VET), labour market perspectives and skills outcomes are less developed than in academic pathways. Given that a high share of students pursue VET, and many from a young age due to early tracking, this poses challenges. Indeed, early tracking and other system-level practices, such as high-stakes examinations at the end of lower and upper secondary education and expanding private provision, also contribute to inequities. In PISA 2018, Turkey had the highest rates of school-level isolation among both high and low achievers, as well as an above-average isolation index for advantaged students, suggesting some academic and social segregation within the Turkish system. Students in Turkey reported a low sense of belonging at school and high levels of truancy in PISA 2018. Finally, low per-student spending, underdeveloped targeted funding practices and the relatively high cost of school education to households pose challenges in effectively supporting disadvantaged and other vulnerable students.

### Strengthening adaptability and resilience in the context of COVID-19 (see Spotlight 1)

Pre-existing resources may have facilitated areas of Turkey's early response to the pandemic. Policies implemented over recent years, such as the expansion of open education, the Movement to Enhance Opportunities and Improve Technology project (2010) and higher education's Digital Transformation Project (2017) may have helped develop some of the digital skills, tools and infrastructure required for mass online learning. As Turkey works to balance short-term responsiveness with longer-term strategic aims and resilience, the crisis has brought specific challenges. Strong targeted support for certain groups of students will be crucial to avoid reversing the progress in participation and attainment made over recent years. In particular, efforts targeted at disadvantaged students and refugees, who are less likely to have access to distance education, will be crucial. Building on Turkey's previous experiences, local programmes focusing on strengthening links between families and schools, and community outreach efforts could have the greatest impact.

## Spotlight 1. The Turkish education system's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak a global pandemic. Education systems across the world have felt the force of the crisis as confinement measures triggered widespread closures of education institutions. On 13 March, Turkey [announced the closure](#) of all educational institutions from ECEC to tertiary level from 16 March. In light of the work of the *Education Policy Outlook* in 2020 in the context of this pandemic, this spotlight offers an insight into system readiness and immediate responses across five key areas.

- 1. Ensuring continued access to learning and smooth educational pathways:** Following an initial week of full closure, Turkey launched a national programme of online education via the [EBA](#) platform. Initially holding 1 600 courses and over 20 000 interactive activities, the platform continued to develop throughout the period of closures, introducing the capacity for teachers to host live synchronous classes (with priority to those teaching national examination candidates), and machine learning-powered adaptive support tools. Online learning was supplemented by a programme of educational broadcasting across six national public television channels with content for children from ECEC to upper secondary level. At tertiary level, most universities transitioned to online teaching through their own digital infrastructure; the [YÖK courses platform](#), centralising content from three large universities, was made available to all students for free. Professional development for teachers continued with numerous courses via EBA and a YouTube channel; with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Turkey developed 17 new online courses for teachers, aiming to reach around 125 000 teachers during the closures. Through the [My Preference](#) programme, university information days continued remotely. Information packs, promotional brochures and videos were prepared for students selecting upper secondary general and vocational courses. Turkey maintained tertiary and upper secondary selection examinations, but postponed them to late June and the scope of assessed material was narrowed. Examination preparation activities, including example questions and solutions, were offered via EBA and television. At tertiary level, institutions have autonomy to adapt the academic calendar; examinations were postponed to beyond the date of reopening (15 June 2020).
- 2. Strengthening the internal world of the student:** The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) published a [psychoeducational activities booklet](#) to support young children's emotional resilience, as well as guidebooks for students and their families. A telephone hotline staffed by 1 375 counsellors based in Guidance and Research Centres across the country was launched to offer advice and support to parents and their children.
- 3. Providing targeted support and interventions for vulnerable children and families:** To facilitate the period of online education, Turkish internet providers committed to supplying all students with between 5 and 8GB of free data during the period of school closures. MoNE launched a [mobile application](#) providing targeted content for students with special educational needs and their parents and teachers, complementing the content already published on the Education Information Network (EBA). Provincial call centres were established across the country to enable teachers to support and communicate with children with special educational needs and their families.
- 4. Harnessing wider support and engagement at local and central level:** Vocational education and training (VET) institutions across the country produced and distributed protective equipment and supplies to frontline workers during closure. To support this further, Turkey aimed to establish 20 research and development (R&D) centres in VET institutions across the country dedicated to increasing production of urgently needed materials.
- 5. Collecting, disseminating and improving the use of information about students:** The EBA platform allows teachers, parents and students themselves to monitor student participation and track learning performance. MoNE has also been monitoring traffic to the EBA. [YÖK](#) (2020) administered a monitoring survey to higher education institutions to ascertain the scope and nature of distance learning and to inform future improvements.

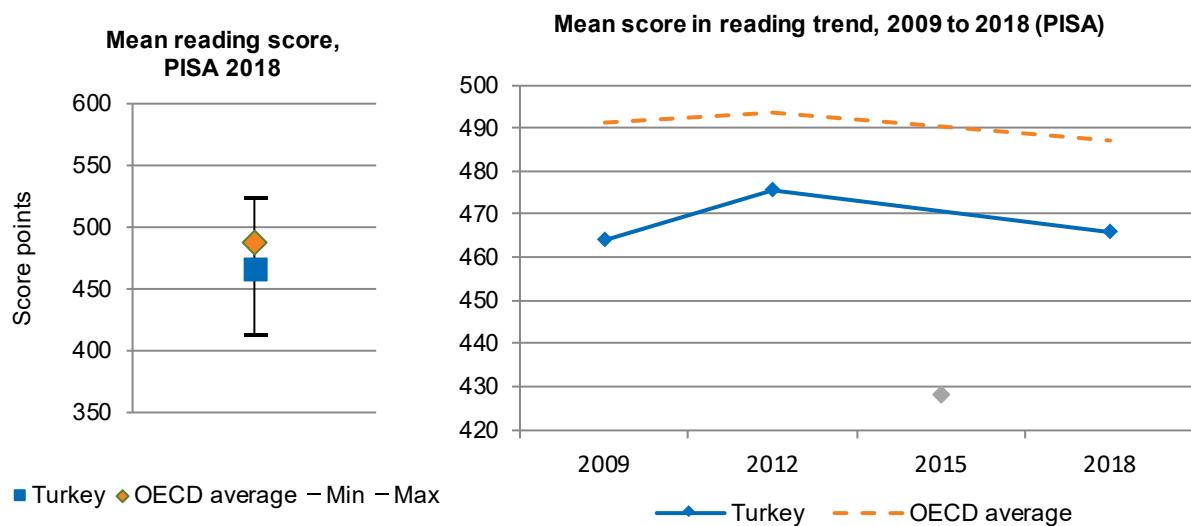
Selected indicators of system readiness (OECD)		Turkey	Average	Min	Max
<i>Students' readiness (according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018)</i>					
1	Index of self-efficacy	0.36	0.01	-0.61	0.36
2	Percentage of students in disadvantaged schools with access to a computer at home that they can use for school work	40.0%	81.5%	23.5%	96.5%
<i>Teachers' readiness (according to lower secondary teachers' self-reports in TALIS 2018)</i>					
3	Percentage of teachers with a high level of need for professional development related to ICT skills for teaching	7.5%	17.7%	5.3%	39.0%
4	Percentage of teachers agreeing that most teachers in the school provide practical support to each other when applying new ideas	79.4%	77.9%	64.7%	86.5%

**Note:** The information presented in this spotlight covers key measures announced or introduced **before 06 May 2020**.

## KEY TRENDS IN PERFORMANCE AND ATTAINMENT

In PISA 2018, students in Turkey scored 466 points in reading compared to an OECD average of 487 points. At 26%, around one-quarter of 15-year-olds in Turkey did not achieve baseline proficiency in reading (Level 2), which was similar to the average of 23%; this varies considerably between school types. Only 3% of students in Turkey were high achievers (Level 5 or above), compared to an average share of 9%. Across PISA cycles, Turkey's mean reading performance has been stable, although improvements may be masked by increased participation (see "Equity and Quality"). In the OECD Survey of Adults Skills (PIAAC), 16-64 year-olds in Turkey score 227 points in literacy skills, which was below the average of 268 points across participating countries. However, the larger-than-average performance gap between younger and older cohorts (20 points compared to 16) indicates the pace at which outcomes are improving.

**Figure 1. Trends and comparative performance of 15-year-olds in reading, PISA**

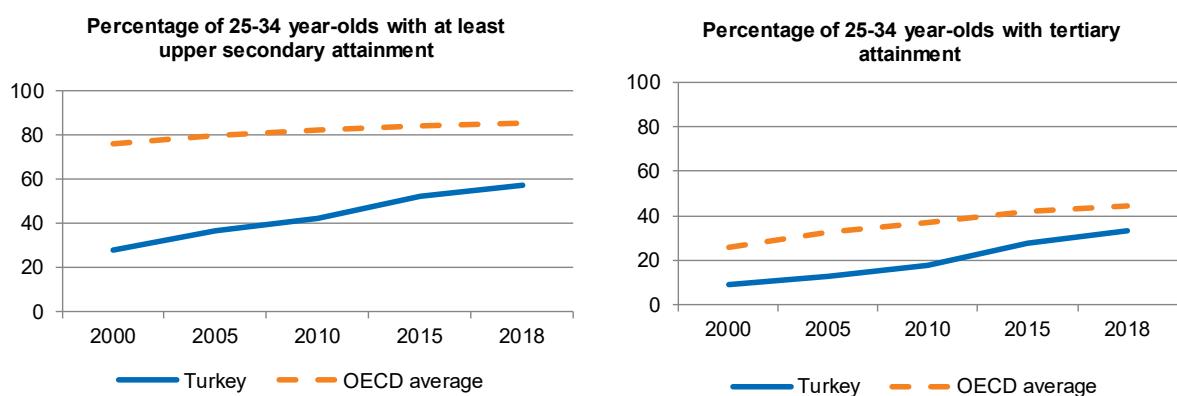


**Note:** "Min"/"Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values. When considering results from all years in PISA, the OECD has found that the results for Turkey in PISA 2015 were anomalous - neither the decline between 2012 and 2015, nor the recovery between 2015 and 2018, reflect the long-term trajectory.

**Source:** OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>.

Turkey's education attainment levels remain below the OECD average, but with substantial increases in recent years. In 2018, Turkey's share of 25-34 year-olds with at least an upper secondary qualification was 57%, compared to an average of 85%. At tertiary level, attainment stood at 33% for Turkey, which was also below the OECD average of 44%. However, between 2008 and 2018, Turkey experienced the second-largest increase in attainment of at least upper secondary education among OECD countries. Furthermore, growth in tertiary attainment has been particularly substantial, more than doubling to 33% over the same period, the largest increase in the OECD.

