

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF POLICIES REGARDING NEETs AND THE CASE
OF TURKEY

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OF TURKEY**

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ABSTRACT

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF POLICIES REGARDING NEETs AND THE CASE OF TURKEY

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Young people who are neither in education, employment or training (NEET) has emerged as a social policy problem in the last ten years around the world. Having emerged in the Great Britain by the end of 1990s and been adopted by the European Commission consequently, the NEET concept has also been introduced to Turkish policy agenda by the second half of 2010. This study aims to investigate the interest in the NEET concept and policies in Turkey from a perspective of global social policy and global governance paradigm. Correspondingly, the study focuses on the various actors in the policy design and implementation context and analyzes their approaches to the NEET phenomena along with the dynamics of how the international social policy context reflects on the national agendas. The analysis reveals that while Turkish NEET agenda turns out to be compatible with the global social governance of NEETs, the dimension of international cooperation and policy coordination does not resonate at the same level. The study also discusses the idiosyncratic dynamics of the causes and effects of Turkish NEET phenomenon and the policy implementation dimension in the Turkish context which are discrepant from the ones in developed economies where the phenomenon emerged as a result of the neoliberal governance rationale. It

is thought that the NEET discussion holds significant potential to contribute to build a new and contemporary social policy paradigm on the global and national level in relation to living conditions of young people.

Keywords: Youth, NEET, Global Social Governance, International Organizations

ÖZ

NEİY GENÇLERE YÖNELİK POLİKALARIN KÜRESEL YÖNETİŞİM BAKIMINDAN İNCELENMESİ VE TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ

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Ne eğitimde, ne istihdamda, ne de yerleştirmede (NEİY) olan gençler son on yılda tüm dünyada bir sorun olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Uluslararası kuruluşlar ve yapılar, NEİY gençlere dikkat çekerek, bu grubu hedefleyen politikaların ülke gündemlerine taşınmasında öncü olmuştur. Çalışmanın merkezine aldığı NEİY kavramı, doksanlı yılların sonunda Birleşik Krallık'ta ortaya çıkmış, küresel finansal krizin akabinde Avrupa Komisyonu tarafından da benimsenmiş ve üye devletlerin bu gençlere ilişkin veri ve politika mekanizmalarını üretmesiyle sosyal politikanın güncel konularından biri haline gelmiştir. Görece büyük bir genç nüfusa sahip olan Türkiye'de 2010lu yılların ikinci yarısından itibaren NEİY politikalarına olan ilgi artmıştır. Bu çalışma, küresel sosyal politika ve küresel yönetim perspektifinden, Türkiye'de NEİY gençlere ve politikalarına yönelik ilginin hangi temelde ve doğrultuda ortaya çıktığını incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışma, politika hedefleri oluşturma ve üretme bağlamındaki aktörlerin NEİY olgusuna yaklaşımlarını, politika tasarım süreçlerindeki dinamiklerle beraber incelemeyi hedefler. Farklı işlev ve görevlere sahip kurum ve kuruluşların, NEİY gençlere yönelik politikaları ulusal düzeyde ne şekilde ele aldıklarının yanı sıra, uluslararası bağlamın ulusal politika yapım

süreçlerine nasıl yansıdığına analizi hedeflenmiştir. Buna göre, Türkiye’de NEİY gündeminin oluşmasında uluslararası yönetim yapılarının etkisinin yüksek olduğu görülmekle beraber, uluslararası işbirliğinin politika yapım süreçlerine aynı seviyede yansımadağı tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma ayrıca, neoliberal bir yönetim rasyonelinin etkin olduğu gelişmiş ekonomilerde ortaya çıkan NEİY kavramlaştırmasının Türkiye bağlamında NEİY olgusunun neden ve sonuçlarıyla beraber bu alandaki politika uygulamalarının kendine has dinamiklerini tartışmaktadır. NEİY tartışmasının, küresel ölçekte ve Türkiye’de yeni ve güncel bir sosyal politika paradigmasının ortaya çıkmasına önemli bir katkı sağlama potansiyeli bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gençlik, NEİY, Küresel Sosyal Yönetişim, Uluslararası Organizasyonlar

to all young people out there struggling, hoping...

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALMPs	Active Labour Market Policies
ÇEİŞ	Cement Industry Employers' Association (Çimento Endüstrisi İşverenleri Sendikası)
EC	European Commission
EET	Young people in Employment, Education, or Training
EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	The Statistical Office of the European Union
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOs	International Organizations
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
İŞKUR	Turkish National Employment Agency (Türkiye İş Kurumu)
KI	Key Informant
KOSGEB	Small and Medium Industry Development Organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
MoFSS	Ministry of Family and Social Services
MoLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
MoIT	Ministry of Industry and Technology
NEET	Young People not in Employment, Education, or Training
NES	National Employment Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NYES	National Youth Employment Strategy
SSTC	South-South Triangular Cooperation

STWTs	School to work transitions
TESK	Turkish Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen (Türkiye Esnaf ve Sanatkarları Konfederasyonu)
TİSK	Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (Türkiye İşveren Sendikaları Konfederasyonu)
TOBB	The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Turkey (Türkiye Odalar ve Borsalar Birliđi)
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute (Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu)
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WB	World Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization
YADA	Yaşama Dair Foundation
YGA	Young Guru Academy

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Social policy has been undergoing significant transformations, not only in terms of its content and approaches, but also in terms of policy makers and implementers. A trend of expansion and diversification both in scope and implementing actors of social policy in the last decades can be observed. One can point out to a proliferation and increasing role of international organizations, non-governmental organizations or entrepreneurs, local bodies and private sector in social policy making, administering and delivery, along with and beyond traditional national state institutions. The traditional social policy package has expanded to new areas such as youth, digitalization, ecology, etc., which seem to find more exposition in the general agenda of social policy. Traditional and novel social policy actors have become intertwined in this process, therefore leading to much more complex, dynamic, multilateral, multidimensional and diversified policy arena. While this propagation has enabled a multiplicity of perspectives and gave opportunity to novel ways of policy making processes, it has also made it more difficult to take a quick picture of the state of affairs in the social policy area. This study, within this context, aims to make sense of this change and transformation in the governance and scope of the social policy making processes, particularly focusing on international organizations and youth issues, specifically youth cohorts neither in education nor employment (NEET), and on the way they transform and shape national policy agendas. To put it in other words, the overarching concern of this study is to question how global/international policy making processes reflect on national agendas, with the example of youth policy in Turkey with a specific focus on social policies devised for NEETs. The research aims to draw attention to the ways social policy discourse and choices in Turkey addressing

NEETs are in interaction and transformed by economic forces, social actors, international policy institutions and discursive practices that are global in their reach.

The main concern of this study first arose from a curiosity with the questions of how youth is defined, who is identified as young people on which criteria, who is youth and how they are addressed within the scope of social policy under ever changing dynamics of globalism. The specific group to be addressed in this research will be young people who are neither in education nor employment (NEET) and the structures and tools they are addressed within the complex multilateral system of global social policy formulation and implementation. The project is ambitious in the sense that it aims to combine two components of academic research which are rather young in the literature, one being young people categorized as NEETs, which refers to groups of young people who suffer from overlapping disadvantages and fall out of education and labour market, the second being global social policy, of theoretical frame institutionalized since mid-1990s, to identify and explain the global proclivity of increasing policy transfer to address social issues. The inclination of public policy transfer among countries especially in the aftermath of the neoliberal turn of 1980s became popular and took off in 1990s, with international organizations having a more powerful say in prescription of certain policies and approach to social problems both in developed and developing economies. This kind of tendency can be observed in policies addressing young groups of the society, who are increasingly in need of being targeted with better designed and more integrated public policy schemes globally.

1.2. Background / Significance

My initial research started with exploring the social category of youth and how they are framed in the official policy sphere. Since the category of youth is a social and historical construction, who are going to be considered young and how they are going to be addressed varies across cultures and countries. In his ground breaking study *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life* Philippe Aries (1962) argues that the idea of childhood did not exist in medieval society in the modern sense we understand now, where it corresponds to a defined age category. Categories of childhood and youth in the sociological sense developed along with social processes such as rising of life longevity, urbanization, industrialization and schooling that came

forth after the 19th century. Over time, childhood and youth gradually emerged as age as well as conceptual categories of their own, becoming separated out from adulthood, largely through education (Jones, 2009; Chevalier, 2016), as a distinct category stage in the lifecycle whose development is linked to the history of modernity in Europe (Neyzi, 2001). According to Aries (1962), the emergence of these categories is mainly related to education and the awareness of its importance for our modern societies. A new concern about education gradually increasing and installing itself in the heart of the society and transforming it from top to bottom is what led to sophisticated schooling of children and youngsters as an instrument of discipline and training for life (Aries, 1962). As schooling started to cover the whole nation through prohibition of child employment and extended education with the advent of industrialization, these social categories of childhood and youth have started to be seen through lenses of policy legislations. This also meant the development of definition of life stages mainly by age, since age can be measured as a criterion (Jones, 2009). In a similar fashion, life course theorists showed how the state has institutionalized the tripartition of the life stages with advent of industrialization, mainly organized around a system of labour into periods of *preparation, activity and retirement* (Kohli, 1986) or *childhood, adulthood and old age* (Chevalier, 2016). As pointed out by these scholars, these stages of life mainly divided by age are shaped by policies, institutions and philosophies of the state (Leisering, 2003), and the temporal period of youth and transition into adulthood is no exception from this (Furlong, 2016; Chevalier, 2018; Heinz, 2003; Kerchoff, 2003).

As pointed out above, social studies interested in youth began to approach this category from a point of view considering how young people fit into social structures, rather than simply seeing it as a psychological phase (Jones, 2005). Youth, in social terms, “is more associated with the period between leaving school and becoming adult in socio-economic terms and thus currently covers the period, in most countries, between around 15 years and the mid-twenties, though both these age ‘boundaries’ are constantly rising...” (Jones, 2009). An emphasis on becoming is underscored by Kelly (2001) who claims that youth is an artefact of a history of diverse outlooks concerning the behaviors and dispositions of individuals regarded neither as child nor adult (Kelly, 2001; Coles, 1995); that it is specifically about becoming, becoming an adult, a citizen,

independent, autonomous, mature and responsible. So this study will make use of this kind of evaluation of youth, more as a social construct than a biological category (Heinz, 2009; Wallace and Kovatcheva, 2000; Beck and Gernsheim, 2009; Harris, 2009; Aufseeser, 2014; Gough et al., 2013; Lüküslü, 2016), specifically as a group of people defined in relation to their social circumstances and their relation to the state, policy making bodies and employment markets (Chisholm, et al., 2011, Wyn and Woodman, 2006). Similarly, Goodwin and O'Connor (2009) understands 'youth' as a social category constructed and modified according to social expectations regarding age brackets for participation in social circumstances of education, work, marriage, parenthood, consumption, and social welfare. From a social policy perspective, how youth is defined and by which means they are addressed is critical in the phase of transition to adulthood, as a defining structure in how young people interact with social and economic structures they are surrounded with (Coles, 1995). Whether these transitions are regular or non-standard transitions are imperatively the products of a mixture of living circumstances and individual decisions (Goodwin and O'Connor 2009).

Having drawn the contours of the study's conceptual approach, identifying a time scope for the background of this research is necessary. As Fergusson and Yeates (2014) point out, the 2000s are marked by two critical turning points which are also central to this study. The first is the establishment in 2001 of Youth Employment Network (YEN) by the Oslo Millennium Summit. This development is significant since "...it redefined youth (un)employment as a social *development* issue (rather than a labour issue) and brought the World Bank into a tripartite inter-IGO partnership with the United Nations (UN) and ILO." (Fergusson and Yeates, 2014). The second turning point which the scholars identify is the global financial crisis (GFC) in 2007-08. The crisis led to an "endemic youth unemployment" (Fergusson and Yeates, 2014) and evolved into extended and precarious transitions into globalized labour markets for many young people (Kamp and Kelly, 2014), mounting to a global social problem exceeding the poorest countries as a long standing phenomena and now seeping into the richest economies. The concern did not accrue only around economic stagnation but gained a social and political countenance in the aftermath of social movements erupting within the context of 'Arab Spring' in North Africa and Middle East, making

youth (un)employment a global policy issue as a trigger of social unrest and revolutionary political action (Fergusson and Yeates, 2014), risks emerging due to marginalization of large groups of young people due to unemployment (Bradley and Hoof, 2005).

Since then, the issue gained increased political and policy significance among national and international actors and triggered a relative heightened academic interest and policy action in the policy making arena. One will notice that literature over youth unemployment and inactivity produced by international organizations, non-governmental organizations and country reports has increased exponentially by these turn of events. A growing body of scholars, intellectuals and professionals point out to the deteriorating chances of young people born after 1980s for attaining secure jobs and better standards of living than previous generations and experiencing relatively more troubled and non-linear transitions to labour market despite rising levels of education (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Bessant, 2018; Bessant et al., 2017; Jones, 2005). Similarly, scholars also underline that young people today, with accelerated globalism, have to negotiate social risks unknown to their parents with the erosion of traditional and predictable pathways enabling transitions from youth to adulthood, regardless of their social background (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; 2007; Dwyer and Wyn, 2001; Bessant, 2018). In the light of this background, international and transnational governance of the prevalent condition of unemployed and inactive youth neither in education nor employment (NEET) becomes a pressing issue to be investigated, which will make up the focus of this study.

The acronym was originally coined in the United Kingdom towards the end of last century and was formally introduced in 1999 as a response to the fact that legislation did not describe unemployment for young between the ages of 16-18 (Kvieskiene et al., 2021). In the face of deteriorating youth employment following the by the economic recession kicked off in 2008, it was only after the year 2010 that the category of 'NEET' conceivably entered into the European Union's policy debate as an indicator to define a diverse group of young people aged between 15-29 who are unemployed or inactive for more than 4 or more weeks¹. Since then, a proliferation in

¹ <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/topic/neets>

the literature over how unemployed and disconnected youth and specifically NEETs are governed and why they are a growing concern for the global social policy can be observed both by the international organizations and among scholars (Fergusson, 2021; Fergusson and Yeates, 2014; Weil et al., 2005, Ruddick, 2003). Likewise, EC, OECD, ILO, World Bank and UNICEF have increasingly been involved in defining who NEETs are and how to address them within the sphere of public policy. Diffusion of policy frames have been addressed by a number of scholars, such as Bessant et al. (2017), Gough et al. (2013); Wyn and Woodman (2013), Bayırbağ et al. (2018) pointing out to the growing tendency in reliance on ready-made schemes and frames or what can be named as ‘policy paradigms’ diffused by inter or supranational organizations, coined as the ‘neoliberal policy shift’ (Wyn and Woodman, 2013, Bessant et al., 2017).

Along with what Deacon et al. (1997; 2009) refers as *globalization of social policy and socialization of the global agenda*, a convergence of social policy agendas and an increased ‘policy borrowing’ across nations have been witnessed from 1990s onwards, a trend that kick started with the dissolution of the Soviet Union and deepening of globalization of national economies. Youth unemployment and inactivity, being no exception to this trend, has been increasingly researched and addressed by international organizations and supranational agencies as a persistent challenge across nations. Pointing out to the distinctive quality of programmatic interventions addressing youth, informed by a rationale that youth differ from their non-youth counterparts in means of limited experience, lower status and restricted social network, Gough et al. (2013) groups policy interventions to generate youth employment under three main approaches; increasing economic growth, upskilling young populations and deploying programmatic interventions which involve tailor-made projects. Such policy measures have been increasingly prescribed to developing economies trying to cope with adverse effects of speeded globalization and liberal transformation of their economies.

In addition to these factors that gave way to NEETs gaining considerable recognition on the global social governance agenda, my research will address two more factors that is interrelated to the NEET discussion; the COVID-19 pandemic and digital transformation. GFC in 2007-2008 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019-2020 as two

important developments with global repercussions, along with the slow but steady digital transformation created renewed and robust challenges to national governments to cope with problems related to youth transitions. While youth unemployment traditionally was the main indicator to address the labour market attachment of young people, new forms of vulnerabilities shaped under shifts in the labour market and increased risk of social exclusion due to long terms of unemployment and inactivity led to the NEET indicator coming forth to capture disadvantage and multiple barriers experienced by young people on a larger basis. The common sense surrounded by an understanding that monitoring the labour market attachment only does not suffice for capturing the diverse and overlapping vulnerabilities of young people; whether they are related to education level or quality, labour market dynamics or other individual factors propelled by income level or geographical restraints, resulted in the introduction of the NEET indicator in the policy arena to talk about issues afflicting youth transitions. As many scholars and international organizations point out, though unemployment rate is a useful measure to understand the difficulties faced by young people in entering the labour market, it fails to reflect the ones who are disengaged from education or employment, thus remain inactive (Susanlı, 2016; Yıldız, 2016; Çelik and Lüküslü, 2018; Bynner and Parsons, 2002; Levels et al., 2022; Bardak, 2015; Mascherini (Eurofound), 2016; Quintini, 2006). Bardak (2015) justifies that the emergence of the concept of NEET is related to increased complexity of youth transitions, the weakening links from education or training to full time jobs and non-traditional forms of work such as part-time, contract based work or other mixed patterns work becoming increasingly prevalent. NEETs turn out to be the most problematic group in the face of changing labour market trends and a group under serious risk of social exclusion and life-long disadvantage (Mascherini (Eurofound), 2016; Bynner and Parsons, 2002)

Within this frame, this study is going to explore these question to understand the repercussions of international reframing or advocacy of certain policy interventions on national social policy agendas: How does the concept of NEET translate to Turkish social policy arena within the context of youth unemployment in Turkey and how is it governed? What are the divergent and convergent aspects of governance of NEETs in Turkey and the rest of the world? Can we speak about any transnational policy transfer

processes in operation and in which ways? Can a pattern in devising policy responses in line with prescriptions of global agencies identified? These are the next questions to be explored in my research.

To investigate the answers for the questions mentioned above, this study is going to make use of the global social governance as its theoretical frame in addition to analyzing policy papers of international organizations' as well as open national policy documents, and explore how they interact and relate, following the footsteps of Deacon, Hulse and Stubbs (1997; 2009), who point out to the necessity of social policy researchers to steer their focus from solely on national and comparative social policy to supranational and global social policy, which deserves equal attention.

A gap in the literature for such an effort was identified upon a preliminary literature review over youth policies. It was identified that though there is a significant body of literature which covers youth transition regimes (Chevalier, 2016, 2018; Walther, 2006; Volkan, 2016), focusing on a typology of models of youth policy (Gallie and Paugham, 2000); a limited number of studies have been conducted on how national youth policy is influenced by the global governance of youth unemployment in the context of Turkey. In line with the above mentioned concern over the interaction of the international social policy agenda and national contexts, the main purpose and focus of this study is on the implications of promotion of certain policies and operations prescribed by IGOs through global governance of NEETs and how these resonate and get operationalized within the context of Turkish youth policy which is in the development phase.

In this manner, the study aims to question whether one can speak of a global social policy in the governance of NEETs and if yes, how it is related to Turkish policy regarding NEETs. The reason for focusing on actors of global governance is that international governmental organizations are agencies of political action, meaning they are political actors in their own right with autonomous sources of legitimacy and power to define norms, set standards and contribute to configuration and dissemination of knowledge, beliefs, values and priorities in social policy making (Yeates and Fergusson, 2014). This is the reason that IGOs' discourses and actions aiming to influence national policy making processes will be focused on and the analysis on how

IGOs and national bodies interact is going to be supported by policy analysis and fieldwork.

The concept has also made its entry into Turkish policy papers and has become a subject of international cooperation and policy transfer with gradually increasing recognition. Youth is considered a social group in need of specialized policy action by the national development plans in Turkey, from 2000s onwards. Turkey has a relatively large young population compared to EU countries and also higher unemployment rates. Despite increasing education levels among the overall population, growth without jobs and limited industrial infrastructure resulted in surging youth unemployment once Turkey started from recovering from the 2001 domestic financial crisis. Programmatic interventions, initiatives to develop institutional capacity of public bodies to tackle youth unemployment and a growing concern over enhancing the connection between education and employment gradually proceeded to central position in the social policy agenda, an outcome further instigated by the EU-Acquis. Within this context, a growing interest developed towards the NEET issue in Turkey, starting from the second half of 2010s.

Given the circumstances, the following chapters of this study provide a full analysis of the state of affairs regarding the NEET discussion in the Turkish social policy arena, firstly by investigating the global social governance agenda on NEETs including the international responses, secondly by looking into the national context surrounding the NEET discussion along with available data and relevant legislation and finally provide an analysis based on a field study and informed by the perspectives of international and national actors' operating in Turkey. The research is designed to have a full understanding if there exists a paradigm shift in the policy making towards young people in general and NEETs specifically and whether imprints of the global governmental rationale can be traced in the Turkish policy agenda, including the double impact of COVID-19 and digital transformation.

Having laid out the main pillars of the research, a more detailed account of the research question and the objectives of the thesis can be delved into.

1.3. Research Question and Objectives of the Thesis

This background picture brings us to the main focus and concern of this research, which is to explore how the NEET category entered the global policy scene and how it was transferred and translated into the Turkish policy scenery. The main question this study aims to provide an answer is how does the concept of NEET translate into national social policy making processes, as a social policy problem framed by global social governance processes. To put it in another way, how does global social policy agenda operationalized by international organizations and supranational agencies alter and shape national policy agendas concerning NEETs? The sub-questions that will be asked throughout this research include the following:

- Where does the NEET discussion fit in the larger global social governance agenda? How is it epistemologically framed by international governmental bodies and received by national contexts?
- How do conceptualization of NEET and global policy prescriptions for NEETs fit into national social policy contexts and institutional framework?
- What are the nature and outcomes of the dialogic interaction between the international and national policy structures? Does a divergence or convergence exist between international, national and local levels?

In line with these questions, the next section will discuss the methodology to be used.

1.4 Methodology

This study employs qualitative research methods to examine the impact of global social governance agenda on national policy agendas with regards to the NEET phenomena. A field study among agencies and institutions taking place in the policy making processes is carried out to understand the impact of discursive and programmatic practices of global social governance on national policy making process.

The study aims to contribute to the literature of policy making processes in Turkey and enhance our understanding of the impact of global social governance structures on national policy agendas. To explore the nature and the outcomes of the interaction

between national and international institutions, the research employs semi-structured, in-depth interviews with the selected participants from different agencies which take place in the policy design and implementation regarding NEETs in Turkey. The qualitative research method in the form of in-depth interviews with key informant speakers is selected as to reach data and insight on the research topic. The key informants are expected to provide valuable first-hand information on how the NEET concept has made its entry to Turkish policy discussion, how it is received and the relation between global social governance and national policy making structures.

To carry out the field research, a number of key informants have been selected and reached who take active role in the design and delivery of NEET policies within governmental institutions, international organization, civil society organizations, social partners and international programs. For a balanced representation of all stakeholders which operate in the policy making sphere, at least one participant from each organization is included in the field study.

Table 1. List of interviewed organizations

Type of Institution/Organization	Name or the Institution/Organization
Governmental Institution	Presidency of Republic of Turkey, Presidency of Strategy and Budget
	Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS)
	National Employment Agency
International Organization	European Training Foundation (ETF)
	International Labour Organization (ILO)
	United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

<i>Table continued</i>	
Independent Expert	National Employment Agency, European Union funded project
Social Partner	Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations (TİSK)
Civil Society Organization	Yaşama Dair (YADA) Foundation

Ten participants from the above mentioned institutions/organizations were included in the field research, based on their knowledge and field of specialization. They had been reached either directly via their professional e-mails or through their institutions requesting if any relevant key informant would be interested to participate in the interviews.

The analysis of the field findings is followed by a preliminary understanding of the emergence and development of the NEET concept in the international global social governance agenda, as well as the reception and operationalization of the NEET concept in different national contexts, including Turkey. The current state of affairs regarding the NEET discussion in Turkey is analyzed in the light of available research conducted by universities, governmental institutions, think tanks and non-governmental organization with dimensions of population, education and employment. It has also been deemed necessary to understand the NEET status in relation to country specific dynamics and the related legislative framework from a contextual and discursive perspective. The analysis of the field findings is built on semi-structured, in-depth key informant interviews with the selected experts from identified institutions/organizations populating the policy field. The interviews were designed to understand the policy ideas, design and delivery of relevant policies, the connections between the national policy responses and global social governance of NEETs.

1.4.1. Limitations and scope

While the study aims to contribute to the limited research on NEETs in Turkey, it suffers from availability of comprehensive literature, besides majority of existing

studies focusing on issues of employment, employability and education or comparison of different models of youth welfare rather than the global governance of NEETs. Against all odds, it is why this study is aimed to fulfil a gap in the literature, by making an attempt to harmonizing two strands of literature. Intersection point of global social policy and global governance of problems related to youth is an area of study that begs more attention, as more policy transfer is underway with scaling of youth unemployment around the world with aggravating effects of post-COVID economic slowdown and the war of Russia and Ukraine distressing supply chains and escalating military expenditure globally. Though youth welfare and problems related to a fair access to education and employment for young people as a vulnerable part of the population have gained increased recognition and visibility in the public policy arena with the effort of international institutions, many countries still lack a unified and coherent policy action targeting less problematic transitions to adulthood. In this respect, the study is going to focus on NEETs, a comparatively disadvantaged group of young people which seems to fall through the public policy schemes and disconnect from chances of social inclusion. The analysis attempting to explain the dynamics and nature of global governance of NEETs is hoped to be useful in understanding the full picture in the policy arena and future policy making processes addressing NEETs.

1.5 Chapter Overview

In this chapter, the aim, scope and main themes of this study are outlined. The argument of the thesis is that global social governance practices have significant impact on national policy making rationale and discourse, with their trend and norm setting practices. How and through by which means they exert an ideological change and policy shift in national agendas will be examined in the following chapters of the thesis.

The study starts with an introductory chapter encircling the background and significance of the subject. The following chapter will provide the theoretical background of the methodology used in the study, along with practical outcomes of the process. The two dimensions of the qualitative methodological approach employed in the thesis will be presented and elaborated upon.

The methodology is followed by the literature review presenting the theoretical framework informing this study. The NEET concept is going to be examined in relation to its emergence, development and responses in different national contexts.

Building on the literature review, the case of Turkey is investigated in the following chapter. Basic demographics and the state of education and employment regarding the NEETs in Turkey is elaborated upon in relation to country specific factors. This chapter concludes by the analysis of the binding legislation and main actors in the policy design and implementation sphere targeting NEETs in Turkey.

Consequently, building on the field findings an analysis of the existing policy framework and its relation to larger global social governance agenda will be provided. Finally, the conclusions will be provided with the complementary policy recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Global Social Policy

One of the most challenging missions of social policy today in a highly globalized and interconnected world is to make sense of the formation and dissemination of policies across societies and nations, through the channels where policy circles interact and policy outcomes diverge or converge. In a socio-economic context where events occurring in one country or region affect the rest of the world more quickly than ever thanks to communication, transportation technologies and accelerated economic activity, social policy of a country is no longer wholly shaped by the politics of the national governments (Deacon et al., 1997) nor can be understood or made without the global context it operates in (Deacon, 2007).

Though transnational influences over social policy cannot be deemed a new phenomenon (Morales-Gomez, 1999), a shift in the social-policy paradigm marked by a series of initiatives instigated by a number of international organizations² and governments to take the human and social development in the forefront from the onset of 1990s. This paradigm shift pushed an increasing number of governments to learn, adapt and cooperate to better address the emerging needs of their societies under larger transformational effects of global economy is taking shape. Thus, traditional frameworks of social policy are challenged by two main factors. Firstly, supranational

² The 1990 World Summit for Children, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, the 1993 UN Conference on Population and Development, the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the 1995 World Summit for Social Development (Morales-Gomez, 1999; The Commission on Global Governance (Weiss, 2000; Deacon et al., 1997)

and governmental actors deserve more attention for their influential power to create and disseminate norms, standards, policy networks and policy recommendations. Secondly, supranationalization and globalization of social policy instruments require a new level of analysis. Two forces are at play in this development according to Deacon and his friends (1997; 2009), which require new tools for analysis: namely, globalization of social policy and socialization of global politics. To understand how these dynamics interact with localities and instigate policy reforms opening up of new policy areas, primarily, the concepts of global social policy, global governance and the central role of international organizations specific to this field of study should be explored.

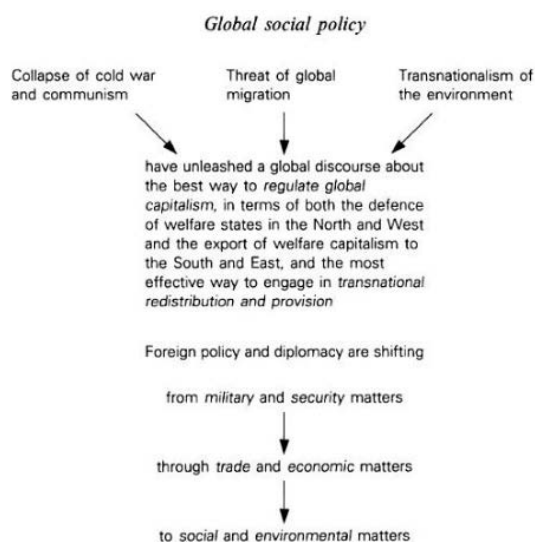


Figure 1. The globalization of social policy and the socialization of global politics³

Global social policy is a field of research that aims to provide a theoretical lens to explore the international and global dimensions of social policy while at the same time analyzing the ways contemporary processes of globalization impact the national social policies. Though it is a field of study with its roots going back to globalism and transnationalism, the emergence of global social policy as an independent body of research in the literature eventuated after the seminal work drawing the contours of the area by Deacon with Hulse and Stubbs (1997). This effort emerged as a reflection of the need to construct a theoretical lens to expose and analyze the context social policy activities within a country having undertaken a supranational and transnational

³ Deacon et al. (1997)

character. Simply put, the lenses of global social policy are necessary to understand the impact of global processes upon the social policies of individual countries, while at the same time globalization of social and economic life procreates something observable as supranational social policy on regional or global level (Deacon, 2007). Many social problems that social policies are called upon to meet have global dimensions (Deacon, 2007) and call for supranational policy responses.

Two fields of study focus on the implications of globalism on public policy and the growth of supranationalism. Political scientists carrying studies on comparative politics took an interest in a number of emergent states upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the diluting effect of globalism on national sovereignty. The other discipline is international relations, which undertook debates on possibilities of international organizations becoming a means to transform the international society or whether they are instruments of the state policy in a world system where sovereign states remain the key actors. Though the future of the state sovereignty and the actual impact of international organizations remain to be issue of debate between neo-realists and critical theory scholars in international relations, the increasing transnational quality of social welfare and domestic policy is widely recognized by a growing body of researchers and epistemic circles (Weiss, 2000; Haas and Haas, 1995; Barnett and Finnemore, 2005; Kaasch and Martens, 2015; Fergusson and Yeates, 2014; Holden, 2017; Orenstein, 2005; Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996; Niemann, 2012; Mahon and MacBride, 2009; Nagel, 1990). Global social policy, along these lines, is an area of study that scrutinizes the dynamics and implications of the international and national interaction in relation to social policy and national social policy in a global context, an area of study that falls neither directly under the domain of comparative politics nor international relations, but that is essentially about transnational quality of policy making processes (Deacon et al., 1997; Nagel, 1990).

Scholars started to take interest in global policy studies and attempted to build a theoretical approach specifically for policy studies that are extended to global problem solving by means of international governance (Nagel, 1990; Soroos, 1991; Palier and Sykes, 2001). The main questions the literature started to evolve are what types of policy problems exist that are of global concern; how public policies are made at the global level; what the nature of the resulting policies is and how they are implemented.

Participants of global policy making and implementing processes are made up of a plethora of governmental and non-governmental bodies. Early studies of global policies mainly focus on the problem solving quality of these policies, mainly to be developed and employed in times of crisis or emergency and the regulatory nature regarding the human activity that is essentially transboundary such as fishing, aviation, migration or man-made disasters, with states and state governments as the main actors of this interaction. However, a true interest that will take social policy and the nature of the interaction between the national and the international or mode of operation of the transgovernmental systems to the center of a theoretical concern will be instigated by the work of Deacon and his friends through the 1990s.

The rise of global social policy as an academic interest and institutions of global governance taking the stage have been the outcome of two historical transformations: Cold War coming to an end with the collapse of the Soviet Union and increased and integrated global economic activity. Now that the states, national markets and societies are more exposed to global economic competition, concerns about how the internal labour markets and disadvantaged groups in a given society are affected by this transformation and limitations of state centric social policy has gained prominence. The economic downturns of the 1970s and 1980s deeply affecting the developing world (Morales-Gomez, 1999) and the closing of the Cold War and the two polar world (Deacon et al., 1997) posed new challenges to social development as well as new threats of national rivalries, regional trade wars, increased racism, illiberalism and migration.