**Figure 2. Evolution of secondary and tertiary attainment among 25-34 year-olds, 2000-2018**



**Source:** OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

## Spotlight 2. Key policies, key challenges and previous OECD recommendations in Turkey

Main policies from Turkey included in this country policy profile	Key challenges identified and recommendations previously provided by the OECD to Turkey
<b>STUDENTS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promoting the Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish education system (2016-18)</li> <li>▪ Accelerated Learning Programme for Protected Syrian Children in Non-Formal Education (2017-19)</li> <li>▪ Inclusive Early Childhood Project for Children with Disabilities (2017-19)</li> <li>▪ Remedial Education Programme (2017)</li> <li>▪ Increasing School Attendance Rates, Especially for Girls (KEP-2011-13; KEP-II 2015-17)</li> <li>▪ National Qualifications Framework (2015)</li> <li>▪ Reform of upper secondary school placement (2018)</li> <li>▪ Turkish Qualifications Framework (2015)</li> <li>▪ Establishment of the General Directorate for Lifelong Learning (2011)</li> <li>▪ Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper (2014-18)</li> <li>▪ Literacy Campaign (2018)</li> <li>▪ Specialised Vocational Training Centres Skills'10 (UMEM, 2010-15)</li> <li>▪ School Protectorate project (2016)</li> <li>▪ Revised co-operation model for VET institutions and sector representatives (2019)</li> <li>▪ Vocational and Technical Education School Board of Directors (2016)</li> <li>▪ Co-operation Protocol for Teaching, Entrepreneurship and Leadership Trainings (2012)</li> <li>▪ Improving the Quality of Vocational and Technical Education in Turkey (IQVET-I 2012-14; IQVET-II, 2014-15; IQVET-III 2020-23)</li> <li>▪ Enabling students at VTCs to gain an upper secondary diploma (2017; 2019)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key challenges identified [2012, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019]:</b> The OECD previously identified a need for Turkey to prioritise raising the quality of education across all levels, including through upskilling and adult education. More recently, the OECD highlighted substantial progress in the area of human capital development but noted that considerable gaps against several OECD benchmarks remain. In particular, the OECD reported that students' academic proficiency differed widely across schools and by socio-economic background. More recently, the OECD pointed to the challenging relationship between these wide variations in student learning experiences and the system of early tracking, which can create a high-stakes learning environment. Finally, the OECD has also identified a need to better match skills with labour market demand and to increase female labour force participation to meet international standards.</p> <p><b>Summary of previous related OECD recommendations:</b> To capitalise on shorter-term benefits of human capital development, the OECD recommended that Turkey focus on upskilling low-skilled workers and low-educated entrepreneurs. The OECD also proposed that Turkey develop lifelong education programmes for adults with inadequate schooling. Among students, the OECD recommended improving core skill levels in literacy and numeracy, increasing tertiary enrolment and ensuring that all upper secondary graduates gain a working command of English. To improve alignment with the labour market, the OECD recommended that the vocational sector emphasise generic skills development and collaborate more with employers for practical training and curriculum development. Increasing the provision and quality of early childhood education and care was recommended to increase women's labour market participation but also, later, to help reduce inequalities in educational outcomes. Most recently, the OECD suggested clarifying the new upper secondary school placement system by introducing clear procedures for oversubscription, reducing the negative impact of entrance examinations and better informing student choice.</p>
<b>INSTITUTIONS</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthening Democratic Culture in Basic Education (2018-2021)</li> <li>▪ Teacher Induction Programme (2016)</li> <li>▪ Teacher Strategy (2017-23)</li> <li>▪ General Competencies for the Teaching Profession (2006; updated 2016)</li> <li>▪ Teacher Appointment and Relocation Regulation (2015)</li> <li>▪ General Directorate of Assessment, Evaluation and Examination Services (2014)</li> <li>▪ Provincial Assessment and Evaluation Centres (2017)</li> <li>▪ National Assessment of Student Learning (ABIDE, 2016)</li> <li>▪ The Student Learning Achievement Monitoring System (2019)</li> <li>▪ Turkish Language Skills Study (2019)</li> <li>▪ Quality assurance system for VET institutions sector (2018)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key challenges identified [2019]:</b> The OECD recently identified a need to improve teachers' initial teacher preparation, particularly in the area of student assessment, and reported that professional development opportunities for teachers are limited. The OECD also reported that student assessment practices require better alignment with curricular reforms as they remain prescriptive and lacking in formative approaches. Additionally, the OECD highlighted a lack of high-quality information regarding student learning outcomes and a need for the system to make better use of information to drive quality improvement. Similarly, the OECD noted that both teacher appraisal and school inspection have not yet been fully harnessed to support system development.</p> <p><b>Summary of previous related OECD recommendations:</b> To support teachers in developing their professional competencies, the OECD recommended strengthening school-based professional learning and ensuring classroom assessment is covered throughout the teacher career. The OECD also recommended that Turkey develop learning standards defining what students should know and when, and support</p>

	<p>teachers in using them through a range of assessment tools. Additionally, the OECD recommended that feedback and reporting focus on providing students with next steps. The OECD recommended introducing a national examination to certify achievement at the end of compulsory education and improving the validity and reliability of assessments in general. Finally, the OECD advised aligning teacher appraisal, school inspection and system evaluation with national priorities and building capacity among school teams to ensure outcomes inform development.</p>
<p><b>SYSTEM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ For a Stronger Tomorrow: Education Visions 2023 (2018)</li> <li>▪ Strategic plans for education (2010-14; 2015-19; 2019-23)</li> <li>▪ Revisions of the national curriculum (2017)</li> <li>▪ Higher Education Quality Council (2015)</li> <li>▪ Mission Differentiation and Specialisation on the Basis of Regional Development (2015)</li> <li>▪ Mission Differentiation and Specialisation on the Basis of Research (2017)</li> <li>▪ Movement to Enhance Opportunities and Improve Technology (FATİH, 2010)</li> <li>▪ Conditional Cash Transfer for Education (2003)</li> <li>▪ Conditional Cash Transfer for Education for Refugees (2017)</li> <li>▪ Private School Subsidisation Programme (2014)</li> <li>▪ Promoting the role of the private sector in VET provision through the Private Education Institutions Law No. 5580 (2012; 2019)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key challenges identified [2012, 2017, 2018, 2019]:</b> The OECD previously identified the need to better align skills-related policies to local economic development. Furthermore, the OECD highlighted the need for system-level efforts to drive up education quality and promote inclusion. Another challenge requiring a holistic strategy, as identified by the OECD, is the need to further harness digitalisation and to mitigate its uneven development. Most recently, the OECD emphasised the importance of ensuring that the curriculum is well-aligned to other aspects of the system in order to support effective school-level implementation. Similarly, the OECD also identified the need to build trust and support for change within society by better communicating national learning goals.</p> <p><b>Summary of previous related OECD recommendations:</b> The OECD recommended that Turkey establish local strategic planning and develop local capacity for research and analysis by leveraging the role of universities in producing labour market information. To drive up educational quality and inclusion, the OECD also recommended increasing financial investment, including targeted funding mechanisms such as adjusted per-student allocations, increasing institutional autonomy, and launching a national youth employment strategy by identifying innovative local approaches to be expanded. The OECD proposed implementing a holistic strategy on digitalisation, encompassing education, lifelong learning, and infrastructure and internet access policies. More recently, the OECD suggested developing a unifying national curriculum framework to guide future reform. Additionally, the OECD recommended making national learning goals more visible through a communications campaign to build societal support for change.</p>

**Note:** The information on key challenges and recommendations in this spotlight draws from a desk-based compilation from previous OECD publications (subject to country participation). The spotlight is intended for exploratory purposes to promote policy dialogue, and should not be considered an evaluation of the country's progress on these recommendations. Causality should not be inferred either: while some actions taken by a country could correspond to previous OECD recommendations, the OECD acknowledges the value of internal and other external dynamics to promote change in education systems.

**Sources:** 2012, 2016, 2018: *The Economic Survey of Turkey*; 2017: *Employment and Skills Strategies in Turkey*; 2019: *Student Assessment in Turkey*.

## EQUITY AND QUALITY: GROWING PARTICIPATION RATES IN ECEC, BUT ONGOING INEQUITIES IN ACCESS

Turkey combined below-average performance in reading with similar-to-average **PISA equity indicators**. As with reading (see Figure 1), mean performance in mathematics and science in PISA 2018 was also below average, with smaller-than-average shares of students achieving baseline proficiency (PISA Level 2). However, Turkey's performance has improved; since 2003, mean scores in mathematics increased by 4.1 score points every three-year PISA cycle, and by 6.1 score points in science, since 2006. Furthermore, Turkey achieved this while expanding participation: between 2003 and 2018, the share of students eligible for the PISA test as a proportion of all 15-year-olds more than doubled. Socio-economic status had a similar impact on reading performance in Turkey as on average across the OECD, explaining 11.4% of the variance in PISA 2018, compared to 12.0%. Performance differences by gender were smaller than average: in reading, girls outperformed boys by 25 points compared to 30 points. Students with an immigrant background in Turkey represented only a small share of PISA 2018 participants (1%, compared to 13% on average). As Turkey continues to receive high numbers of refugees and works to integrate them into formal education, addressing performance gaps for students with an immigrant background may become more of a challenge (see “Recent policies and practices”).

**Early childhood education and care** (ECEC) policies can increase the equity of education systems. Turkey has a large and growing population share of 0-6 year-olds. Those from 0 to 3 years old may attend care-oriented programmes in crèches or day-care centres (*Kreş*). For 3-5 year-olds, integrated or education-only programmes are provided in ECEC institutions, including preschools (*Bağımsız Ana Okulu*) and practice classrooms (*Uygulama Sınıfları*). Children aged 5 (and 4, if there is space available) can attend nursery classrooms (*Ana Sınıfları*). However, young children in Turkey are typically cared for by families and, in 2017, less than 5% of children under 3 years old were enrolled in ECEC services, compared to 26% on average across the OECD. Enrolment rates do increase with age: only 10% of 3-year-olds participated in ECEC in 2017, compared to 79% on average, but 73% of 5-year-olds did, compared to a 95% average. Various initiatives exist to expand enrolment (see “Recent policies and practices”), which is growing quickly: among 3-5 year-olds, ECEC participation more than tripled between 2005 and 2017.

According to OECD evidence, some **system-level practices** can favour equity, such as a long period of compulsory education, low grade repetition and limited academic sorting. In 2012, Turkey increased the length of compulsory education to 12 years from ages 6 to 17, becoming one of the longest in the OECD. In PISA 2015, 11% of 15-year-olds in Turkey reported repeating a grade during their education, which was equal to the OECD average. Students in Turkey were less likely to be streamed academically between classes than on average in PISA 2015, however, they are first tracked into different educational pathways at age 13, much earlier than the most common age in the OECD of 16. This may contribute to academic segregation between schools: the isolation indices for both low and high achievers in Turkey in PISA 2018 were the highest in the OECD at 0.35 and 0.39, compared to averages of 0.22 and 0.21. Furthermore, a high isolation index for advantaged students, at 0.28 compared to an OECD average of 0.19, indicates some elitism in accessing certain schools. Based on PISA and national evidence, a [recent national study](#) (2020) recommended increasing academic heterogeneity in schools starting by those with high academic performance, as well as providing more academic, social and financial support to low-performing schools. Potentially exacerbating learning inequities is a developed shadow education system which supports students with the economic means to succeed in high-stakes examinations (see “Evaluation and Assessment”).

Despite the positive growth trajectory, there are **equity concerns for ECEC participation** in Turkey. Firstly, [OECD regional data](#) shows regional variation in enrolment for 3-5 year-olds: in 2016, around 30% of children in Southeast Anatolia and Istanbul attended ECEC compared to up to 45% in the Mediterranean West and South Aegean. This may have been exacerbated by policy decisions (see “Recent policies and practices”). Socio-economic inequities also exist: in PISA 2015, of those 15-year-olds in Turkey who remember, advantaged students were over three times more likely than their disadvantaged peers to have attended ECEC for two years. At 23 percentage points, this was more than double the average gap of 10. TALIS Starting Strong 2018 indicates some further socio-economic sorting: 34% of publicly subsidised ECEC settings in Turkey serve a cohort with more than 11% of children from disadvantaged families compared to just 7% for private settings, the second-largest difference among participating countries. The [Education Reform Initiative](#) (ERG, 2017) reports that, unlike elsewhere in the system, there are no gender inequalities in ECEC enrolment. Yet, low child participation may impact gender equality as women in Turkey disproportionately carry the childcare burden, limiting their labour market participation.

### Key strengths and challenges in equity and quality (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths	Key challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-term trends in Turkey's performance in mathematics and science are positive.</li> <li>Participation in compulsory education and ECEC has grown substantially in Turkey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In all three main PISA disciplines, smaller-than-average shares of students met baseline proficiency in 2018.</li> <li>As enrolment grows, ensuring equitable access to ECEC is critical.</li> </ul>

## Recent policies and practices

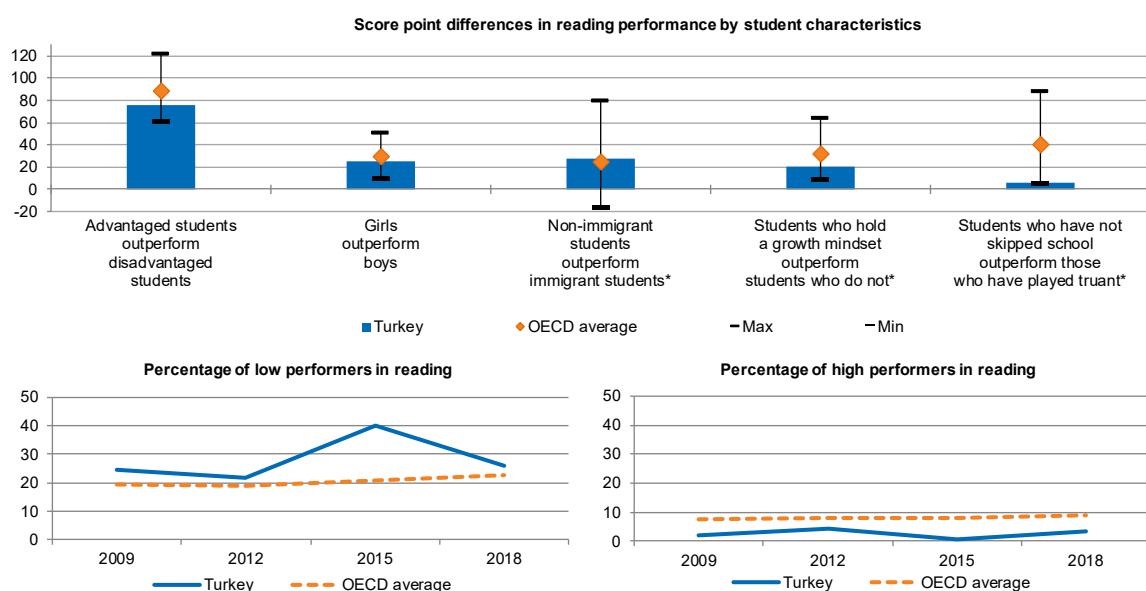
Efforts to integrate refugee children into education include the [Promoting Integration of Syrian Kids into the Turkish Education System](#) project (2016-18), which, with EU support, includes language programmes, catch-up and extra-support classes, transportation and educational material, teacher training, and awareness raising in the 24 provinces with the highest concentration of Syrian refugees. [UNESCO](#) (2018) commended these efforts: school enrolment among Syrians increased from 37% in 2015/16 to 63% in 2019/20; the project was extended until 2023. The Integration of Syrian Students through VET programme, with the German Development Bank and the EU, has pilot projects in 8 provinces, updating infrastructure in VET institutions. With the support of UNICEF, the [Accelerated Learning Programme for Protected Syrian Children in Non-Formal Education](#) (2017-19) provides education to Syrian 10-18 year-olds outside formal education; [UNICEF](#) (2018) reported reaching 5 616 children by the end of 2018. Complementary financial incentives are also in place (see "Funding").

Since 2010, Turkey has been exploring the introduction of compulsory pre-primary education. The aim has been commended by the [ERG](#) (2017), but the [World Bank](#) (2013) previously indicated that running feasibility pilots in areas with already high participation exacerbated inequalities. Since then, new provision models target hard-to-reach communities. The Summer Pre-School programme offers free education and nutrition to those aged 60-66 months from low socio-economic or immigrant backgrounds. The Central Nursery Classrooms for Bussed Education offers supervised transportation to ECEC settings from rural areas and Itinerant Teaching (2017) sees ECEC staff transported to work in remote villages. Financial incentives are also in place (see "Funding"). The [Inclusive Early Childhood Project for Children with Disabilities](#) (2019), aiming to strengthen access and staff capacity, operated pilots in 90 schools, providing educational material, teacher training and community awareness raising; early assessments indicate increases in enrolment and attendance. Turkey's Education Vision 2023 (2019), commits to compulsory ECEC for 5-year-olds from 2023.

The [Remedial Education Program](#) (İYEP, 2017), in collaboration with UNICEF, supports primary school students with low core skills in literacy and numeracy by providing personalised or small-group instruction and additional support from teachers and school counsellors. The programme uses diagnostic and summative assessments to identify students and monitor progress. Around 302 000 students received support in 2018/19.

[Increasing School Attendance Rates Especially for Girls](#) (KEP-II, 2015-17) aimed to raise participation, particularly for girls, in vocational education. With EU financial support, KEP-II includes: school and community events and family meetings to raise awareness; capacity building for gender mainstreaming and counselling; and Provincial Visit Teams, which provide targeted support to early school-leavers. Gender parity in national participation rates now exists but inequities remain in regions where general attendance is low. [ERG](#) (2017) calls for a focus on quality over access as early school-leaving and labour participation remain gendered.

**Figure 3. Selected equity and quality indicators for Turkey, PISA 2018**



**Note:** "Min"/"Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values; [\*] Score point difference after accounting for students' socio-economic status and language spoken at home.

**Sources:** OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume I): What Students Know and Can Do*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/5f07c754-en>; OECD (2019), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en>; OECD (2020), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en>.

## PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE: A SYSTEM THAT HAS RELIED BROADLY ON ACADEMIC SELECTION

The capacity of a country to effectively develop **skills and labour market perspectives** can play an important role in the educational decisions of the population. Formal employment prospects rise with educational attainment in Turkey, and the wage premium for tertiary-educated workers relative to upper secondary<sup>3</sup> was 64% in 2017, compared to 57% on average. Many adults, however, have been unable to access such advantages: in 2018, Turkey had the OECD's largest share of 25-64 year-olds not educated beyond primary school, at 44%, compared to 7% on average. Furthermore, in the Survey of Adult Skills (PIAAC) in 2015, Turkish adults' literacy and numeracy scores were below average. In 2018, unemployment rates for 25-64 year-olds were among the highest in the OECD at 29%, compared to 19% on average, and higher educational attainment did little to limit the chance of unemployment. Prospects for young people have improved: in 2018, 26% of 15-29 year-olds were not employed, in education or training (NEET), compared to 42% in 2008. However, this was well above average, and national aggregate figures hide regional disparities.

Since 2012, **upper secondary education** in Turkey is compulsory and begins relatively early at 13.5 years old. Participation has increased rapidly but remains below average. Turkey has several school types at this level, including general and vocational, selective and non-selective. A common curriculum covers the first two years and successful completion of any four-year programme leads to a school-leaving certificate granting access to tertiary admissions procedures. Nevertheless, the [OECD](#) (2019) reported that the transition between programmes has been limited due to varying entry requirements and capacity, and the likelihood of advancing to university differs across schools. According to [Eurostat](#), in 2018, the share of early leavers from education among 18-24 year-olds was 29% in Turkey, down from 46% in 2008, but still well above the average of 10%.

**Vocational education and training** (VET) can ease entry into the labour market, yet across the OECD, many VET programmes make insufficient use of workplace training. In Turkey, VET takes place in Vocational Technical Anatolian High schools (VTAHs), or Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), which offer apprenticeships, including for early school-leavers from the age of 14. Previously considered a non-academic pathway, since 2017, VTC students may also gain an upper secondary diploma (see Spotlight 2). According to a [national VET report](#) (2019), in 2017/18, only 5% of vocational students studied in VTCs. In Turkey, work-based learning is formally required in all VET programmes, although the share of curriculum time varies by programme type. Companies with 20 or more employees are legally obliged to provide such training, but the [European Training Foundation](#) (ETF, 2018) reports that these requirements are not fully upheld. Efforts to strengthen the VET sector and address key challenges are ongoing (see Spotlight 2).

**Higher education** in Turkey takes place in public and non-profit foundation universities and non-profit post-secondary vocational schools. Since 2001, Turkey has been progressing towards the Bologna model, and the National Qualifications Framework (see "Recent policies and practices") is aligned with the European Higher Education Area. A national examination determines the institution and programme for which students are accepted. The process is transparent and well-respected but presents challenges (see "Evaluation and Assessment"). Non-selective open education catered for around 45% of undergraduates in 2018. Tertiary attainment has grown substantially (see Figure 2), mostly at bachelor's level. Yet, in 2017, 50% of first-time entrants entered short-cycle, largely vocational programmes. These high participation rates may be a result of less stringent entry requirements, but in 2018, employment rates for short-cycle graduates were only 2.4 percentage points higher than those of upper secondary graduates, compared to an OECD average difference of 5.5. In PISA 2018, 87% of students in Turkey expected to complete tertiary education, compared to 69% on average. However, many did not yet have minimum academic proficiency (PISA Level 2) in core skills, and the tertiary system lacks capacity to meet such demand.

Participation in **adult learning** can support workers to adapt to changing economic circumstances. All higher education institutions (HEIs) in Turkey house Continuous Education Centres offering certificated academic, vocational and professional courses, as well as seminars and conferences for all ages and subjects. Such training in certain specialised areas is also available in Applied Research Centres. Open and distance education play an important role in extending the reach of adult learning. In 2016, only 21% of adults in Turkey took part in formal or non-formal education or training; efforts to strengthen provision are ongoing (see "Recent policies and practices").

<b>Key strengths and challenges (pre-crisis analysis)</b>	
<b>Key strengths</b>	<b>Key challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Participation in upper secondary and tertiary education has increased, helping to substantially reduce NEET rates.</li> <li>▪ High numbers of students in Turkey follow vocational programmes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Academic selection funnels many students into programmes with lower labour market outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Strengthening adult learning to address skills gaps.</li> </ul>

### Recent policies and practices

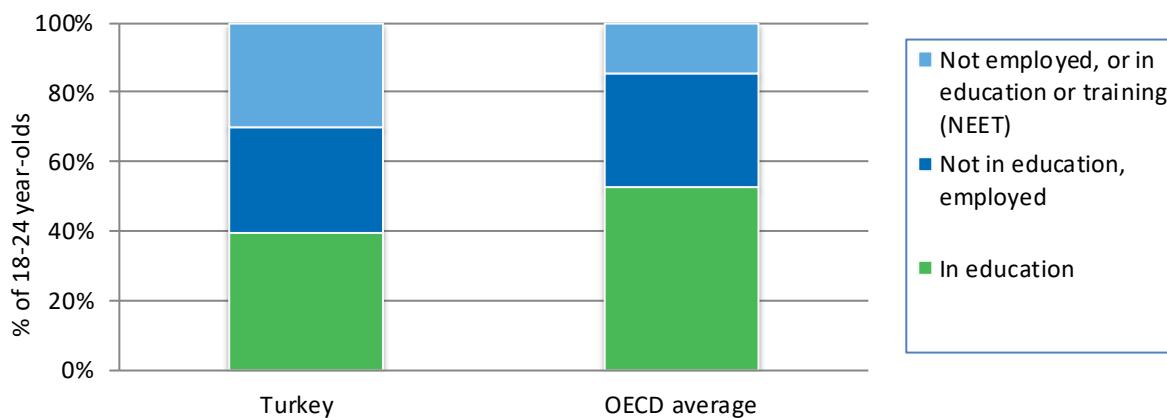
Turkey reformed the system of upper secondary school placement (2018) aiming to address inequities created by early tracking. The previous Transition from Elementary Schools to Secondary Schools Examination (TEOG, 2013), mandatory for all students, was seen to put pressure on learners, narrow the curriculum and promote shadow education. The new system sees most students transition to upper secondary based on personal preference and residence; around 10% of places are determined by an optional centralised examination. In 2018/19, 85% of the cohort took the test, which determined around 13% of places, although the MoNE expects candidate numbers to fall as families and schools become familiar with the new system. The [OECD](#) (2019) praised the intention of the reform, but highlighted a need to carefully manage oversubscription to those schools considered better quality and to mitigate continued inequities as advantaged students tend to have better access to information, private tutoring and quality schools in their area. An [early analysis of the new selection process](#) (2019) indicates a reduction in the effect of school types and students' socio-economic status on mean test scores following the changes; continued monitoring over the long term is required to validate this.

The [Turkish Qualifications Framework](#) (2015) establishes an integrated standards framework for all education levels to promote lifelong learning, permeability between tracks and international mobility. The Vocational Qualifications Authority (VQA) oversees implementation, supported by a [3-year action plan](#). VQA has been working to incorporate quality-assured general, vocational and academic qualifications. Within the first year, the TQF's alignment with the European Qualifications Framework was approved and, by 2020, all formal VET programmes were aligned to the TQF. The [European Commission](#) (EC) (2018) advised Turkey to continue efforts to fully establish quality assurance, credit systems, inclusion of qualifications, and validation of non-formal and informal learning.