The changing parameters of the welfare state due to competitive pressures necessitated profit and non-profit mechanisms to deal with different sectors of social policy with regards to regional inequality, a widening spectrum of social needs, increasing social expectations of young people, women and racial minorities' needs calling for alternative public and private interventions. However at the same time, the neoliberal policies push for reduction of costs of social reforms. This dilemma increasingly pushed policy actors to look abroad for policy learning and policy transfer through programmatic schemes brokered by international agencies. In this vein, social policy analysts have developed comparative models to explain the welfare state diversity and difference and to offer explanations of social policy. The welfare literature in 1990s

proliferated with comparative models aiming to analyze the diverse ways western states address the social needs and challenges (Esping-Andersen; 1990; Castles and Mitchell, 1991; 1992; Jessop, 1999; Ginsburg; 1992, Mishra, 1998; Gough et al., 1997) and further enlarged to different geographies such as Mediterranean and Southern Europe (Gal, 2010; Ferrera, 1996; Gough, 1996; Bonoli, 1997), East Asia, South Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (Arts and Gelissen, 2002; Wood and Gough, 2004), the pacific countries (Jones, 1993), Southern Eastern Europe (Aidukaite, 2004; Cerami, 2005; Cook, 2010; Fenger, 2007) by other scholars. The welfare cluster literature was also contributed by feminist scholars on the basis of women friendliness and relationship to gender (Siaroff, 1994; Daly, 1994; Bamba, 2006) and also in relationship to ethnic minorities (Williams, 1995). However, despite their explanatory power, comparative models are not enlightening in means of exploring globalization's effect on national systems. (Deacon et al., 1997). Global social policy as a field study arises not only from a need for an analytical frame to answer the question of how the national redistribution is organized under globalizing effects, but also as a critical tool to explore for ways to use transnational power structures as a basis for globally redistributive projects on the global level.

Existing welfare models are challenged due to a number of changes that took place at the end of the 20th Century. Mainly, social democratic and conservative corporatist welfare states of Europe had to undergo transformation due to the freeing of global regulations on finance capital and the increased free trade. The consequence of accelerated global movement of the capital meant that governments beginning to have less control over investment policies through Keynesian economic management since the capital can go 'regime shopping' to locate better conditions for investment or 'social dumping' to sideline the social and economic costs of labour in the developed countries (Deacon et al., 1997). Esping-Andersen (1994) denotes that the challenge for welfare state is two-fold: one is because of global economic integration in a free market context and the other is social structure changing in the developed countries where the male breadwinner family model has been undergoing a transformation. A mismatch between the existing protection schemes and emerging needs and risks led to dissatisfaction with the welfare state's capacity to address evolving demands. Diversified life courses and social policy needs of different groups in society, the

freeing of global trade and loss of control over state planned investment posed new challenges to the Keynesian welfare state. The Keynesian redistributory mechanism built on the 'historical consensus' between the state, capital and society) underwent into an existentialist crisis in the face of changing social and economic structure (Esping-Andersen, 1994; Rosanvallon, 2004; Mishra, 1999). Esping-Andersen (1994) identifies three responses to the challenge welfare systems faced. While social democratic welfare states maintained commitment to welfare through job creation in public sectors, liberal welfare states went for deregulation and lowering wages to attract global investment. Conservative corporatist regimes, on the other hand, chose shedding of jobs in less productive sectors and invest in high productive firms. These efforts in total, led to what Jessop (1999) identifies a new way of governance in the welfare, switching from the Keynesian national welfare state to Schumpeterian workfare postnational welfare regime, through a 'hollowing out' of the national state as its powers are delegated upwards (...), downwards (...) or outwards (...).

As the neoliberal transformation of global economy took pace, the welfare effort and provision underwent a delegation to non-state actors, as the mode of governance for compensation of market failures and inadequacies transformed. The welfare effort became selective with the aim of lowering social costs and supporting productivity, which led to dualization of workforce, on national and global levels, creating insiders and outsiders. Welfare systems now have to find solutions to deal with residualism, rising inequality and precarity due to increased labour market flexibility, which call for globalized social policy solutions and supranational interventions to meet the social challenges in the face of globalized national economies. The traditional frame of analysis for social policy within a country, which can be understood as the mechanisms, policies and procedures employed by governments to intervene and introduce changes to distributive and social outcomes of economic activity (Deacon, 2007), is no longer adequate to understand the local and national policy choices and shifts in full scale.

Such a diversified and graded welfare provision intensifies the problem of how to secure social justice between territories, developed and developing states. Minimizing social dumping, global economic migration and global security climbed to top priorities in the policy agenda of global policy agencies such as World Bank, World

Trade Organization or European Union as a transnational governance agency. The capital escaping national rules provoked the question of reinventing and imposing social regulations at a regional and global level (Deacon, 2007). The table by Gough and Woods (2004) to explain the trend of interfusion of the domestic and supranational welfare provision is useful here:

	Domestic	Supra-national
State	Domestic governance	International organisations, national donors
Market	Domestic markets	Global markets, MNCs
Community	Civil society, NGOs	International NGOs
Household	Households	International household strategies

Figure 2. Domestic and supranational welfare provision matrix (Gough and Woods, 2004:30)⁴

Deacon (2007) refers to this trend as the ‘global welfare mix’, which denotes the process of social policy issues transposing to supranational and global terrain. Upon these larger global forces envioning the welfare transformation, the main functions of social policy in a country which are redistribution, regulation and social rights are transposed to the global level. The ‘three Rs’ aim to bring a normative understanding to global social policy studies as a transformational tool, with a broad and comprehensive account on what makes up of social policy at a world scale (Kaasch, 2019).

Such an outlook on welfare functions from a globalization perspective brings forward the supranational and global agencies as main actors of influence in the shaping of national policies. These institutions (agencies) of global governance emerge as a locus of power in disseminating knowledge, standards and norms of social policy and ‘external agencies’ (Kaasch, 2019) of social policy change as they engage in transnational redistribution, regulation and provision. Globalization of social policy has brought new players in the making of social policy, with international organizations (IOs) such as the IMF, World Bank, WTO and UN agencies becoming more and more involved in prescribing policies (Deacon, 2007). Global social policy aims to bring the interaction between the national and the international in relation to

⁴ Gough and Woods (2004)

social policy under focus. This process has intensified since the fall of the Berlin Wall and reconstruction of Eastern European and post-Yugoslav countries and analyzes the larger consequences of the rising role of international organizations in shaping social policy:

Supranational and global agencies contribute to the shaping of national policy and the terms of international competition by laying down social policy conditions on governments for the receipt of financial assistance, or by redistributing sources between governments, or by establishing conventions and technical advice and assistance as a step towards legal social regulation (Deacon, et al., 1997).

In this line, a special focus to activities and discourses of global agencies in relation to domestic policy and specifically to the NEET concern crosscutting national policies should be given attention to.

2.2. Global 'Social' Governance

Globalization fosters a global discourse on how to deal with social needs in the face of changing conditions of global economy and welfare provision. The major players of neo-liberal form of globalization are Bretton Wood organizations and international governing organizations (Deacon, 2001; 2007) as they engage in prescribing a set of social policies along with encouraging economic globalization. There are also other significant actors who engage in raising and framing policy concerns on the global or transnational level, such as international non-governmental organization and the EU as a regional/transnational policy coordination and implementation body (Holden, 2017). International organizations and their discourses have moved to center of focus with the globalization of economies and the constraints it created over the autonomy of nation states for policy making matching with economic globalization and the globalization of social standards (Mishra, 1998). This does not mean that their voice is univocal and identical as they have contested views on different set of social policies or the shape neo-liberal form of globalization.

As the world went through 2000s and the post crisis condition after 2008, common logic moved away from a faith in unregulated markets to provide for market failures

to socially regulated, socially embedded capitalism sustained by social policies (Deacon and Stubbs, 2013; George and Wilding, 2009; Kaasch and Martens, 2015; O'Brien et al., 2000). While the traditional economic rationality of efficiency and competitiveness still dominates, there is raised awareness of the need to develop social policies as a corollary of global economic development and an increased emphasis on social costs of neoliberalism. Another view on the underlying logic for global governance argues that economic globalization which widens inequalities within and between countries necessitates complementary global governance arrangements to ensure stable conditions for overseas investment and a fit and healthy workforce with basic educational skills (Holden, 2017). Holden (2017) proposes that the expansion of the global market without complementary global governance interventions has the potential to undermine state capacity at the national level.

There exist two related fields of discussion related to global social policy that need to be examined to get a better understanding of how policies are framed and disseminated across nations and who is involved in this circulation of policy ideas and the act of ideational transmitting. First one is global governance or more precisely, global social governance. And the second is international (governmental) organizations (IOs or IGOs). The following paragraphs are going to attempt to define and analyze what global social governance is and the role of IOs in this context.

A concept that has been attached to the debate on the extent and impact of international organizations is global governance. Globalization implies increased interconnectedness and interdependency between states (Held et al., 1999; Deacon, 2007; Gül, 2018). On consequence and part of this globalism is global governance which comprises of global, national and public policy processes that include learning from one another, transfer or implementation of best practices or tried prescriptions operating through interstate cooperation and transnational networks. One aim of engaging in global governance for states is not falling into disadvantageous situation by falling behind and staying competitive in the global economy. The other is handling the social predicaments caused by globalized national economies by transferring certain concepts and best practices to their specific national context.

Globalization implies interdependency and interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary life (Held et al., 1999; Deacon, 2007; Gül, 2018), binding states and international actors together in a state of competition and cooperation. With accelerating effect on pace and intensity of economic and social interactions at all levels (Weiss, 2000), globalization also implies a shrinking of time and space (Deacon, 2007). This global web requires more effective governance, not only through interstate cooperation but also different levels of transnational networks, actors and loci of governance structures. Global governance operates through these networks and structures, crosscutting global, national and local public policymaking processes and increasingly includes learning from one another or monitoring, transferring and implementing best practices (Gül, 2018). While what global governance really means and how it is operationalized is still under scrutiny, a global trend towards a complex system of governing which includes elements of global politics and public policymaking can be observed (Gül, 2018; Kaasch and Martens, 2015; Weiss, 2000).

This complex system of governing which is increasing associated with global problem solving gave rise to a discussion on the concept of 'governance'. Governance is defined as "the sum of many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is the continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action may be taken." (Weiss, 2000) by the Commission on the Global Governance. While governance does not discard the governmental institutions, it also opens the space up for non-governmental institutions or non-state actors and the increased role of international cooperation for securing public goods and services.

One central argument by Rosenau (1992) suggests that the act of governance can no more be only associated with the activities of governments along with the world witnessing a proliferation of non-state actors with significant governing purposes. 'Governance' can be deemed a major trend in relation to the minimized role of the state, where the state is defined more as an 'enabling state' rather than a 'coercive' one, which aims to increase the efficiency in public service delivery, empowering the market and society to provide the goods and services individuals need (Peters and Pierre, 2006). Peters and Pierre (2006) underline that governance is a necessary 'solution' to the problem of governing complex societies and a domestic market

increasingly characterized by a global economy with greater levels of volatility and unpredictability. A society and an economy getting more and more complex, incoherent and unpredictable puts pressure on traditional pillars of government to address the changing needs of societies on different levels, over a very limited time scope. Governance, in this context, introduces as a solution to overloaded public services and the problem of complexity, which is mainly defined as identifying and defining the collective goals and priorities of society and bringing together resources or devising mechanisms from a large number of different actors to achieve these objectives. To Rhodes (1996) governance is a shift from the central role of the state to public sector being divided into smaller and fragmented self-organizing units and increased interdependence and interaction between organizations. Policy outcomes are not the product of actions by the central government imposed with a top-down management, where actors other than states express public interest, a state of affairs which can also be coined as ‘complex multilateralism’ (O’Brien et al., 2000, Deacon and Stubbs, 2013). Policy areas emerge from negotiations of several parties involved and affected where government assumes a steering role.

Defining governance on such grounds, global governance can be drawn as the complex multi-actored, multi-layered governing activity being transferred to globally informed interactions. Global governance implies a new functional division of labour and authority between public, international governmental and non-governmental and private actors (Gül, 2018) along with a proliferation of policy transfer, international or transnational cooperation and agenda setting activities by autonomous international organizations. Moving from the discussing on globalism, governance and global governance and laying the grounds of the contextual and ideational circumstances that surround these concepts, this study takes global ‘social’ governance (Deacon, 2007) as its focal theoretical lens, which brings in the social dimension to globalized policy making processes. In other words, global social governance aims to study social problems from a global perspective and advance our understanding of the global dimension of social policy by “applying the notion of global social governance to policy actors, their relations to each other and their pathways as well as their footprints of influence in specific policy fields of social concern in which they are active (Kaasch and Martens, 2015).

According to Deacon (1997, 2001, 2007), who particularly attempted to reveal the ways IOs and other global social policy actors influence and shape national social policymaking processes, global social governance stems from the actions and interactions of “a number of competing and overlapping institutions, all of which have some stake in shaping global social policy towards global social problems” (Deacon, 2007). Deacon (2007) essentially sees global social governance as a “struggle for the right to shape” policy and the content of a policy among these competing and overlapping actors. Global social policy literature presupposes the notion that international actors (IOs, supranational actors such as the EU, non-governmental organizations) lie at the core of global social policy and global social governance practice (Kaasch, et al., 2019). This kind of a perspective brings in the concept of agency to global governance studies which inform the central role of IOs and other global social policy actors in influencing national social policy making processes. Global social policy and global social governance take a strong interest in global governmental and non-governmental actors, who actually they are, what constitutes them, how they can be classified and where their legitimacy, authority or autonomy comes from in the eye of other actors and national governments.

Global social governance has its limitations, due to being a rather new field of study in comparison to studies focusing on IOs’ internal institutional systems or their instrumental function to shape and international standards and govern interstate relations from an international relations perspective. The second challenge arises from disentangling the influence of global governance actors from each other and on national systems in the multi-centered and multi-scaled environment they operate in. How the norms and standards the global governance agencies disseminate and diffuse into worldwide circulation into national context of social policies is a phenomenon many scholars and various studies try to understand.

A good number of scholars have put efforts in how global social policy operates through global social governance. Seeing IOs as the frontiers of global social policy, Orenstein and Beland (2013) developed an ideational approach where they underline the evolving discourse of IOs have impact on domestic policy. Reversing the general judgement that IOs have more or less fixed preferences on social policy and that they are tools of powerful states to pursue policy preferences on the global arena, they claim

that ideas matter much more for the IO influence and they can be far more flexible than functionalist accounts assume them to be. Upon a comparative research on IOs and think tanks in means of their ideational orientation and policy paradigms, they discover that IOs are much more open to ideational shifts as sites of contestation. It is difficult to claim that IOs stick to the same policy paradigm over long periods of time. They are open systems where ideational processes of persuasion and convincing is much more prominent and their policy preferences can change depending on their expert dominated staffing and their openness to influences from policy entrepreneurs. IOs display adaptability on their policy prescriptions, might have swinging frameworks on specific policy areas depending on expert perspectives, best practices and changing demands. This shifting position is the strength of IOs, rather than an inherent weakness, which locates them as democratic sites of contestation or an open platform dependent on their delegated expertise. They are in demand for their flexible expertise, which constitutes their legitimacy.

In a similar fashion to Orenstein and Beland (2013), Barnett and Finnemore (2005) point out to the authority and influencing power of IOs which they derive from their rational and legal bureaucracies, delegated tasks and expertise in opposition to a functionalist view that sees the authority of IOs as a delegated authority transferred by powerful states. IOs possess a productive power in contributing to the constitution of global governance through collecting information, establishing commitments, defining problems and crafting particular solutions to them. Their solutions presented as 'technical' have deeply political, transformatory consequences on the existing social relations. They execute authority on social constitution of the world by determining by strategic usage of information, determining what is and what is not discussed and defining interests for various states and social groups.

Niemann (2012), in an attempt to answer how IOs influence national policies and why states follow IOs' governance initiatives and change their national policy making propose that IOs have considerable impact on the ideational framework, policy instruments and the policy content of a policy field. All three dimensions are interrelated, where a paradigm shift in the ideational framework related to general orientations, paradigms and underlying interpretations lead to a change in policy instruments. An introduction of new decision procedures, structures of involvement of

new actors have an important impact on the policy content which translate into new policy programs, practices and settings. Their persuasive governance (Mahon and McBride, 2009) abilities are reflected in offering recommendations to introduce certain ideational frameworks which result in policy shift. They execute this persuasive governance through inquisitive and meditative modes (Niemann, 2012; Niemann and Martens, 2018). The first mode refers to gathering of information and transforming into substantial knowledge, while the second refers to steering influence on policy discussion among policy makers and experts. IO recommendation is based on publicized information and findings about best practices in a certain policy field. This kind of persuasive governance of IOs operates through constraining the appropriate behavior and giving non-binding recommendations, which serves for horizontal influence without any means of top-down enforcement. Legitimizing and de-legitimizing of certain behavior and defining collective interests in a highly competitive global system through discursive practices found on the technical expertise and scientific knowledge provided by expert communities of IOs lie at the core of autonomy and authority of IOs (Niemann and Martens, 2018).

These line of scholars of global social policy and global social governance (Orenstein and Beland 2013; Barnett and Finnemore 2005; Nieman et al., 2021; Niemann and Martens, 2018; Mahon 2009;) recognize strategic discursive practices central to power of IOs and their influencing capacities. IOs use discursive capacities to steer ‘soft governance’ through “their ability to create, diffuse and implement rules, norms and (behavioral) standards” (Nieman, et al., 2021). They can be viewed as ‘knowledge brokers’ (Niemann and Martens, 2018; Nieman, et al., 2021) reserving the right to framing social problems on a global level and influencing policy outcomes on the local level. Beyond being mere instruments, their bureaucracies and internal structures allow them to develop a life of their own, which constitute their autonomy and normative authority in the international field. By providing strategic knowledge to their members or recipient states delegating to international organizations otherwise non-available, they render themselves irreplaceable in the competitive global system (Martens and Jakobi, 2010; Niemann et al., 2021; Barnett and Finnemore, 2005). They have strong influence on the global agenda, by classifying information and knowledge (Barnett and Finnemore, 2005) and prioritizing certain topics in the global policy field.

Overall, IOs are thought to possess ‘cognitive authority’, which helps them define problems in a given policy area, set targets and establish means to achieve policy goals (Niemann et al., 2021; Barnett and Finnemore, 2005).

2.3 Adoption of the concept ‘NEET’ Globally

The diffusion of the NEET indicator itself and the ideational framework informing the policy ideas, policy design and practices addressing NEETs is a well-suited example for global social governance. The neoliberal commitment to dismantling of welfare mechanisms and internationalization of markets and economic competition has proved a transformational effect on transition to adulthood (Mills and Blossfeld, 2005). The enduring difficulty of tackling youth unemployment and inactivity on a national level instigated a *global discussion on global social problem construction and global policy formation* (Fergusson and Yeates, 2021). IOs and other transnational actors have risen as influential and ideational loci of power for framing social problems and policy diffusion to address the youth issues, particularly on employment and education. This kind of a process underlying the framing and diffusion of the NEET concern can be traced from the emergence and entrenchment of the indicator/concept in the global social governance agenda.

The category of NEET youth has become a focus of attention in the area of social policy from the onset of 1990s. While policy and research were largely focused on youth unemployment as a defining category, concerns over the ‘grey zone’ between the categories of employed and unemployed emerged to define and analyze the disengaged youth, who are neither in education, employment or training with the seminal work of Istance et al. (1994)⁵. Istance and colleagues used the term ‘Status Zero’, derived from career services’ records, to define the young group of people aged 16-18 who were not in any of the main categories of labour market status – employment, education or training (Eurofound, 2012). Status 1 distinguished the same age group who are in education, Status 2 in training and Status 3 to those in employment. However, to avoid the negative connotation of Status 0 entailing marginality, crime or deviance (Williamson, 1997; Maguire and Thompson, 2007), the

⁵ Istance, G. Rees, and H. Williamson, Young People not in Education, Training or Employment in South Glamorgan, South Glamorgan Training and Enterprise Council, Cardiff

acronym NEET was adopted by researchers and policy makers. Abandonment of youth unemployment as an indicator for young people under the age of 18 (Furlong, 2007) and changes to benefit entitlement regulations which excluded young people under 18 from unemployment benefit (Maguire, 2015) led to a gradual adoption of the term NEET by researchers and policy officials to understand problems young people face in transition to labour market and assess labour market vulnerability.

The entrenchment of the concept's place in the public policy took place upon the pivotal report 'Bridging the Gap' (SEU, 1999) by the Social Exclusion Unit in England, focusing on issues related to social exclusion young people mainly between the ages of 16-18 face in the transition from school to work. This report drew attention to difficulties young people from diverse backgrounds face with potential risks of social exclusion, with no prospects of decent jobs and income for the future due to a combination of disadvantaged backgrounds, lack of necessary skills and qualifications for the labour market and growing disconnection from society. The report puts forward a "radical approach" as itself claims, proposing to ensure that all young people until the age of 18 stay in education, training or work and a comprehensive advice and support service on education and training choices for young people between the ages of 13 and 19. The structure is aimed to be socially inclusive, comprehensive in the sense that it aims to end the institutional fragmentation in public delivery of services, encouraging financial and other incentives and giving recognition to volunteering as an acknowledgement of achievements of young people. The ambitious policy intervention was designed as a response to a trend in reduced participation in education or training in England between the years 1994 and 1998 in the proportion of 16 and 17 year olds, mainly related to labour market changes. The latter included a decline in manual jobs, low-skilled jobs which require few qualifications or none and an increase in occupations in service industries, technical and professional jobs accessed through academic study and higher education. The report proposes that disengagement between these critical ages is a major predictor of unemployment at the age of 21. The main two factors propagating risk of being NEET identified by the report are educational underachievement and familial disadvantage and poverty with additional factors such as ethnic minority background, care responsibilities, learning difficulties

or disability, misuse of drugs and alcohol, living in a deprived neighbourhood or in a disadvantaged rural area.

The methodological and conceptual framework the report put forward had significant impact on defining youth inactivity and policies administered to reduce the percentage of young people who do not engage in formal education or training nor employment. States across the European Union adopted the term with an expanded age limit 15-24 or 15-29 (Eurofound, 2012; Mascherini, 2019), while Japan, New Zealand, Taiwan developed their intrinsic NEET definitions (Eurofound, 2012; Ak et al., 2022). The concept was adopted by the European Commission Employment Committee (EMCO) upon a commonly shared definition in 2010 and the methodology for the NEET indication to measure and monitor trends of NEET population in the European Union (EU) within the perspective of Horizon 2020 Strategy (Mascherini, 2019).

The term aimed to underline the heterogeneous quality of the concept while trying to avoid the negative connotations attached to not being included in neither in labour nor education. As Eurofound (2012) report points out, while the term is mainly used for teenagers in the UK and New Zealand, most European countries use NEET to identify young people not in education, employment or training between the ages of 15 and 24. The age bracket is even more widened in the Japanese definition to 15-34, with an addition of young people who are not married (Ak, 2022). Korea adds one more characteristic to NEETs between the same ages as Japan, as young people who are also not taking familial responsibilities (Susanlı, 2016).

The lack of an internationally recognized definition of NEET makes cross country definitions difficult in the face of differing characteristics of groups of young people classified as NEET from country to country. Due to this difficulty, international organizations such as OECD, ILO and European Commission provided their own definition of NEET to ease and capture cross country comparisons (Eurofound, 2012; Eurofound, 2016; Levels et al., 2022; Pohl and Walther, 2007; Quintini and Martin, 2006; Carcillo et al., 2015; Bardak et al., 2015; Rocca et al., 2021; Kevelson et al., 2020). These cross country comparisons are conducted to reveal the role of institutional contexts and policies that effect the situation of being NEET. The heterogeneity of the term requires different categorizations of NEET, hence different

policy solutions. Eurofound report (2012) identified five subcategories under the concept of NEET, involving a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people:



Figure 2. The heterogeneity of the NEET population (Eurofound, 2012:25)⁶

Conventionally unemployed and the disengaged can be deemed the most vulnerable groups. While the unemployed suffer from an involuntary inactivity because of lack of jobs or lack of necessary skills, the disengaged holds the possibility of having given up looking for jobs, discouraged by previous attempts of entering the labour market or might be suffering from other conditions that hinder activity. The unavailable group is a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable young people with disabilities who are in need of conditions and policies that support their entry into the labour market and young mothers with caring responsibilities who might either voluntarily or involuntarily left the job market. Opportunity seekers are deemed as a non-vulnerable group of young people from a privileged background and staying out of labour market by choice. And finally, voluntary NEETs are a group engaged in informal activities such as travelling, developing a talent or volunteering and pursuing alternative pathways (Eurofound, 2012).

This kind of grouping provides a method for tackling the heterogeneity of who are NEETs in a given setting. The second dynamic emphasized by scholars is an interaction between the young person and institutional configurations in a country. Can

⁶ Eurofound (2012). NEETs – Young people not in employment, education or training: Characteristics, costs and policy responses in Europe. Publications Office of the European Union. Luxembourg.

patterns, determinants and consequences of being NEET identified? Though individual characteristics play an important role into and out of the transition into NEET spells, different trajectories produced by labour market conditions, educational institutions and policies (Levels et al., 2022; Pemberton, 2008) and varying number of NEETs in different countries remains as an issue to be explained. Before looking into the proportions, causes and effects of NEETs in different settings, an analysis of literature concerning the origins, explanatory power and limitations of the concept is going to be discussed to better understand the scope and limitations of the concept.

2.4. A critique of the term and international approaches

NEET has made its stage entrance as an alternative concept in the labour market research (Levels et al., 2022) to research and better understand the complicated and diversified school-to-work transitions. While some scholars evaluate the heterogeneous quality of the term as challenging (Furlong, 2006; 2007; Yates and Payne, 2006; Serracant, 2014) some others claim that it serves an important function for researchers who are interested in youth inactivity beyond youth unemployment (Levels et al., 2022), and underscoring that unemployment is only a partial indicator of employment problems (Ryan, 2001). Dietrich (2013), in this vein, claims that NEET category holds more explanatory power compared to youth unemployment, covering a broader base of young people out of the labour market who are inactive for several reasons other than unemployment. Dietrich (2013) also attributes more explanatory power to the concept NEET, as it is more advantageous in capturing young people who are disengaged from labour force and education (Bacher et al., 2017). Levels et al. (2022) draws a fundamental difference by underlining while NEET is conceptually related to youth unemployment, it offers inclusion of the share of all young people who might be unemployed by choice or by obligation. Though unemployment is a good measure to evaluate the difficulties faced by young people in the labor market, it does not fully capture the situation of young people who have completely retreated from education and employment (Susanlı, 2016; OECD, 2015; Levels et al., 2022). To better understand the demarcation of two different concepts, a diagram by Eurofound (2012) would be useful to look at:

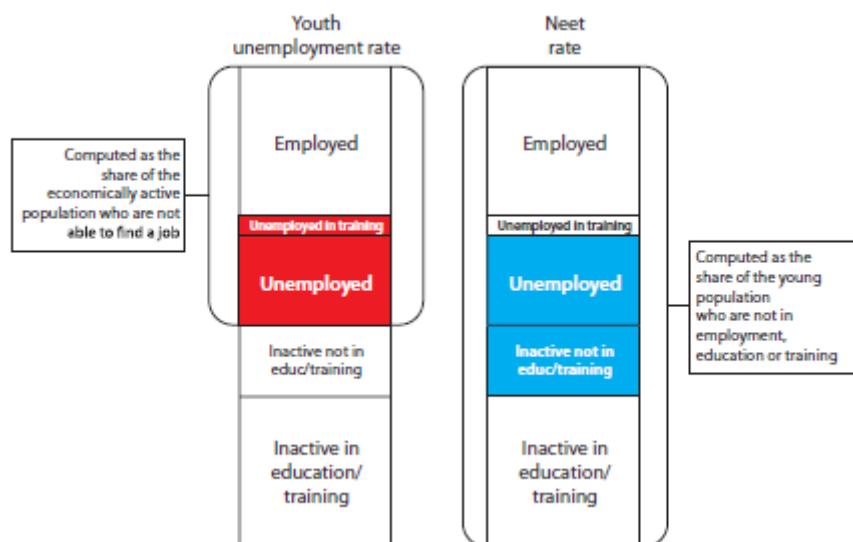


Figure 3. Differences between the youth unemployment rate and the NEET rate (Eurofound, 2012:23)⁷

It can be seen from the diagram that while youth unemployment rate refers economically active portion of the population who are out of employment, NEET rate refers to the share of young people within the total population who are inactive due to not being in employment, education or training (Eurofound, 2012). This leads to us to the conclusion that NEET numbers can be higher than the unemployed, while NEET rate is lower than youth unemployment rate. This is why though the two concepts are interrelated, the rates of NEET and unemployment are not directly comparable, because they measure by different denominators (Eurofound, 2012).



Figure 4. Different denominators (Eurofound, 2012: 23)⁸

A similar point is made by ILO (2013), that NEET serves as a broader measure of potential youth labour market entrants, plus including discouraged worker youth, economically inactive due to disability and household or familial responsibilities. Useful in overcoming the limitations of youth unemployment rate by capturing

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*

different types of youth “joblessness” that fleets the conventional measures of unemployment and not depending solely on administrative reports of unemployment (OECD, 2010), NEET has become an important indicator for political actors who desire to target youth inactivity (Levels et al., 2022). The term has also gained considerable popularity on European Union’s social policy agenda and has been found to be a good indicator to better understand the vulnerabilities of young people and multifaceted disadvantages young people face associated with labour market and social inclusion, along with spurring an awareness in targeting disengaged young people for policy makers in Europe (Eurofound, 2016).

Many scholars, on the other side, point out to problematic and conflictive nature of the concept. Yates and Payne, 2006; Furlong 2006; 2007; Finlay, et al., 2010; Serracant, 2014; Bacher et al., 2017, Rocca, et al., 2022). Yates and Payne (2006) finds the concept problematic on grounds that it defines young people by what they are not and classifies a heterogeneous mix of young people under a negatively perceived label. In addition to the negative connotations of the concept (Serracant, 2014), the policies shaped along with this concept accompanies a ‘fire-fighting’ approach (Furlong; 2007) to reduce NEET numbers, rather than focusing on support and intervention mechanisms. Furlong (2007) finds NEET a flawed concept due to merging a heterogeneous mix of young people, some suffering from overlapping disadvantages with another proportion of young people are labelled as NEET due to their life choices.

A similar criticism is point out by Yates and Payne (2006), that the status of being NEET is viewed inherently in a negative fashion from a policy making perspective and policies are designed with a concern of social exclusion at the core while at the same time they point out to a growing awareness to the heterogeneous quality of the targeted group. Two main problems Yates and Payne (2006) identify with the use of the NEET label and assumed social exclusion it entails are conceptual and practical, the first referring to problems about the way NEET categorization leads to the recognition of a proportion of young people going through very different challenges, risks and transitions by policy makers and practitioners, while the second points to practical problems related to target setting and effectiveness of the interventions. The usage of the universal category of NEET fails to do justice to those who are in a transitory state of life that make them automatically a NEET, young parents who

consciously make a decision to become a NEET to take care of parenting responsibilities and who are under the effect of overlapping disadvantageous situations that create the risks more serious than being a NEET. Scholars find the usefulness of categorization of NEET debatable for young people under multiple risks of homelessness, offensive acts, emotional or behavioral problems, academic underachievement, substance abuse and disabilities because it leads to a waving aside more complicated problems at stake, that can hardly be dealt only with education or training (Yates and Payne, 2006; Finlay et al., 2010).

In addition to defining an important part of the nation's youth by what they are not only failing to differentiate between the situations of different groups in this cohort, the second problem with NEET approach according to this group of scholars is that it diverts the policy design process from more urgent interventions addressing above mentioned complications to movement of young people from NEET to EET category. That is, the policy effort concentrates around moving NEETs to EET status, rather than putting forward a preventive approach to those who are under the risk of social exclusion or of becoming NEET, before they become one (Yates and Payne, 2006). Quantitative and standardized performance indicators that aim to reduce number of NEETs leads to the problematic viewpoint of seeing young people socially excluded and difficult to employ (Weil et al., 2005) or workshy and unemployable (Furlong, 2006) when the problem nor solution lies there. They also point out to the trap of precarious and short-term cycles of employment for young people, which schemes aiming to reduce NEET numbers seem to miss. Furthermore, focusing on the NEET status bring the risk of focusing on subgroups who are not disadvantaged in particular and turning a blind eye on short term and insecure forms of employment (Furlong, 2006).

Some scholars conducted studies over the transfer of the term to other country contexts and commented on the negative connotations attached to it (Inui, 2005; Genda, 2007; Serracant, 2014) and operational disadvantages when assessing the situation of inactivity, unemployment or precarious employment (Inui, 2005; Serracant, 2014; Elder, 2015). While all of the scholars touch upon the problem of heterogeneity and offer solutions to reduce it, they point out to different complications in operationalization of the indicator. In the Japanese case, due to exclusion of the

unemployed who are looking for work from the official NEET definition among young people from 15 to 34 years old out of the labour force, single, not engaged in education and housekeeping, mass media and political viewpoint associates NEET inactivity with a lack of desire to work (Inui, 2015; Genda, 2007). However, when data is more closely scrutinized, Inui (2015) concludes that there is an important proportion of young people among NEETs who are willing to work but facing circumstantial and labour market difficulties, while the other portion includes a small group of individual engaged in volunteer activity or efforts for artistic aspirations. To further complicate the case in Japan, 'freeter' category is employed to refer to young people who switch between temporary or part-time jobs and not in education with an implication that freeters avoid regular job and long-run career aspirations. This assumption is again, problematic to Inui (2015) because data shows that those who desire for a regular job are on the majority among the unemployed youth, but many settle for part-time or temporary work due to the fact that it is what can get. Freeters suffer from a situation coined as the 'NEET churn' (Furlong, 2006, Pemberton, 2008) moving through categories of freeter, unemployed and NEET in between unstable and informal jobs and facing difficulties in entrance to regular labour market. Inui (2015) and Genda (2007) conclude that a positive correlation exists between disadvantaged family background, low qualification and academic level of the family, which evokes assumptions related to growing inequality over the last decade.

Other scholars and policy circles offered different subcategorizations for NEET subgroups to tackle the problem of heterogeneity. Williamson (2010) makes a differentiation between the 'essentially confused' 'temporarily side-tracked' and the 'deeply alienated' and underlines the need for devising different policy solutions for each group. According to Williamson (2010), while the first group is ready and willing to be included in training or employment with right policy intervention and support, the second group needs attention and patience in means of other important matters in their lives such as young parenthood or exploring opportunities outside formal job market. While these two groups cannot be deemed 'disaffected', the third group is in deep risk of being socially excluded and hard to persuade to be reengaged into education or employment due to having 'switched off' completely or having 'switched

on' to drug abuse and engagement in illegal or informal economies. These groups definitely have to be handled and addressed in different ways.

ILO Technical Report (2015) account on the operationalization of two different NEET definitions (strict, excluding unemployed students; broad, including all unemployed) in 41 developing countries provides valuable insight related to issues of discouragement, joblessness and marginalization/social exclusion associated with NEET status. While discouragement is found to be surprisingly low among NEETs, positive results were found on the fact that NEET status and joblessness is technically the same and NEET status results in exclusion. ILO Technical Report (2015) offers to use three separate indicators to tackle the heterogeneity issue, that is using NEET for 15-19 years old out of employment and education; unemployment for jobless young people, a rate is more accessible and defined according to international standards and finally; vulnerable employment or informal employment rate for a large number of young people working in irregular, poor quality and informal forms of employment in developing countries.

Serracant (2014), provides an account of the term's journey to Spain and an examination of its implications. Similar to Japanese reception, NEET has attained a negative character in Spain, pointing out to a value crisis on account of idleness, effort avoidance of the new generation, labelled as 'Generación ni-ni' (Serracant, 2014). In addition to problems of heterogeneity, oblivion of other groups and defective policies which solely focus on achieving a change in the status from NEET to EET, Serracant (2014) points out to two more problems of NEET conceptualization. The first problem is 'individualization' of the problem which obscures the fact that employment status is linked to immediate opportunities an individual can reach and depend on the interaction between labour markets and social distribution of education achievement (Thompson, 2011; Pemberton, 2008). The second is youngness of the phenomenon, which disregards the alternative analyses that show the status of NEET exists in all age groups and is more related to precarity (Standing, 2011) and the secondary labour market (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2007), phenomena involving all age cohorts. Similar to ILO (2015) report, upon running a NEET- standard and NEET-restricted comparison, Serracant (2014) offers an alternative design to the concept. A NEET-restricted indicator referring to inactive non studying people between the ages of 16-

64 is more limitative in means of social exclusion and might allow more focused policies (Serracant, 2014). The role of structural factors such as economic cycles and social inequalities should be recognized in relation to status of being NEET, rather than explaining the NEET status predominantly on personal choice (Inui, 2015; Serracant, 2014; Furlong, 2007).

Finally, Eurofound report (2016; 2017) offers seven subcategories to disentangle the heterogeneity of NEETs and how to prioritize policy responses on the criteria of duration of unemployment, building upon the data offered by Eurofound report (2012) in 2012: re-entrants, short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, unavailable due to illness of disability, unavailable due to family responsibilities, discouraged workers and other inactive.



Figure 5. Disaggregation of the NEET population (Eurofound, 2016:33)⁹

The four of the seven categories are labour-market driven (re-entrants, short-term unemployed, long-term unemployed, unavailable due to illness of disability) while three are inactivity driven (unavailable due to family responsibilities, discouraged workers and other inactive) (Mascherini, 2019).

This kind of elaboration of the NEET disaggregation into seven groups with a focus on staying NEET by looking into the intersection points of different reasons for

⁹ Eurofound. (2016). Exploring the diversity of NEETs: Country profiles. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

becoming a NEET offers a refined categorization for better informed policies. The first two categories have the lowest risk of social exclusion due to moderate durations of disengagement and higher possibilities of returning to education or employment. Long-term unemployed and discouraged workers are under high risk of social exclusion due to lifelong disengagement, loss of human capital and poor employment outcomes. Unavailable due to illness or disability are highly in need of social support, financial aid and facilitated access to education and labour market due to their health conditions. Unavailable due to family responsibilities are a mix of vulnerable and non-vulnerable and mostly made up of young women. This group needs targeted policy responses and support to reroute to education or labour market. Lastly, other inactives are composed of young people who do not fall under any above mentioned categories and stand at the extremes of spectrum of vulnerability. They are either totally disengaged, deeply alienated and hard to reach or the most privileged exploring their talents, taking their time out or have limited presence in formal education or employment.

The aforementioned report also offers an operationalization to track NEETs with the same logic:

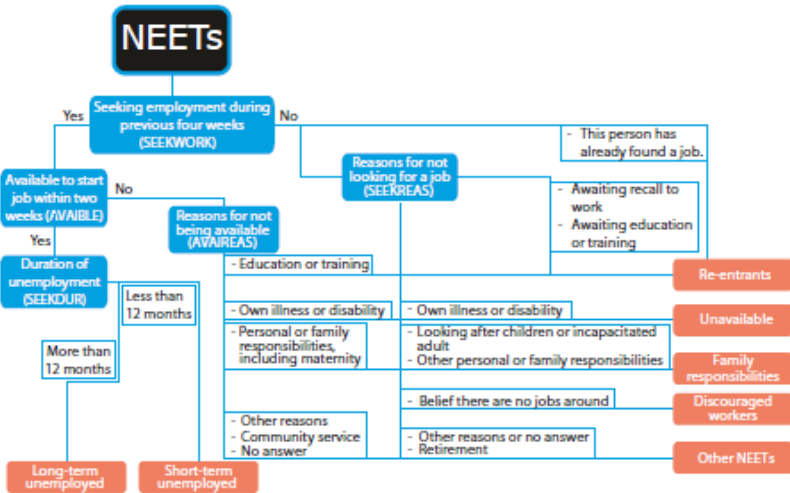


Figure 6. Operationalisation of the disaggregation of the NEET indicator (Eurofound, 2016:34)¹⁰

¹⁰ *ibid.*

This kind of operationalization provides insight for regional categorization, research on NEETs and reference points for tailored policy responses. European Union agencies on this regard, presuppose that NEET is the best proxy indicator (Eurofound, 2016) to capture the extent of young people's disadvantages and enables policy making agencies or policy entrepreneurs to bring particular populations such as young mothers or young people with disabilities to the center of the policy debate without marginalizing them.

2.5. Chapter overview

This chapter took an attempt to cover the conceptual debates on global social policy, global social governance and the dissemination of the indicator NEET as a policy idea to address emerging vulnerabilities of young people. The theoretical lens to make sense of policy shift and policy transfer is identified as the global social policy, which is explanatory in means of the increasing tendency of applying programmatic schemes designed and dispersed by supranational/international bodies and the international community to address domestic social problems. The discursive practices and soft power of these organization are pivotal in global social governance sphere since they take the lead the production of quantitative data and set the ideological frame to address NEETs within a specific economic context. Within this frame, a comprehensive analysis of the discursive practices and policy schemes drawn by international bodies and their relation to national governmental agencies is carried out. The discussions aimed to underline the trend in globalization of social policies as well as the socialization of global problems. Discussions surrounding global social policy suggest that while globalization sets welfare states in competition with each other and break down the traditional welfare paradigm associated with work and security, it also raises social policy issues to international and supranational levels. The complexity of policy making for changing social needs and risks in a globalized world and the imperative to keep up with increased global economic rivalry, states engage in consulting to intergovernmental agencies for policy prescriptions or supranational policy transfer more and more. This brings the international agencies and their discursive practices influencing the ideational frames informing certain policy areas within a country and bringing about a paradigm change and policy shifts, which is discussed under the concept of global 'social' governance. In relation to global social

governance practices, the emergence and dissemination of NEET as a concept to refer, measure and address various difficulties young people are facing during school to work transitions is investigated, along with the international response from different countries, international and transnational governance agencies.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter is going to explain the methodological approach that informs this thesis and methods that had been employed to gather empirical information in the following chapters which cover fieldwork findings. For this purpose, first the main focus and key research questions will be outlined. Secondly, key techniques to the specific approach that is selected are going to be justified.

3.1. Methodological Approach

The main focus of this thesis is to examine the repercussions of international/global social policy initiatives on NEETs in Turkey. Within this focus, current policy agenda targeting youth unemployment from a larger perspective and NEETs more specifically set by institutions of global governance will be of main concern. For this purpose, approaches by international institutions to address NEETs will be followed by existent policy interventions in Turkey, mainly through cooperation between ministries and international bodies. NEETs are a fairly new social concern in Turkey, the concept transferred to formal policy agendas following a growing concern on the global social policy scenery and with non-governmental bodies conducting research and producing policy recommendations on the subject. To this end, the study will make use of open resources which are published by the governmental bodies such as development reports, strategy papers, statistical data, etc. as well as public agendas, reports and end-reports of international governmental organizations. Though Turkey accumulated a significant history of international cooperation for policy implementations, cooperation with the aim of targeting young people and specifically NEETs is rather young and under-

investigated. The study aims to investigate the nature of this cooperation, policy shift and policy transfer with its implications for future policies.

3.3. Primary sources and Field Study: Key informant interviews

With the aim of documenting and understanding the impact of global social governance practices on national policy formation processes, key informants have been consulted to gain insight and examine the available literature by fieldwork. For this purpose, the field study comprises of interviews with key informants from international bodies, governmental institutions and civil society organizations who play a key role in design and implementation of programmatic interventions addressing NEETs in Turkey. Conducting interviews with the members of a community engaged in making and implementation of policies at given circumstances is found useful to contextualize and deepen the understanding for this specific strand of social policy. The interviews are designed in a semi-structured and in-depth style, to enable key informants share their ideas and experiences extensively. The thesis aims to examine the existing policy schemes from varying angles by interviewing a number of stakeholders from different organizations with diverse interests, scope of action and discursive or legislative power.

By the same token, to get a clearer snapshot of the dynamic policy making arena, the study aims to include viewpoints of ‘key informant persons’, who are “‘Encultured informants and key members in a community.” (O’Reilly, 2008). Key informant speaker interview is a technique originally used in anthropological studies, as a method of gathering expert knowledge from integral members of a community (Tremblay, 1957; McKenna and Main, 2013). They are representative of a community and its perspectives (McKenna and Main, 2013) in the sense that they hold key information, special knowledge or status and access to particular resources, populations, organizations, gatekeepers, etc. (Mack et al., 2005). Using key informant technique is found useful for contributing “to the development of a picture of the beliefs and practices of a community” (LeCompte and Schensul, 2010). Key informants are deemed highly knowledgeable about their culture and

community and their *representativeness* of a group provides valuable information about their community.

The technique used to interview the key informants has been in-depth interviews, aiming to get a full picture of the experience, view point of the person as well as understanding the policy ecosystem the interviewee is operating. Despite the qualitative emphasis of the technique, it is possible to extract a high degree of quantitative data from a key informant (Tremblay, 1957), who might possess specific and up-to-date information about the targeted group or topic. This kind of data has been integrated to the research. The interviews are structured loosely, to give space and opportunity to the speaker to express oneself without feeling the pressure to having to choose between listed options as it is the case in a survey method. However, questions were grouped under certain themes and the titles of the themes have been shared with the interviewee to prevent a total randomness. If the informant's conversation diverted from the topic and became repetitive, this framework was helpful to bring her/him back to the main focus of the interview, but without forcing her/him to any predetermined resolution (Tremblay, 1957). Therefore, the interviews with such key informants can be described as 'non-directive' or 'speaker centered' (Heyrman and Goedhuys, 2001), in the sense that the speaker can express her/his ideas and comments exhaustively within the limits of the research. The technique is designed to be flexible in the sense that the interviewee is *encouraged* to follow a line of thought with relative freedom, by the assistance of the interviewer.

Tremblay's (1957) guidance can be useful on how and which criteria will be used on selection of key informants. Tremblay (1957) speaks about *a focused use of key informants*, which addresses an approach unlike the use of the technique in anthropology where key informants that are chosen on the basis of their contribution to our understanding of the specific culture, but rather selection of a group key informants on the basis of who might be expected to have specialized information on the particular topic (Tremblay, 1957). Instead of speaking to a large number of informants to gather exhaustive data and information as the way it is used in anthropological studies, this study will focus on a limited number of key informants who can provide valuable and critical insight on the subject.

The technique is open to self-development, as the interviews amounting can direct the researcher to omit or add questions, might be directive to new key informant speakers the researcher is unaware of or can be repeated upon new data or recollection of critical informations¹¹. McKenna and Main (2013) stress that a researcher should keep in mind that key informants might be “gatekeepers”, through which other key persons with valuable information can be reached and “...it may be essential to interview particular people merely because of their position in the context—for political reasons—rather than whether this person can actually contribute valuable knowledge to support the research process.” (Lokot, 3). Self-developing quality of the technique makes it suitable for social policy research, where policy making processes are rather long, limited to a group of governmental and non-governmental community, and take shape under a variety of socio-economic and historical forces. On the baseline, the key informants were required or expected to:

1. Provide a definition of the problem (What is NEET as a social category? Who are defined or identified as NEETs? How did NEETs become an issue of global concern and transnational social policy? What are their specifics in the Turkish context?) This will help us how NEETs are framed within the policy circles and the criteria they are identified upon.
2. Providing the limits of existing definitions and schemes relating to the problem. (Is the framework inclusive and overarching? Who is left behind? Which actors should be more involved? Which actors are excluded? Are there formal and informal boundaries among policy making bodies?)
3. To increase knowledge of the problem. (How do IGOs shape the social policy agenda on a global scale? How are these policies carried and presented to the national policy agenda? In which ways these policies affect the social policies of states? How do policy ideas are shaped on a global and national scope? How are global scale concerns framed in the national policy papers? What are the limits of

¹¹ This is exactly what happened during the field research phase. The informants provided contact information of possible other candidates whom they know from the policy making sphere; from joint programs they coordinate or meetings conducted to form a NEET policy.

cooperation? What are the conditionalities attached to transnational cooperation? Who gets what? Are the target groups addressed comprehensively?)

While the interviews were important in providing a clearer picture concerning the NEET problem and relevant policies, they were also informative about the convergence and divergence in the policy arena, on conflicting and collaborating interests, room for development or risks looming ahead. This kind of information was exposed through different perspectives and standpoints of the key informants, which may not have been explicitly stated during the interview but surfaced itself through a comprehensive analysis.

Upon considerations on selection and evaluation of the key informants and the content they provide, Tremblay (1957) provides five criteria for key informants to fulfil the expectation a researcher seeks from them: (1) role in community, (2) knowledge, (3) willingness, (4) communicability, (5) impartiality. McKenna and Main (2013) interprets these briefly as “suggested that key informants should meet the following criteria: hold formal positions in the community, have knowledge relevant to the study, be willing to share this knowledge, communicate well, and be unbiased or able to reflect upon their own biases” (McKenna and Main, 117). Tremblay (1957) emphasizes that only the first criteria is determined in advance and the rest are “apt to be largely matters of personality” (Tremblay, 1957). Once key informants are identified on the first criteria, the remaining four will be guiding in scaling the interviews on a continuum of ‘good, successful’ and ‘poorer’.

How to judge the information provided by key informants? This time, Tremblay offers to focus on (1) internal consistency, (2) productivity and (3) reliability. These three qualifications will be guiding to make a fair evaluation among the speakers. These are about provision of a consistent narrative within the bulk of information and about the speaker her/himself, provision of ample information about the subject and finally provision of correct data which can be checked from other sources. Morris (2009) warns the researchers to be aware that the information gathered from the informants reflect their subjective perspectives and meanings that arise in the interviews, and not the objective truth. McKenna and Main (2013) suggests critically examining the social positions and roles of key informants to

overcome this kind of fallacy. Therefore, information provided by key informants will be viewed as an opportunity to explore multiple perspectives within a specific socio-economical context they operate in rather than closed-end truths¹².

Lastly, the selection of informants is another subject that needs to be touched upon. A preliminary list of probable key informants was prepared on the basis of their representative status as well as their potential of providing a true, reliable and useful information about the subject. The list was designed to be tentative comprehending the risks that some might not be willing to share information or might display some sort of lack of information about the subject, other operational inconveniences or additions can be made to the list. The interviewees were identified from open and available policy documents, reports and surveys and reached through e-mail. They were provided with the information and scope of the research and were ensured that a conflict of interest is avoided on grounds that the interviewer does not operate under or in the name of any institution. Key informants were selected on their representative quality (role in the community), knowledge (whether they are currently working or have worked and are informed in the area of NEET policies), willingness (they have been demanded to sign a form of voluntary participation and the ones who refused to have been excluded from the analysis), communicability (the ones who were not available or unwilling have been excluded from the analysis) and impartiality (the informants were informed that interviews are designed in a way to expose the technical aspects of the NEET policy discussion and representative roles of their institutions, rather than their personal thoughts).

3.4. Limitations

Existence and direction of an extensive NEET policy in Turkey is debatable and it would be correct to say it is in the making process under significant influence of international cooperation and engagement. For this reason, perspectives and ideational direction of the expert community are key to understand the nature and shape Turkish NEET policy is taking in the near future. Though evaluating the

¹² This kind of cross checking has been carried out in the analysis section, from the available literature and the data.

final effects of implemented programs within the scope of international cooperation is beyond the limits of this study, insight provided by key informants can enable us to take the picture of the policy scenery at a given time. This is the reason a qualitative method has been selected, which has proven to be very useful in research trying to explain developmental and historical processes within institutions, communities and market (Sofaer, 1999). While they enable us to describe the events, they also enhance our perspective about how and why they are interpreted in different ways by different stakeholders (Sofaer, 1999; Heyrman and Goedhuys, 2001), which is highly central to design and implementation of policies. As Innes and Booher (2003) underline, the explanatory power of in-depth key informant interview method to capture how collaborative policy dialogues with multiple stakeholders operate in practice and how they differ from traditional policymaking.

Methodological conundrums while studying global or transnational social policy are addressed by Yeates (2018). While trying to understand the nature of border spanning practices and relations which shape and connect social policies across countries and regions, delineation of where national policy ends and where international policy making processes interfere does yield a smooth inference. Yeates (2018) points out to two starting points for this task. The first is identification of diverse actors, structures, sites, spheres and ideas related to the interactions between national and transnational social policies and secondly, considering the implications of these globalizing process and forces for social policy analysis. Social policy, as its basic definition suggests, can be understood as collective interventions and actions by national governments and NGOs, namely, a political practice of social and political actors, as well as a subject of academic research and study. Two broader questions are proposed by Yeates (2018) within the perspective of global social policy studies in line with these two given positions. Can social policy be understood as the outcome of sociopolitical forces rooted only within domestic spheres of governance and can social policy be any longer studied in isolation in a globalizing world, disregarding the embeddedness of governments in larger international society?

These questions have constituted the focus of the present research. The study aims to contextualize social policies concerning NEETs both in a global and national perspective and analyze how unifying forces of neoliberalism and globalism take hold of the content and direction of social policies shaped through border spanning influence of international organizations. The first step is to identify the transnational actors within a policy sphere and address how they attempt to frame and influence policy problems and provision of social policies and how they interact with domestic actors. For this reason, a group of key informants in international organizations, NGOs and governmental bodies operating in Turkey specifically for this policy agenda are selected to provide a 360 degree understanding regarding the NEET policy in Turkey.

The second challenge Yeates (2018) points out to is to identify forms and loci of transnational social policies, which informs the activities of non-elite actors operating in social spheres that are not directly included in the policy making sphere. Global social governance is not only multi-tiered, but also multi-sphered in this sense. Yeates (2018) speaks of ‘embedded transnationalism’ as a useful concept for recognition of existence of transnational spheres not directly included in formal policy making processes. While vocabulary of levels and tiers presume a hierarchy with supranational entities at the top and local bodies at the bottom and power running through the echelons of this structure, a more constructive and prolific perspective is to see different levels and foci as parts of an overall system where all parts affect each other and where influence travels multi-directionally. Therefore, identification of such agents are important in disentangling the effect of transnational governance because in policy making and policy transfer practices, local actors such as NGOs, local authorities, local expertise, etc. are appealed to as a strategy to shape the course national social policy. For this reason, experts from local NGOs, local researchers and local experts operating within the international domain were included in the research with the aim of understanding and answering questions related to what extent local actors are involved and included in the course shaping of domestic policy. To address this challenge, interviewed persons are groups in line with their “sphere” of action, whom they represent and with which other actors they are in coordination in their operations. In this line, five spheres

of policy action were identified with regards to NEETs, including governmental/public institutions, international agencies, civil society organizations, social partners and independent experts. At least one key informant speaker was included in each group to target representativeness. Some were identified through research and reached via e-mail while some were suggested and introduced by preliminary interviewees.

3.5 Operationalization of the field research

The following chapters aim to analyze the policy making structure in Turkey with regards to NEETs with a perspective of global social governance. The analysis is based on three pillars of information; (i) the literature, (ii) open national and international policy documents and most prominently, (iii) the inputs provided by the key informant speakers presented in the Table below. With the aim of presenting the perspectives of a number of institutions and their projections about policies regarding NEETs in relation to global social governance and to ensure full relevancy of interviews, key informants and institutions selected were based on:

(i) area of activity (the institution/organization),

(ii) professional background or current experience (key informant speaker),

To provide a sample reflecting all necessary perspectives in the policy making process, key informant speakers who were communicated by the researcher were selected from governmental institutions, international organizations, civil society organizations, social partners and independent experts. However, it was not possible to conduct interviews with every single institution or key informant speaker since not all experts communicated via e-mail or phone were available for various reasons. Still, at least one respondent from each aforementioned party was achieved to be included in the analysis, so that the representativeness of the sample is not damaged. The interviews took place in September, October and November 2022 and carried out through face-to-face and online meetings, depending on the availability and will of the respondents.

Table 2. Data collection through in-depth interviews with key informants

Type of Organization	Key Informants	Professional background and current experience
Governmental Institution	KI1	Employment policies, international cooperation with a focus on employment, NEET/youth employment policies, policy coordination and implementation
	KI2	Employment policies, international cooperation with a focus on employment, NEET/youth employment policies, policy coordination and implementation
	KI3	Socio economic development, state budgeting, youth employment, NEETs
	KI4	Employment policies, policy planning and coordination
International Organization	KI5	International cooperation, employment and education policies with a specific focus on youth
	KI6	International cooperation, regional/rural development, public finance, youth and women employment/empowerment, NEETs
	KI7	International cooperation, EU social policy, human capital development, employment policies with a focus on youth and gender and NEETs
Civil Society Organization	KI8	Youth and gender research and policy, regional development, impact analysis
Social Partner	KI9	International cooperation, industrial relations, women and youth empowerment
Independent Expert	KI10	Employment and training expert, youth employment policies

The semi-structured interviews were designed with the aim of exposing (i) the NEET concept and its relevance in the Turkish context, (ii) causes and effects of the phenomena for NEET in Turkey, with a view to exploring (iii) policy responses to the global social governance of NEETs. The analysis aims to expose the introduction and reception of the NEET concept in the Turkish social policy agenda, how the country specific dynamics translate to institutional configurations and the nature and extend of NEET agenda in Turkey in relation with the global social policy agenda.

The literature review presented in the second chapter guided the themes to provide a full scale analysis of the policy making process in Turkey with regards to NEETs. The relevancy of themes for all respondents from a variety of backgrounds and institutions were paid special regard to, with the aim of enabling a 360-degree analysis of the policy making process. This approach enabled the researcher to understand the convergence and divergence between the perspectives of different institutions on multiple levels such as governmental and non-governmental, national and international, policy designer and policy implementer. Their intersecting and conflicting views on policies regarding NEETs is sure to enrich the analysis on how the policies for NEETs are designed, the challenges and bottlenecks in the process and opportunities for better informed and targeted policy design.

CHAPTER 4

THE CASE OF TURKEY: NEETS AND EXISTING POLICY FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims to explore the concept of NEETs and its governance in Turkey, against the background of the global use and functioning of the concept discussed in the previous chapters. Turkey is one of the countries which has recently started implementing programs targeting NEETs along with development plans and strategy papers through governmental institutions. The section aims to provide information and analysis on the general outlook of the state on young population, youth employment trends in Turkey, NEETs in Turkey and their intrinsic qualities, legal framework informing the policies of NEETs and relevant policies and finally, an overview of international cooperation effort for policies targeting NEETs. Though literature on Turkish NEETs is relatively thin, this section attempts to make the most of the available data from TURKSTAT, EUROSTAT, OECD and available reports to capture the most recent trends of young populations and NEETS in Turkey

4.1. Overview of Young Population, Youth Employment and NEETs in Turkey

4.1.1. Population Dynamics and Young Population in Turkey

Turkey is characterized by high young population aged between 15-24 when compared to the total population of the country. From the onset of 2000s, Turkey has been going through a demographic window of opportunity (Tansel, 2012; Kılıç, 2014; World Bank, 2017; UNDP, 2019; YGA, 2020; Lüküslü and Çelik, 2021), in the light of the “theory of demographic transition” (Tansel, 2012), where a country reaches highest young population. Young population since 1935 has increased steadily and reached its peak in 2016 with 12.989.042 with a proportion of 16.3 among the total population. Young population between the ages of 15-24 is recorded 12.971.289 in 2021 with a

proportion of 15.3 per cent in total population and is expected to remain high until 2050s fluctuating between 12 and 13 million approximately¹³. Same research elaborates that young population increases towards the Eastern provinces.

Among its 84680273 inhabitants, one-third is under the age of 20 with 26 521 373 and half are under the age of 30 with 39 678 775¹⁴. The working age population between 25 and 64 is expected to remain relatively high before it will start to drop until 2050s according to statistical calculations.

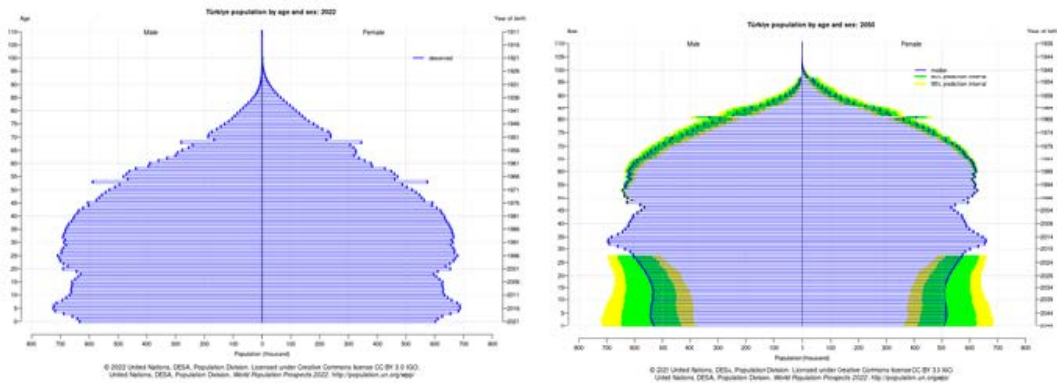


Figure 7. Population pyramids¹⁵

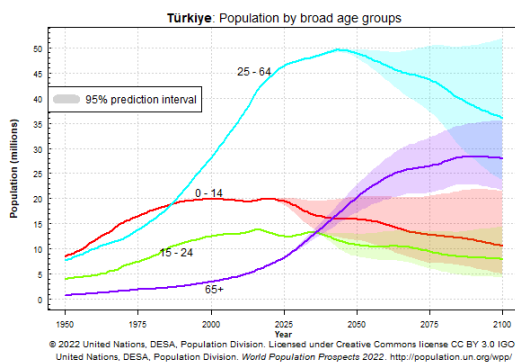


Figure 8. Population prediction by age groups¹⁶

Relatively large young population of Turkey poses socio-economic risks and opportunities simultaneously and renders policies targeting youth highly relevant. The next section will explore the dynamics of youth inactivity and unemployment of

¹³ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Genclik-2021-45634>

¹⁴ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=45500>

¹⁵ <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/Pyramid/792> reached on 08.10.2022

¹⁶ <https://population.un.org/wpp/Graphs/DemographicProfiles/Line/792>

Turkey in relation to gender, education and labour market attachment and provide current available data on Turkish NEETs.

4.1.2. NEETs in Turkey by age, gender, education and labour market status

The NEET rate in Turkey is 24,7 percent by 2021, with 17,5 percent for men and 32,4 percent for women¹⁷. NEET rates since 2006 for 15-24 and 15-29 ages are as below by EUROSTAT data:

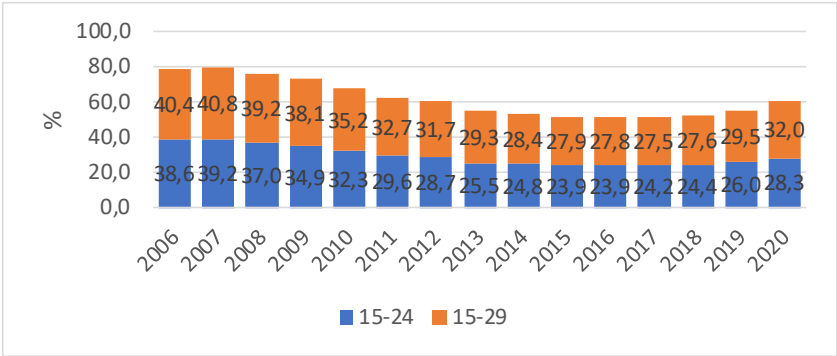


Figure 8. Proportion of NEET youth in Turkey, from 15-24, 15-29¹⁸

Women are overrepresented among the NEET youth in Turkey for both age breakdowns of 15-24 and 15-29. Though data record more female than male NEETs in most countries (Eurofound, 2016; OECD, 2016), the gender gap in Turkey is two or three times higher in Turkey, with highest proportions among OECD and EU countries.

Recent data by OECD covering a large region in means of NEET displays that Turkey ranks second following South Africa in highest rate of NEETs with a significant gender gap.

¹⁷ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Genclik-2021-45634>

¹⁸ (Source: Eurostat, October <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>)

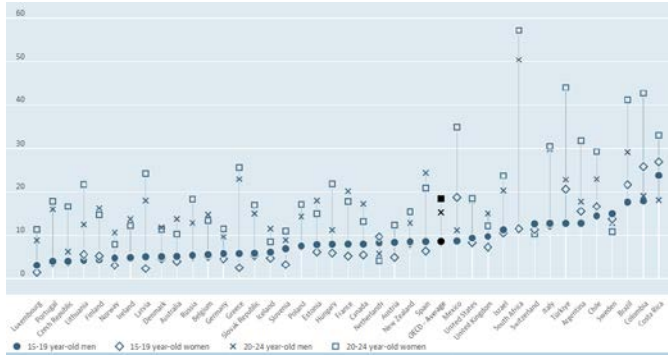


Figure 9. Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET)¹⁹

The fluctuations in NEET rates in Turkey can be further observed from the EUROSTAT data, with age breakdowns of 15-24 and 15-29.