MoNE's [General Directorate for Lifelong Learning](#) (2011) leads non-formal educational provision for those beyond the age of compulsory schooling. The [Lifelong Learning Strategy Paper](#) (2014-18) identified six priority areas: raising awareness, increasing opportunities, expanding access, developing a guidance counselling system, recognising prior learning and establishing a monitoring and evaluation system. The Distance Education for Lifelong Learning Project (2016-20), has aimed to increase access to flexible learning opportunities in general, vocational and technical courses through promoting online learning. The [Literacy Campaign](#) (2018) offers adult literacy courses through schools and public learning centres across the country. It reached over 1 million participants in its first two years, with 200 000 people receiving their primary school diploma. The [General-Directorate for Lifelong Learning monitoring report](#) (2018) indicates that participation had increased considerably since 2007, particularly among women, but that in online learning specifically, only 36% of registered students were actively participating, calling for quality to be strengthened further.

Turkey introduced the Specialised Vocational Training Centres Skills'10 project (UMEM, 2010-15) to address high levels of unemployment stemming from the mismatch between skill supply and demand by involving employers in the skills development of the unemployed. To this end, Turkey conducted its first Labour Force Market Needs Analysis (2010), designing vocational courses aligned with the results, which covered three months in-school theoretical-practical training and a three-month internship. UMEM supported 140 VET secondary schools to expand their technical infrastructure to meet increased demand. Trainees received financial support during the training and subsequent job seeking, and companies employing successful trainees were exempted from certain charges. The [OECD](#) (2017) reported that 225 000 people were trained and approximately 75% of them employed through the programme, making it an important initiative for involving employers in developing the skills of the unemployed.

**Figure 4. Percentage of 18-24 year-olds in education and not in education, by employment status, 2018**



**Source:** OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

### Spotlight 3. Ensuring quality VET provision as student numbers grow at upper secondary level

As an increasing number of students in Turkey participate in VET programmes, improving VET quality has been a high priority for successive administrations. The [current administration](#) (2019) has identified three key, ongoing and interrelated challenges for the sector: 1) VET programmes disproportionately serve low-skilled or disadvantaged students, exacerbating their perceived low status; 2) collaboration with the private sector needs to be further developed, and; 3) despite relatively good employment rates for vocational students, mismatch in the transition to the labour market is high. Turkey's policy efforts in the VET sector can be grouped into four key areas:

- *Strengthening collaboration with employers to improve transitions to the labour market.* Efforts include the School Protectorate Project (2016), which aimed to link all vocational and technical secondary education institutions with at least one sector organisation. By 2018, some 839 protocols in 415 schools had been put into practice. A [revised co-operation model](#) (2019) requires sector representatives to collaborate on curriculum updates, provide students with work-based learning, regularly provide teachers with work-based training, offer scholarships and prioritise students for employment. In the first six months, 40 new co-operation protocols were signed in 35 professional fields. A leading example is with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which aims to establish 189 new schools between 2020 and 2023, in addition to the 200 already in place. Schools and hotels are matched, with students performing their skill training in the hotel. Another example is the co-operation protocol (2019) with the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (TOBB) and TOBB Economy and Technology University to establish workshops or laboratories in one VET institution per province – 81 in total. Complementing these efforts, Turkey also formed School Administrative Boards of Vocational and Technical Education in all provinces and districts. These Boards bring together representatives of municipal authorities, various professional and sectoral organisations and other public and private institutions. At the national level, the Vocational and Technical Education School Board of Directors (2016) oversees and steers the provincial boards. Turkey also conducted a [VET mapping study](#) (2019) assessing, at provincial level, the capacities, employment opportunities and future investment plans of the sectors, as well as current VET provision; future provision will be adapted accordingly. Finally, Turkey provided financial incentives for the establishment of private VET institutions (see "Funding").
- *Developing the skills of teachers and trainers to increase quality provision.* MoNE and the Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey signed a Co-operation Protocol for Teaching, Entrepreneurship and Leadership Trainings (2012) aiming to carry out in-service training in real work environments. The Improving the Quality of Vocational and Technical Education in Turkey project has completed two rounds. According to a [final report](#) on the project's more recent second round ([IQVET-II](#) 2014-15), more than 7 000 teachers were trained, around 10 000 students received vocational and career guidance services, and over 200 partnerships between VET institutions, social partners and private enterprises were signed. A third round of the project is currently underway ([IQVET-III](#) 2020-23). Building on this, and within the scope of the new co-operation protocols, from 2019, VET teacher professional development has increased, including distance education. In 2019, nearly 35% of VET teachers participated in teacher professional development programmes and the scale of in-service professional development had increased six times from 2018.
- *Enhancing the status of the sector to encourage greater diversity among VET participants.* Efforts include two new, high-profile VTAHs, one in collaboration with ASELSAN focused on the defence industry and another in collaboration with Istanbul Technical University focused on engineering. In their first years, these two schools have been oversubscribed and welcomed students from the top 1% in academic performance, a first for the VET sector. To boost participation and raise the profile of VTCs, in 2017, students were given the opportunity to complement their studies with open education academic modules, which, on completion of the four-year programme, would lead to an upper secondary diploma. In 2019, these became available as face-to-face courses in all VTCs. The role played by VET in producing essential sanitary equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic (see Spotlight 1) may also help to raise social esteem of the sector.
- *Establishing a clear quality assurance system.* Since 2016/17, all VET institutions in Turkey have conducted self-evaluation and received external evaluation (see "Evaluation and Assessment"). In 2018, progress was assessed by the MoNE in the [Outlook of Vocational and Technical Education in Turkey](#) identifying some satisfying outcomes: labour force participation and employment rates were both higher for vocational upper secondary students than general upper secondary students in 2018. These findings are confirmed by the ETF's [Assessment of Policies for Human Capital in Turkey](#) (2020), which also reports that the reforms facilitate progress towards higher quality VET provision in line with EU standards. More recently, a [national review in the context of COVID-19](#) (2020) reported that the number of students choosing to enter VTAHs increased by 17% between 2018 and 2019 and that improvements in VTCs have led to a 62% increase in the number of enrolments. Yet, challenges persist: both MoNE and ETF report persistent skill mismatch, both vertical and horizontal: in most study areas, less than 10% of VET graduates are employed in their graduation field. Further identified priorities include reducing the academic course's intensity for VET students, and facilitating the transition to higher education.

## SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: STRENGTHENING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP COULD FOSTER MORE POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Developing positive **learning environments** for students which enable school leaders and teachers to succeed is essential in raising achievement in schools. In PISA 2018, students in Turkey found the disciplinary climate less favourable than on average across the OECD, with an index value of -0.08, compared to 0.04. Furthermore, in TALIS 2018, lower secondary teachers reported spending 18% of class time keeping order, compared to 13% on average. Despite an increase since 2015, students in Turkey reported a low sense of belonging in PISA 2018, with an index value of -0.14, compared to 0.01. A one-point increase in the index at school level was associated with an increase of 74 score points, the equivalent of nearly two years of schooling. Student truancy as reported in PISA 2018 was among the highest in the OECD: more than half of 15-year-olds in Turkey reported skipping at least one day of school in the two weeks prior to PISA. Facilitating positive school experiences for students may promote student engagement, helping address Turkey's elevated rate of early school-leaving (see "Preparing students for the future").

Attracting, retaining and developing good-quality **school leaders** is critical to improving the quality of learning environments. Since 2014, Turkish principals must hold a tertiary degree, teaching qualification, teaching and management experience, and pass an interview with the national administration. Successful candidates are appointed to 4-year contracts, with a maximum of eight consecutive years in the same school. Re-appointments are done through an evaluation process. In TALIS 2018, 78% of Turkish principals held a bachelor's degree, a 13-percentage-point increase from 2008. The principal's role is largely administrative, and Turkish principals report spending less time on leadership-related tasks or meetings than on average at 15% compared to 21%. Nevertheless, Turkey's index of instructional leadership was 0.54 in PISA 2015 while the average was 0.01. Turkish principals' self-reports in TALIS 2018 indicated a lower-than-average perceived need for professional development in all but one area (classroom observation); however, barriers to professional development were more highly reported than on average, most notably lack of employer support. According to TALIS Starting Strong 2018, 92% of leaders in ECEC settings hold a bachelor's degree or higher. They also have a largely administrative role: while 86% reported having received administrative training, only 54% had received training related to early childhood development.

A strong supply of highly qualified and engaged **teachers** is vital in every education system. Most prospective teachers in Turkey follow a four-year teacher training Bachelors, and around one-fifth complete a regular consecutive teacher education or training programme (one-year course). In TALIS 2018, 92% were qualified to this level, as required, and Turkish teachers consistently reported that initial teacher preparation (ITP) left them feeling better prepared across various occupational components than on average. Following ITP, candidates must pass a national examination, the results of which inform a centralised placement system. New teachers must spend four years teaching at their first school during which they follow a formal induction period: in TALIS 2018, 67% of Turkish teachers reported having done so during their first employment, twice the OECD average. Annual professional development is mandatory and organised centrally. Some 94% of Turkish teachers reported having engaged in professional development in the 12 months prior to TALIS 2018, similar to the average share, but only 72% felt this had a positive impact on their practice, compared to 82%. In PISA 2018, one-fifth of students were in schools whose principals reported that the schools' capacity to provide instruction is hindered by an inadequate or poorly qualified teaching staff, even more so in disadvantaged and public schools. However, uniquely, the share of fully certified teachers is higher in disadvantaged schools by 31 percentage points than advantaged schools. ECEC staff have a higher level of qualification than in other countries in TALIS Starting Strong 2018, however, 28% have received no training on working with children.

**Teaching conditions** in Turkey include fewer teaching hours, with lower salaries and larger class sizes. The net teaching time in 2018 in lower secondary schools was 504 hours<sup>4</sup>, below the OECD average of 709 hours. Unlike most OECD countries, in Turkey, teachers from pre-primary to upper secondary level have the same statutory salaries. The salary scale is compressed: on average, lower secondary teachers' salaries increase by two-thirds across a career but in Turkey they grow by only one-quarter. Therefore, statutory salaries for Turkish teachers are below the OECD average for all levels, and increasingly so as teachers gain more experience. Additional payments are available for those who teach over a certain number of hours. In TALIS 2018, Turkish teachers reported similar levels of satisfaction with the profession as on average: 74% said that if they could choose again, they would still become a teacher, compared to 76%, and 26% felt that the profession was valued in society, equalling the OECD average. Among ECEC staff in 2018, the respective shares were 90% and 50%.

Key strengths and challenges in school improvement (pre-crisis analysis)	
Key strengths	Key challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Comprehensive initial teacher training and a formal induction period help to support novice teachers.</li> <li>▪ Qualification requirements and statutory salaries for ECEC staff are in line with those for other levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensuring schools offer positive learning environments to enhance student engagement.</li> <li>▪ Matching the professional development offer to teachers' and school leaders' needs.</li> </ul>

### Recent policies and practices

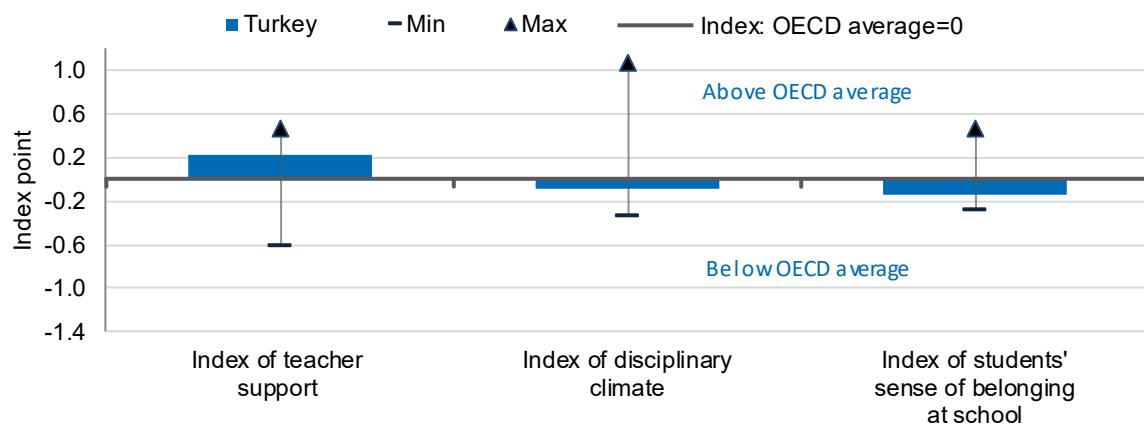
The [Strengthening Democracy Culture in Basic Education](#) project (2018-21) aims to promote democratic school cultures and strengthen democracy throughout society. Covering pre-school and compulsory education, and with financial support from the EU, the project develops relevant educational materials, builds teachers' capacity to develop civic competencies, raises democratic awareness in schools and their communities, and develops policy recommendations for future system-level practices. A pilot programme which will inform further activity is currently underway in 110 schools across 10 provinces. Resources are also freely available online. Training has been provided for 240 teachers to become trainers themselves, with the intention of reaching a further 5 500 teachers. A whole-school model which focuses on building collaborative partnerships with services and actors in the local community and elevating student voice will be implemented as part of the pilot.