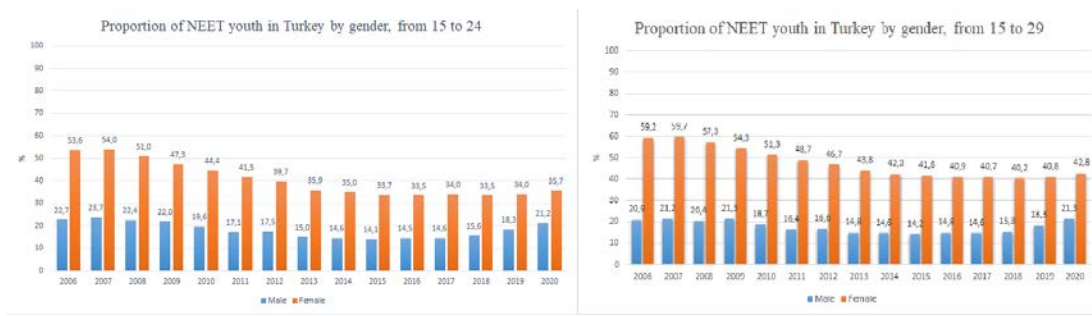


Figure 10. Proportion of NEET youth in Turkey by gender, from 15 to 24 and 15 to 29²⁰

Numeric comparison of NEETs between the ages of 15-24 and 15-29 among EU countries with Turkey for the last 10 years is as below. Though Turkey has achieved to lower NEET levels since 2011, a surge after COVID-19 pandemic is observed.

GEO/TIME	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Turkey (15-24)	3.410	3.324	2.951	2.907	2.820	2.840	2.871	2.874	3.036	3.316
Turkey (15-29)	5.825	5.654	5.210	5.088	4.997	4.991	4.940	4.926	5.225	5.700

Figure 11. Thousand person of NEETs by country of origin in comparison to EU for the last ten years, from 15-24²¹

¹⁹ OECD Employment Outlook (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1787/72d1033a-en>

²⁰ Source: Eurostat, October 2022 <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

²¹ Source: Eurostat, October 2022 <https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

For reasons of comparison, proportion of young people in total population is higher from 27 EU countries and the EU average with 15.3 % in 2021 by TURKSTAT's data²² as well as the EUROSTAT's data. Turkey has the highest share of NEETs when compared to EU countries by 2020 for age breakdowns of 15-24 and 15-29 and remains almost three times higher than the EU average with 28.3 per cent to 11 per cent and 32 per cent to 13.7 per cent for the second age group.

4.1.2.1. Education indicators in relation to NEET status

Educational outcomes in relation to the length and quality of schooling that individuals receive have significant impact on school to work transitions as well as labour market conditions and economic conditions (OECD, 2022; OECD, 2016; Eurofound 2012). Investing in education is a critical policy to prevent young people becoming NEET in the first place or to help those who need a way back to education or training to get out of the NEET status.

Education levels in Turkey have increased across the whole population and all regions, especially as a result of dissemination of higher education geographically. Turkey has also achieved elimination of illiteracy and better results with compulsory secondary education. However, female participation in education is lagging behind, in all levels²³. According to a comparison among OECD countries (OECD, 2022), Turkey ranks third in highest NEET rates among tertiary education graduates. This is an intrinsic characteristic Turkey shares with other Southern European countries Greece, Italy and Spain, which implies university degree does not guarantee smooth labour market transition.

Covid-19 pandemic had a major impact on young people's educational and employment participation, due to restrictions on social life and shrinkage of the labour market. As a vulnerable group in the labour market, young people were hit particularly hard. Lock down and social distancing measures affecting hospitality sector, where young people usually take jobs along with difficulties of finding an internship or short-term contracts lead to an increase of NEETs from an average of 14.6 percent to 16.6

²² <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Genclik-2021-45634>

²³ TURKSTAT, Youth in Statistics, 2021, file:///C:/Users/Senem/Downloads/istatistiklerle%20genclik%202021.pdf

percent between 2019 to 2020 among OECD countries (OECD, 2022). NEET rates returned back to pre-pandemic levels in 2021 in most countries, which suggest that government measures to support young people back in education, training or employment had been effective (OECD, 2022; OECD, 2021b). However still, NEET rates of Turkey remain highest among OECD countries after the pandemic (OECD, 2022).

In a cross country comparison in long term unemployment (12 months or more) levels among tertiary-educated workers, Turkey ranks highest sixth, where below upper secondary or post-secondary non tertiary graduates have lower rates in long term unemployment (OECD, 2022). This data suggests that university graduates wait longer for jobs better matching their qualifications in Turkey and that required qualifications in the labour market in Turkey is more in line with skills attained in upper secondary or post-secondary non tertiary education. This pattern of long-term unemployment rates higher among adults with higher educational attainment is observed among countries which tend to have per capita GDP levels that are below the OECD level with weaker unemployment protection schemes (OECD, 2022). This might also lead to the assumption that poorer unemployed adults with lower educational attainment levels need to find a job more urgently. High inactivity rates among tertiary educated young people aged between 25-34 in Turkey suggest that high inactivity among women due to caring responsibilities might be the reason for this. Economic inactivity and its reasons for women in Turkey is going to be discussed in more detail in the upcoming sections under gender being a cause of the NEET status.

The graphical outlook of the table above is provided to get a clearer picture of how educational levels interact with the NEET status. It is observed that while the illiterate young people are the most disadvantageous in means of economic or educational activity in the following phases of life, NEET status increases by educational levels in Turkey.

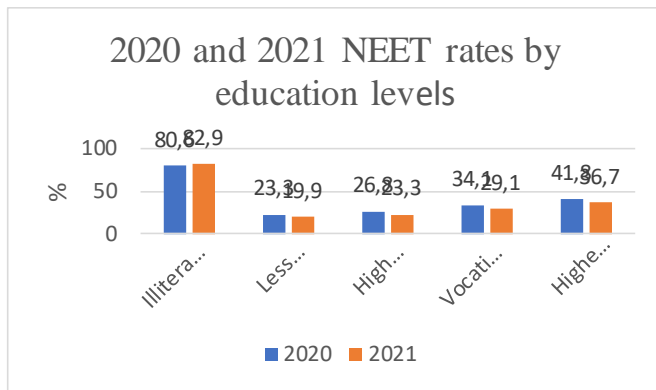


Figure 12. Breakdown of NEETs in 2020 and 2021 by education levels²⁴

According to breakdown between male and female NEETs between the ages of 15-25 in 2020 and 2021, disadvantage based on gender persists with same trend NEET rates increasing with education level.

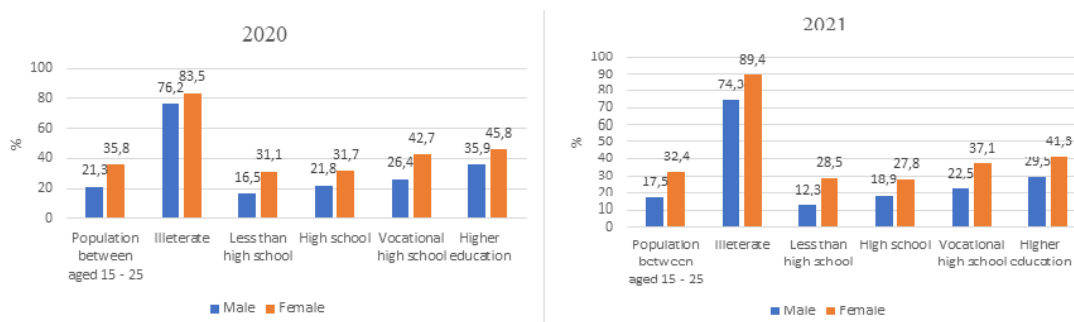


Figure 13. Breakdown of NEETs in 2020 by education levels and gender for 2020 and 2021²⁵

As an outcome that may be caused by several factors from poverty to traditional norms, early school leaving is also an important factor in becoming NEET in the following phases of life. Early school leaving in Turkey rate is one of the highest among OECD countries by 2014 data and remains higher among women (OECD, 2016).

Out-of-school rates are defined as the percentage of children in the official age range for a given level of education who are not enrolled in school, an indicator monitored by Social Development Goals (OECD, 2021a). The available data by 2019 registers high upper secondary out-of-school rates for Turkey, way above the OECD average. To tackle with the effects of COVID-19 pandemic hampering face-to-face education

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ *ibid.*

risking many young people not being able to return to school, Turkish government provided financial initiatives such as cash, food, transport or wavier (OECD, 2021a).

According to the latest TUKSTAT data for 2020 and 2021, Turkey achieved to reduce rates of early school leaving. It can be observed that not wanting to work is high among unemployed early school leavers.

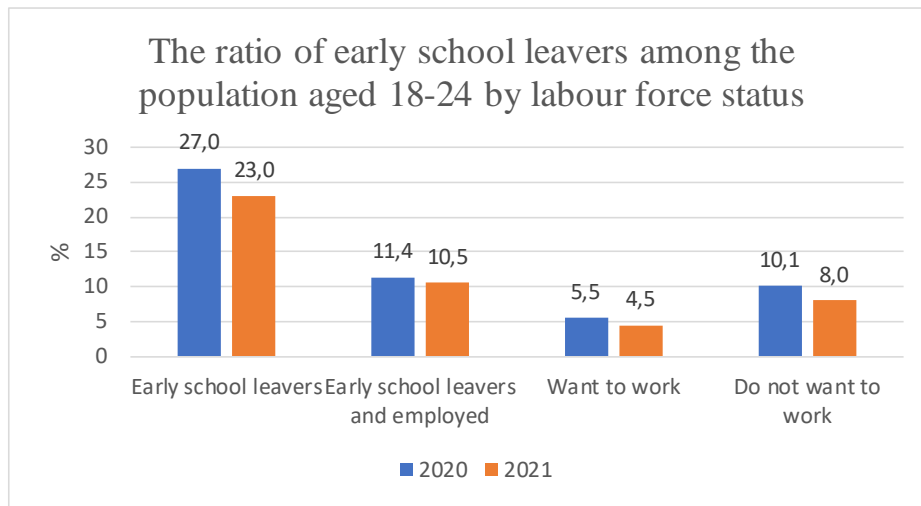


Figure 14. Early school leavers' rate in 2020 and 2021 between ages 18-24²⁶

Upper secondary education is accepted as a milestone in “navigating the modern economy and society”, meaning it is not only a key factor in employment but also an ensuring factor in higher social connectivity (OECD, 2021a). Turkey displays a steady decrease in the share of young adults with below upper secondary attainment as their highest level of education from more than 50 percent for 25-34 ages by 2010 by 10 per cent. The percentage of young adults with below upper secondary attainment as the highest level of education is more than 40 percent in Turkey. By 2020, 58 percent of Turkey’s population aged between 25-64 has below upper secondary education as the highest level of educational attainment, followed with 20 percent for upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary and 22 percent with tertiary education (OECD, 2021a).

²⁶ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Yuksekokretim-Istihdam-Gostergeleri-2021-45865>

4.1.2.2. Labour market status of young people in relation to NEET status

The previous chapters attempted to provide the NEET's status in Turkey with the latest data available, as well as positioning Turkey in a global and cross-country perspective. Youth employment is seen as an important factor for social cohesion and from a macro-economic perspective, persistently high rates of youth unemployment and inactivity constitute a loss of economic opportunity on individual and societal level (OECD, 2016; Eurofound, 2012). Large differences between countries in means of NEET rates exist, which indicate that institutional and macro-structural characteristics are at play effecting country specific distributions (Levels et al., 2022; Eurofound, 2012). Analyzing the NEET phenomenon is more about understanding the labour market trajectories of young people interacting with structural conditions which shape their lives and preferences than providing a single snapshot of youth experiencing labour market detachment at one point (YGA, 2020). Labour market integration or detachment relies on important determinants of youth integration opportunities, pointed out as institutional configurations of education and training system (existence of apprenticeship systems), the labour market and welfare state (employment protection legislation, minimum wages, active support of NEET young people) and specific macro-structural conditions (aggregate economic conditions and youth cohort sizes) (Eurofound, 2012). A similar configuration is laid out by Levels et al., (2022), pointing out to an interaction between the individual circumstances and institutional contexts where labour market conditions, educational institutions and policies generate different trajectories in and out of NEET in different countries.

The youth unemployment along with youth inactivity stands as a challenge on national agendas. Labour force participation rate of young people aged between 15-24 has been steadily declining from 53.1 to 41.2 from 1999 to 2019 globally, with large disparities across regions according to estimations of ILO (2020). While this trend is a reflection of increased enrolment in secondary and tertiary education, growing NEET ratios are pointing out to a growing gap between better skilled and non-skilled, active and inactive group of young people. Due to their limited work experience and other structural barriers in the first entry to labour market, young people tend to be unemployed three times as likely as adults. ILO (2020) estimates that one-fifth of young people are currently in the NEET status globally, approximating to 267 million

among a total of 1.3 billion. The same study states that the NEET youth rate has not displayed a significant decrease since 2005, a situation with implications of scarring effects and growing generational poverty and inequality.

The decrease in the share of young people participating to labour force (employment-to-population ratio) globally from 1999 to 2019 from 46.4 per cent to 35.6 is substantial. One reason is longer duration spent in education with increased rates or enrollment in secondary and tertiary education. This represents an opportunity for a better skilled adult labour force across nations. However also at the same time, school to work transitions are not as straightforward as it was, nor irreversible. 77 per cent of the whole population of young people are engaged in informal work and a large proportion are NEETs. While there are more girls and young women in education more than ever, the gender gap is persistent especially across Africa, the Arab States, the Asia and the Pacific. Women are particularly vulnerable in means of entering and holding on to the labour market where mean age at first marriage is younger and traditionally seen as the main caregivers and a source of unpaid household labour along with obstacles in the labour market such as gender discrimination and lack of women friendly work environments. Long term unemployment on behalf of young people are of particular concern, as it generates scarring effects, such as income penalty and decreased well-being (Eurofound, 2017).

NEETs are a group particularly vulnerable in means of labour market attachment because not only they are unemployed, but also because they are not accumulating human capital. If NEETs are imagined along a continuum of diversity between the voluntary and advantaged and involuntary and disadvantaged, the disadvantaged are either discouraged in means of finding secure employment, some do not know how or where to look for jobs, some are engaged in family responsibilities, while some others are preferring to wait until an opportunity matching their skills or aspirations comes along and some other are suffering from health issues or disability. The NEET rates are projected to rise to 22.3 in 2020 from 22.2 per cent by 0.1 and further to 22.5 per cent in 2021 (ILO, 2020).

NEETs are pointed out as a group among youth with special vulnerabilities such as low skill set, poverty and social exclusion risks by the National Youth Employment

Strategy (2021). NEET rates have risen since 2019 from 26.0 per cent with 3 million 39 thousand persons to 28.3 per cent with 3 million 317 thousand persons in 2020 and identified as 23.5 per cent with 2 million 805 thousand persons by the second half of 2021. Gender gap is almost by half with 16.2 per cent for ages 15-19 and 26.6 per cent for ages 20-24 and 21.6 per cent for ages 25-29 for men while it is respectively, 23.5 per cent, 48.1 and 56.2 respectively for women by 2020. Rates considered, young women NEETs step forth as a group which needs special attention (National Youth Employment Strategy, 2021).

In this vein, NEETs have entered the Turkish policy agenda. According to the National Youth Employment Strategy (2021) labour market participation of young people between 15-24 ages is 45 per cent by 2019, 33 per cent for women and 57 per cent for men. It is also commented that a correlation exists between unemployment and higher education levels, an indicator which tells that job seekers' ratio is higher among higher education graduates. Young people are determined as a group which need targeted policy action by this document within the scope of 11th Development Plan targeting to decrease the youth unemployment level to 17.8 per cent by 2023. The reasons for relatively high youth unemployment rates are a result of gender disparity in labour market participation, high unemployment rates among vocational school and university graduates and a prevalent skills mismatch problem stemming from lack of enough jobs on the market for higher education graduates. Relatively higher labour market participation among young people with lower educational attainment is justified on grounds that they tend to settle down for lower wages and decreased selectivity and expectations.

The rationale for high youth unemployment rates also apply to relatively high NEET rates in Turkey. Moreover, considering school to work transition duration and labour force participation during education are deemed as important factors in relation to the NEET status. Turkey has low rates of young people in employment during education among OECD countries.

In a comparison with the European Union, though labour market participation rates are close to EU average, unemployment rates and number of inactive persons who are outside the labour force and available but not actively seeking employment are way

higher than other EU countries for the ages of 15-29 between 2018-2020 according to the latest data available. In other words, as National Youth Employment Strategy (2021) comments that though unemployed NEET rates are close to EU 27 country average, those who do not seek employment (inactive NEETs) turn out to be way higher than the EU average. This means that one out of every three NEETs are not seeking employment, unlike Greece or Spain where youth unemployment is way higher than Turkey. Education and training stand as the foremost reason for not participating in employment with 62.3 for men and 40.9 for women (National Youth Employment Strategy, 2021) for 15-29 years of age. Other reasons of household duties and familial and individual reasons follow by 29.9 per cent and 12.6 per cent consecutively for women as causes of not participating in employment in Turkey (National Youth Employment Strategy, 2021). The reasons for these disparities in cross country comparisons and the gender gap will be analyzed in the light of the available research in the next section.

4.2. Dynamics of being a NEET: Determinants and Risk Factors in Turkey

The NEET group displays diversifications across countries and also within a country in line with causes of being a NEET. As indicated in the literature review, NEET is widely recognized as an indicator useful to capture various vulnerabilities and disadvantages of young people which might be related to their being out of the labour market or any kind of education or training. There are various factors at play in young people's school to work transitions, from availability or access to high quality education or vocational training to employment services in a given country, apart from a young person's individual preferences or characteristics. NEET indicates a highly heterogeneous and diversified group of young people in means of what causes them to become NEET.

The NEET category is essentially linked to 'disengagement' (Bynner and Parsons, 2002) over long periods of time, which might be permanent and cyclical and have 'scarring' effects (Maguire, 2015; Assmann and Broschinski, 2021; Ralston et al., 2022). Though it is linked to unemployment or inactivity, it serves for other purposes than defining young people in means of their work status only (Quintano, et al., 2018). The NEET category embarks on identifying the underlying factors of being disengaged

at young age, which might be other than solely labour market dynamics and may need diversified policy interventions at different stages of life. The NEET status refers to a set of determinants and consequences at play on the individual, social and economic level.

Studying the determinants of being a NEET for effective policy intervention needs a careful analysis of taking diverse factors into consideration in a given locality and from a longitudinal perspective. One outstanding determinant at a given country might not be a strong determinant in another, just as NEETs residing in urban and rural areas have different difficulties in access to jobs or training. It may be misleading to assume that NEET refers to the most vulnerable or marginalized groups such as homeless, young offenders or young people leaving care (Maguire, 2015). On the contrary, majority of NEET clusters comprise young people with average levels of educational attainment, living with their families, engaged in informal or temporary work but still struggling to establish themselves in the labour market and suffering from skill deficiencies. Thus, assuming that there can be a universalized list of causes to identify who NEETs are would be a fallacy out from the start. Thus, it is more useful to focus on the patterns of economic, social and personal characteristics which contribute to the NEET status in a given context while accepting the diversity in the make-up of NEETs at the same time (Maguire and Thompson, 2007).

With this aim, this section investigates the determinants and risk factors of being NEET on different levels in the Turkish context. NEET is a relatively new concept in the Turkish research and policy context and sources on NEETs are limited in number and scope. There exists field research and clustering inquiries conducted by civil society organizations, universities and local governments which aim to profile the make-up of NEETs in Turkey, identify their needs and expectations and make connections between their individual circumstances and larger institutional contexts. This section looks into the determinants of the NEET status under relevant categories by making use of these valuable research and recent publications.

Individual and non-individual determinants are going to be discussed in detail under these larger categories and various results from available research is going to be fed into the discussion.

4.2.1. Factors related with the NEET status

4.2.1.1. Individual factors

Individual factors are defined as characteristics of an individual which are not possible or easy to change by individual agency. Individual factors or determinants to become a NEET are going to be investigated under the subcategories of gender, age, health status, personal characteristics and income level.

4.2.1.1.1. Gender

In Turkey, young women are overrepresented among the NEETs; with the highest NEET rate among the European countries (Bardak, et al., 2015) as well as among the OECD countries (OECD, 2019). Though various research points out that gender is an important determinant of NEET status globally and women are more likely to become NEET compared to men in a majority of countries around the world, the striking gender gap in Turkey warrants further investigation.

Research suggests that gender is a strong determinant to become a NEET for women due to their care responsibilities, deeply ingrained cultural perceptions and labour market discrimination. Most studies find out that that being a woman is the single most important factor to being NEET in Turkey (YGA Report, 2020; Erdoğan and Uyan Semerci, 2020) and young women are three or four times more likely to be in NEET status than young men (Erdoğan et al., 2017). Low educational attainment levels combining with the gender factor leads to a multiplier effect on becoming a NEET (Erdoğan et al., 2017; Lüküslü and Çelik, 2022; Gülüm and Karakaş, 2020; YGA, 2020). Erdoğan et al., (2017) find out the probability of being a NEET for a young woman with any education as compared with a young female university graduate is 10 times higher while it is twice as high for young women with basic schooling. YGA Report (2020) in this vein, comments that education makes a greater difference for women than it does for men. NEET rates for women with secondary and post-secondary education having no significant difference indicate that completing at least secondary education is critical for women's employment in Turkey. A similar gender gap among NEETs in Turkey is also pointed out by Susanlı (2016), finding out that women are 19.4 % more likely to be in the NEET status compared to men and

educational attainment is a critical determinant when combined with the gender dimension. While higher levels of education have a higher chance of participation in labour and are less likely to be NEET for women, this outcome is not only due to level of educational attainment but also other characteristics that lead to them to get an education in the first place (YGA, 2020).

Both studies (Erdoğan et al., 2017; Susanlı, 2016) find out that marriage is also a positive factor in becoming a NEET, accompanied by domestic chores and child care responsibilities. YADA Vakfi (2021) reaches to a similar conclusion, with additional reasons of lack of partner or family support or active opposition to women's working on behalf of the partner or the family contributing to women's status as a NEET. Educational attainment raises as a critical issue again, this time hampered by families due to cultural reasons or marriage at a young age.

A comparative study among Southern Eastern countries and Turkey in cooperation with ETF underlines that the largest gender gap in youth employment is visible in Montenegro and Turkey (Bardak, et al., 2015). Bardak et al. (2015) explain the gender gap between male and female NEETs for the 15-24 age group by two factors for these countries: young women tend to spend longer time in education than young men, but also another significant proportion of young women is hampered by child-rearing and family care obligations or traditional and cultural norms.

Another study putting gender to the focus in NEET research by Lüküslü and Çelik (2022) point out to prevalent early marriage in Turkey, with the average age being below 25 for women as the underlying factor for high female NEET numbers along with patriarchal cultural values, social gender roles, lack of accessible child and elderly care. The socio-cultural perception that married women enjoying a higher status than those who are unmarried and putting familial responsibilities first for women raised in a traditional culture (Lüküslü and Çelik, 2022) exposes the cultural aspect of high gender gap among male and female NEETs in the Turkish context. A report by Toplum Gönüllüleri Vakfi (Gülüm and Karakaş, 2020) reaches to similar conclusion that cultural inclinations, early marriage and early drop-out going hand in hand contribute to a voluntary withdrawal from employment on behalf of women. Socioeconomic level, size and composition of the family also tend to effect women's educational and

labour market situation and preferences highly. Gendered character of education, marked by priority given to the education of boys, lack of parental support and a lack of sense of accomplishment has influence over educational attainment and the status of being a NEET. Another important finding related to women's labour market perceptions and preferences is that women tend to refrain from working due to difficult working conditions, low paid jobs with limited social security and fear and past experiences of sexual harassment. Life decisions of women with low educational attainment levels and lower chances of having secure work are opted for marriage as a way to achieve social status, economic and social safety over difficult, unequal and dangerous working conditions.

4.2.1.1.2. Other individual factors

Other individual factors that determine the NEET status are age, health status and disability, personal characteristics, income level and familial factors. It should be kept in mind that individual factors might not always be the direct or only reason for the NEET status, however they are important in means of how they interact to other components. For example, age factor plays out differently between men and women in Turkey, where it is found out that young women are inclined to become economically inactive between the ages of 25-29 (Bardak, 2015; Kılıç, 2014; YGA, 2020), where the NEET rate among men decreases during the same life stage. Turkey has the lowest mean age for marriage and lower mean age at birth among women compared to OECD countries which associate with the labour market detachment of women in Turkey between the ages of 25 and 29. NEET rate increases correlatively following marriage and having children, while age and starting a family does not seem to be in correlation with the NEET status for men (YGA, 2020).

Health status, mainly poor mental or physical health and disability are major predictors of being NEET. However available data in Turkey presents contested views over these determinants. While YGA (2020) report suggests having poor health or a physical restraint increases the likelihood of being NEET, Ak et al. (2022) find much lower rates of direct correlation between the health issues and disabilities. However, the general opinion is that lack of infrastructure designed for people with disabilities in the dwelled area or disability friendly environment in work places seem to result in

dropping out of school or not being able to commute to work. The relationship of the NEET status with health issues and disability in Turkey presents an area that needs further inquiry.

Personality traits might have impact on the status of being a NEET. Personality characteristics can be interpreted as ‘internal assets’ or ‘non-cognitive’ assets which have effect on academic, family, social and employment outcomes (Carcillo et al., 2015). Research conducted on this factor is limited to Ak et al. (2022) and YADA Report (2021) which point out to high proportions of indifference or disaffection for education among NEET groups. Though indifference to education might have various underlying socio-cultural dynamics, a relation between disaffection and being NEET is strong. Options for young people who lose contact with formal education to develop themselves come forth for this factor.

Income level, which is mainly related to total household income and number of people working in the family is also found to be highly relevant with NEET status in various studies (Bardak et al., 2015; Kılıç, 2014; YADA, 2021; Gülüm and Karakaş, 2020; Kılıç, 2014). Low income level of a young person’s family amplifies the risk of transition to NEET status, disadvantages caused by poverty both serving as the causation and consequence of being a NEET. YADA Report (2021) points out that majority of NEETs aggregate in the low income groups. Moreover, from a longitudinal perspective, poverty leads to longer spells of being NEET or higher risk of becoming NEET in the future. The study by Erdoğan et al. (2017) suggests that probability of being a NEET falls with increased levels of house hold income, as well as among young people having parents with higher education. Research by European Training Foundation (Bardak et al., 2015) and Ak, et al. (2021) underline that young people from families with low work intensity, (unemployed family members or parents with very limited work engagement) tend to discontinue education and suffer from generational poverty and social exclusion.

Familial factors usually have effect on the NEET status in two ways; the level of parent’s education and the income level in close relation with family structures and household size. Families with lower income usually find it difficult to cope with education expenses and might lead to making preferences in prioritizing some

children's education to others. Family income and parents' employment status also has effects on duration of education and social network, which is closely related with the socio-economic status. Family support, either in means of resources or parental interest in education and aspirations of children also seem to at play with the future NEET status (Pemberton, 2007). According to a study by European Commission (2018), among a differentiation between transition NEETS, floating NEETs and core NEETs, core NEETs with chronicle unemployment problems tend to come from families unsupportive of educational attainment. Ak et. al. (2021) also find out in a comparison between NEET and non-NEET young people, that rates of unemployed fathers are higher in NEETs' families.

4.3.3. Educational factors

Whether related to individual circumstances such as early school leaving, low academic success, lack of familial support, etc., or macro factors shaped under the influence of institutional configurations such as education system or school to work transition mechanisms, education stands out as the most important factor in relation to NEET status. Main components of education in relation to the NEET status are education level and academic success, early school leaving, skills mismatch or mismatch between labour market requirements and educational outcomes.

Low educational levels and low academic achievement is observed to be a major triggering effect for the NEET status in the following phases of life for young people (Quintini and Martin; 2006, Carcillo, et al., 2016; Eurofound, 2012; 2016; 2017; Bardak et al., 2015). Having a lower educational level is found to be leading to long-term unemployment across European countries as well as in Turkey. However, it should be noted that although higher attainment of education usually protects individuals from unemployment, the effect is weaker across the Mediterranean countries (Eurofound, 2017) as well as for Turkey (Bardak et al., 2015; Erdoğan, et al., 2017).

Erdoğan, et al. (2017) find out that probability of being a NEET is highest among young people who failed to complete basic schooling. The study also contends that, as TURKSTAT numbers in the previous chapters also suggest, relationship between

educational attainment and NEET status is not linear. Probability of being unemployed is lower for young people who have attained secondary education, a result that may be related to gender factor and the labour market structure.

A breakdown of NEET youth by their education level indicates that probability of being NEET increases with lower levels of education. 68.2 percent of the NEET population is made up of those with less than basic education. However, high school degree and university education does not generate a large difference for NEETs.

European Training Foundation (Bardak et al., 2015) points out to the tricky dynamics between education and NEET status among partner countries. The effect of education on NEETs is neither homogenous nor straightforward. The table below displaying NEETs by their educational attainment level after secondary education indicate that higher school education, vocational higher school education and university education do not provide immunity from unemployment or inactivity in Turkey.

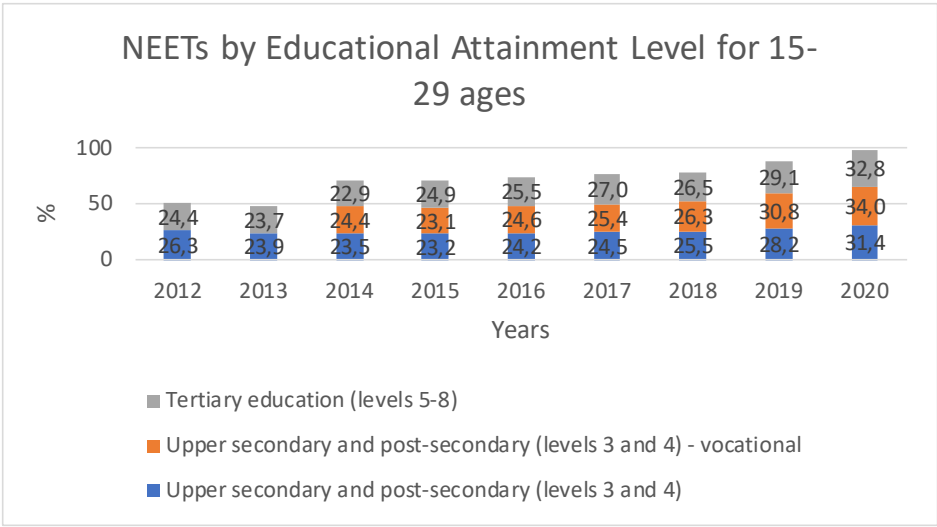


Figure 15. NEET rates by educational attainment level between 15-29 ages in Turkey since 2012²⁷

One reason for this might be, as Bardak (2015) points out, a high proportion of students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or those with lower levels of academic success tend to follow VET programs instead of general high school education. This

²⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EDAT_LFSE_21_custom_3641337/default/table?lang=en extracted on 24.10.2022

both limits the capacity and reputation of VET programs to contribute to employability, along with possible problems related to availability of quality training and apprenticeship programs. For the other two levels of upper/post-secondary and tertiary education, NEET problem is either related to gender, skills mismatch or labour market related factors other than education. There is no straightforward conclusion to be drawn regarding the relationship between education and the NEET status. The NEET rates close to each other among these three levels indicate a difficult transition from school to work for those with upper secondary and tertiary diplomas in Turkey.

4.3.3.1. Early school leaving²⁸

Prevention of early school leaving is assessed as one of the most important measures to tackle the NEET challenge for governments (Eurofound, 2012; Carcillo et al., 2016). Ensuring that all young people obtaining at least an upper secondary degree that entitles them to pursue high school or vocational education is critical for countries with high NEET numbers (Carcillo et al., 2016). Early school leaving exacerbates the NEET numbers as it reduces the capacity of young people to engage in life-long learning and lowers the capacity to obtain new skills for the changing labour market conditions. Early school leaving in Turkey has been dropping steadily in the last decade.