Turkey has strengthened support for novice teachers through introducing a [Teacher Induction Programme](#) (2016) during the initial six months of a teacher's first role. Participants are assigned a mentor and engage in various internal and external development activities, including school visits, training sessions, and planning and assessment support. The process includes formal probation appraisal, with evaluations conducted by the principal, the mentor and an inspector, as well as a written examination. Success leads to certification; unsuccessful candidates may repeat the induction process in another school. The programme was first implemented for 30 000 teachers in 2016. Research into [first experiences of the programme](#) (2018) suggest it was well-received, with classroom observations seen as particularly valuable; however, the high quantity of activities involved was not always matched with quality.

Turkey's [Teacher Strategy](#) (2017-23) takes a holistic approach to strengthening the profession. Development began with a National Teacher Strategy Workshop bringing together representatives from the MoNE and other relevant ministries or central bodies, members of parliament, academics and representatives from non-governmental organisations and unions, as well as educators, students and parents. Based on discussions, a first draft was prepared and then discussed in working group sessions with administrators and academics. A revised document was presented to 77 stakeholder groups for feedback before final revisions. The paper outlines 35 strategic actions, under 11 goals with 3 core objectives: 1) build a cohort of highly qualified, well-trained and professionally qualified teachers; 2) ensure continuous personal and professional development; and 3) improve societal perceptions and status of the profession. Each action has performance indicators, responsible actors and an implementation timeline. The [OECD](#) (2019) praised the ambitious nature of the Strategy, which aims to address several key challenges for the profession, and emphasised the importance of careful collaboration with relevant bodies, notably the Council of Higher Education (see "Governance"), which oversees ITP. The Strategy's objectives were rearranged for integration into the Education Vision 2023 (2018) and monitoring therefore takes place within wider progress-reporting for the Vision.

As part of the Strategy, Turkey published new, streamlined, [General Competencies for the Teaching Profession](#) (2017). This update of the previous competencies (2006) signals an effort to ensure the teaching profession keeps apace with rapidly changing contexts. The update was developed in consultation with stakeholders, including representatives of various relevant central bodies, academics and teachers; the process also took into account international research and best practice. The [OECD](#) (2019) highlighted the importance of ensuring that these competencies are aligned with curricular updates and act consistently as a framework for all aspects of the teaching career, including appraisal and professional development, a practice that has not always been embedded previously.

**Figure 5. The learning environment according to students, PISA 2018**



**Note:** "Min"/"Max" refer to OECD countries with the lowest/highest values.

**Source:** OECD (2020), *PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/acd78851-en>.

## EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT: A SYSTEM UNDER TRANSFORMATION

Defining strategies for evaluation and assessment is an important step towards improving student outcomes and developing a better and more equitable school system. **System evaluation** can provide evidence to help decision-makers craft informed policies and increase the transparency of education system outcomes. Turkey has invested heavily in strengthening administrative data collection. MoNE's Education Information System collates information on school inputs and conditions and the e-School database offers continuous monitoring of student outputs for schools and parents. Strategic planning requires provincial and central administrations to annually monitor and report progress against national targets, including the Education Vision 2023 (see "Governance"). MoNE has also promoted the role of evaluation and assessment through changing institutional structures (see "Recent policies and practices"). Following five years without regularly administered national examinations or standardised assessments, information on student outcomes has been sourced from periodic international or classroom-based assessments; new developments are addressing this (see "Recent policies and practices"). While extensive system-level information is available, the [OECD](#) (2019) called for more improvement-focused analysis and efforts to improve the reliability of data.

In Turkey, regular external and internal **school evaluation** procedures are in place. External evaluation is carried out by the Ministry of National Education's Directorate of Inspection. The national framework for school inspection focuses predominantly on compliance with education, management and financial indicators, although inspections do include classroom observation, and stakeholder interviews and inspection reports must inform school development plans. According to school leaders' reports in PISA 2015, 79% of students in Turkey attend schools receiving external evaluation, compared to 75% on average. However, only 78% reported that results inform specific actions for school development, compared to 82% on average. National frameworks for internal evaluation are also in place, although they differ across school types and levels. Self-evaluation reports are submitted annually to the provincial education directorates and also focus on reporting against national requirements. As of 2020, the school evaluation system is suspended pending major reform which aims to reach a more holistic model. In the VET sector, recent policy efforts have focused on establishing systematic approaches to institutional evaluation (see "Recent policies and practices").

According to OECD evidence, **teacher appraisal** can strengthen professionalism and performance if it includes both improvement and career progression components. In Turkey, according to the [Teacher Appointment and Relocation Regulation](#) (2015), school leaders conduct annual teacher appraisals to measure teacher effectiveness and provide guidance. Teachers of all levels are assessed on how frequently they display criteria laid out in the national framework. These appraisals are low-stakes, not informing career progression or pay levels. Separate appraisal procedures are in place at the end of probation and for teachers applying for bonuses. In TALIS 2018, 87% of Turkish teachers had principals who reported formally appraising their teachers at least once a year, compared to an OECD average of 63%. Furthermore, 76% had principals who reported that appraisal is mostly or always followed by formative discussions, compared to 63% at OECD average, and 58% had principals who reported that a development or training plan was put in place most or all of the time, compared to 46%. The [OECD](#) (2019) previously reported that a quantitative approach to appraisal reporting means that teachers in Turkey do not always receive qualitative feedback to guide improvement. As of 2018, a new system which draws on both quantitative and qualitative student assessment data is under preparation. Moving forward, appraisal frameworks will need to be carefully aligned with new teacher competencies and career structures (see "School Improvement").

Strong **student assessment** practices can inform and shape effective initiatives for educational improvement. This is another area of change for Turkey. Curricular reforms in 2005 and 2017 (see "Governance") emphasised more varied, formative approaches to student assessment, and detailed national regulations are in place limiting when and how summative assessments may be used. Students' performance is reported twice a year via report cards and the e-School database, although space for qualitative feedback is limited. As of 2017, only optional national examinations are in place, in grade 8 for those hoping to attend certain upper secondary schools and in grade 12 for university admissions; there is no national school-leaving examination. The selective function of the highly competitive optional examinations, and compulsory nature of the grade 8 version up until 2017, means they continue to impact teaching and learning (for example, narrowing curriculum and assessment approaches). Furthermore, teachers have comparatively lower autonomy over assessment practices: according to principals' reports in PISA 2015, 92% of students in Turkey attend schools where national education authorities establish student assessment policies, compared to an average of 25%.

### Key strengths and challenges in evaluation and assessment (pre-crisis analysis)

Key strengths	Key challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ By introducing new administrative structures and systems, Turkey has increased the amount and scope of system-level information collected.</li> <li>▪ School evaluation and teacher appraisal practices are commonplace in Turkish schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensuring data informs system improvement by building capacity and establishing reliable sources of information on student outcomes.</li> <li>▪ Prioritising qualitative feedback in school evaluation and student assessment practices.</li> </ul>

### Recent policies and practices

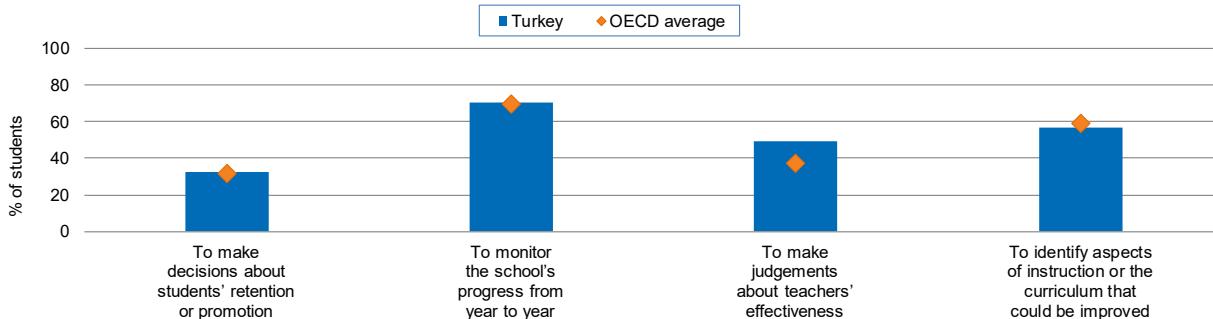
Turkey has strengthened the institutional architecture of evaluation and assessment. The [General Directorate of Assessment, Evaluation and Examination Services](#) (2014) previously a unit within another directorate, leads several pilots and national projects. New provincial level Assessment and Evaluation Centres aim to improve Provincial Directorates' and schools' assessment capacity. As of 2020, all 81 provinces had a dedicated assessment and evaluation team. In 2018, the MoNE began publishing the Education, Analysis and Evaluation Series, offering regular analysis of policy work and challenges in education.

Turkey is working to produce more reliable information on students' academic outcomes. Following a small pilot in 2015, a national assessment of student learning (ABiDE, 2016) was administered to a sample of 38 000 students (grade 8) to provide nationally representative results for the end of lower secondary schooling. A smaller pilot study was also implemented for primary-level students (grade 4) in 2016. In 2018, ABiDE was administered to around 75 000 lower secondary students and around 40 000 primary students. In 2020, the MoNE intends to extend the assessment to include upper secondary students (grade 10), for which a pilot study was administered in 2019. ABiDE assesses progress in Turkish, mathematics, science and social sciences, offering some more innovative test items to assess higher order skills than the multiple choice based assessments traditionally used in Turkey; background questionnaires for students, teachers and principals are also included.

The Student Learning Achievement Monitoring assessment (2019), which assesses curriculum outcomes, was introduced to provide schools with diagnostic information on students' strengths and weaknesses in Turkish, mathematics and science. As of 2019, a sample of 350 000 students in primary, lower and upper secondary (grades 4, 7 and 10) had participated. The assessment includes background questionnaires for students, teachers and principals. Turkey published a [national results' analysis](#) (2019) as part of the Education, Analysis and Evaluation Series. In 2020, a sample of lower secondary students (grade 7) would take the Turkish Language Skills Study, assessing students' listening, reading, writing and speaking skills with a view to providing valuable feedback prior to the upper secondary placement examinations. Previously, there was no standard assessment tool for the four skill areas. As of early 2020, the computer-based assessment had been piloted in 15 provinces. Further feasibility studies are in progress for primary and upper secondary students (grades 4 and 11), with pilot studies due by the end of 2020. An [initial review of the pilot](#) supported the validity and reliability of the Study. The [OECD](#) (2019) praised these efforts to address gaps in monitoring and supporting progress at system and school level and highlighted the importance of clearly defining the purpose of each assessment to ensure coherence.

As part of efforts to strengthen quality assurance in VET, Turkey established a National Quality Assurance Centre for VET to coordinate and steer the various stakeholders involved in the sector and to develop a quality assurance framework aligned with the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET) Reference Framework. In 2016/17 all VET institutions carried out self-assessment processes and the following academic year, received external evaluation visits from the MoNE. These evaluations considered the schools' context and infrastructure, student outputs, guidance, collaboration with the local community and private sector, and school administration. A [national synthesis report](#) (2018) identified geographic variation in some key areas of performance, including student success and collaboration with sector representatives. Following this, in 2018, over 10 000 administrators and teachers received training to build capacity for quality assurance at central and local level. The same year, 189 institutions were inspected by newly trained VET quality auditors in a pilot project that informed the development of quality indices for future cycles. The [MoNE](#) (2018) identified challenges, including information gaps regarding reliable data on learning outcomes and mobilising information for better policy-making. In 2019, sector representatives were also included in the external evaluation teams; in the future, Turkey intends to include the views of teachers, administrators and students as further criteria.

**Figure 6. Percentage of students in schools where the principal reported assessments of students in national modal grade for 15-year-olds, PISA 2015**



**Source:** OECD (2016), *PISA 2015 Results (Volume II): Policies and Practices for Successful Schools*, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264267510-en>.

## GOVERNANCE: A LARGE AND HIGHLY-CENTRALISED EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Turkish education system is both comparatively large and highly centralised, covering over 1 million teachers and 18 million students in 2018/19. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for pre-primary (ISCED 02) to upper secondary level education, and adult education. Since 2010, five-year strategic plans determine action at national, local and school level (see “Recent policies and practices”). The Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services (MoFLSS) oversees ECEC for 0-3 year-olds and some settings serving children aged 0-5, as well as continuous education for employed adults. Beyond the centre, 81 Provincial Directorates of MoNE and 922 District Directorates oversee policy implementation and compliance, as well as supporting schools and teachers in their development and monitoring. Other bodies that help shape education policy in Turkey include:

- The [Board of Education](#) develops curriculum, plans and objectives, coordinates the equivalence process of primary and secondary education diplomas, and approves textbooks.
- The [Vocational Qualifications Authority](#) (2006) oversees the National Vocational Qualification System, aligning provision for adults and students. Some 27 multi-stakeholder sectoral committees inform its work.
- [Provincial Employment and Vocational Training Boards](#) (2006) are a platform for stakeholder engagement which aim to mobilise local facilities and resources to tackle unemployment and skills gaps.
- The [Council of Higher Education](#) (YÖK, 1981) is an autonomous body responsible for all HEIs.
- The [Assessment, Selection and Placement Centre](#) (2011), in coordination with the MoNE, administers university entrance examinations.
- The [Turkish Public Employment Agency](#) (2000) operates autonomously under the MoFLSS and is in charge of reducing unemployment and improving alignment between supply and demand in the labour market.

Turkey involves **stakeholders** in education governance through the National Council of Education, which convenes representatives from public administration, higher education, professional associations, the private sector and non-governmental organisations every four years to deliver advisory decisions to the MoNE. The Vocational Education Council, which meets annually, includes representatives from ministries, trade and employers' unions. Numerous professional unions exist in the sector, which can play an important role in the functioning of the system; the largest, the Educators' Trade Union (*Eğitim-Bir-Sen*), has grown considerably since 2002 and works closely with the current government to support policy implementation.

Central authorities dominate **schooling decisions** in Turkey, with responsibility for curriculum development and teaching resources, as well as the allocation of human and financial resources, via the Provincial Directorates. Schools are legally required to appoint school boards with representation from teachers, management and parents, as well as students at upper secondary level. Representatives of the local community or employers are not included, and the boards do not carry decision-making power. In 2017, the central government took responsibility for 73% of decisions made for public lower secondary education, the second-largest share in the OECD, where the average was 24%. Schools had only 8% of the share, compared to 34% on average (see Figure 7). This may inhibit the system's responsiveness to local needs. The [OECD](#) (2019) reported Turkey's intention to bring decision-making closer to schools, although decentralisation efforts have so far focused on deconcentrating authority to Provincial Directorates.

In Turkey, **higher education** governance is centralised under YÖK, whose members are appointed either presidentially or by HEIs for 4 years. HEIs have limited academic, administrative and financial autonomy. In public HEIs, rectors are appointed centrally following nomination by YÖK, which also approves the hiring of academic staff and new programmes. Institutional governance in public HEIs generally does not include multi-stakeholder representation. Private institutions do have boards of trustees which select deans, although a rector's appointment requires YÖK's approval. Following concerted expansion efforts, by 2015, Turkey had at least one university per province; [research into the expansion](#) (2017) indicates that this had a positive impact on both local economies and female participation. With rapid expansion taking place, recent efforts aim to address concerns over ensuring quality and addressing a lack of institutional diversity (see “Recent policies and practices”). Expansion also puts pressure on YÖK, as involvement in day-to-day administrative matters can inhibit system leadership. This has been a stated goal of previous administrations, and a consensus is yet to be reached as to how to address this.

Key strengths and challenges in governance (pre-crisis analysis)	
Key strengths	Key challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The MoNE's strategic planning at national and regional levels can support system coherence.</li> <li>▪ Mechanisms exist to engage stakeholders in the VET sector at national and regional levels and at national level in level in basic and upper secondary.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Empowering schools to meet the needs of local contexts while maintaining national coherence.</li> <li>▪ Granting HEIs more autonomy to foster greater specialisation and enable YÖK to fulfil a more strategic role.</li> </ul>

### Recent policies and practices

Turkey's [For a Stronger Tomorrow: Education Vision 2023](#) (2018) promotes a holistic, human-centred approach to education. The 8 concrete targets address many of the challenges raised in this profile: 1) reduce gaps between schools; 2) improve school learning environments; 3) improve the attractiveness of VET; 4) reduce exam pressure; 5) develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills; 6) improve educators' job satisfaction; 7) expand ECEC; and 8) improve inclusive practices for students with special educational needs. The vision establishes 44 sub-goals, each with a rough policy timeline, often including piloting phases. An accompanying media campaign aims to make these aims more visible.

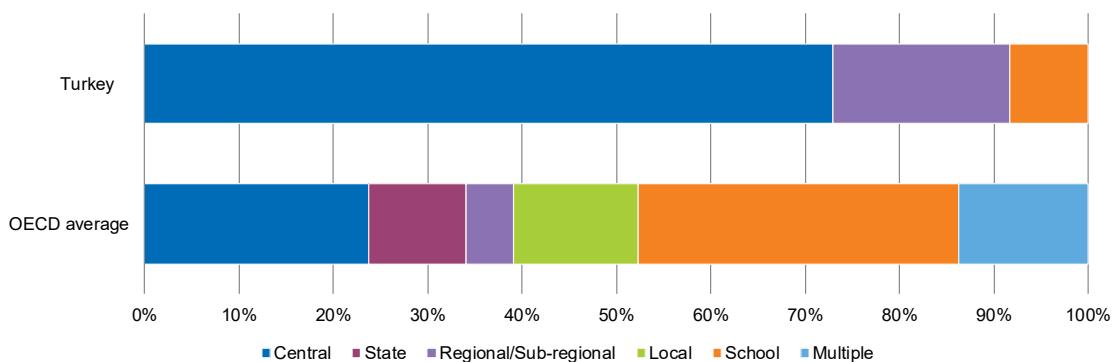
Since 2010, the MoNE has developed five-year strategic plans establishing medium-term goals to inform work at the central, provincial and district levels. The plans assign quantitative progress indicators, responsible actors and financial resources to each goal; the MoNE publishes annual progress reports. While the [first strategic plan](#) (2010-14) focused on access, the [second](#) (2015-19) emphasised quality and institutional capacity. To develop the latter, the MoNE consulted around 38 000 internal stakeholders (educators and administrators) and 35 000 external stakeholders (students, parents and academics). An [evaluation](#) praised the focus on disadvantaged groups and good governance while noting gaps in performance indicators and funding. The [third plan](#) (2019-23) aims to improve transitions to tertiary and employment, as well as support for special educational needs, and modernise structures for greater efficiency.

Coordinated by the Board of Education, the [latest curricular revisions](#) (2018) emphasise 21<sup>st</sup> century competences, reducing curriculum overload and enhancing labour market relevance. The revisions also took into account the knowledge and skills required for the information age, diversity in teacher competences and student needs in different types of schools across different regions, and alignment with the Turkish Qualifications Framework (see "Preparing students for the future"). The comprehensive revision of VET curricula was completed in 2020 in collaboration with sector representatives. The [OECD](#) (2019) praised the direction of change, while identifying the following aspects to support the implementation process: addressing gaps in teachers' competences, changing the current focus on high-stakes examinations, and ensuring clear communication to avoid reform fatigue.

The Higher Education Quality Board (2015) conducts quality assessments of HEIs and authorises private accreditation agencies. As a connected body to YÖK, the Board was independent in its formal decisions, but not in official status and organisational structure. The Board later became the [Turkish Higher Education Quality Council](#) (THEQC, 2017), a fully autonomous institution with a stronger mandate. THEQC has 13 members from relevant administrative bodies and HEIs, including one student representative. In 2020, THEQC became a member of the [European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education](#). External evaluation of HEIs takes place in five-year cycles; according to [TEHQC 2015-2019](#) (2019), 77% of HEIs had participated. THEQC authorised 16 national accreditation bodies and recognised 4 international ones. Although programme accreditation remains voluntary, the number of accreditations rose by 55% between 2016 and 2019, suggesting a shift in culture.

[Mission Differentiation and Specialisation on the Basis of Regional Development](#) (2015) aims to promote HEIs' contribution to their region and encourage specialisation. More than half of eligible HEIs applied for the project; 5 were selected for the pilot, with 5 more in 2016 and 5 in 2020. These HEIs have developed regional development action plans; progress is overseen by a multi-stakeholder expert body established by YÖK. [Mission Differentiation and Specialisation on the Basis of Research](#) (2017) has similar aims, fostering research-oriented specialisations in priority areas. More than 50 universities applied; 16 successfully became research universities. [Research](#) suggests that, as well as promoting regional development, these efforts could help HEIs increase their quality and prestige.

**Figure 7. Percentage of decisions taken at each level of government for public lower secondary schools (2017)**



**Note:** This figure considers four domains of decision-making: 1) Organisation of instruction; 2) Personnel management; 3) Planning and structures, and; 4) Resources.

**Source:** OECD (2018), *Education at a Glance 2018: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/eaq-2018-en>.

## Spotlight 4. Establishing the conditions to enhance teaching and learning through technology

In 2010, Turkey launched the Movement to Enhance Opportunities and Improve Technology (FATİH) project, aiming to extend and enhance the use of technology in teaching and learning. The project was initially a collaborative effort led by the Ministry of National Education with the support of several other ministries, the Treasury and the Scientific and Technological Research Council. FATİH has evolved into a longer-term programme that seeks to foster digital skills and improve access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in schools.

The project has five key lines of action:

- Establishing the necessary infrastructure, including broadband internet connection, tablets, interactive boards, and online platforms;
- Developing and managing online educational content and resources;
- Promoting the effective application of ICT in teaching programmes;
- Offering professional development to teachers including face-to-face and online training; and
- Ensuring the ethical, reliable, manageable, and measurable use of ICT.

Initially, headline goals of the project included every student in secondary education receiving a tablet device and every classroom having an interactive whiteboard (IWB). This would be delivered in three phases focusing first on general secondary schools, then vocational schools, then primary and pre-primary schools. FATİH was initially supposed to last five years (2010-15), with the first two years allocated to planning, preparation and pilot studies.

According to one early [evaluation of FATİH](#) (2013), after just the first year of national roll-out, 84 000 classrooms had been equipped and 63 000 tablets distributed. The aim to provide professional development to 680 000 teachers was also underway: a 30-hour ICT in education programme and a 25-hour preparatory course were launched in 2012 with over 120 000 participants within the first year. Distance learning centres were also set up in all provinces to facilitate professional development in the future. Administrative support was strengthened: by 2018, there were 500 FATİH trainers in schools helping to solve school-level issues, with a further 700 rotating between schools. However, following medium-scale piloting, the project was adapted, since the pedagogical model and educational outcomes of the original plan were not satisfactory.

From 2018, with the introduction of the Education Vision 2023, the development of the Education Information Network (EBA) gained importance. EBA is the official national digital education platform, providing interactive and subject-specific digital content for students and teachers across Turkey from pre-school to upper secondary education. EBA aims to provide collaborative digital learning opportunities through the creation of alternative communication channels between teachers and learners and the development of personalised learning plans for individual learners. Features include a smart content recommendation system, gamified features such as points and badge collection, and the EBA Portfolio where students can display their achievements and their work. For older students, an EBA Academic Support feature has been developed to provide adaptive individualised learning based on artificial intelligence assisted analytics. Furthermore, to support teachers, sub-portals focused on professional development and digital library resources are available, and the EBA Professional Development Platform provides online support for teachers' continuous professional development.