²⁸ **Early leavers from education and training** denotes the percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 having attained at most lower secondary education and not being involved in further education or training. The numerator of the indicator refers to persons aged 18 to 24 who meet the following two conditions: (a) the highest level of education or training they have completed is ISCED 2011 level 0, 1 or 2 (ISCED 1997: 0, 1, 2 or 3C short) and (b) they have not received any education or training (i.e. neither formal nor non-formal) in the four weeks preceding the survey. The denominator in the total population consists of the same age group, excluding the respondents who have not answered the questions 'highest level of education or training successfully completed' and 'participation in education and training'. (https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/en/edat1_esms.htm)

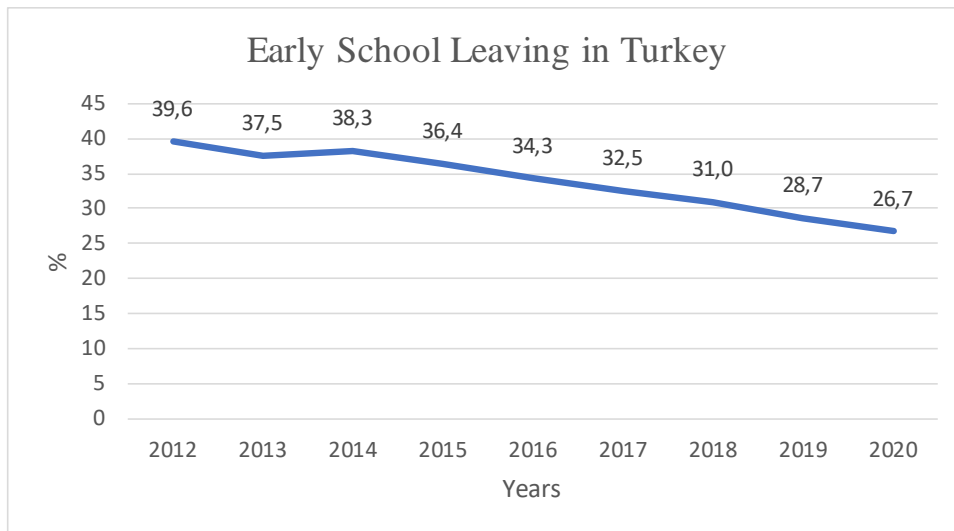


Figure 16. Early school leaving in Turkey since 2012²⁹

Despite the positive trend, Turkish early school leaving average is way above the EU average 9.9 percent by 2020s³⁰. Early school leaving in relation to NEET requires additional research and relevant policy measures. In the research by YADA (2021), the most common reason for both NEET and non-NEET groups for leaving or not continuing education turns out to be economic constraints. Specifically, for NEETs, disaffection towards education, health issues and family/spouse pressure are the main reasons for early school leaving or not continuing education. According to Ak et al. (2021) those who think their education was halted due to early school leaving or not continuing among NEETs are on the majority.

4.3.3.2. Skills mismatch or mismatch between labour market requirements and educational outcomes

Skills mismatch is created due to education systems not being able to endow young people with necessary skills required in the labour market or labour market not being able to absorb the higher level education graduates. According to ILO “Skills mismatch is a discrepancy between the skills that are sought by employers and the skills that are possessed by individuals. Simply put, it is a mismatch between skills

²⁹

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/EDAT_LFSE_14_custom_3640420/default/table?lang=en

³⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/edat_lfse_14/default/table?lang=en reached on 20.10.2022

and jobs. This means that education and training are not providing the skills demanded in the labour market, or that the economy does not create jobs that correspond to the skills of individuals.”³¹ According to the existing literature, it works both ways in Turkey. Turkish economy enjoyed a relative recovery after the 2001 crisis, however it came without employment creation (Ercan, 2005; Yentürk and Başlevent, 2008). An increase in unemployment rates at the beginning of 2000s in general was also an effect of the shrinkage of labour market in the agriculture sector and incapability of service and other sectors absorbing the disclosed labour force (Ercan, 2007; Diriöz, 2012; Aslan, 2019). The contraction of agriculture sector since the beginning of 2000s, which was relatively large in Turkey among OECD countries meant faster urbanization, rising unemployment and lack of marketable skills for employability in non-agricultural sectors. Accelerating processes of liberalization and integration to global markets and productivity rates not translating into jobs since the economic recovery starting from 2002 until the global financial crisis meant higher unemployment rates among young people. Youth unemployment rose steeply from 13.1% in 2000 to 16.2% in 2001 due to economic crisis of 2001, then stagnated around 19% and 20% during years of relative economic stability between 2002 and 2008 (Susanlı, 2016).

Turkey is praised for a quick recovery from the 2009 global financial crisis, enjoying high growth rates until 2015, at the expense of external and internal balances, growing its GDP on average by 7.4 % (World Bank, 2017). However, the same report notes that the growth model faces certain challenges in the medium-term, as rapid monetary and credit expansion policies in the face of decreasing investment rates tend to aggravate the pre-existing economic vulnerabilities. The main challenges of economy remaining as competitiveness in international markets, productivity and full employment, Turkey has been experiencing larger youth unemployment rates since 2018 (UNDP, 2020). All in all, growth without jobs interfusing with skills mismatch factor leads to high rates of unemployment and inactivity among young people even among those with higher education levels.

³¹ https://www.ilo.org/skills/Whatsnew/WCMS_740388/lang-en/index.htm#:~:text=Skills%20mismatch%20is%20a%20discrepancy,mismatch%20between%20skills%20and%20jobs.

The contradictory nature of Turkish youth employment trends is also addressed in National Youth Unemployment Strategy Document (2021), which call for updating of vocational education in line with labour market needs and more effective school to work transition mechanisms such as quality internships, public employment services, endowing young people with contemporary and marketable skills and enhancing entrepreneurship for all levels but particularly higher secondary and tertiary level graduates. In the light of the data presented in the educational factors leading to high NEET rates in Turkey, it is possible to comment that both under and over skilling is pertinent for Turkish labour force. According to ILO³², a person can be simultaneously overqualified and under skilled, which occurs when the field of education does not correspond to the field of occupation.

According to research by Ak et al. (2021), a large amount of NEET people who have work experience confirm that they have taken up jobs not compatible with their education to generate income and quit working due to low wages, heavy and insecure working conditions. Another group of NEETs indicate that they preferred not to work because they did not want to work in jobs under their skills and would prefer to wait until they can find a job matching their skills with secure conditions. The Next Generation Report (2017) finds out that young people are not satisfied with the education system in general and believe that the education system based on heavy handed testing measures is insufficient in equipping them with marketable skills. Habitat Kalkınma ve Yönetişim Derneği's Report (2013) confirms that the economic context and lack of investment in sectors which create jobs are the major obstacles to enhance youth employment. The interviews with both sides reveal that, while young people suffer from very low wages in the first job, employers think the theoretical education young people have does not match with the skills needed for occupations in the labour market. This is a situation with consequences on both the individuals and companies, where individuals suffer from wage penalties and low job and life satisfaction, while skills mismatch results in lower productivity and competitiveness, higher staff turn-over and sub-optimal work organization for firms.³³

³² *ibid*

³³ *ibid.*

4.3.4. Environmental factors

Environmental factors are the dynamics either related to the resided geography or external factors that could affect the labour market. The resided area as a factor in the NEET status has two dimensions: living in a rural area and in poor regions. The rural-urban divide has implications in means of access to education, employment and job quality (ETF, 2015). Educational outcomes are also at stake in means of environmental factors; schools located in rural and peripheral urban settings or in communities with ethnic minorities tend to score lower in education assessments. Underemployment and unpaid family labour is also present in rural households (Bardak et al., 2015; Yentürk and Başlevent, 2008).

YADA Vakfi (2021) points that belonging to an ethnic minority, being an immigrant or refugee exacerbates the probability of being a NEET due to language barriers, social discrimination and limited opportunities in accessing to education and employment. The ILO report *Promoting Decent Work in Refugee and Mixed Migration Contexts: A South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Initiative Between Turkey and Colombia* (2021) registers high NEET rates among Syrian communities, especially among women. Ak, et al. (2021) find out that living in a rural area, in a poor neighbourhood and in remote areas with limited transportation infrastructure hampers access to education or employment for young people.

It should also be noted that research on rural NEETs in Turkey is highly limited, and the only study focusing on the rural NEETs in Turkey by Erdoğan and Uyan-Semerci (2020) notes that though 93 per cent (77 million) of the population lives in urban areas according to statistics, this figure can be highly misleading since it is based on administrative divisions, instead of a sociological or spatial examination. By the 2012 administrative reform, 30 provinces with a population higher than 750000 individuals were declared as the metropolitan areas and all villages in these provinces were transformed into urban units. This administrative transformation by effect, dropped the rural population from 23 percent to 8 percent. An alternative measure to previously accepted distinction based on population size was not introduced by the TURKSTAT and data on NEETs based on a rural-urban divide is non-available for the time being. However, deriving from statistical data, YGA Report (2020) comments that NEET

youth is concentrated in metropolitans like İstanbul, Ankara and İzmir with İstanbul coming first, and east and south-eastern Turkey where unemployment and NEET rates are also higher.

Economic crises or market crashes are also important factors in youth unemployment and inactivity. Young people and young people's jobs are disproportionately hit during crisis periods. As Carcillo et al. (2016) notes that one out of every ten jobs held by individuals under 30 were destroyed between 2007 and 2014 due to the Great Recession (Global Financial Crisis). Young people tend to work on temporary and atypical contracts which are easier to terminate and they are the ones usually shed first in the labour market in a period of crisis. Employment of young people between 15 - 29 ages fell by 8 per cent between on average in OECD countries between 2007 and 2015 (Carcillo et al., 2016) and labour market recovery has been slow and disproportionate across regions.

In a similar vein, the EU Report (2021) notes that young people were double hit by the global recession and COVID-19 pandemic, as a result of the artificial restrictions on economic activity and social distance measures, which affected hospitality, retail and service sectors, which specifically employ a large proportion of young people with insecure contracts. Restrictions on social life had effects on social development and participation of young people along with diminished opportunities for education, internship and employment hampering young people's accumulation of skills and human capital.

According to the Youth and Covid-19 Report (ILO, 2021), GFC slowed down the improving rates of labour force participation of young people since 2000s. Moreover, COVID-19 and the following declining economic situation in Turkey reversed the trend. The report also registers a substantial decrease in labour force participation and employment rates among youth in Turkey by 19,7 percent (men) and 26 percent (women) respectively since the 2009 GFC. NEET rate has also increased by 37,9 percent between years 2019 and 2020. Along with the desperation about their future along with behavioral change in means of spending time online, sleeping more and watching TV longer before COVID-19, the report (ILO, 2021) notes that majority of NEETs reportedly stopped looking for a job during the pandemic. Thus, the pandemic

has significant effects on young people's career prospects, confidence, motivation and positive future expectations which plummeted sharply.

4.3.5. Labour market sourced factors

Young people tend to face discrimination due to their lack of experience during their first entry to labour market. Some young people suffer from double or triple discrimination due to their gender, ethnic or cultural identities as well. According to Next Generation Türkiye Report (2017), many young people believe that social network is more important than academic achievement for labour market entry and future success. Other factors underlying high youth unemployment rates are pointed out as economic growth in the first decade of 2000s not translating into desired increase in employment rates, employers' preference for cheap unskilled labour along with reluctance of highly educated young people settling down for minimum wage levels in the first entry, skills mismatch between educational outcomes and skills demanded by the labour market (Ercan, 2007). Similarly, Habitat Kalkınma ve Yönetişim Derneği (2013) points out that low wages in the private sector operate as a major factor demotivating qualified young people to take up jobs after spending long years in education. This attitude feeds into the employers seeing young people as 'vain'. Another factor affecting youth employment on behalf of employers is noted as local employers' reluctance in meeting the mobility expenses of young people, such as transportation, rent or adaptation. Maternity leave probability in the future or religious identity are also counted as factors affecting young women's prospects of labour market entry (Habitat Kalkınma ve Yönetişim Derneği, 2013; Ak et al., 2021). Lack of job searching skills such as searching and applying jobs online or CV preparation also hamper labour market entry, especially on behalf of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and regions.

Short term or informal employment accompanied by weak social rights are also counted as risk factors for being NEET. YADA (2021) and İstanbul University Report (2021) find out that an important proportion of NEET suffer from the 'NEET churn'. where a high amount of young people prefer to leave their jobs due to uncovered social security payments, not getting regular payment (YADA, 2021) or termination of contracts (Ak, et al., 2021).

4.4. Legal Framework for NEETs and NEET Targeting Policies in Turkey

4.5. Towards a NEET Policy

The concept of youth related policy in general and its sub-topics are relatively new in the Turkish policy context. While governance of youth policies is remarkably centralized, policy design and implementation addressing young people are rather fragmented (Gökşen, et al., 2015). Involvement of non-governmental actors such as trade unions, employer organizations or NGOs are increasing slowly but yet remain limited. This section takes a closer look at the institutional framework in Turkey which crosscuts policies and policy initiatives cross cutting NEETs, before the field findings are represented.

4.6. Key policy documents and legal framework with regards to NEETs

State and young people's relationship is defined by the Constitution of Turkey, article no. 58, which serves as a base for youth policies;

The State takes measures to ensure the growth and development of the youth to whom our Independence and our Republic are entrusted, in the light of positive science, in line with Atatürk's principles and reforms, and against views that aim to destroy the indivisible unity of the State with its country and nation.

The State takes the necessary measures to protect young people from ignorance and addiction to alcohol, drugs, criminality, gambling and bad habits alike.

According to this law, the state assumes a protective role towards young population, against bad habits, drug abuse, crime and separatist ideologies. However, along with the increased globalization of Turkish economy and expansion of young population, so as youth unemployment and inactivity gave pace to transformation of policies addressing young people. Accordingly, the main documents that are going to be addressed and analyzed in this section in relation to development of NEET policies are:

Table 3. The institutions and policy documents

Institution/Document Issued by	Policy Document
State Planning Organization	The 9th Development Plan (2007-2013)
	The 10th Development Plan (2014-2018)
Presidency of Republic of Turkey, Presidency of Strategy and Budget	The 11th Development Plan (2019-2023)
Ministry of Labour and Social Security (MoLSS), General Directorate of Labour	National Employment Strategy (NES, 2014-2023)
	National Employment Strategy (NES, 2017-2019)
	National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan (NYES, 2021-2023)
Ministry of Youth and Sports	The National Youth and Sports Policy Document (2012)
Specialization Commission of Child and Youth	Youth Working Group Report (2015)
Specialization Commission of Child and Youth	Youth Working Group Report (2018)

A concern over expanding working age population and youth employment on an extended measure corresponds to 9th Development Plan (2007-2013). The 9th Development Plan (2007-2013) highlights Turkey's relatively large young population as an economic and social resource whose potential must be more effectively addressed in means of education, employment and social cohesion. In line with the uttered intentions to direct the agricultural labour force towards non-agricultural sectors, 9th Development Plan (2007-2013) paved the way for formulation of a National Employment Strategy.

In 2014, the High Council of Planning adopted the new National Employment Strategy (NES, 2014-2023), which quotes larger targets of reducing the unemployment by 5 per cent, increasing the employment participation by 55 per cent and reducing the

informal employment in non-agricultural sectors by 15 per cent by 2023. Moreover, development and encouragement of entrepreneurship is appointed as a way to foster diverse employment options. As per the following National Employment Strategy (2017-2019), young people are pointed out as a risk group in need of specialized policy implementation. Besides highlighting high unemployment rates among vocational school and higher education graduates and prevalent skills mismatch problem, NEETs are included for the first time within the national policy agenda as a specific group to be targeted with a reference to OECD Employment Outlook Report (2016).

Emergence of a youth policy as a distinct field of social policy action and an intensified interest in NEETs manifests itself along with the 10th Development Plan of 2014-2018. The 10th Development Plan includes the Basic and Vocational Capacity Building Program (Program 1.19) within the scope of ‘Priority Transformation Programs’ for the first time to tackle the NEET problem. The main objectives of this program is explained as ensuring that all young people acquiring basic skills in different levels of education system for increased employability, reducing the long-term unemployment rate and reducing the number of NEETs. Better functioning transition from school to work systems through strengthened school-business cooperation, improved quality of statistical data on the education system and labour market, effective monitoring and evaluation systems and planning of vocational training programs in line with market needs are foreseen within the scope of this program. In addition, a ‘Youth Working Group Report’ (2015) prepared under the supervision and with inputs of an ‘expert’ community, namely Specialization Commission of Child and Youth, made up of academicians, NGO and IGO experts and experts from various governmental bodies is issued under this development plan, which also makes a brief emphasis on NEET rates in Turkey being way higher than the OECD countries.

Another novelty in the area of youth policy is the establishment of Ministry of Youth and Sports in April 2011 with the decree law 6223. Along with this innovation, the division under the name of General Directorate of Sports operating under Prime Ministry since 1989 has gained a larger organizational structure and endowed extended responsibilities. Consecutively, the National Youth and Sports Policy Document was issued in November, 2012, defining the activities and responsibilities of the Ministry.

According to the Strategy Plan of 2019-2023 (2018) of the Ministry, the main targets of the institution is to promote active participation of young people to realize their potential, participate in decisions making processes and all dimensions of social life through training programs and projects designed in line with research identifying the needs of young people. The National Youth and Sports Policy Document justifies the importance and emergency of a youth policy on grounds that they are a group of the population which need specialized policy action and the centrality of activation and participation of youth for societal development.

The current 11th Development Plan (2019-2023) aims to boost the potential of youth as a driving power of development. Along with measures targeting improvement of education services at all levels, active labour market policies, vocational training courses and on-the-job training programs in compliance with digital transformation, flexible working schemes, work placement services and practices harmonizing work and family lives will be expanded with increased effectiveness. The Plan calls for identification of the young people who are neither in education nor employment nationwide and a holistic approach in policy design which includes the individual, the family and the society to activate youngsters.

The 11th Development Plan of 2019-2023 carries on with the novelty of ‘Youth Working Group Report’ (2018), as a policy document dedicated solely to concerns and policy solutions of young age groups, again under the supervision of a Specialization Commission. This time, a comprehensive section is dedicated to NEETs, the acronym mentioned on 4 occasions this time. It is also significant how the language and approach to the “youth issue” transforms from a marginal issue attached to concerns over employment and criminality (‘criminality’ mentioned 4 times in the report of 2015 and drops to 2 in the report of 2018) to an area of technical expertise with different dimensions and which requires sociological lenses. The Report underlines that though gender gap among NEETs are prevalent across all countries, the highest ratios are observed in Turkey along with a group of countries like Mexico and Chile where gender inequality is rampant. Gender roles ascribing women with household duties and care responsibilities are appointed as the main reason of high NEET ratios among women and among the total number of NEETs. Young women, also tagged as ‘house girls’ who are not married, are not going on with education and remain totally

dependent on their families are one of the major NEET groups in Turkey. They also make up a large amount of the high number of young people who are not unemployed and do not actively seek a job. The Report concludes that the NEET youth should be addressed as a special category among the whole young population and are in need of specialized policy action due to the risks of social exclusion and scarring effects of inactivity.

The most recent and pivot document addressing the NEET issue on a comprehensive scale and identifying the policy actions is the National Youth Employment Strategy 2021-2023 (NYES) (2021), issued in October 2021 under the coordination of Ministry of Labour and Social Security. This is a first of its kind document, which comprehensively deals with youth unemployment and NEETs specifically, the acronym mentioned 58 times, along with specific policy targets set-up.

The NYES (2021) justifies the production of this specific document in line with global factors such as digital transformation, slowing down of the economy due to COVID 19 pandemic and the target of decreasing the youth unemployment by 17.8 per cent by the 11th Development Plan and The National Employment Strategy 2014-2023 addressing the promotion of employment of groups in need of specialized policy action accordingly. Another important factor that necessitated this document was action and reform packaged created to minimize the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic in line with Economic Reforms Action Plan (2021) by the Ministry of Treasury and Finance. Taking necessary steps to “Promote Youth Employment and Quality of the Labour Force” (Action 5.3) within the scope of Economic Reforms Action Plan by taking the needs, problems and expectations of the labour market into consideration resulted in production of this document. With three main policy targets³⁴ and three main policy axes³⁵ to achieve these policy targets, NYES (2021) emphasizes the cooperation dimension among the institutions. To put the measures³⁶ into operation,

³⁴ (i) dropping the youth unemployment rate by 17.8 per cent by 2023 which is 25.3 per cent in 2020, (ii) increasing the youth labour participation by 46 per cent which is 39.1 per cent in 2020 and (iii) dropping the NEET rate by 20 per cent by 2023 from 28.3 per cent in 2020.

³⁵ (i) strengthening the education-employment relationship, (ii) promotion of employment of NEETs and (iii) future jobs.

³⁶ (i) research, guidance and visibility activities to increase the employability of the individuals in the NEET group, (ii) Young people identified as potential NEETs are going to be provided with National Employment Agency services, primarily job and vocational counseling service and (iii) infrastructure

the Action Plan calls a variety of institutions and agencies into cooperation such as, MoLSS, MoNE, MoYS, MoFSS, MoIT, National Employment Agency, Social Security Institution, Higher Education Council, Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, along with local governments, development agencies, professional organizations, private sector, universities, professional organizations, social partners international institutions and NGOs.

An ongoing concern regarding the young population and youth issues informing employment, education and democratic participation throughout these documents can be observed. However, they display epistemological leaps as they evolve through 2000s. Looking at the successive policy documents including umbrella 5-year span development plans and subdocuments produced by institutions in response to the development plans, one can observe the youth policy significantly moved to a relatively more central position in the sphere of social policy. The transformation of perspective regarding youth as a policy category with its intrinsic qualities and specialization starts with the 9th Development Plan. The previous 8th Development Plan refers to youth under the title of Youth, Physical Training and Sports, deeming the youth issue as a policy field related mainly to the Ministry of Education and mentions general provisions about the extracurricular activities and the role of the state in protecting young people from addiction. The Plan addresses young women in relation to literacy, health increasing the education and labour participation levels and improving gender equality. Young people are not identified as a group in need of specialized policy (women, children and disabled are included in this category). However, in the 9th Development Plan, youth unemployment and their well-being takes place right from the start under ‘International Developments and Basic Trends’. The Plan recognized the trend of youth unemployment along with the shrinkage of agricultural sector.

Another breaking point is the European Union Acquis process, which brings the issue of youth with regards to Turkey’s relatively large young population and youth employment dynamics. Transformation of education to respond the needs of the labour

and training activities are going to be enhanced to increase the employment of people in the NEET group.

market, specifically with an end target in increasing youth employment is taken into consideration for the first time in this Plan. Promotion and increasing the quality of vocational education and overcoming labour market rigidities are also pointed out for enhancing employment. In this vein, introduction of ALMPs and the central role of National Employment Agency in implementation of ALMPs is emphasized. Equality of opportunity in accessing the labour market, easier access to care services to promote women employment and programs to enable young people to gain experience are among the specific targets of this Plan.

The youth issue gains even more prominence with the 10th Development Plan and is addressed in conjunction with topics of economic migration and ‘brain drain’, international competition, and digital transformation. Participation to public life, free and larger access to health services on behalf of children and young people, larger bursary and credit opportunities for education, social support programs, promotion of mobility through youth centers and camps are accrued to concerns over youth unemployment and labour force participation. Reference to young people neither in education nor employment is uttered the first time.

‘Youth policy’ or the ‘youth issue’ becomes a key component of public policies with the 11th Development Plan. From a discursive perspective, one can track the increasing frequency of the word ‘youth’ is included; 17 times in the 9th, 45 times in the 10th and 91 times in the 11th Development Plan. It can be claimed that the social and political pressure to address young people and their needs and demands has definitely surmounted in the last decades. This might have a few implications; the growing ratio of young people in the total population is making youth issues all the more urgent to address in Turkish public policy. The growing numbers of a certain group demographically also means a larger voter base, which puts more pressure on bureaucracy and politicians. The other dynamic that increases the pressure and urgency on matters related to youth is the increased global competition among nations, which makes welfare, employment opportunities and economic growth all the more important in means of individual income, living and working conditions and migration decisions.

At the other end of the equilibrium stands the public services such as education, health and social security services which have to respond to a growing body of unemployed and/or inactive youth population in addition to labour market which also has to be supported with qualified and sustainable labour force. The kind of jobs and working conditions young people are able to access not only has impact on their individual careers and earning prospects but also the development trajectories of their countries (ILO; 2020). Impediments in the sustainable qualified labour force hampers growth of firms and cripples their capacity for international competition, meaning lower growth rates for countries. Apart from structural difficulties, COVID-19 pandemic has had repercussions on labour markets and working conditions as well as on the accessibility of jobs for young people both on international and national level. Correspondingly, Turkey is not free from the global challenge of devising policies to equip young people with professional skills and for increased opportunities for social engagement. An analysis of relevant policy documents indicate that Turkey shows a will to participate in the joint effort to support young people in means of employment and education.

The next section of the research is dedicated to field findings based on in-depth interviews to understand the existing policy infrastructure in Turkey and to what extent it is going to allow Turkey to reach its targets. The research is going to take a closer look at the journey of the concept of NEET, on which grounds an interest in NEETs and relevant policies have emerged in Turkey, perspective of policy makers and researchers on the risk factors related to NEET status and opportunities as well as challenges in effective policy implementation regarding NEETs are going to be analyzed.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF THE POLICY MAKING RATIONALE REGARDING THE NEET PHENOMENA IN TURKEY

Built upon the literature review and country specific dynamics discussed above, this chapter presents the analysis of current policy effort and policy responses. The analysis is guided by the inputs derived from semi-structured interviews with key informants. The findings are supported by relevant literature, policy papers and evaluation reports produced by a variety of national and international organizations.

5.1. Framework of the Analysis

The NEET concept and its relevance in the Turkish context analyses the reception of the indicator by stakeholders and how it contributed to public policy making process in general and youth policy specifically. The second section of causes and effects of the phenomena for NEET in Turkey elaborates on the specificity of the Turkish case, distinct and analogic qualities in comparison to global governance of NEETs and comments on how the current situation is conferred by different policy sectors in Turkey which are also stakeholders in NEET policies. Finally, the current policy responses, trends and tendencies in policy design and level and nature of national and international cooperation is interrogated. Opportunities and cross-cutting challenges for NEET policy making in Turkey is addressed in the light of current global agenda is presented in a separate section.

5.2. Theme 1: The NEET Concept and its relevance in the Turkish context

5.2.1. From global governance to national agenda

The surging numbers in youth unemployment and inactivity across countries accelerated and intensified the NEET discussion and policies targeting NEETs within

national agendas. In this line, Turkey recently started policy initiatives to address NEETs along with the existing policy structure addressing youth including apprenticeship training, on the job training program and lifelong learning system. Four major policy initiatives kick started during this period are:

- Preparation of the National Youth Employment Strategy Action Plan (2021-2023)
- Labour Market Support Programme for NEETs (NEET PRO) Operation to be implemented by National Employment Agency within the scope of IPA II EU Accession funds,
- Young Women Building Their Future Project implemented by the UNDP and Sabancı Foundation in cooperation with the Ministry of Family and Social Services and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security
- National Internship Program by the Presidency of Turkey Human Resources Department to support school to work transitions of young higher education graduates

In addition to the preexisting national agenda on NEETs, these latest initiatives also took place in the discussions with key informant speakers. Some of the key informant speakers, who took part in the preparation phase of these policy initiatives or preparation of key policy papers and who are currently working in implementation of these programs provided valuable insights on how the global agenda on youth unemployment and inactivity have been communicated and translated into national agenda and how the larger NEET policy discussion is played out on the field in a national context. How the national and international contexts interact from a global governance perspective is going to inform the analysis of the field findings.

5.2.2. The NEET concept's contribution to the youth policy debate

The questions included in the first theme aims to understand the technical aspects of the use of NEET indicator and how it became a prominent issue in the youth policy debate. Upon interviews, two important functions of the indicator brought to the policy debate can be identified. Firstly, all respondents, without exception, concurred that the inclusion of the NEET indicator in the statistics and concept's usage among policy

circles has made a positive impact on awareness with regard to discussion of youth related issues. An important contribution of the concept has been raising awareness specifically on youth inactivity. All respondents confirm that the concept has various advantages over solely looking into unemployment rates when young population is concerned, such as bringing inactivity to policy discussion. In the words of the respondents from public institutions;

The NEET indicator is useful in two ways. Firstly, NEET serves as an additional indicator demonstrating inactivity, beyond young people's work status and participation in the labour market. Secondly, it provides a tool for bringing inactive youth to policy agenda.' (KIs 1-2)

Key informants from international organizations emphasized the difference between calculation of the unemployed and the inactive. The definition of unemployment is relatively narrow, which requires the respondent to be unemployed at the moment, be actively seeking work (for the last two weeks or one month) and be able to work right away. While unemployment rates are also very important to capture vulnerability, it overlooks the inactive populations, who are invisible in research by nature. Thus, The NEET indicator allows us to recognize young people who are not currently looking for a job and are discouraged to do so while unemployment refers to people who actively seek jobs and are still attached to the labour market.

The second quality of the concept that distinguishes it from the unemployment is bringing education and school to work transition systems, which are not systematic or existent in many countries into picture, as emphasized by the European Training Foundation. In the light of social investment perspective (Kenworthy, 2017; Dräbing and Nelson, 2017; Jenson, 2017; Hemerijck, 2018) and especially if we are speaking about youth transitions, education and its function in transition to work is an indispensable factor. The discussions of education and training in relation to labour market participation are contested, though. Key informants pointed out to multiple structural and administrative gridlocks about education and training ensuring smooth transitions both on the global and national level, which will be discussed in the following sections.

The third advantage the NEET indicator provides is addressing the gender inequality and invisibility of the large female populations. As one of the respondents expressed;

The breadwinner ideology is still very important in society's eye. It is still very rare that a young male past 18 years does absolutely nothing, engaging neither in education nor employment unless they are in very disadvantaged circumstances, incarcerated or suffering from addiction. I know there is a trend in increasing numbers of NEETs in

the middle classes due to disillusionment in finding better employment opportunities. However, for girls, whom we call 'house girls', a risk looms that their inactivity is a social norm. NEET provides us with a perspective to speak about this invisible group. The bottommost advantage of the NEET concept is that it allows us to speak about each and every young person in a given society.' (KI 7)

Because of the traditional values, though economic and intellectual inactivity poses a problem for men (unless they are leading a marginal life), there is a potential risk that it transposes into a social norm for women. This problem is widely discussed under risk factors that, such social formation of differing values attributed to genders might result in decreased investment in education opportunities for females, both on the behalf of the family, the individual and the state.

The NEET concept, replacing its precursor categories such as 'house youth', 'ni-ni generacion', the 'hikikomori', the 'zero youth' in general, brought the very diverse conditions young people are facing across nations into light for researchers and policy makers, beyond a phenomenon simply out of preference. Moreover, in means of conceptualizing inactive females, the coinage 'house girls' replaced with NEET has given a certain leverage in addressing the gender disparity in education and employment in Turkey. This shift in approach along with the introduction of the NEET concept has enabled to discuss and address diverse groups such as ethnic and migrant communities, which happen to display high ratios among the NEET population. As a respondent stressed;

The initial usage of the concept in Turkey mainly served the purpose of alluding to young people from lower social strata and lower cultural backgrounds, mainly from slum areas, widely referred as 'emo' or 'apachi'. Later 'house girls' started to be included in the picture, then 'house youth'. This kind of emphasis on 'house' is problematic due to NEETs' heterogeneous nature, a group that does not display the quality of a social group acting in an analogical manner. Though it is true that NEET youth is hampered in means of their access to public space, the emphasis on the 'house' does not do justice to other immigrant and ethnic NEET groups, experiencing problems in means of accessing education or employment. Being a NEET is not about being 'in the house', or preferring to be in the house, but having no other option than being in the house, in a way not being able to leave it. Therefore, NEET concept opened up a conceptual space to discuss the problems young people experience in relation to education or employment as a socio-economic phenomenon beyond preference.' (KI 8)

Overall, the concept has enriched the policy discussion in and among Turkish policy circles, particularly in addressing the obstacles young people experience in the

transition period not only on grounds of employment but with dimensions of inactivity, education and gender.

5.2.3. The NEET concept is young in Turkey

The NEET indicator is fairly a recent novelty in Turkey. Data on NEETs were started to be collected in 2016 for the first time by TURKSTAT. Upon discussions with respondents, it is underlined that NEET is not a widely recognized concept on the societal level but more generally known among the institutional circles. Therefore, it cannot be said that NEET as a concept defining inactive and unemployed young people has caught the public attention in a negative fashion, but it is also not widely known either. Unemployment related to youth policies is more on the foreground as a problem inflicting youth.