By 2019, targeted coverage of the digital infrastructure reached 47 158 schools within the FATİH project, revising the original target of 40 000 schools. Nearly 450 000 IWBs were installed, more than 1.4 million tablet computers were distributed to upper secondary level students and teachers, and approximately 1 million teachers had enrolled in either online or onsite professional development. Perhaps more significantly, the EBA became the cornerstone of Turkey's educational response to the COVID-19 pandemic and consequent school closures; further efforts were made during this period to enhance various features and tools (see Spotlight 1).

The FATİH project has been assessed several times since its launch. The [MoNE's annual report](#) (2018) shows positive results on both the number of EBA visits - which was up to 1 billion - and the annual increase in number of online support materials – just under 2 000. Further [research regarding teachers' concerns](#) (2018) suggests positive views among practitioners regarding the commitment to improving digital infrastructure and addressing inequalities, as well as the availability of digital teaching information and resources. However, teachers also report some concerns related to using the digital resources, including the quality of educational content and classroom time management issues. There have also been concerns about the quality and coverage of professional development: teachers may be benefitting from support to digitise their teaching but not necessarily to enhance it. Finally, in terms of governance, approaches to the digital transformation of teaching and learning appear to require a clearer, more coherent vision.

As stated in the Eleventh Development Plan's education policies, Turkey intends to continue enriching digital content through the EBA in order to become a model of effective and equitable distance learning, and to build on the foundations of FATİH to continue strengthening network infrastructure in schools across the country.

## FUNDING: A NEED FOR MORE TARGETED SPENDING TO SUPPORT EQUITY

**Overall expenditure on education** in Turkey has increased substantially in recent years to meet the demands of a growing system. In 2016, Turkey's expenditure on primary to tertiary education relative to the gross domestic product (GDP) was 5.4%, compared to 5.0% on average across the OECD. Furthermore, this share has grown in parallel with considerable increases in GDP: between 2010 and 2016, Turkey's education spending as a share of national wealth increased by 24%, compared to an average decrease of 7%. Disaggregated data suggest that education spending is oriented towards higher levels of education: while 1.9% of GDP is dedicated to tertiary education in Turkey, compared to 1.5% on average and despite lower participation rates, only 1.0% goes to universal primary education, compared to 1.5% on average; international evidence indicates that the highest returns to education are seen at lower levels. The increase in education spending since 2010 is, at least in part, due to the substantial expansion in participation. Despite increases in overall spending, Turkey's per-student spending is around half the OECD average for primary and secondary education and around two-thirds at ECEC and tertiary levels. In 2016, Turkey spent USD 43 351 on a child's education from 6-15 years old, compared to an OECD average cumulative spend of USD 92 674.

Among OECD countries, Turkey had the highest share of educational spending coming from **private sources**- including international sources- in 2016, at 25% compared to 17% on average. Furthermore, while private investment in education was most evident at tertiary level across OECD countries, in Turkey, private funding was equally high in primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary, and below average for tertiary. At school level, the majority of private expenditure comes from households, and Turkey has actively promoted private schooling to increase participation rates and meet demand. However, this may cause equity challenges, and efforts to support disadvantaged students to access private schools are limited (see "Recent policies and practices"). At ECEC level, provision in public institutions is free, although all ECEC settings can charge for additional services and educational material. A Commission determines maximum amounts according to context. Some settings do not charge any fees and certain children, including those from the most socio-economically disadvantaged families, can receive exemptions: in 2018/19, 32% of children in pre-school paid no fees.

In Turkey, public funding for **primary and secondary schools** comes almost entirely from central government. In 2016, 99% of public funds for education came from the central level, after inter-governmental transfers, compared to 43% on average. Schools receive funds via the Provincial Directorate of education, according to a basic formula. All schools may, and increasingly do, seek voluntary parental contributions for instructional resources or building maintenance. Secondary schools may also seek financial support from the private sector, which is financially incentivised by the government. Schools located in advantaged areas or serving advantaged students may therefore benefit disproportionately from such contributions. Other than some conditional cash transfer programmes (see "Recent policies and practices") and some schemes to supply free educational material or offer scholarships, the [OECD](#) (2019) has reported that redistributive approaches to school funding remain underdeveloped. In PISA 2018, the difference between the frequency with which principals of disadvantaged schools and those in advantaged schools reported shortages was larger in Turkey than on average in the OECD, by around 7 percentage points. The [Education Vision 2023](#) school development model aims for a more equal and inclusive allocation, taking into account differences between students, schools and localities. This could bring benefits as the model continues to be rolled out. VET funding has increased considerably to accompany growing participation. [ETF](#) (2017) reported that assigning providers more financial autonomy and establishing better incentives for public-private financing could help strengthen the education system.

**Higher education** in Turkey is free for domestic students attending public institutions, with tuition fees in place for international students and those who do not graduate within the theoretical time. Private institutions charge fees to all students; the Board of Trustees determines the amount. Students in Turkey cover living and accommodation costs and may access grants, loans or scholarships to support this. All public funding at this level is provided directly from central government to HEIs, in the form of a line item budget as opposed to a block grant; this may limit more targeted distribution of funds at local or institutional level. HEIs have the right to generate revenue, and there is growing pressure on public universities to do so through expanding international enrolments, running evening and summer schools and seeking donations. Advantaged students, who may pay for private tuition in preparation for the university entrance examinations, can also pay to attend private institutions, thus offering them multiple avenues through which to access a tertiary education, many of which may be unavailable to their more disadvantaged peers.

Key strengths and challenges in governance (pre-crisis analysis)	
Key strengths	Key challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In 2016, as a share of national wealth, Turkey's expenditure on primary to tertiary education was comparatively high and growing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Private funding sources are comparatively high and are a growing share of education funding.</li> <li>Developing more targeted spending measures could help counteract inequities in the system.</li> </ul>

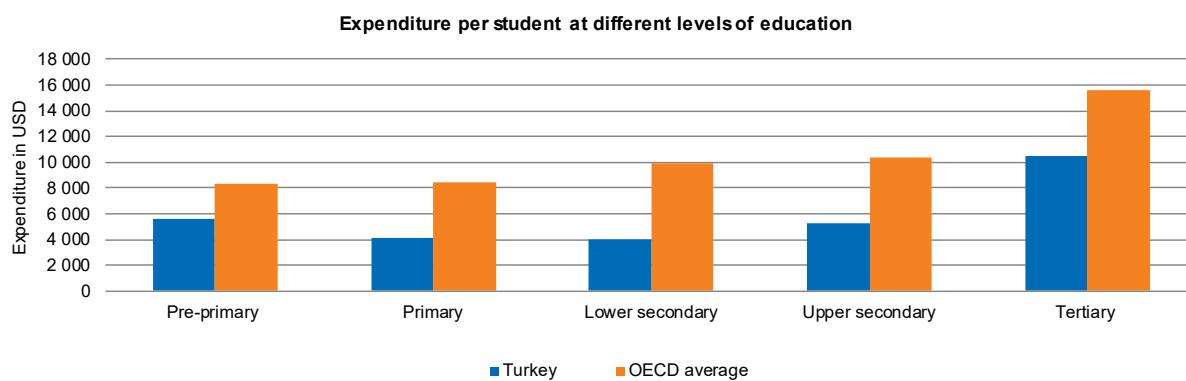
### Recent policies and practices

In 2017, Turkey extended its Conditional Cash Transfer for Education programme (2003), previously limited to targeting disadvantaged families, to refugees. The programme is collaboratively run by the MoNE, Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, Turkish Red Crescent and UNICEF, and financially supported by the EU, Norway and the USA. Families of school-age refugee children in Turkey receive financial payments every two months, on the condition that their child has a school attendance record of at least 80%. The programme covers children from pre-primary to upper secondary, as well as those in Accelerated Learning Programmes for students who have been out of education for an extended period. By mid-2019, nearly 500 000 refugee children had attended school through the programme. The programme has been in place for Turkish families since 2003. In a previous evaluation, UNICEF judged this programme to have had a positive effect on enrolment and attendance rates, particularly in rural areas. A further conditional cash transfer for education is in place for families of children between 48 and 66 months who attend pre-school education.

Some financial support arrangements exist in Turkey for students enrolled in private schools. The government's Private School Subsidisation Programme (2014) subsidises the fees or parental contributions required by private schools to enable some students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access these institutions. These amount to around 20% of the full cost and are accessible based on a needs assessment which takes into account family income level, the number of children in the family, disability status and parents' marital status. In 2015/16, this policy was extended to include children between the ages of 48–66 months attending private ECEC settings. Some 3 000 children would receive support in 2016/17, up from 849 in the first year. At the same time, further research reports that, in general, the fixed amount of the subsidy, which is not means-tested, may inhibit the programme from achieving its aims, as the most disadvantaged families cannot afford to sufficiently supplement the subsidy to cover the full cost of tuition. Previously, the government had implemented the Private Vocational and Technical School Subsidisation Programme (2012), which supplies all students attending private VET institutions with support grants to cover fees. In addition, Turkish law (2007) obliges private schools to provide free tuition to at least 3% of their students, prioritising disadvantaged students.

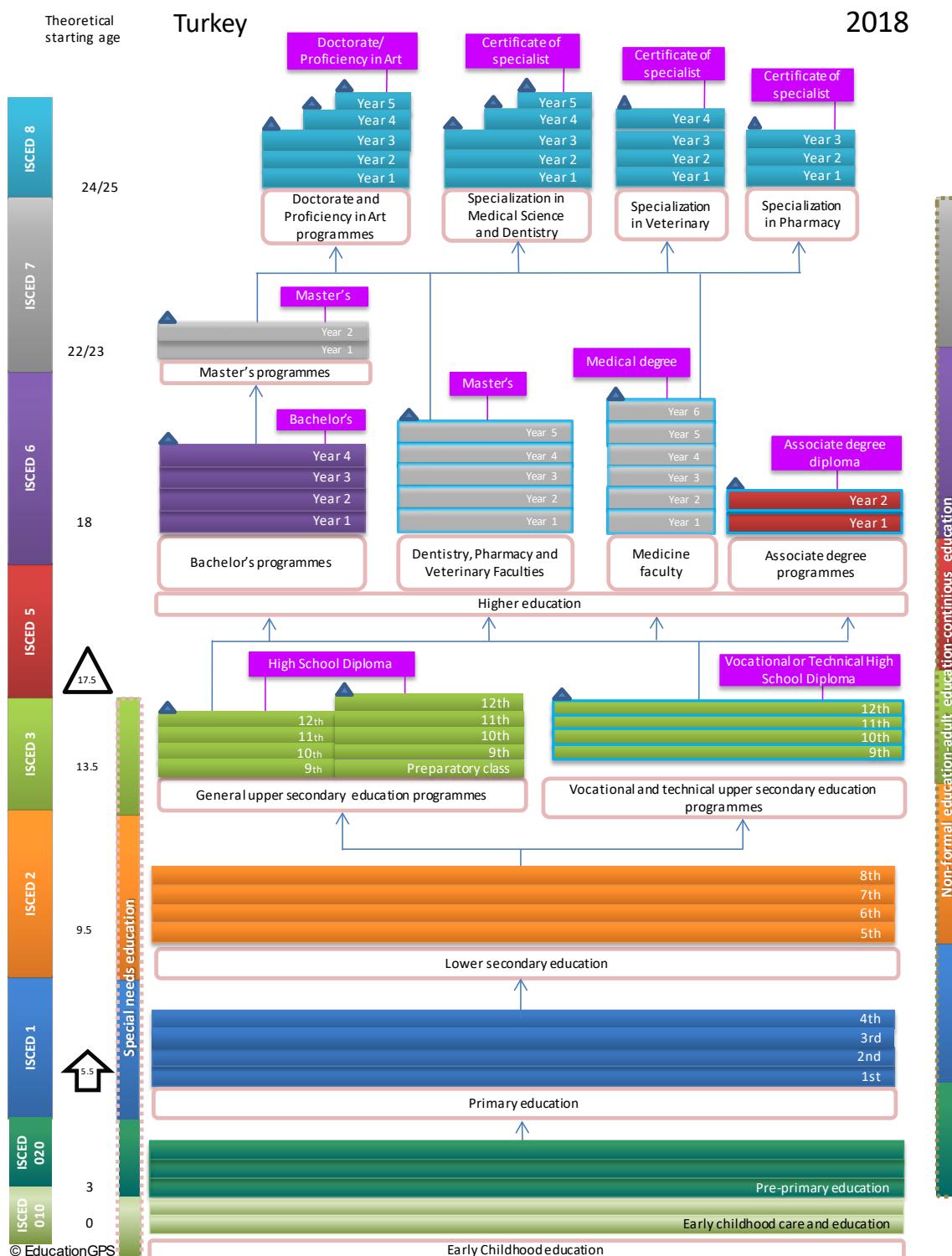
Turkey has been providing financial incentives to increase the role of the private sector in the provision of VET. In 2012, the Private Education Institutions Law No. 5580 introduced financial support from the government for any private VET institutions located within a designated Organised Industrial Zone (i.e. where various sectors are clustered). Implemented from 2012/13, the amount of the financial allocation was determined each year according to student numbers. In 2016, the legislation was updated to include any private VET institution from 2016/17. National data reported in recent research (2019) indicates that between 2008 and 2017, the number of students in private VET institutions as a share of all VET students increased from 0.1% to 5.5%, but this remains low in international comparison. Updates to the Private Education Institutions Law No. 5580 (2019) have been enacted very recently by which private providers may now also establish VTCs.