The interviews aimed to explore and expose the normative discussions surrounding the concept. Building on the assumption that basic understandings, political frames and attitudes toward a concept informing the direction of policy making, whether a negative connotation attached to NEETs in Turkey was interrogated. The issue of ‘preference’ or discussions regarding young people not being eager to leave their comfort zone comes up here again. A key informant commented that the negative implications attached to NEET are mostly related to the underlying assumption that young people are responsible from this unfavorable condition, which is not the mentality surrounding the NEET discussion in Turkey. The key informant states that,

Abundant numbers of young people neither in education nor employment points out to a deficiency or a dysfunctionality in public policies, whether they are related to education or employment planning or availability of sufficient decent work in the labour market, where young people bear the least responsibility. While not preferring to work is a human right, extraordinary rates of unemployment and inactivity in the case of Turkey point out to a structural problem. All in all, Turkey has the right attitude to read the implications of this indicator. (KI 5)

The policy making attitude in Turkey is on the positive and informed side in means of implications of the NEET indicator. Comparing the aforementioned perspective with other parties joining the interviews, the policy discussion in Turkey generally agrees on the fact that NEET status does not necessarily emerge due a deliberate inclination or work shyness on behalf of young people. Only when the structural problems hampering participation in employment and education (such as accessible care services, quality vocational education, decreasing early school leaving, etc.) are addressed, who wishes to remain economically inactive can be understood. A key

informant (KI 6) stresses that, one outstanding reason for high NEET rates that steps forth on field studies is the lack of availability of decent work conditions in the labour market and the rate of young people who refrain from work is very marginal and does not constitute the core of the problem.

Though it is generally accepted that the concept refers to an unfavorable social status, it has not caught stigmatization. Due to the research area of this study, how NEETs see themselves, or whether they are aware of the social categorization attached upon them is not known. However, a heightened awareness and a will to address their problems exists on the institutional level. Emphasizing that young people leading an active life is important for policy makers, a respondent emphasized;

No, it has not gained negative connotations in Turkey among policy makers or researchers. It is not widely known or common to public anyway. It is very recent that it has entered the plans and programmes in policy papers and international documents [in Turkey] so that a raised awareness is aimed for policy makers and researchers nationwide. An important bulge of the young population being left out from public life and employment is not acceptable, especially speaking of female NEETs. The concept is not as widely common as the youth unemployment in bureaucracy but is slowly catching attention. The NEET concept is inherently a negative indicator, suggesting that the individual is leading an inactive life for several reasons, however it has not gained an extra negative connotation. On the contrary, for us it implies a group of people who can be activated through certain measures and thus constitute a potential. (KI 3)

Another view is that the indicator getting into circulation created a positive impact in terms of awareness among civil society organizations working with young people:

On a social level, NEET concept is not widely known. On the institutional level or in the academic sphere, it has not gained a negative connotation. On the contrary it helped framing and understanding this amorphous group from a sociological perspective. It brought a new dimension and served as a common ground to take action for civil society organizations' activities dealing with youth unemployment or domestic violence against women, as groups who also happen to be NEET on a large basis. (KI 8)

It has been emphasized by the key informants that the NEET concept is apt to gain more recognition and attention in the future due to the large young population in Turkey. The concept provides a valuable tool for discussing the social and economic conditions of young people, as well as their public participation.

5.2.4. Which criteria to go for?

As examined in the literature review, the NEET indicator is questioned by scholars in regards to its representativeness. NEET group is not comprised of individuals who are socially connected, nor acting on a common rationale. NEET individuals are essentially dispersed, living in diverse conditions and their economic inactivity is a result of diverse factors ranging from gender to geography. Moreover, not all of them can be deemed totally economically inactive, as can be seen in many inquiries, they display ‘boomerang’ movement in means of labour market attachment, or what Furlong coins as the ‘NEET churn’ (2006). That is, young people might be going in and out of the NEET status, switching between short-term insecure jobs without making a transition to long-term employment. The NEET indicator is criticized for overlooking the groups of people who happen to be in the ‘grey areas’ of education, training and employment (Eurofound, 2012). Young people who are engaged with insecure and temporary forms of employment or those who are under-employed are most of the time in vulnerable or marginalized positions, but they escape the NEET category. Moreover, another strand of research emphasizes that some young people in education and training are rather ‘reluctant conscripts’ (Eurofound, 2012), that they are ‘forcibly’ joining training or programs to avoid benefit withdrawal (Weil, 2005; Kayaduvar, 2015). Emphasizing these weaknesses, a group of scholars offered ‘customized’ criteria for measuring NEET (Inui, 2005; Serracant, 2014; Elder, 2015).

Building on this rationale, the interviews aimed to understand (i) along which limitations and criteria Turkish policy structure operationalizes NEET data collection, (ii) the reasons for this preference and (iii) whether the NEET indicator corresponds to the social policy design in Turkey or a customized approach is needed. The respondents had contesting views about this aspect and provided competing perspectives which have an enriching potential for the NEET debate in Turkey.

Turkish policy agenda is in accordance with the European Commission’s definition of NEET as young people who are neither in employment nor in any education nor training aged 15-29, as per ILO’s definition of NEETs. Turkish policy is based on TURKSTAT data which is also in accordance with EUROSTAT. This has a few practical reasons; TURKSTAT provides data for EUROSTAT, ILO and other UN

organizations³⁷, along with Turkish governmental institutions having multiple technical assistance projects under implementation within the context of EU acquis, as well as other operations in junction with the UN organizations. Especially EU acquis makes it necessary to use similar criteria for effective partnership. Upon questioning whether Turkish policy making processes call for a customized version of NEET indicator, the majority of the respondents confirms that EUROSTAT's and ILO's criterion is well-serving and suitable for the purpose, while two respondents definitely look for a customization in line with the data collection on the field, and two other expressed that technical variations can change upon needs in the future.

It is observed that there is agreement among governmental institutions and international organizations in terms of the definition of NEET for Turkey. Upon a question why EUROSTAT's definition is preferred on the others, a key informant stated that:

The OECD definition is not preferred on grounds that it refers to those attending part-time or full-time education, but excludes those in non-formal education by meaning young people in education. A further complication of the definition is not foreseen specifically defining the Turkish context and European Commission's criteria and limitations are deemed sufficient. (KI 2-3)

It has also been underlined that working on the same parameters is an enabling factor when working with international stakeholders. For further cooperation with the EU institutions and policy transfer such as Youth Guarantee program, for which a desk study has been conducted, being on similar terms has a facilitating purpose. The respondents from international organizations also express that the definition of the NEET indicator in line with ILO's criteria is sufficient and effective for the Turkish context, on grounds that the NEET concept is fundamentally about inactivity and other forms of insecure work are subject matter of unregistered employment;

Counting young people in informal learning as active is valuable on grounds that informal education is an important component of entitlement to lifelong learning. Within the context of the arguments related to the future of work, ILO stands firm that skill development and skill transformation is a right and this right is executed under the collective responsibility of the public sector, the private sector and the individual. Subcategories for informal work, unpaid work or piecework are already defined within the context of Turkey as unregistered employment. There also exist other forms of labour referred as gig economy, where people work under temporary contracts.

³⁷ https://www.tuik.gov.tr/Kurumsal/Veri_Gonderilen_Kurum_Kuruluslar

However, unregistered or atypical employment forms should not be confused with the NEET status, which mainly refers to inactive youth. (KI 5)

It is also underlined that a further categorization might lead to missing out the focus from inactive young people in the policy design process. The problem stems from the quality of informal education in the Turkish context, not from the participation of a young person in informal education. To respond changing skill requirement, especially within the context of automation and digitalization of work, upskilling and updating one's training is found to be an important means to invest in human capital.

The problem with component of training is also pointed out by other respondents, mainly from international organizations. Measuring training is problematic since it is not defined along with an international criterion, as is employment. Some countries can count driver license courses or craft courses as training, which are not inherently linked to outcomes of employment. It is emphasized that the indicator has an instrumental value, which can be revisited upon needs and depending on necessary policy action.

As for the respondents who opt for a customized version of NEETs, or additional criteria in relation to better understand who needs urgent policy action, the problems regarding localization of the concept due to the training component have been emphasized;

A direct categorization or a statistic data specifically on training is not available. Whether it is about being registered to İŞKUR's training courses, İSMEK courses or municipality's vocational courses is vague. While using the TURKSTAT data, problems occur related to training element and age breakdowns which is 15-24 for TURKSTAT but is 18-29 for OECD, a contradiction which makes it difficult to make country comparisons. The NEET concept should also have categories with a timeline dimension to it, since young people who might get out of the NEET status in a short period and who have been for a long time and no hope for getting out of it do not have the same conditions, nor they should be addressed with the same approach. (KI 8)

Therefore, it has been asserted that for Turkey, only formal education should be included while counting young people in education, which is a closer stance to OECD's definition, on grounds that attending to open education does not necessarily bring a change in one's daily social conditions, nor necessarily provide them with employable skills.

The technical hampers in operationalization of the NEET indicator were another significant point made by the respondents. For instance, the project implemented by UNDP anticipates an analysis report of the current situation and needs of NEET women in Pilot Provinces, so that a field research on NEET women is carried out by the İnsani Gelişme Vakfı. Operational problems encountered on the field defying the ILO and TURKSTAT limitations showed that the NEET definition is in need of certain diversifications specific to Turkey, especially in terms of including informal, unregistered and unpaid forms of work in the NEET definition.

Lastly, it has been pointed that the difference between the EU and ILO regarding how many weeks the individual has been looking for a job, or OECD's distinct perspective regarding education, are technical details, which can be shaped along with technical needs. A key informant resolves;

What is important for us is that demographically how many people there are that we cannot reach and address and thus, lose them... The priority is to see who needs what and get the report³⁸ completed on the current situation. Then we can understand whether we need a diversification to the NEET indicator for Turkey. (KI 3)

While national institutions displayed a somewhat converging attitude to criterion setting, the international organizations had diverging views depending on their organizational culture, historical commitments and operational needs. This kind of an outcome confirms the outlook in the literature review that international organizations are rather democratic sites of contestation open to ideational shifts than tools of powerful states to pursue policy preferences. They display adaptability depending on the country specific conditions, changing demands and expert perspectives, which constitute their legitimacy for delegated expertise.

5.2.5. Heterogeneity and policy preferences

The most prominent criticism in the literature directed at the concept is the heterogeneity (Bardak, ETF, 2015; Yates and Payne, 2006; Bynner and Parsons, 2002; Furlong, 2006) and merging sociologically distinct categories (Ralston et al., 2021; MacDonald, 2011; Lunsing, 2007). To understand who needs urgent policy action in

³⁸ A report on the current status of NEETs with a geographical and risk factor based breakdown across Turkey is going to be prepared as per the 11th Development Plan.

a group with very diverse conditions on a continuum of advantage/disadvantage stands as a challenge for policy makers. The NEET group is composed of vulnerable and unskilled young people with lower chances of employability and higher risk of social exclusion on the one end of the scale and young people taking their time off from education or labour market to travel or develop artistic skills stand on the other end. Young mothers with caring responsibilities or skilled young people unable to find matching jobs, young people with health issues or disabilities and with migrant or ethnic minority background are among the diverse subgroups in the NEET composition. It is important to keep in mind that these conceptual categories tend to overlap in real life and requires a careful analysis for effective policy action. The key informants were asked to provide their insights on how to overcome this challenge in the national context, specifically for an indicator that has been born abroad and further developed by international agencies.

All respondents pointed out to the relatively high gender disparity in NEET numbers in Turkey, to be addressed the most urgently. Therefore, gender factor stands out as a distinct determinant that has high potential to inform the NEET policies in the future. Second foremost factor to be prioritized varied in discussions; measures related education (low education levels, early drop out and school to work transitions systems), poverty and income level, disability and health problems, regional disparities and ethnicity were pointed out by different respondents to be looked into to overcome the heterogeneity.

While national policy circles stressed the need for a survey across Turkey and additional studies or research aiming to reveal the heterogeneity of the NEET group to inform the policy making process, respondents from international organizations offered views regarding solutions to address the heterogeneity, based on available cross country comparisons or field research. A respondent from an international organization states:

To overcome the problem of heterogeneity and address which groups are in need of urgent response, we developed two subcategories; one group is actively seeking employment who are on the reachable side, the other subgroup is composed of the discouraged unemployed and disengaged from the labour market who are neither in education nor employment. The second group is in need of empowerment and learning regarding their rights, also referred as the 'invisible' NEETs. One other category of

NEETs that begs for definition are the ones who are under the risk of being NEET, engaged in informal forms of work, unregistered employment, unpaid household workers and care giving, not included by TURKSTAT in statistics under the NEET category. Maybe a broad definition of NEET could be devised for Turkey. Poverty being a main factor of the status of NEET, we carried out a segmentation analysis based on the income level among female NEETs in the pilot provinces for a full understanding of the policy needs. The analysis was based on the data required from the National Estate and survey results to identify the poorest and most disadvantaged neighborhoods. (KI 6)

An effective subcategorization and carrying out a national mapping is crucial to eradicate the reasons leading to the NEET status. This is especially emphasized by the international organizations, based on cross country comparisons and regional research the institution carries out. Pointing out to the inherent weakness of the indicator as clustering all young people out of education or employment under one category although problems and reasons for being out of education or employment are different, to capture market vulnerability and address inactivity;

NEET total numbers are not sufficient to understand who needs what for policy making. For effective policy making to activate young people or to steer them to education, you have to understand the factors that leads them to become NEET in the first place. Gender, education levels, rural and urban distinctions all play a role in the NEET profile. All countries should carry out research based on their distinct subcategorization... The first subcategorization would be the unemployed, the second would be the discouraged workers and the inactive group. And then the inactive group should also have subcategories based on several factors... In Europe, the inactive group is commonly composed of young people with drug addiction problems, with very low education levels, from very poor backgrounds, belonging to migrant or ethnically different groups. However, this profiling might change from country to country. For instance, in Egypt, the NEET or unemployed group comprises 80% of university graduates. So when producing statistics, you should keep the reasons in mind and produce subcategorizations in line with it. (KI 7)

Another important factor appears as the need for enhanced coordination and cooperation among national and local institutions and agencies in the process of producing data and policies to overcome the heterogeneity and for effective policy implementation. The key informant from an international organization stressed ‘the principle of complementarity’ to address the heterogeneity of the needs of NEETs and to achieve efficiency in policy implementation. As the key informant suggested, a main policy tool to activate NEET groups are ALMPs, where principle of complementarity is central, whether they are vocational training programs, language courses or employment incentives. According to experience, it was proven that an absence or lower degrees of complementariness decreases the efficiency and success

of ALMPs. A second crucial step would be to define different NEET groups, along with their needs and work for harmonization with existing policy infrastructure. This kind of approach requires different ministries and public bodies to act in coordination and to closely communicate in means of initiatives targeting NEETs;

[...] For example, İŞKUR's on the job training programs should go hand in hand in with provision of care services by the Ministry of Family and Social Service. Though Youth Employment National Action Plans are prepared along with contributions and cooperation of all stakeholders, implementation phase bears obstacles in means of coordination and communication. A third important component in targeting a heterogeneous group of NEETs are the local administrations being recognized as policy actors. Geography is a major factor in the distribution of NEETs across Turkey and local administrations should be endowed with a central role in identification and outreach activities in policy response for NEETs. (KI 5)

One of the respondents emphasized the 'ripple effect' solution; that reaching out to discouraged young people with relatively higher levels of education and employable skills and trained as 'ambassadors' to provide a good example and reach out to other NEETs inactive due to disaffection. The 'ambassadors' can later be further trained as job and vocational counsellors upon will.

Lastly, the tendency to push NEETs into employment and see it as the only solution has been pointed out, when sometimes educational needs are on the foreground. Overcoming one dimensional training and employment policies is crucial in selecting priority groups or implementing relevant policies. It is reaffirmed that a needs mapping is crucial for Turkey for better informed and refined policies, with the underlying understanding that no group is left out or left behind.

5.3. Theme 2: Causes and Effects of the phenomena of NEET in Turkey

Discussions with key informants in the second section aimed to understand the underlying factors that are related to the high NEET rates in Turkey. The findings of in-depth interviews show that individual factors, the education system and economic structure are the main determinants of the NEET status and the gridlocks in the system should be addressed with a holistic approach. The causes are addressed with latest national and global developments that are thought to have impact on youth unemployment, along with possible long term effects of persistent NEET rates.

5.3.1. The gender dimension

Gender gap is pointed out as the most prominent reason of high NEET numbers in Turkey. Therefore, women constitute an outstanding group to be targeted by policy interventions. Respondents pointed to different social and economic factors resulting in high gender gap in NEETs in Turkey. The most underlined reasons by respondents, which are closely interrelated with each other are;

(i) gender roles

(ii) gender discrimination in the labour market

(iii) infrastructural incapacities with regards to care arrangements

High NEET rates among women are shaped by the socio-cultural perception of women's social roles as the primary housekeeper and caregiver. It is usually the female party who detaches from the education or labour market in case of a need for care whether for youngsters, the sick or the elderly in the family. Also, the education of boys is prioritized over girls by families. Though social policy structure in Turkey is generous towards young females with regards to financial provisions and monetary benefits; in addition to comprehensive public health services, stipends for orphaned girls and loans for both sexes in higher education, it does not necessarily serve for de-familializing ends once they transfer to young adulthood. Along with the cash for care schemes, care is increasingly commodified without being de-familized (Aybars, et al., 2018), decreasing the freedom for choosing between paid employment and care work for women. One respondent explains the underlying social assumptions informing the 'choice' between employment or family life;

Gender related structural problems are either family not allowing the women to work, or marriage and having children being prioritized either by the society or women themselves. First thing after graduation for women whether she enters a job or not is to get married and have children. This mentality is always a factor hampering women's labour market participation in traditional societies like ours. Partner's support [or lack of support] or lack of affordable and quality care services affect women's work status. They either leave work or never start due to these problems. And if they have never started, it becomes more difficult to enter the labour market in the following phases of life. (KI 3)

Gender discrimination in the labour market is another dimension for high NEET numbers among women. Entrenched gender roles in the society have effect on employment of women in the labour market, leading them to be seen as non-committed employees, who are going to leave for marriage and start a family soon after. The lack of effective and comprehensive care services turns the situation into an egg-chicken problem, adding over the early mean age for marriage in Turkey. Labour market rigidity in Turkey and lack of enough flexible working schemes also make it difficult to strike work-family balance for families in Turkey, resulting in females leaving the labour market when care responsibilities are at stake. Resonating with the available literature, a respondent states;

Interestingly enough, while inactivity and unemployment among men decrease with age, it surmounts among women, specifically between ages 25-29. Family and subsistence responsibilities have different impacts on both sexes, which encourage men to take up jobs in a less selective fashion but women to undertake care and household responsibilities. Household and childcare responsibilities coupled with limited childcare services are deemed strong deterring factors for women, who also find it difficult to turn back to labour market according to labour market transition data. (KI 2-3)

Experts also informed that, while data on unemployed NEET women are available, data drawn by an institutional research and baseline study on NEET women on a provincial or regional basis is not available at the moment. Other respondents' answers were also in line with this input. Only two international organizations have had contributed to data collection on female NEETs so far; the UNDP in the pilot provinces based on income and ILO on migrant female NEETs, as a group suffering from double vulnerability.

Though gender inequality in the labour market was aimed to be eliminated with the 2003 Labour Law foreseeing measures for “prohibition of gender-based discrimination in employment relations, the prevention of women’s lawful dismissal on grounds of pregnancy, the extension of compulsory paid maternity leave from 12 to 16 weeks, the introduction of a daily 1.5-h paid nursing leave for female workers with children below the age of 1” (Aybars, et al., 2018), the effect of these measures remained limited due to infrastructural incapacities such as public provision of care services. With the following policy schemes of ‘maternity gift’ (cash for first three borns of a couple), part time employment for parents with children in primary

education, cash for grandmothers who are taking care of their grandchildren or a monthly stipend for working mothers to pay for a professional nanny for home-based care and disability care allowance for home-based care provided a mix of support measures based on labour market flexibility and cash transfer rather than comprehensive de-familializing and high quality public or private infrastructure for care services.

Lack of enough public or in-workplace day care nurseries feeds into the previous factors and aggravates their effect. One respondent provides a general picture, where one factor leads to another;

The main infrastructural problem leading to high women unemployment is lack of necessary care facilities across Turkey. Enterprises or industrial complexes which want to hire more women are faced with extra burdens of care arrangements, transportation, working hours matching with school hours. Gender discrimination between women's work and men's work being high in Turkey also pushes women out of certain sectors and labour market on a more general level. The gender perception that women are the main caregivers discourage employers from hiring women who see marriage, maternal leave, being dependent on husband's or family's permission for working or occasional business trips as deterrents for hiring women. (KI 6)

Underlining the necessity of addressing the infrastructural problems as the precondition of any substantial change to occur, another respondent states;

To differentiate between the rate of gender discrimination from care needs as factors preventing women to participate in labour, this infrastructural problem needs to be overcome in Turkey. Unavailability of quality and affordable care services coupled with discordant working and schooling hours straining the work-family balance make it a luxury for women to participate in labour, education or training. (KI 8)

Addressing both issues of labour market discrimination and incentives for women, another participant comments that; prejudice against female workers in labour market is prevalent except for a few large firms. Laws requiring additional responsibilities for firms hiring a certain number of female employees such as nursing rooms or day care nurseries deter companies from hiring women. Apart from that, entrepreneurship and entrepreneur culture are not prevalent among women. The expert comments;

[...] These problems are of course related to social perception regarding gender roles. Social assistance schemes do not support more employment, on the contrary, they incentivize staying at home for women. Assistance schemes should be designed with a concern over incentivizing female employment. Incentives such as premium and tax

reductions for firms that hire more female workers and build nurseries could also break this labour market prejudices. (KI 9)

Gender issue in relation to the NEET status has many dimensions at play in a developing country context such as Turkey. The high female NEET rates in Turkey are an outcome of complex agency and structure relations, which necessitates it to address the issue on many levels; social, political and economic. As the key informant accounts and the literature point out, revision of legislation to alleviate female unemployment and inactivity fall short of accomplishing the desired results, without the infrastructural arrangements and a boost in labour demand in place. Hence, defamilializing welfare mechanisms are key to address the gender related factors of the NEET status.

5.3.2. Systemic gridlocks: the current situation in public services as factors underlying the NEET status

5.3.2.1. The education system

The structure of the education system in Turkey and poor school to work transition systems are among the most prominent factors contributing to high rates of NEET. All respondents pointed out to different aspects of the education system unable to achieve higher labour market participation among youth, under the topics below stepping forth as the main ‘usual suspects’;

- (i) education planning and skills mismatch
- (ii) lack of school-to-work-transition mechanisms
- (iii) vocational education
- (iv) early drop outs
- (i) Skills mismatch producing NEETs

Higher education not planned in line with the labour market needs results in large cohorts of young people stuck in unemployment and inactivity and longer transition periods with possible scarring effects in the future. As discussed in the literature review, upper secondary and tertiary education graduate ratio among the total NEETs

are relatively high and close to each other in Turkey. According to the respondents this situation signals a deficiency in planning and skills mismatch:

One of the main factors that leads to high percentages in NEETs in Turkey is lack of planned education and employment policies which might be due to the abolishment of the State Planning Organization. Higher education is considered as a way of postponing employment. A planning dysfunction in matching vocational training and higher education based on future jobs and sectoral growth leads to skills mismatch in the labour market. No wonder a young person making money and time investment in university education would find it difficult to take up disqualified jobs as if s/he has not completed a university degree. (KI 5)

The policy planning and coordination vacuum due to abolishment of State Planning Organization is re-emphasized another respondent, with additional comments on the rigidity in education policies;

The education system, especially new departments in universities should be designed in a way to endow young people with skills matching the future jobs and professions as well as higher education matching the needs of work. It is also not easy for young people to change their majors once they are in university in Turkey, due to bureaucratic rigidities and financial obstacles, which lead to skill mismatches after graduation. Turkish education system is not flexible, nor tailor made, depending on regional and individual needs of young people neither in early stages nor in higher education. Children or young people who belong to an ethnic minority and do not speak Turkish as their first language automatically find themselves in a disadvantaged position. Moreover, foreign language education does not meet the international standards, thus puts Turkish higher education graduates in a disadvantaged position in means of developing oneself after graduation. Governments in Turkey need to produce detailed strategic plans based on duration, costs and outcomes of education. (KI 6)

Though the expansion of higher education across the country and larger accession opportunities for young people living in remote areas or with limited financial resources to change town for education is not an inherently negative development, it led to a surge in unemployment among university graduates because of labour market's incapacity to produce adequate and matching employment opportunities. Moreover, expansion of higher education on fast track without concerns over quality make it difficult for employers to differentiate who really has the matching skills with the job. Regarding the need for skills and job matching services, which are also school to work transition systems, one respondent comments that;

The function of education as a means for social mobility eroded in the last decades, especially for children of middle or lower middle class parents. Public education system was the key to social mobility through education, whose effect is diluted for several reasons. As a norm, the function of school in labour market is signaling about the skills and attitude of the graduate such as foreign language, self-initiative and

entrepreneurial attitude, skills in statistical analysis, etc. Expansion of higher education makes it difficult for employers to understand the quality of education and soft skills acquired by students during education. Graduates from universities opened up recently which have not built a reputation yet might be experiencing a disadvantage in the job market. So, we can say the signaling function of education is loosened or even lost except for a few institutions. This means that you have ensure this matching, through STWT mechanisms, since it is usually the first job that is hardest to get. (KI 7)

While another informant emphasized the importance of skills matching and equip youngsters with default skills required in the job market in all levels of education, the risk of reducing education to labour market skill development should be avoided;

The global trend in commodifying and reducing the education system to skills for labour market is a prevalent structural problem. Skill acquiring should not be task-based, short-term or limiting the individual's potential if we want to develop a resilient human resource. One needs good literacy, analytical and handicraft skills not for only one job, but all through her/his life to be capable of re-learning. (KI 10)

The findings point out to skills mismatch stemming from an input oriented education system and lack of effective planning of educational outcomes and labour market needs are one of the prominent factors in high NEET rates. Skills development with a perspective of addressing labour market needs without commodifying or limiting the individual's potential remains as an issue to be addressed.

(ii) School to work transitions mechanisms are yet to be developed

School to work transition mechanisms are weak in Turkey. Though certain initiatives for establishing STWT systems have started in Turkey by a mixture governmental institutions, companies or civil society organizations, such as 'National Internship Mobilization' or by companies such as Arçelik and Mercedes (opening up their own vocational education and apprenticeship programs) or Esas Sosyal Program by the Sabancı Vakfı (providing young people with mentorship and first job opportunity in an NGO for 12 months on a paid basis), a comprehensive and standardized STWT policy in Turkey does not exist. Lack of effective school to work transition systems mean great public and human resource going to waste, especially on behalf of vocational and technical upper secondary or non-tertiary higher education graduates, as emphasized by the National Employment Agency and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. Mentioning the above cited initiatives, an informant states;

School to work transition initiatives and relevant policy implementations are rather new in the Turkish policy arena... [informing about the good examples above] ... Each initiative in this area is valuable since NEETs are in need of urgent policy response and quality internships are a crucial tool in school to work transitions. National Employment Agency has an internship portal under construction to match young people with employers. (KIs 1-2)

Another respondent proes that firms and education institutions should be in higher cooperation, which is the main problem in school to work transitions. Giving an example, the expert states;

Curriculums do not equip students with the labour market requirements. There are many new universities but the education content is questionable on the employer's side. This is due to a planning malfunctioning in education. Most companies cannot find the mid-level workers in the manufacturing and production sector. Some firms such as Arçelik and Mercedes has opened up their own vocational education centers to overcome this problem. Another member company of us, ÇEİŞ (Çimento Sektörü İşverenleri Sendikası) operating in the cement sector has initiated a cooperation with two schools in the region, adding two lessons to curriculum according to sectoral needs. Syndicates, firms and education institutions should be cooperating for the same target, striking a balance between employment and labour market needs. (KI 9)

(iii) vocational education should be supported in terms of reputation and quality

Literature points out that countries with effective dual education system such as Germany and Austria, or countries with high quality vocational education with matching internships such as Netherlands or Denmark suffer less from the NEET issue (Eurofound, 2017). Vocational education supported with apprenticeship systems are pointed out as efficient tools for fostering employment and shortening the transition period. Strengthening vocational education is a policy target for Turkey, coupled with efforts to upgrade the quality of vocational education and install effective apprenticeship systems in the last decades. However, the process is not free of problems. Two main problems related to vocation education seems to persist despite the institutional effort; reputation and quality of vocational education.

Reputation and social perception of vocational education seems to remain a factor preventing families and students from preferring vocational education when planning the future. Reputation problem is inextricably connected to social concerns over the quality of vocational education and its contribution to get a secure job and earning in the following phases of one's life. Some respondents comment that vocational

education is not held in high esteem among society. Problems regarding prestige of vocational education are commented by one expert as;

One problem is building good reputation for vocational high schools, which are not the first preference of families and young people. Other problem is the system making it an obligation to attend vocational schools by the recent revisions in education system. The last problem is lack of close relationship between vocational schools and available sectors. There are individual initiatives such as Mercedes company which provide quality training programs, apprenticeship and jobs, but participation and rate of utilization remain low due to lack of visibility, counselling services in schools and attractiveness of vocational training and jobs. There is a need to make vocational training more attractive through supporting the schooling system with quality jobs. (KI 8)

In the same vein, another expert underlines that cooperation among social partners, firms and the state should be higher for purposes of visibility and higher prestige;

I believe there is good amount of incentives and support mechanisms for apprenticeships and on the job trainings by the state, however they are now well known among the employers. Visibility and dissemination should be addressed through higher cooperation between social partners and firms, supported with increased digitalization on behalf of the state. Firms refrain from tackling with bureaucratic processes, therefore carrying out the processes digitally with less bureaucracy is very important. However, it should be kept in mind that incentives available for apprenticeships and on the job trainings usually target the ones who are in the education, not NEETs. And it is not realistic to expect that employers would want to hire a young person out of education and without employable skills. NEETs are in need of tailor made policies that steer them to education and employment. (KI 9)

(iv) early drop outs and preventive measures

Lastly, early school leaving stands out as a problem underlying the NEET issue within the context of education. The available research informs us that gaps in the cognitive and non-cognitive skills are a strong driver of economic and social success or failure in the following phases of life (Carcillo, et al., 2015; Corbanese and Rosas, 2015; Alivernini and Lucidi; 2011, Levels, et al., 2022). Preventive mechanisms such as tracking systems are the most advised tools to capture vulnerability before young people become NEETs. Early school leaving is still relatively high in Turkey and stands as a challenge for policy makers in relation to the NEET problem:

Various youth studies point out to a growing disaffection towards education on behalf of young people. Young people with low belief that education is going to have positive impact on making their lives find it easier to drop out of education, which is an indicative of high drop-out rates in Turkey. A research programme that aims to

generate data to explore the needs, potential and aspirations of young people (18–30) in Turkey³⁹, revealed a tendency among young people that network and cultural capital are believed to have more impact than education on reaching to employment opportunities. (KI 8)

Upon the importance of preventive measures, another respondent underlines,

NEET policies respond best when they are preventive, ideally on the stage of compulsory and higher education, before young people become NEETs following the completion of education. Quality vocational education supported with apprenticeship routing young people to employment as it is in the case of dual education system of Germany and strong tracking systems on behalf of schools are among preventive measures that need to be applied. (KIs 1-2)

Similar concerns are shared by other respondents, pointing out to the need to address young people while they are still in education, due to concerns over disadvantage and reach out and for purposes of prioritization among NEETs;

STWT mechanisms and school tracking systems are necessary to address the gaps between education levels and from education to employment. Risks factors leading to NEET status and obstacles to education or employment should be addressed during the education phase whether they are related to familial issues or poverty related, or if the student should be steered to vocation education before dropping out. Of course, the focus is more on the disadvantaged groups and addressing them interactively during the education, when they are still accessible to state. Reaching them is highly difficult once they leave education and more expensive at the same time. Graduation tracking systems, early school leaving tracking systems are useful for this purpose. The advantaged group comes secondary because they have alternatives, plus, people cannot be forced to work. The ones who should be addressed first are the ones who want to work or go for education or can be encouraged to think about it but who cannot find the chance or hope. (KI 3)

A major criticism to regulations concerning school attendance in the literature by Şaşmaz (2015) is brought up in interviews. The report by UNESCO⁴⁰ explains that up until 2007, governments showed strong commitment to school enrollment and higher participation education through several policy initiatives⁴¹, none of the measures to consolidate and enhance the previous gains in the following phase after 2008 declared as the ‘phase of institutionalization’ were not fully implemented. According to the

³⁹ Next Generation report in 2017 carried out by YADA and British Council

⁴⁰ Aytuğ Şaşmaz, 2015. Politics of educational expansion in Turkey, ED/EFA/MRT/2015/PI/20 on UNESCO Digital Library, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000232427?posInSet=20&queryId=beb6dace-244a-4555-a3d5-b926d716c564>

⁴¹ *ibid.* 1997 Basic Education Law, Hey Girls, Let’s Go to School Campaign in 2003, Catch-Up Education Programs, 2004, e-schooling system introduced in 2008 set up based on diagnosis between 2003 and 2006, Social Risk Mitigation Project (World Bank) in 2003

report, this is due to several reasons including the politicization of the conditional education assistance mechanisms, a change in the mid and upper level bureaucrats in the Ministry of National Education who refrained from collaboration with international and civil society organizations on grounds that collaborations slowing down the pace of reforms and a will to decrease the ratio of public spending on education between the years of 2008 and 2011. Another major change in the system was the introduction of 4+4+4 reform in 2012. This reform is alleged to change the structure of the previous ‘8-year, compulsory and uninterrupted basic education system’ and received negative reactions. Teacher training schools in universities, think-tanks and children’s rights and women’s rights organizations argued that this revision dropped the compulsory formal education effectively to four years, which is supposed to have impact especially among girls and students with disabilities.

The expert argued that breaks in the educations resulted in a surge in distant education, which has negative impact on academic success and a growing disaffection towards education. Through a quick cross check on the current situation by the researcher, it was found that according to Eđitim-Sen⁴², there is a direct relation between the 4+4+4 reform and increasing numbers in open lower and upper secondary schools. Eđitim-Sen states that attendance to open higher education increased to a total of 1 million 452 thousand 331 by 2020-2021, with 222 thousand 638 in open lower secondary and 1 million 254 thousand 420 in upper secondary education from 797.921 for upper secondary before 4+4+4. A comparison of the data by Eđitim-Sen is not possible since the latest data provided by MoNE for open high school attendance online is by 2016-2017⁴³, which is 797.921 (466.057 for male and 331.864 for female). However, according to a news issue by Anatolian Press⁴⁴, a total of 1 million 580 thousand 764 (826.31 for male, 754.733 for female) children registered to open education system at the primary and lower secondary levels. This increase might have an implication on the high NEET rates in Turkey, especially with a gender dimension to it. Exceeding the limits of this study, a relation between more and more youngsters routing to open

⁴² <https://egitimsen.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MEB-%C3%96rg%C3%BCn-E%C4%9Fitim-%C4%B0statistikleri.pdf>

⁴³ <https://aol.meb.gov.tr/www/onceki-yillara-ait-sayisal-veriler/icerik/50>

⁴⁴ <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/egitim/meb-egitim-ogretim-istatistiklerini-acikladi/2361308>

education and their risk of being NEET in the following phases of life remains open for further research.

5.3.2.2. Larger macro-economic context and the labour market structure

If education system is one end, macro-economic context and labour market dynamics are the other end of discussion with regards to the NEET phenomena. In the interviews, the respondents who preferred to analyze the causes of high NEET rates from an economic perspective converged on the view that macro-economic policies and the labour market structure is not supportive of youth employment. Though NEETs are rather recent concern, country specific literature in the previous chapter shows that youth unemployment has been a long standing challenge for policy makers in Turkey.

Pointing out to the fact that youth unemployment being a structural problem in Turkey for a long time, one respondent from government summarizes the diverse factors at play leading to the NEET status among young people;

High youth unemployment problem has always existed in Turkey as a structural problem, especially on behalf of women. Skills mismatch, the need to organize the departments and higher education in line with the needs of the labour market, education planning to meet the needs of labour market, jobs which are skill based but not necessarily requiring university education not being popular are the underlying structural socio-economic problems with regards to youth unemployment. None of them are new problems but on the policy agenda for years. (KI 3)

International organizations' view on the labour market are somewhat similar, in terms of the availability of jobs supporting youth employment and working conditions. Two outstanding root source of structural youth unemployment are point out as (i) the inadequacy of a labour market to produce enough number of decent work opportunities in matching measures with the population, (ii) lack of competence and output oriented education and (iii) individual circumstances of young people that hamper the means to develop themselves. A key informant explains;

[...] Though Turkey is a developing country on many grounds, non-availability of an economic infrastructure to provide the population with decent work leads to high unemployment rates. Turkish economy is mainly composed of low and mid-level technology manufacturing industry, lacking an industrial infrastructure in line with the needs and requirements of the modern age, despite the efforts on behalf of the state. The economic growth in the last two decades came without growth in employment. Turkish economic model which does not support employment creation is also not in compliance with modern and quality education. Addressing the problems regarding

education could at least trigger entrepreneurship, even if the economy fails to produce more jobs, a process triggering a creative destruction of the existing model. Creative sectors such as gaming and TV series which took off in the last years are key for economic growth, however such examples remain very limited for a large country with 80 plus million population. Turkey is lagging behind in creation of qualified human resource for creative sectors. The economy policy does not communicate with education policies and lack long term projection. Similar problems in relation to projection remain on the side of the employer who cannot provide a career vision, individual development and decent work conditions for young people. The third problem lies on behalf of the young people, who might lack the means, financial resources or interest to develop themselves. A lack of long term policy projection by the tripartite structure (the state, the employers and the civil society) is a main problem underlying youth unemployment and inactivity. (KI 6)

Providing a similar perspective, another respondent touched upon problems regarding decent work conditions, as a problem stemming from both national and global factors. A lack of effective planning of education and labour market, lack of youth welfare mechanisms and shifts in the global redistribution and labour markets due to automation aggravate the NEET problem. A key informant explains;

One of the main factors that leads to high percentages in NEETs in Turkey is lack of planned education and employment policies which might be due to the abolishment of the State Planning Organization. [...] The other structural problem in Turkey is the family being positioned as a de facto social protection provider for young people. Working conditions offered to young people in entry to job market mostly do not meet the standards of decent work. It is very difficult for a young person to set up her/his life and meet her/his needs, where such an initiation would cost almost three times higher than the minimum wage. Difficult economic circumstances coupled with repression of wages lead to a disaffection towards work and inactivity on behalf of young people. Apart from structural problems on the national level, work is undergoing a structural transformation on the global level, where forms of production change through digitalization and automation. Automation leads to shedding of disqualified jobs, with additional transformation of economic sharing of the added value. This means more unemployed people on the global level ringing the question of how to share the added value on the social level. NEET problem is related to larger consequences of this transformation on the macro and international level which have national implications. Young people are usually the ones who are hit first and foremost as a consequence of such transformations affecting the labour market. (KI 5)

As suggested in the literature, employment protection regulations have implications for youth employment (Eurofound, 2012). The study finds out that increasing regulations on temporary jobs hamper the access of young people to labour market along with rigid labour protection measures. As it seems, fostering youth employment requires targeted measures to ease their labour market transition, without jeopardizing the protection of permanent contracts:

Labour market regulations are rigid in Turkey, with limited options for flexible working schemes such as distant working, short term work, home-based work, invoice based working. Trial periods are usually short, which discourage employers to hire young people. Flexibility could bring more labour market participation on behalf of young people and women. Countries with flexible working schemes are the ones with lowest women unemployment when one looks into the ILO and OECD reports. Flexicurity has not found a place in our regulations yet. (KI 9)

However, it should be kept in mind that, issue of labour market rigidity is controversial in the case of Turkey. Some scholars in the literature argue that as a country without a mature welfare state, the labour rights and protections in Turkey has never been comprehensive, nor inclusive except for only a limited segment of the working population (Kayaduvar, 2015). Turkish economy is composed of small and medium sized enterprises on a large scale and therefore, most workplaces are excluded from the rigid job security law, since it is imposed on larger firms with 30 or more employees. Therefore, it should be noted that, according to the opposite perspectives in the literature though the employment protection legislation might seem rigid, it excludes a large part of the economy (Kayaduvar, 2015). The social partner involved in this study incorporates the membership of largest enterprises in Turkey, therefore their knowledge and perspective is in line with their member community and cannot be deemed outright flawed.

The principle of complementarity was also emphasized in the interviews, to avoid overlapping efforts and addressing policy gaps between a group of policies targeting the NEETs;

A holistic approach should be adopted in the issue of prioritization of NEET groups. The impact of social and economic investment in one group with other groups lagging behind would hamper the effectiveness of policy efforts. Principle of complementarity is valid also in targeting different NEET groups, where policies should be designed and implemented in coordination between governmental institutions both on the national and local level. What remains emergent is making connections and achieving policy dialogue between different sets of policy responses to avoid overlapping or policy gaps. (KI 5)

The NEET problem with its underlying factors in the economic structure and labour market dimension require an integrated policy making rationale. Supply sided policies such as ALMPs, deregulation or enhanced flexibility in labour markets should either be supported by careful policy interventions such as targeted upskilling, reduction of

costs of housing, transportation and care services, or promoting investments that would increase the aggregate demand for labour.

5.3.3. Miscellaneous challenges shaped by current global and national circumstances

The last three major factors apart from issues related to education and employment identified in the discussions were digital transformation, COVID-19 pandemic and the global and national economic down turn.

More recent developments that has had effect on the rates in the recent years has been the COVID-19 global pandemic conditions and a shrinkage in labour demand and decreased economic activity. One respondent pointed out to COVID-19 pandemic and recession as current circumstances having an impact on NEET rates, combined with limited portion of decent work conditions;

The two major factors impacting the situation of NEETs very recently have been the COVID-19 pandemic and the deepening economic crisis in Turkey. The impact of these two factors, one being a global and the other a national one has translated into a disaffection towards employment on grounds that more and more people find it difficult to make ends meet though participation in employment. This effect can be observed among a group of people who live by rental incomes and find working pointless in means of generating income. They are counted as the advantaged NEETs, however the advantage coming from not choosing to work is problematic since such a life choice can diminish future chances of employment. This situation stems from the lack of decent work opportunities in Turkey. (KI 8)

A recent ILO Report (2020) foresees a hollowing of mid-level skilled jobs in the forthcoming years. Digital skills such as computer literacy and knowledge of office software are almost minimum level entry requirements even for non-technical roles. The growing importance of digital and soft skills require an updating of educational and vocational curricula across developing economies. The report foresees that automatable jobs are going to face higher risk of being obsolete, therefore equipping younger generations with the demands of the digital economy is going to be crucial for the education systems.

Government and social partners appear to have similar perspectives with regards to Turkey lagging behind the digital transformation trend both in education and employment sectors. Accordingly, Turkey should be catching up with the global trend

in digital transformation which has similar effects of erosion of certain jobs while need for new skills emerge across countries.

5.4.4. Cross Country Comparisons

Cross country comparisons can be tricky, due to the intersectional nature of the NEET phenomena. They are also highly critical for successful policy transfer of good examples or effective regional collaborations. Policy transfer literature tells us that the process is likely to be unsuccessful when it is uninformed, incomplete or inappropriate (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000; Fawcett and Marsh, 2012). While policy learning and lesson drawing are convenient time and money savers for policy makers, literature points out to the dubious nature of lesson drawing. (Bennett and Howlett, 1992; Mossberger and Wolman, 2003; Benson and Jordan, 2011) Risks involved by Mossberger and Wolman (2003) in lesson drawing are pointed as upon reviewing several policy transfers;

The scope of information potential borrowers have can be limited. Information about the policy may be inadequate or even inaccurate. Problems and goals may differ. Assessment of program success in the home environment is often problematic. Important differences in program setting between the home country and the importing country may not be taken into account. And available information may be ignored or not used appropriately in the decision process. This is a formidable indictment from the perspective of rational analysis as set forth in the policy analysis textbooks.

Lesson-drawing, as an indispensable part of global social governance and policy diffusion could be risky. Cross country comparisons and evaluation of the available data being the most fraught concerns, a correct evaluation of the actual condition in other countries requires a careful analysis of the context and path dependencies which effect the policy implementation process. The discussions in this section is analyzed with these bearings in mind.

A cross country comparison in terms of NEETs with a focus on Turkey is a significant gap in the institutional and academic literature. This is directly related to lack of a country mapping study, yet to be produced as an output of the Labour Market Support Programme for NEETs (NEET PRO) Operation and the current situation analysis completed by 2023 by the Presidency of Strategy and Budget. However limited it may seem, inputs by the respondents provided valuable insights over where the literature on NEET can lead to.

The available research mentioned in the discussions were conducted by ILO, specific to migrant and disabled NEETs⁴⁵ and a comparison between Turkey and Columbia with a focus on decent work⁴⁶ and by ETF⁴⁷ on NEETs in partner countries. Though more research on cross-country comparisons would surely enhance understanding regarding NEETs, a concern over the complicated dynamics of country specific factors should not be disregarded. Some respondents stressed that numbers alone are not enough for a healthy comparison of NEETs, but factors such as education levels, social spending and security systems, gender dynamics, etc. should be looked out for. Providing their thoughts on possible comparisons between Turkey and other countries; one respondent comments;

Japan could be mentioned in comparison with Turkey in terms of high women NEET rates, generated by similar factors such as care responsibilities and cultural norms. Turkey also show similarities with Mediterranean/Southern European countries in terms of social security and social protection systems and so does in terms of youth unemployment. However, a similarity in terms of cause and effect factors cannot be commented on, since a comprehensive research profiling NEETs in Turkey is limited for the time being. Turkey also differs from its Southern counterparts in means of family being the de facto unemployment security for young people. Comparative studies are useful in giving perspective, however, each country has its own dynamics and should be evaluated contextually. Moreover, labour market dynamics transformed dramatically with COVID-19 pandemic conditions, such as distance freelance working, increased platform labour and ‘digital nomad-ism’. Though these novel working conditions are more popular on a general basis, data or insight about whether they are preferred forms of work on behalf of young people or young people find themselves in locked up in freelance work do not exist yet, not to be overlooked when making comparisons. (KIs 1-2)

Another respondent proposes that if there would be any comparative studies to be made, countries with similar demographic and economic infrastructure should be considered first, especially ones we are in economic and sectoral rivalry, such as Romania, Portuguese or Spain.

⁴⁵ Youth with Disabilities and COVID:19 Access to Decent Jobs in the Midst of the Pandemic, https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/infographics/WCMS_771446/lang--en/index.htm, reached in 5.11.2021

⁴⁶ Promoting Decent Work in Refugee and Mixed Migration Contexts: A South-South Triangular Cooperation (SSTC) Initiative Between Turkey and Colombia, 2021, https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS_828647/lang--en/index.htm

⁴⁷ Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET): An overview in ETF partner countries by Ummuhan Bardak, Martiño Rubal Maseda and Francesca Rosso, 2015, <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/young-people-not-employment-education-or-training-neet>

The ETF, as an organization experienced in research and promotion of education, training and skills development for external assistance within the context of EU policies covering a large geography of transition economies, underscores that cross country comparisons should be based on how socio-economic dynamics interact each other in the case of NEET. It is also stressed that education levels are a strong determinant, which should be central in comparisons;

Subcategories of NEET vary according to countries. It is not possible to go for a generalization for all countries. Numbers vary greatly depending on the social and economic structure of each country. Similar patterns can be found though. For example, except for Albania and Central Asian countries, NEET rates usually do not exceed 15 percent in post-Soviet countries. What could be the reason? One should look at how the education infrastructure interacts with the employment dynamics. Though dynamics of employment changed with switching to free market, the education infrastructure and appetite for education remained. Public education is inclusive and all the young population remain in compulsory education until the age of 18 due to generous infrastructural investment carried out in the Soviet era. The second reason is relatively achieved gender equality. Large differences remain in means of NEETs across Europe, due to such differences. NEET phenomena seems to increase in the southern states while it drops in the North. (KI 7)

It is stressed by the key informant that gender and education levels are outstanding factors that need close attention in comparisons. Lebanon, Egypt, Syria before the crisis, Jordan have been identified as most similar countries from a bird's eye view by the key informant, with an additional comment that Tunisia differs in means of education levels. Regarding female labour participation and traditional gender roles, Azerbaijani, Armenia and Georgia are also pointed out as showing a parallel ratio with Turkey, again with a footnote that upper secondary education completion ratio is high in Georgia, with 4-5 percent of medium lower secondary level early school leavers. Especially early school leaving indicators are a major factor that should be taken into consideration in cross country comparisons, which have implications for NEET, especially for women.

5.5.5. Long term provisions

Building on the available literature, it can be claimed that persistent high rates of NEETs have several implications on multiple levels. A growing body of an unemployed and inactive group in a transitional life stage has economic, societal and individual costs to nations (Eurofound, 2012). Though it is not easy to assess the possible outcomes, since it is not possible nor plausible to commodify young people

or to put a price tag on a young person's life, large rates of unemployed and inactive youth has bearings on public finance and productivity rates (Eurofound, 2012), with additional impacts on social cohesion, generational equality and scarring effects on the individual level. In addition to guesses about possible effects of youth unemployment and inactivity on the economy and society, projections of policy makers and researchers provide an insight on why a NEET policy is necessary.

The respondents had varying perspectives regarding the long term impacts of persistent NEET numbers. Three of them pointed out the possibility that active-passive balance in social security would be strained in the future with only a narrow ratio of the working age population actively contributing to the system. Two answers alluded to disruption of social cohesion due to a lost generation experiencing a waste of potential, talent and skills. Other topics stressed were issues related to sustainability of employment, increased migration and brain drain, scarring effects on individual level, decreasing political engagement and civic participation and backlash in social development, especially with implications on gender roles. Some underlined the looming risk of entrenchment of traditional gender, with diminishing prospects on social transformation and civic engagement with NEET status surging among younger generations;

In means of socio-political consequences, the NEET youth risks two important outcomes. Research shows that being unemployed and inactive culminates a general sense of hopelessness among young people about their future and results in an entrenchment of gender roles in society⁴⁸. Young people who cannot participate in production and reproduce their lives are also unable to generate social transformation and display a tendency for dependence on the female family members for care. As for political consequences, the same reasons generate apoliticization and disengagement from public sphere which hamper checks and balances function of the society. Turkey also risks having a lost generation problem, which might result in radicalization and political discontent among young people, especially among migrant groups. (KI 5)

Only one respondent had a positive outlook. The informant claimed that considering the global trends indicating this as a persistent problem in the upcoming decades, NEET problem can push policy makers to take more radical measures such as universal income. That said, NEETs' increasing visibility being the first step, the

⁴⁸ <https://www.ilo.org/ankara/areas-of-work/youth-employment/lang--tr/index.htm>

policy making process can evolve positively on behalf of young generations' entitlements.

5.4. Theme 3: Policy Responses and Global Social Policy

The findings in the third section of the field study aim to reveal the deeper rationale of policy responses towards NEETs along with the nature and impact of international cooperation between national and global governance institutions and attitudes in policy transfer. This section aims to provide a holistic and comprehensive view about different institutions' end goals, proposed solutions, political and ideological stance and viewpoint towards the policies targeting NEETs. It also aims to explain the policy shift, policy transfer and agenda setting processes in Turkey concerning the NEET issue through interaction of the global policy advocates and national actors. The risks, limitations and opportunities in relation to these processes are analyzed with a concern towards the rural-urban axis and the social dialogue aspect.

5.4.1. The influence of global governance and the international agenda

Drawing from the literature review, the influence of global social governance structures and diffusion of certain policy agendas through international or supranational bodies have been aimed to be understood. Of all the ten key informants, seven pointed out the influence of EU harmonization process, while three respondents also included ILO along with EU. Other two included the UNDP influence along with the EU while some also mentioned the efforts of Department of Foreign Affairs and Projects within the scope of activities to address groups in need of specialized policy action. So as a matter of fact, the influence of the EU harmonization process of Turkey, starting from the onwards of 2000s has had an undisputable impact on the NEET agenda of Turkey, along with influence of the UN organizations.

Given this preliminary analysis, norm setting and norm diffusing function of the international organizations and supranational structures from a global social governance perspective are going to be discussed in this and following sections. The interaction taking place in the web of national and international institutions opens up a policy space where both cooperation and rivalry is played out. The global web that is more interconnected than ever requires more effective governance of social aspects

of the socio-economic outcomes of globalization, which is carried out through transnational networks and international governance structures. Building on the literature review picturing the rationale of global governance from the side of international and supranational structures, this section aims to complete the other end of this policy diffusion process, which is, the national policy making context.

On the global level, the NEET concept was born out of a need to better understand and identify a group of young people who have lost attachment to education and employment due to diverse obstacles. This is a concept mainly from abroad, so it took some time for it to find a place its way to the Turkish context. During the interviews, it had been underlined that the introduction of this concept into Turkish research and policy circles involved a double way interaction between the international and the national, with double efforts of international governance structures using their discursive powers and Turkish policy circles looking abroad for analytical tools to use in the Turkish context. The utterances of key informants complete each other in means of content and timeline and thus provide a full picture of the introduction of the NEET concept and NEET policies in Turkish policy context.

As indicated above three international governance structures had been on the forefront in the joint effort of diffusion of the NEET concept; the EU, ILO and UNDP. As for the EU, the Youth Guarantee⁴⁹ scheme had served as a propulsive factor for member and candidate countries to adopt and implement policy schemes for NEETs. NEETs are a central issue in Youth Guarantee, aiming to ensure that each young person under 25 having full access to education, apprenticeship, traineeship opportunities, employment services and support within four months of losing a job or leaving formal education (Council of the European Union, 2013). The underlying rationale is that losing access to education and employment not only diminishes the future financial prospects of the individual, but also poses a strong risk for social cohesion with surmounting numbers of young people facing overlapping risks of economic, institutional and cultural exclusion. Thus, the Youth Guarantee is designed as a structural reform (Andor and Vesely, 2018) to rebuild and strengthen the connections

⁴⁹ Youth Guarantee is a policy scheme issued in 2013 by the Council of European Union to secure a smooth transition from school to work and to support labour market integration for young people with NEET young people being a central concern.

between to school to work and reach out for young people in disadvantaged circumstances as an intervention mechanism to leave nobody behind.

This paradigm shift had implications for national policy makers. They were either expected to revamp their existing policies targeting young people or build up their administrative capacities for enhanced coordination between services and to develop outreach strategies (Andor and Vesely, 2018). Due to a number of factors related to institutional capacity of relevant actors for cooperation and coordination and under massive cuts in public budgets particularly in countries hit hard by the crisis, it took some time to understand and implement this structural reform (Andor and Vesely, 2018). Following suit, Turkey kick started producing data on NEETs in 2016 and legislative and administrative preparations to deploy initiatives targeting NEETs. The NEET concern and policy targets started to be included in the policy documents and steps were taken to enhance institutional capacity.

The Employment Expert cadres of the National Employment Agency created in 2003 are endorsed with responsibilities of following the global agenda and best practice policy implementations on employment, conducting research and bringing up policy recommendations on an institutional level. Aligned with this target, one of the interviewed Employment Experts produced a desk study on NEETs and Youth Guarantee in 2016⁵⁰. The key informants indicated that his research on NEETs and Youth Guarantee published in 2016⁵¹ was pursued in a fashion to conceptualize the study into a project in the future, to be operationalized under National Employment Agency. Hence, the introduction of the concept of NEET formally into Turkish policy circles on the institutional level can be traced back to 2016, when TURKSTAT started issuing data on NEETs and when there was only one study conducted on NEETs in Turkey⁵². An orientation towards a European approach on NEETs is due to European Union being one of the main donors of international projects of National Employment Agency. Confirming this account, experts state:

⁵⁰ <https://media.iskur.gov.tr/15666/emre-yildiz.pdf>

⁵¹ *ibid.*

⁵² <http://egitimvebilim.ted.org.tr/index.php/EB/article/view/3094/794>

NEET was announced as the formal indicator in 2015 and all member and candidate countries were requested to produce this information/data. So I believe, Turkey started producing this data as a candidate country after this announcement. (KI 7)

A similar point is made by another respondent from an international organization; as for how this concept travelled to Turkey, accession negotiations to the European Union along with an influx of IPA funds accelerated of such studies targeting these groups. Moreover, according to a key informant, the reform process İŞKUR underwent in 2003 within the frame of harmonization led to the NEET concept to make its introduction to the Turkish policy context. (KI 5)

Emphasizing the process of looking abroad for policy learning, a respondent explains;

... the introduction of this concept into Turkish research and policy circles has been by looking abroad through national and international institutions trying to use this concept functionally in the Turkish context in areas such as migrant policy, women empowerment or youth empowerment initiatives. I believe this is a valuable effort on grounds that the concept means more than labour force participation and opens up extended debate what is being a young person about, participation to public space and social life, etc. beyond work status and labour market participation. So going on with such studies and if possible, youth organizations to show ownership of this issue with this perspective is very important. (KI 8)

Apart from these accounts, the function of the international organizations in the NEET discussion cannot be overlooked:

ILO has been pushing for the NEET agenda from onset of 2000s, while intensified effort corresponds to the last three years. ILO's contribution to the discussion has been underlining the need for Turkish NEET youth policies should also address migrant NEETs and bringing migrant NEET youth to the policy agenda. (KI 5)

However, the same expert speaks about a policy gap or 'blindness' so to say, especially towards young NEET women, whose inactivity and home staying was presumed within traditional norms. A similar attitude towards young people who did not continue with education was prevalent, who were counted as unregistered employment. Introduction of the NEET concept helped the policy makers to define this group and understand the idiosyncratic features of their situation. The Expert further commented that the reports by international organizations have limited impact among policy circles in Turkey and a direct impact with regards to NEETs was initiated along with accession negotiations of Turkey to the European Union.

The UNDP had joint efforts with the ILO to pursue the agenda of NEET. From the account of the planning unit, in contradiction with the ILO expert's position, it can be seen that an interaction with global trends as well as a bottom-up approach can be observed in the travelling of the concept NEET through policy circles, through discursive practices employed by the international organizations;

Speaking of myself, a UNDP report including the numbers and situation of NEETs had been very striking for me. This is an important vulnerable group, which is relatively large in Turkey. Then slowly, we started to include this indicator in our documents which also started catching attention of other institutions. We request it to be included in other institutions' policy documents as well. Academicians, NGOs or international organizations emphasizing this concept contributes to dissemination of this issue. Then a concern among policy circles and academicians have started an interest in this topic. (KI 3)

Making an emphasis to the pandemic as a factor propelling an interest in the topic, the international organizations expert underlines that; an interest in NEET in the policy arena corresponds to before pandemics and speaking about a policy or strategy targeting NEET before 2019 was weak. Youth unemployment as a policy concern was more on the foreground for national and international governing institutions in Turkey. UNDP, as an international organization aims to shape the national interests in taking necessary policy actions and the current discourse on NEETs and to kick start the process for designing effective and comprehensive NEET policies in Turkey with an emphasis on the gender aspect. For this purpose, the UNDP initiative on female NEETs aims to produce a policy recommendation, namely a white paper specifically targeting NEETs at the end of the project (Young Women Building Their Future Project). A second action foreseen by the project is a high level board to be convened once a year, with high level representatives from relevant policy partners. The double function of this board is planned to bring relevant policy actors such as civil society, private sector, international organizations and national governing bodies around a policy dialogue as well as raising awareness with regards to this social problem.

It was also emphasized by other institutions that COVID-19 pandemic served as a propelling factor deepening the youth unemployment and inactivity with its larger effects on the economic activity and social life. Confirming the pandemic has provided a very strong urge to address young people in dire conditions, an expert from a national institution informed;

The National Youth Employment Strategy was originally scheduled for after the pandemic. The Presidency shared the economic reforms coordinated under the Ministry of Treasury and Finance. Preparation and implementation of the NYES was one of the actions under the economic reform action plan. Along with the pandemic, efforts for the strategy were prioritized. (KI 4)

All in all, the NEET concept to manifest itself in the Turkish is the output of the interaction of Turkish institutions with international and supranational governance bodies, along with COVID-19 serving as an accelerator to the process.

5.4.2. Coordination and implementation: Risks, limitations and opportunities

Policies informing NEETs crosscuts a large group of factors and can display varieties according to underlying factors. Addressing NEETs also crosscuts a large area of education and employment policies, thus require a high level coordination and cooperation among national or international stakeholders. The discussions related to main risks, limitations and opportunities are informed by the current situation in in means of coordination and cooperation among institutions and what could be the possible opportunities to enhance the level of cooperation in the future. The discussions in this section are informed the NYES Action Plan, which foresees a high level cooperation among national and local institutions and policy initiatives started within the scope of international cooperation.

As indicated in the above sections, to serve as a baseline study to inform the future policy actions designed for NEETs, the Planning Unit foresees the completion of a research on NEETs and underlying factors by 2023. TURKSTAT, Social Security Institution, İŞKUR and MoNE are planned to be the main partners for this research. Those who are in the education, those who are registered in the system as unemployed and looking for work, those registered under social security system are going to be looked into first. Policy priorities and groups that need emergent response are going to be identified according to this baseline study. This study is expected to provide information on the regional pillars of the issue, which groups face high risk of the NEET status, most prominent factors of the existing gender gap (whether they are related to educational or familial factors), whether the NEET groups are mainly university graduates (along with a departmental breakdown) or belonging to other levels of education. A statistical analysis is planned to be carried out to understand the

determinants on the basis of a group breakdown, so that which stage to apply policy measures can be identified.

The coordination processes, whether they are related to producing data or policy implementation, are not free of risks, though. An important initiative concerning NEETs that has been put into action is the implementation of the NYES Action Plan. The experts involved in this process mentioned of the very close cooperation with other stakeholders. To ensure a smooth running of the action plan an interactive web tool is built. As the coordinator institution, the MoLSS carries out the following up of the measures set in the action plan in six-month intervals through this digital tool as well as coordination meetings. The main risk for the upcoming implementation of measures is the issue of ownership on behalf of stakeholders. Implementation of necessary measures requires high level ownership and lack of ownership constitutes a major problem due to the intersectional nature of NEET policies.

Ownership is pointed out as a possible risk by other governmental institutions. The main resistance point in successful implementation of NEET policies is the necessity that top managers and policy makers showing ownership and seeing the NEET issue as a problem. A successive reshuffling of top managers and experts and change of direction of policies in line constitute a problem for sustainable policy making and extracting expected policy results. Such breaks in in the continuum of policy making leads to a loss of ground where one topic currently seen as an important problem losing importance in the next phase. Thus, change in bureaucracy between short intervals constitute a risk, resulting in discontinuity in tracking of the policy results. All in all, project based understanding and lack of ownership are the main obstacles in installing sustainable policies.

Prioritization of NEET groups and relevant policies are another dimension of the coordination, determining which institutions and policy tools are going to be on the forefront. Though a baseline study is needed to identify the policy priorities, addressing the gender gap in NEETs rates seem to be on the top priority for all national institutions. MoLSS having already started a project targeting NEET women, National Employment Agency also uttered that women employment, women empowerment and inclusion have been on the agenda of the institution's available policies for a long time;

Within this context, a focus on gender in employment policies has continued along the agenda on NEETs. Women are seen as a group in need of urgent support by policies targeting NEETs. As a global trend, cultural codes, care responsibilities, gender pay gap and a mismatch between skills and the labour market are seen as main factors aggravating women inactivity and unemployment. The second group which needs urgent policy intervention is vocational school graduates. A similar concern is at stake for university graduates. Though an increase in number of universities has contributed to an increase in the level of education throughout the country, youth employment rates have not yet caught up with this development, NEET rate being 30.9 percent among higher education graduates, which also stand out as a group to be addressed. Higher education levels, which is thought to be a key factor for higher employability, a direct relationship between education a young person obtains and the prospects of getting a matching job is not straightforward in Turkey. (KIs 1-2)

ALMPs are the most preferred interventions for youth employment at the moment, including skill development and incentives for employers and job placement with a specific focus on youth and women, National Employment Agency being the main coordinator. Policy interventions are designed on the basis of eliminating disadvantages originating from gender, age and skill deficiency. Social protection as a policy tool has come forefront with the COVID-19 pandemic where jobs were hit by national closure measures.

Along with the available policy tools for youth employment such as job and vocational counselling, on the job training and apprenticeship programs, career days in cooperation with local administrations, National Employment Agency started two initiatives targeting specifically NEETs. Job and vocational counselling services for NEETs has started in 2019⁵³. Among young people aged 15-24 registered to National Employment Agency database and identified as potential NEETs, Job Hunt Model has been used, to establish labour market attachment of these young people.

The second one is the European Union and Republic of Turkey co-funded project Labour Market Support Programme for NEETs (NEET PRO) Operation⁵⁴ to overcome the problems in reaching out and activation of NEETs in Turkey. The main obstacles of effective policy making has been identified as heterogeneity of NEETs, reaching out to them and understanding the local needs. Within the scope of this program, these obstacles are aimed to overcome through development of institutional capacity, identification of intervention areas and outreach strategies and production of quality

⁵³ <https://media.iskur.gov.tr/37553/2019-yili-faaliyet-raporu.pdf>

⁵⁴ <http://www.ikg.gov.tr/labour-market-support-programme-for-neets-neet-pro-operation/?lang=en>

research on field research on NEETs. The project is designed with an effort to harmonize specific needs of NEETs in Turkey and best practices from the Youth Guarantee scheme, with an understanding underscoring 'one-size doesn't fit for all'. The project aims to bring universities, local administrations, development agencies, non-governmental organizations and social partners to support local initiatives to reach and activate NEETs, along with production of big data through focus group meetings and quantitative research in 16 provinces. Issues related to local partnerships are going to be addressed in the upcoming sections.