**Figure 8. Annual expenditure per student by level of education, 2016**



**Source:** OECD (2019), *Education at a Glance 2019: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f8d7880d-en>.

## ANNEX A: STRUCTURE OF TURKEY'S EDUCATION SYSTEM



**Note:** The key for the interpretation of this table is available at the source link below.

**Source:** OECD (2018), "Turkey: Overview of the Education System", *OECD Education GPS*, [http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/TUR/TUR\\_2011\\_EN.pdf](http://gpseducation.oecd.org/Content/MapOfEducationSystem/TUR/TUR_2011_EN.pdf).

## ANNEX B: STATISTICS

#	List of key indicators <sup>1,2,3</sup>	Turkey	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
<b>Background information</b>					
<i>Economy</i>					
1	GDP per capita, 2016, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs (OECD Statistics)	26 330	42 441	14 276	107 775
2	GDP growth, 2016 (OECD Statistics)	3.2%	1.8%	0.6%	6.6%
<i>Society</i>					
3	Population density, inhab/km <sup>2</sup> , 2017 (OECD Statistics)	104	37	3	517
4	Population aged less than 15 as a percentage of total population, 2018 (OECD Data)	23.5%	17.0%	12.2%	28.4%
5	Foreign-born population as a percentage of total population, 2018 or the most recent available year (OECD Data)	2.8%	14.4%	0.8%	47.6%
<b>Education outcomes</b>					
6	Mean performance in reading (PISA 2018)	466	487	412	523
<i>Average three-year trend in performance across PISA assessments, by domain (PISA 2018)<sup>4,5</sup></i>					
7	Reading performance	2.2	0.4	-4.9	7.1
	Mathematics performance	4.1	-0.6	-9.1	6.4
	Science performance	6.1	-1.9	-10.7	6.4
8	Enrolment rates of 3-year-olds in early childhood education and care, 2017 (EAG 2019)	10.1%	79.3%	2.4%	100%
9	Percentage of 25-64 year-olds whose highest level of attainment is lower secondary education, 2018 (EAG 2019)	15.1%	14.4%	0.8%	39.9%
<i>Educational attainment of the population aged 25-34 by type of attainment, 2018 or latest available</i>					
10	At least upper secondary education, 2018 (EAG 2019)	57.2%	85.4%	50.1%	97.8%
	Tertiary education, 2018 (EAG 2019)	33.3%	44.3%	23.4%	69.6%
	Vocational upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education, 2018 (EAG database 2020)	10.8%	24.5%	1.8%	50.1%
<i>Unemployment rates of 25-34 year-olds by educational attainment, 2018 (EAG 2019)</i>					
11	Below upper secondary	11.8%	13.7%	3.0%	37.3%
	Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary	11.3%	7.3%	2.5%	25.1%
	Tertiary education	13.9%	5.5%	1.7%	23.2%
<b>Students: Raising outcomes</b>					
<i>Policy lever 1: Equity and quality</i>					
12	First age of selection in the education system (PISA 2018)	11	14	10	16
<i>Students performing at the highest or lowest levels in reading (%) (PISA 2018)</i>					
13	Students performing below Level 2	26.1%	22.6%	11.1%	49.9%
	Students performing at Level 5 or above	3.3%	8.7%	0.8%	15.0%
14	Percentage of students in schools where students are grouped by ability into different classes for all subjects, PISA 2015	4.2%	7.8%	0.0%	56.1%
15	Percentage of students whose parents reported that the schooling available in their area includes two or more other schools, PISA 2015	m	36.8%	20.4%	56.9%

#	List of key indicators <sup>1,2,3</sup>	Turkey	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
16	Percentage of students reporting that they have repeated at least a grade in primary, lower secondary or upper secondary schools (PISA 2015)	10.9%	11.3%	0.0%	42.6%
17	Percentage of variance in reading performance in PISA test explained by ESCS (PISA 2018) <sup>4</sup>	11.4%	12.0%	6.2%	19.1%
18	Score difference in reading performance in PISA between non-immigrant and immigrant students AFTER adjusting for socio-economic status (PISA 2018) <sup>4</sup>	-27	-24	-80	16
19	Score difference between girls and boys in reading (PISA 2018) <sup>4</sup>	25	30	10	52
<i>Policy lever 2: Preparing students for the future</i>					
20	Mean proficiency in literacy among adults aged 16-64 on a scale of 500 (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC, 2015)	226.5	267.7	220.1	296.2
21	Difference in literacy scores between younger (25-34) and older (55-65) adults AFTER accounting for age, gender, education, immigrant and language background and parents' educational attainment (Survey of Adult Skills, PIAAC, 2015).	19.9	15.6	-8.3	37.6
22	<b>Share of students in upper secondary education in 2017 following:</b>				
	General programmes (OECD Stat - INES 2020)	53.6%	58.1%	27.6%	100.0%
	Vocational programmes (OECD Stat - INES 2020)	46.4%	43.1%	9.0%	72.4%
	Combined school and work-based programmes (OECD Stat - INES 2020)	a	18.3%	1.0%	58.0%
23	First-time graduation rates from tertiary education, 2017 (Below the age of 30, excluding mobile students / OECD Stat - INES 2020)	49.0%	36.6%	10.1%	49.9%
24	Percentage of 18-24 year-olds not in education, employment or training, 2018 (EAG 2019)	29.8%	14.3%	5.9%	29.8%
<b>Institutions: Improving schools</b>					
<i>Policy lever 3: School improvement</i>					
25	<b>The Learning Environment - PISA 2018</b>				
	Mean index of teacher support in language-of-instruction lessons	0.22	0.01	-0.61	0.47
	Mean index of disciplinary climate	-0.08	0.04	-0.34	1.07
	Mean index of students' sense of belonging	-0.14	0.00	-0.28	0.46
26	Percentage of teachers in lower secondary education aged 50 years old or more, 2017 (EAG 2019)	6.3%	37.0%	6.3%	54.2%
27	<b>Number of teaching hours per year in public institutions by education level, 2018 (EAG 2019)<sup>7</sup></b>				
	Primary education	720	783	561	1063
	Lower secondary education, general programmes	504	709	481	1063
28	Ratio of actual teachers' salaries to earnings for full-time, full-year adult workers with tertiary education, lower secondary education, general programmes, 2016 (EAG 2019)	0.85	0.88	0.64	1.40
29	Proportion of teachers who believe the teaching profession is valued in society (TALIS 2018)	26.0%	25.8%	4.5%	67.0%
30	Proportion of teachers who would become a teacher again if they could choose (TALIS 2018)	74.5%	75.6%	54.9%	92.2%

#	List of key indicators <sup>1,2,3</sup>	Turkey	Average or total	Min OECD	Max OECD
<i>Policy lever 4: Evaluation and assessment to improve student outcomes</i>					
31	<b>Percentage of students in schools where the following arrangements aimed at quality assurance and improvement at school are used (PISA 2015):</b>				
	Internal/Self-evaluation	93.5%	93.2%	74.8%	100.0%
	External evaluation	78.8%	74.6%	20.8%	97.4%
32	<b>Percentage of students whose school principals reported that standardised tests are used for the following purposes (PISA 2015):</b>				
	To make decisions about students' retention or promotion	32.4%	31.3%	3.4%	60.6%
33	To monitor the school's progress from year to year	70.3%	69.4%	26.2%	97.7%
	To make judgements about teachers' effectiveness	49.0%	37.0%	4.4%	87.5%
	To identify aspects of instruction or the curriculum that could be improved	56.7%	58.9%	14.1%	92.4%
33	Percentage of lower secondary teachers whose principals report conducting formal appraisal of their teachers at least once per year (TALIS 2018)	87.3%	63.5%	16.2%	98.1%
<b>Systems: Organising the system</b>					
<i>Policy lever 5: Governance</i>					
34	<b>Percentage of decisions taken at each level of government in public lower secondary education, 2017 (EAG 2018)</b>				
	Central	72.9%	23.8%	0.0%	83.3%
	State	0.0%	10.3%	0.0%	62.5%
	Regional/Sub-regional	18.8%	4.9%	0.0%	33.3%
	Local	0.0%	13.3%	0.0%	71.9%
	School	8.3%	34.0%	0.0%	91.7%
	Multiple levels	0.0%	13.8%	0.0%	100.0%
<i>Policy lever 6: Funding</i>					
35	Expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP (from primary to tertiary), 2016 (EAG 2019)	5.4%	5.0%	0.0%	6.5%
36	<b>Annual expenditure per student by educational institutions, for all services, in equivalent USD converted using PPPs for GDP, 2016 (EAG 2019)</b>				
	Pre-primary education	5 568	8 349	1 579	17 533
36	Primary education	4 168	8 470	2 961	17 913
	Lower secondary education	4 063	9 884	2 561	21 739
	Upper secondary education	5 213	10 368	3 001	21 231
	Tertiary education	10 519	15 556	5 787	48 407
37	<b>Relative proportions of public and private expenditure on educational institutions, 2016 (EAG 2019)</b>				
	Public sources	74.6%	82.7%	62.7%	97.6%
37	All private sources (includes international sources)	25.4%	17.4%	2.4%	37.3%
38	<b>Change in the share of expenditure on educational institutions, EAG 2019 (Percentage-point difference between 2010 and 2016, primary to tertiary education)</b>				
	Public sources	m	-2.7	-9.8	6.3
38	All private sources	m	2.5	-6.3	7.0
Notes					
1. The average, total, minimums and maximums refer to OECD countries except in the Survey of Adult Skills, where they refer to participating countries. For indicators 6, 13 and 17-19 the average value refers to the arithmetic mean across all OECD member countries (and Colombia), excluding Spain. For indicator 5, the average value refers to the arithmetic mean across all OECD member countries (except Japan, Korea and Poland) as calculated by the Education Policy Outlook.					
2. "m": included when data is not available.					
3. "NP": included if the country is not participating in the study.					
4. Statistically significant values of the indicator are shown in bold (PISA only).					
5. The average three year trend is the average change in PISA score points from a country's/economy's earliest participation in PISA to PISA 2018.					
6. "a": included when the category is not applicable.					
7. For Turkey, this refers to typical teaching time (teaching time required from most teachers when no specific circumstances apply to teachers).					

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> On 25 May 2018, the OECD Council invited Colombia to become a Member. While Colombia is included in the OECD averages reported in this publication for data from Education at a Glance, the Programme for International Student Assessment and the Teaching and Learning International Survey, at the time of preparation of these OECD datasets, Colombia was in the process of completing its domestic procedures for ratification and the deposit of Colombia's instrument of accession to the OECD Convention was pending.

<sup>2</sup> As in most countries, for Turkey, there is a break in the time series for this indicator as data for 2018 refer to ISCED 2011 while data for 2008 refer to ISCED-97.

<sup>3</sup> For Turkey, this refers to earnings net of income tax.

<sup>4</sup> For Turkey, this refers to the typical teaching time (teaching time required from most teachers when no specific circumstances apply to teachers).

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