Inclusion of a diversity of institutions in implementation phase has been emphasized by other respondents in public institutions. Because of the components of education and employment of the NEET issue, MoNE, Higher Education Council and National Employment Agency deemed the main actors. But when we take the factors that lead to the NEET status into consideration, Ministry of Family and Social Services, Social Security Agency, Ministry of Youth and Sports should also be the supportive institutions. MoYS is a pivot institution in means of addressing discouraged and disengaged young people with socializing problems and disconnected from the public life through sports and voluntary activities. Some groups of young people cannot be immediately put into employment, so they must be encouraged to leave the house first and commute to an educational or voluntary activity and gain confidence. Voluntary activities are seen very important in gaining confidence and transition to work with its functions of attachment to public life, seeing one's potential, giving help to others, commuting to a work or sport activity, making friends and creating network. For this purpose, voluntary activities in a young person's province can be reached through the web page of MoYS and trainings free of charge can be received from youth centres. Youth Centres and activities by MoYS are expected to have increasingly crucial roles and functions in activation of young people, especially NEETs. MoYS is deemed as an institution constituting a potential, though not used in full capacity for the time being.

Though all parties came to terms on the need for a comprehensive policy package with preventive measures to address the NEET problem, a projection towards one could not be observed under current circumstances. A cross-cutting youth policy to coordinate the effort is urgently in need, since the available ALMP tools are not inherently

policies designed for addressing the diverse needs of NEETs. As mentioned in the above sections, labour market conditions in Turkey are different from the ones with a mature welfare state. However, Turkey was prescribed by international organizations to employ ALMPs to tackle unemployment and to incorporate flexibility and deregulation into its labour market, starting from 1990s and heavily after 2000s (Kayaduvar, 2015). Thus, the design and implementation of ALMPs always had a conflictive nature due to different market conditions and a lack of necessary legal infrastructure. Given this brief background information, implementation of ALMPs and policy design addressing labour market structure is faced by criticism from several parties. The main criticism addressed towards the general understanding of ALMPs is being one dimensional and one sided. That is, they only focus on training (for purposes of reskilling and upskilling) of the young people without evenly raising awareness among employers and taking only employers' demands into account. The criticism is mainly directed by agencies of international partnerships;

While training young people is an important pillar in tackling the NEET problem, a second important component the necessity to train the employers concurrently. An awareness raising effort should be spent on both ends of the labour market, young people and employers at the same time. One dimensional supply side policy approach to upskill young people turns out to be inefficient, due to incapability of employers to meet young people's demands. İŞKUR's regional offices and employment agency of municipalities should also be aligned for an effective policy implementation. [...] In Turkey, ALMPs are utilized mainly which mainly focus on upskilling and training young people. Training young people is the fastest and least costly response. (KI 6)

It was also stressed by the informant that demand side policies such as training employers and service providers are usually more difficult, costlier and its effects can only be seen on the long run. A main criticism that was also stressed by other respondents that a tripartite approach which responds to the capacity development and coordination of all parties does not exist came up again. Ministries (MoYS, MoLSS and MoFSS) with different policy concerns and target groups, worker's organizations, recruitment and educational service providers and lastly youth organizations which specifically represent NEETs were expected and advised to come together to produce and implement effective policy solutions.

In the same vein, with an emphasis on the gender dimension, another respondent comments;

Employment policies are not NEET policies. Though they are complementary, they cannot substitute NEET policies. The overriding tendency to push NEETs into employment and see it as the only solution. [...] Likewise, women entrepreneurship is also a cover solution for women unemployment since a study conducted by our organization exposed that women entrepreneurs experience failure as entrepreneurs by 80 percent on the long run. As a highly demanding work style and work environment, entrepreneurship brings extra pressure and stress in unemployed women's lives. This is again an example for one dimensional policy solution to a social problem that needs more comprehensive and inclusive approach. Formal and trackable systems of education, employment or training are more effective solutions for addressing NEETs. (KI 8)

Bringing a critical approach to employer incentives as a supply side employment policy as the dominant approach in Turkey and upon the policy making processes mainly focusing on employers' demands, another respondent notes;

Employers' demands in the process of policy making get ahead in the policy making process in Turkey. Dominant focus on employers' demands in the policy design process is in conflict with ILO's principle of division of responsibility denoting the responsibility; which should be shared between the public, the employer and the individual. A centrality of employer demands where the public sector and the individual assuming responsibility results in an imbalance in responsibility sharing. This kind of one dimensional supply side policy approach endorses the individual with the responsibility of training and skill development and does not call for employers taking more responsibility (KI 5).

As discussed in the literature review and in the above section analyzing the labour market oriented problems, the NEET status are not solely a result of skill deficiency. Inactivity can be a result of disaffection stemming from poor working conditions, very low wages or skills mismatch. NEET problem with its idiosyncratic factors constitutes a more complicated problem and challenges the neoliberal rationale that retraining and upskilling the labour force to the needs of the labour market, in other words raising employability is the key to raise employment. Youth unemployment as a social problem entrenching on the national agendas across the world defy the presumed success of supply side solutions and call for more refined policies addressing the demands of the labour force as well.

5.4.3. The urban-rural axis and local institutions' role

The heterogeneity and dispersed composition of the NEET make it a necessity to include local administrations in NEET policies, especially for outreach purposes. While one pillar of the NEET policies is designing an integrated policy response for disengaged and inactive young people, second pillar is reaching them, making young

people aware of the services they can make use of. Just as determinants of the NEET status differ between urban and rural setting, so does the obstacles in outreach.

Outreach mainly refers to identification and engagement of young people who are ‘hard to reach’ due to residing in remote areas and not being registered to any kind of public services, thus remain invisible to statistical analysis. There is not a determined pathway for ‘outreach’ and it can display differences from context to context. However, two main approaches in the literature exists; either by focusing on the policy response or the characteristics of the NEET group.

Table 4. Two main approaches in reach-out

Policy focused outreach strategies ⁵⁵	NEET characteristics focused outreach strategies ⁵⁶
1. One-Stop-Shops	1. Temporary NEETs
2. Partnership network and referral system	2. Permanent NEETs

While one-stop-shops bring the functions of different public service providers together under one roof for easy access and effective coordination, the second approach aims to connect the existing services and programs addressing youth to be carried out by municipalities, NGOs or community-based organizations. The second group of strategies makes a differentiation between the easy to reach and mainstream NEETs who can be reached through educational institutions, channels of internet and social media, workshops or events, while hard-to reach and disengaged NEETs are in need of more intense outreach activities such as door-to-door visit by social workers, one-stop-shops and tracking of benefit receivers. The two approaches can be harmonized, cross matched or tailored according to contextual needs.

It has been identified in the interviews that a territorial mapping of NEETs in Turkey is unavailable at the moment, thus making it harder to understand the geographical

⁵⁵ ILO, Technical brief, Outreach strategies for young NEETs, Valli' Corbanese and Gianni Rosas, 2015
⁵⁶ Publications Office of the European Union, Effective outreach to NEETs Experience from the ground, Santos-Brien, Ruth, 2018 (citation: Santos-Brien, R 2018, Effective outreach to NEETs: experience from the ground, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, viewed 10 Nov 2022, <[https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?pubId=8136\(Id=en&catId=738&furtherPubs=yes&>.\)](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?pubId=8136(Id=en&catId=738&furtherPubs=yes&>))

dispersion of NEETs. Only after the above mentioned mapping and profiling studies are carried out, an outreach strategy is going to be developed. However, some of the approaches mentioned above were provided by the key informants to be employed in the future for different groups of NEETs in the rural or non-urban settings.

Pointing out to the critical roles of the local administrations in reaching out to hard to reach NEETs, key informants emphasize that;

Each local government needs to produce its own strategy based on regional field research. Prioritization has to be carried out on local needs. Applying certain policy prescriptions without a needs analysis might fail to produce the expected results. Local governments carry out needs analysis on different themes, especially for families in need of social assistance. Municipalities are critical in a research on NEETs because it is usually the only service point where NEETs usually commute to for receiving services or social assistance. Solutions might differ among childcare services, vocational training or an infrastructure development for disabled people depending on what NEETs need on the local level. This way of policy development rationale is not prevalent in Turkey, due to Turkey being a highly centralized country. However, an emerging rivalry for future elections among local governments to produce brand projects and social policy initiatives can provide a change to this situation. This momentum could be used for more informed and refined bottom-up social policies. (KI 8)

A similar approach is adopted by the governmental institutions; since NEET is a relatively new agenda, level of inclusion by the private sector, local administrations and civil society organizations in policy design and implementation is expected to increase over time. Local administrations and regional development agencies are expected to adopt several functions within the scope of The Labour Market Support Programme for NEETs (NEET PRO) Operation for outreach and supporting local initiatives. (KIs 1-2)

Another key informant mentioned the need for municipalities to develop their capacities in developing and institutionalizing services;

We know that municipalities are under pressure from citizens to find them jobs within the scope of 'social municipalism'. Young people who cannot find jobs consult municipalities to find them jobs. Gazimir and Yenişehir municipalities are observed to provide service of a job agency offices. However, these remain individual initiatives. Some of the municipalities are already active in this sense and are going to be more active in the future probably, which is a positive development in means of localization of services. Municipalities should develop their capacities and institutionalize their services. (KI 6)

In a similar vein, the regional employment offices enterprise⁵⁷ by İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality is mentioned as a good practice and suggested that municipalities can take more active roles in employment services provided for young people.

Employment offices which provide matching and job and vocational counselling services is a highly valuable effort. Municipalities' efforts and localization are crucial in producing tailor-made policies since National Employment Agency has to operate under high pressure and unrealistic expectations exceeding its capacity due to surmounting unemployment, youth unemployment and NEET rates. National Employment Agency has a good stock of human resource; however, responsibility has to be shared among other parties as well. (KI 5)

The rural-urban divide in Turkey remains as a topic to be researched comprehensively due to high rates of unpaid family worker (10.3 by September 2021, TURKSTAT⁵⁸) especially in the rural areas. Though they are registered as employed, they do not earn and their access to education and other employment opportunities remain low. From a perspective of whether working creates a change in one's daily life conditions and life opportunities or it creates agency, young people working as unpaid family workers' situation is deemed closer to NEETs by one respondent, in line with their position in adopting an extended NEET definition. Young people working as unpaid family workers have limited agency over life choices, access to public space and engage less in activities that would define them as a young person. They also tend to have lower levels of economic activity and diminished opportunities for employment due to skill deficiency in the future. How the concept of NEET interacts with the situation of young unpaid family workers in the rural area would be a valuable research topic for policy analysis and design. A NEET study specific to rural NEETs in Turkey could provide a clearer picture of the idiosyncratic situation of rural NEETs, leading to an analysis and policy solutions which includes unpaid family workers under the category of NEET though being in employment.

⁵⁷ <https://kariyer.ibb.istanbul/bio>

⁵⁸ <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Isgucu-Istatistikleri-III.-Ceyrek:-Temmuz---Eylul,-2021-37547>

5.4.4. The international cooperation aspect

It is observed that though the influence of the global governance agenda on youth unemployment and discursive powers of international actors has had a direct impact on the Turkish NEET policy agenda, international-national cooperation processes turned out to be not totally free of frictions and conflict. Two important dynamics were identified which diminish the effectiveness of international cooperation processes; ‘alienation’ and ‘politicization’ both on the discursive and operational levels.

International cooperation mechanisms bring an added value to the policy space. They enable learning from each other among partners and provide a platform for policy discussion and sharing of experiences. These functions of international dialogue gain more importance considering the double forces at play; globalization of the social policy and socialization of global governance, which converges social problems across societies. However, alienation and politicization of the international community and international governing bodies by the dominant political discourse to shape electoral behavior and a parallel rationale surrounding the cooperation diminishes the chances of effective partnership and knowledge sharing for better informed policies. Being a member of various international organizations and thus an actor of the international community by nature, Turkish political discourse making an adversary of the international community in a globalized world where policy making processes and industrial production are highly integrated and subject to a global division of labour puts Turkey in a contradictory position and diminishes its chances of engaging in closer and stronger cooperation mechanism. The added value these international organizations produce to solution of social problems should be recognized and should not be wasted for daily political struggles among parties. International organizations, on the other hand, should spend more efforts to express oneself to convey their messages more effectively and invest in mechanisms to be more persuasive.

One other problem experienced by the people working as agents of international cooperation and within the scope of international governance structures is high politicization in the echelons of bureaucracy. It should not be forgotten that the aim of international cooperation is bringing technical capacities together and politicization of technical cooperation usually decreases trust between parties and quality of the

outcomes of the cooperation. Politicization of bureaucracy also brings shuffling of the technical bureaucrats upon will, which do harm to continuity and institutional ownership of already started policies. An expert comments;

From the personal experience and observation, one dominant resistance point for engaging in effective international partnership and designing policies is the erosion of distinction between political party and bureaucracy on all bureaucratic levels, erosion of meritocratic approach and increased politicization in governmental institutions. Policies being designed with a timeline targeting elections and a shuffling of administrators in bureaucracy following the elections diminishes the chances of effective policy implementation by undermining bureaucratic and administrative continuity. A loss of organizational memory and connections with past experiences on behalf of the ever changing bureaucratic body hampers incremental success and continued efficiency of policy initiatives. (KI 5)

Politicization also leads to confusion of the discursive power of the international governance structures with rivalry among national in the international arena. Persuasive governance and ideational framing of global governance structures are a projection of soft governance and they aim to open up a space for cross country policy discussion through their normative authority. Underlining the need for separating what is technical from the ideological, another expert states;

International exchange is very important if you are open. Not every international conference is about how to show your country doing great or best, it is not a race. Of course naming and blaming trends exist, which is also a strategy to mobilize policy action, since European Union does not have a direct hegemony over employment or education policies of the member countries. This is called the Open Method of Coordination for employment, education and training which was created by the European Commission, which obliged countries to steer towards the common objectives and results, such as decreasing the NEET rates below 10 per cent. This is basically monitoring by results, which is different from coercive policy adoption. By doing that, all the countries had to report their NEETs rates and then suddenly it become clear that some countries are faring better than the others. This is naming for countries doing well. For worse performers, this is blaming. Without even having any power to change the country policies, you create this feeling among the policy makers coming from Spain, for example, that they need to do more. This is a brilliant way of creating and directing international pressure, without having any hard power. Of course this creates some reactions among some of the EU countries and lead to showing off of national pride but technicality of the policy dialogue usually prevents this outcome. At the beginning, EU countries were also anxious about how to present themselves, but now it is understood that the cleverer way to be more credible and convincing is to present the good and bad results at the same time. Turkey could make use of this practice of handling social issues in a technical way rather than a political way. For example, staff of PES joining in an international conference shouldn't be political. Taking an ideological rather than a technical stance results in the loss of attention on behalf of the epistemic community which also includes the independent international staff of the technical cooperation projects. Good experts look for credibility and openness and prefer to go for environments where they can have better

results. Therefore, we can say credibility and showing a true will to make a change have an impact on the chances of recruiting better teams, thus increasing the effectiveness and success of policy transfer and international cooperation. There are all those kinds of cascading effects. (KI 7)

The limitations regarding international cooperation mechanisms can be related to the capacity of the operations of these organizations as well. Making an impact on different levels requires higher technical cooperation and harmonization of agendas between national and international parties. Moreover, a concern over Turkey's own internal dynamics related to state tradition and magnitude should be kept in mind as well. Thus, the limitations and opportunities are explained by the respondent as;

The effect of international organization is more on the discursive level in Turkey. Turkey is a highly centralized, bureaucratic state with deeply ingrained state tradition inherited from its history. Therefore, the actual impact of international organizations in Turkey cannot be compared with their impact in younger and less developed states with lower levels of institutionalization. Turkey is a demographically and geographically large country, highly institutionalized on all levels simply to be transformed by international projects and displays a rather complex structure compared to many developing countries. Thus, a high level of national-international cooperation is necessary for international organizations to be influential. Of course on the other end of this discussion stands the international organizations, who might have shifting agendas and discourses over time. Their positions are not fixed or consistent all the time, continuity of their discourses can be conflicting or overlapping depending on their internal dynamics or larger political conjecture. Bureaucrats in Turkey are welcoming and informed about policy transfer, but it is all up to the management level ownership. (KI 6)

On the national side, policy transfers within the scope of international cooperation is well regarded. However, same risks mentioned above are pointed out for success and sustainability of policies:

Models from abroad have been tried to transfer to Turkey from time to time, but levels of achievement can vary since the target profile can change. Transferring the services under Youth Guarantee would be very beneficial to İŞKUR's service provision capacity such as graduate tracking systems and support for young people on a timeline basis. Working with the EU or other international organizations is welcomed, however needs and targets should be well defined the national institutions. Institutions should be proactive about their needs and turn it into a project, like it is done with the Labour Market Support Programme for NEETs (NEET PRO). The main problem with international cooperation is projects not turning into sustainable policies and initiatives end with the time duration of the projects. A structure which installs the project activities or initiatives as a sustainable and permanent function of the institution is needed. Hope this time, NEET Pro will be useful in installing services and policy initiatives to the institution on a sustainable basis. Otherwise, projects tend to create a limited impact with limited dissemination of impacts within the institution, ownership remains low or do not contribute to institutional culture. (KI 3)

The priorities of national institutions usually determine the scope and content of cooperation, along with the technical dimensions facilitating or limiting the terms of working together. Regarding the method followed for international cooperation, one respondent comments;

International cooperation is initiated and operationalized by the internal experts, functioning mainly under the Department of Foreign Relations and Projects. The agendas harmonized with The Presidency of Strategy and Budget and Ministry of Labour and Social Security are translated into projects with international partners. National Employment Agency's policy agenda on NEETs overlap with the European Union agenda who has been pushing for effective policies addressing NEETs since 2013. National Youth Employment Strategy has served as a strong policy document to pursue effective partnerships with international organizations. Harmonization of policy agendas through higher policy documents strengthens the probability and effectiveness of international cooperation. (KI 1)

Regarding limitations to international cooperation, technical aspects are also emphasized;

In means of international partnership and cooperation mechanisms, institutional agendas and implementation rules/requirements are determining. Shifting agendas of international organizations along with the changing global concerns also bring limitations to institutional cooperation. Some international organizations which do not provide direct funding but are funded by other donors tend to harmonize their social agendas and technical priorities with the donor institutions, which also limits our opportunities for cooperation. More complicated parameters when it is necessary to work along with the international stakeholders make it more difficult to harmonize the priorities and institutional requirements, which leads the institution to make preferences among international partners. (KI 1)

It can be seen that a harmonization with the EU agenda has given way to opportunities for technical partnerships and more efforts should be invested in the EU Acquis process to extract utmost benefit.

For better informed policy transfer, social dialogue is found crucial by international parties. However, the aspect of social dialogue is found to be weak in Turkey, and transfer mechanisms usually stay limited to public circles depending mainly on the public initiative. To overcome the one dimensional transfer process, utilization of the 'tripartite structure' is proposed, which refers to division of responsibility between the public, the employer and the individual, all represented by relevant parties;

Policy transfers are valuable in the sense that transferring good practices from similar socio-economic contexts decreases the time and financial costs on behalf of Turkey. However, the Turkey is lagging behind in means of successful policy transfer and

implementation. ILO developed a framework for successful policy transfer, namely A South-South Triangular Cooperation model which aims to distil good practices and lessons learned by analyzing the activities implemented by different countries in relation to certain policy responses⁵⁹. The critical point in policy transfers is to overcome the strong tendency of public-to-public dialogue but to achieve the 'tripartite structure' by inclusion of all parties namely, the public, the workers' organizations and the employers' organizations. (KI 5)

Along with an understanding that a successful policy implementation should include efforts and responsibility sharing among these three parties, ILO advocates for setting up of policy transfer mechanisms where representatives from each party joins the policy dialogue. The Expert concludes that there are efforts on behalf of Turkey in means of policy transfer, however such an understanding where all partners who should have a say in employment policies being included in the process has not yet been achieved. Issues related to a deficiency in the social dialogue are going to be discussed in the following section.

5.5.5. Social dialogue aspect

As indicated in the above sections, whether they are an extension of international cooperation and policy transfer or national initiatives, implementation of NEET policies require the involvement of a variety of actors, including state, non-governmental and social actors with their representative capacities. However, involvement and commitment except for state institutions is found out to be low in the current state of affairs. Different perspectives to address the social dialogue dimension within the lifetime of the projects are provided by international organizations;

To enhance cooperation among different partners, we included establishing a High Level Board in within the course of the project [Young Women Building Their Future Project]. The board aims to bring representatives of the public, the private and the international organizations together, along with an international symposium to enhance policy dialogue and awareness dimensions of NEET policies. (KI 6)

The key informants from national governance bodies also referred to limited ownership among social partners. Though preparation of NYES steered and interest among social partners, some tend to provide input for purposes of visibility and lack ownership in the implementation phases. ILO joined the coordination meetings as neutral observer and their impression is in the same direction. Finding inclusion of

⁵⁹ https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS_828647/lang--en/index.htm

private sector, social partners, local administrations and civil society organization in policy design and implementation processes targeting NEETs in Turkey very limited, the key informant from ILO informed about the Economic and Social Council, as a potential solution to enhance policy dialogue. The Council was established in 1995⁶⁰ along with Turkey's harmonization process with the EU and gained legal status in 2010⁶¹ as an advisory body to strengthen social dialogue for labour market governance. However, the Council is inert and holds an untapped potential to achieve the tripartite structure. Having underlined the potential of this policy platform which have not convened since 2009, the Expert asserted that public, social partners and civil society should find a ground to coordinate and cooperate on a more regular basis.

The perspectives of government and international partners converged over the fact that civil society and private sector tend to pursue their specialized agenda, where research does not necessarily turn into effective policy recommendations. It was added that civil society organizations might have politicized agendas, which also might not harmonize with governmental institution's agendas. It has been pointed that awareness towards NEETs is limited among civil society organizations yet. A similar perspective was presented on social dialogue aspect;

Private sector is almost absent. NGOs do not have the expected level of awareness. Regional administrations have limited involvement. A project aiming to upskill NEETs' digital skills in 45 provinces in cooperation with Association of Municipalities of Turkey is going to be carried out, which can contribute to awareness on behalf of local administrations. A system where all actors other than state-public institutions does not exist at the moment. A structure where all partners (private sector, NGOs with supportive roles, local administrations) are involved and have more roles could be established in the future. (KI 3)

Social partners such as TOBB, TESK, TİSK, professional organizations and universities are expected to bring more effort and high quality data on NEETs and take more active role in policy implementation in the future. Interestingly though, contrary to accounts mentioned above, one respondent's view is positive that there is high level of social dialogue, but the process is usually blocked in making necessary legislation

⁶⁰ <https://www5.tbmm.gov.tr/sirasayi/donem21/yil01/ss640m.htm>

⁶¹ <https://open.metu.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11511/97359/10465778%20%20-%20MS%20-%20Gizem%20Karsli%20V..pdf>

regarding overcoming the obstacles regarding women or youth employment. The informant adds;

The topics syndicates should transform for a heightened interest in NEETs. Speaking of international cooperation, we are members of International Organization of Employers, Business Europe (Confederation of European Business) and we see that green deal, women and youth employment are on the top of organizations' agenda. It should be focused on how they install the changes in their national legislations, because I believe it is one of the blockage points in Turkey. Social dialogue level is way sufficient, however transforming the needs into legislation is lagging behind on behalf of the state. (KI 9)

Finally, most key informants found the social dialogue aspect weak, and pointed out to problems either in the policy design or delivery phase. While there is a lack of initiative to harmonize the agendas with the NEET concern and adopt recent topics in the policy area on behalf of the non-governmental institutions, there also seem to be problems with feeding the demands from non-governmental organizations into legislation and implementing them on behalf of the state. Thus, the participation of non-governmental organizations to the policy making process is found to be not institutionalized yet. CSOs and social partners have low level of awareness and ownership regarding the NEET concern and involvement and commitment except for state institutions is found out to be limited in the current state of affairs.

5.5. Policy Pointers

Considering policy making process a dynamic open-system proceeding with feedbacks and made up of stages (Bayırbağ, 2013), this study attempted to investigate and analyze the point of views of various actors in the policy making sphere. This analysis is hoped to provide the policy makers and policy advocates with risks and opportunities for contestation, negotiation and reconciliation in the policy making arena in the future, specifically regarding policies targeting NEETs. For this purpose, the main findings of the field study and analysis are included below:

- NEET concept and discussion is not common for Turkey yet, except among a group of policy makers and researchers.

Table continued

- The NEET concept raised awareness about youth inactivity and provided a tool for bringing inactive young people and their life conditions to policy agenda.
- An all-encompassing profiling of NEETs in Turkey with regional distributions, income and educational levels breakdowns is not available at the moment. Presidency of the Republic of Turkey Presidency of Strategy and Budget MoLSS and National Employment Agency are leading the preliminary data production projects.
- The trendsetter in NEET discussion is EU and ILO in relation to Turkish policy context.
- The NEET indicator has been introduced to Turkish social policy as a result of the EU-acquis process.
- Gender gap is the most prominent reason of high NEET numbers in Turkey.
- Gender gap is identified as the most urgent policy area to be addressed regarding high NEET numbers.
- Education system should be installed with preventive mechanisms to address NEET status.
- School to work transitions mechanisms are weak in Turkey.
- Labour market should be regulated along with needs of young people, with more investment in creative sectors. Flexibility in labour market regulation without increasing insecurity should be targeted.
- A cross-cutting youth policy to coordinate the efforts is yet to be developed.
- Turkey risks creating lost generations, with a large population of young people. The impetus NEET discussion provided should be used to address young people and next generations.
- Studies investigating the relation between the education system and the NEET status, a regional analysis of NEETs and cross country.

Table continued

comparisons including the dynamics of the NEET status are identified as gaps in the literature for future research.

- In means of addressing NEETs with informed and effective policies, Turkey is in line with the global governance agenda, however effective policy implementations systems and institutional capacity is yet to be developed.
- Overall coordination and ownership of the NEET cause is weak in institutions.
- Initiatives by local initiatives are sporadic and not coordinated and they constitute an untapped potential in addressing NEETs.
- The NEET problem should be addressed along with the double impact of COVID-19 and digital transformation.
- Relations with international governance agencies brings added value to policy making processes, however level of cooperation should be enhanced.
- EU-acquis enriched the social policy governance in Turkey and provided valuable contribution to tackle with social problems entailed to neoliberalization process. However, the membership process should be more invested, along with closer cooperation and commitment.
- NEET problem does not seem to be solved immediately. Policy initiatives and preventive measures should be taken considering high young population in Turkey, not only for the current situation but also for the next generations.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The thesis aims to understand and elaborate on the repercussions of global social governance on national social policy agendas, with a focus on NEETs. It provides an analysis of policy making processes in Turkey, focusing on policy ideas, design and delivery of relevant policies. The study presents an overview of the concept's emergence and development in the global arena and then its slowly gaining prominence in the Turkish policy agenda. Turkey has been including youth as a vulnerable group in the legislation that needs targeted and specialized policy action for the last two decades and NEET policy can be deemed an extension of this concern for this large demographic group which suffers from various disadvantages in education and employment. In line with this concern, the focus of the thesis is understanding the rationale of policy making processes and the interaction between actors in the policy making sphere concerning NEETs.

For this purpose, the thesis employs qualitative research methods; in the form of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with selected key informants from various institutions operating in the policy arena. Key informant interviews are aimed to extract information on the policy making structures, divergence and convergence on many levels such as the national – international, central – local and governmental – non-governmental. The key informants are selected from the institutions and organizations who actively take part in the policy making and policy advocacy processes in Turkey.

By bringing together the literature review and field findings, this thesis reached theoretical and empirical findings on the policy making processes of NEETs. The literature review exposes that institutional configurations in a given country has high impact on young people's education and employment opportunities and school to work

transitions. With a concern over surging youth unemployment and inactivity all around the world especially after the global financial crisis, global institutions have taken up the leading role in framing and advocacy of addressing young people's life conditions and youth transitions. The NEET concept has been identified as the main indicator to assess and understand young people's education and employment attachment and the bearer of concerns over long term inactivity.

This study departs from the preliminary premises that governance as a dominant paradigm in public policy, shaped along with the neoliberal rationale which outlines the policy making process as a decentralized, fragmented (multileveled) and dynamic continuum populated by multiple governmental and non-governmental actors (Rhodes, 2000; Bayırbağ, 2013). The public policy in this context is essentially based on networks, whether national or international, for delivery of public services or implementing the policy prescriptions diffused and trickled from global networks. Governance itself being a prescription for cost-effective and efficient governing, the policy prescriptions formulated and diffused in this paradigm are essentially blind to social and political differentiation; as dynamics shaped by space and time. Thus, what this study aims at the core is taking the 'NEET' as a neoliberal policy concern cutting across national agendas and a concept to define a group of young people by what they are not (not in education, not in employment) across societies; and then reframing it in a specific national and political context. The main finding of such an effort is that while NEET is a problem intrinsically related to social exclusion of individuals with backgrounds of marginality, poverty and migration for developed countries; it is essentially a problem of social inclusion informed by gender roles and economic infrastructure with implications of redistribution for developing countries. Any policy making effort for NEETs in Turkey, whether taking the international or national perspective at the core, should pay attention to this fundamental difference. Though the governmental and non-governmental institutions converge on the fact that the NEET phenomena in Turkey is essentially a problem gender informed by cultural codes, norms and values shaping the gender roles, a concerted and targeted policy action for social or more importantly, cultural transformation cannot be spoken of.

Youth has been one of the groups that has been disproportionately hit by the global financial crisis and the following COVID-19 pandemic. While it has been widely

accepted as a fact that school to work transitions are all the more complicated, non-linear and rotational in the neoliberal era, high numbers of youth unemployment and inactivity, coupled with insecure conditions young work urged policy makers to take action. The discursive power of international and supranational policy structures served as catalyst for national policy making agencies to investigate and take up policy transcriptions addressing youth.

Upon this background, this study aims to investigate the repercussions of global social governance processed and analyze the national policy making structures and processes. For this reason, key informant interview technique is selected. Theoretically, key informants have the kind of insider information to policy making rationale that cannot be reached from other sources. For this aim, a group of experts from governmental institutions, international organizations, civil society organization, social partners and independent experts were interviewed.

Upon field research, it has been reached that the NEET concept had been useful in addressing inactivity, which had been de facto invisible in the policy arena. There is a consensus among key informants that the NEET concept provided important advantages over youth unemployment in means of speaking about life conditions of young people, over a time span of education and employment. The NEET concept has also contributed to policy discussions that youth unemployment or inactivity is a social phenomenon with underlying structural factors, rather than an outcome of work-shyness or reluctance towards work. It has also been concluded that the NEET concept has also been useful in problematizing the socially accepted category of 'house girls' and addressing the gender discrimination. All in all, NEET has enabled the policy making and advocacy to extent over a larger group of young people than it was before.

It could be claimed that NEET is not a widely known phenomena in Turkey, except a group of policy makers. This is deemed both as an advantage and risk where policy making agencies are incurred with responsibility of presenting the NEET in a correct way to the public. While it is getting more widely known among institutional circles, awareness raising activities should be carried out for local organizations and employers.

The field findings display that Turkey utilizes the criteria set and definition of EU and ILO to produce data and address NEETs in official documents. The reason for convergence with mainly with the EU is the EU-acquis process that has accelerated from the onset of 2000s and technical harmonization along with the co-funded programs. However, a comprehensive field research on NEETs covering the whole geography along with the underlying factors included does not exist at the moment. The planning institutions are not totally opposed to revising the set of criteria upon country specific needs. Implementer organizations, though, definitely support the view that country specific criteria should be produced to operationalize the indicator.

The field research shows that gender gap in the NEET numbers are the main cause of high NEET rates in Turkey and remains as the first and foremost issue to be addressed. The gender roles and gender discrimination are the main challenges in delivery of effective NEET policies. Lack of affordable and accessible care services in Turkey are identified as the prominent reason of entrenched gender roles and a structural obstacle in the way of women employment. Other criteria in addressing NEETs according to emergency level are early school leavers, poverty, being disabled or having a health issue and living in disadvantaged rural areas.

The factors in relation to NEET status in Turkey are also related to structural problems and policy gap in the areas of education and employment. Problems regarding educational planning, lack of school to work transition systems, lack of popularity of vocational education, early school leaving and skills mismatch are identified as the factors that needs to be addressed in Turkey with relation to the NEET status. Expansion of higher education has to be supported with stronger school to work transitions systems and a better education planning. Though there exists mechanisms against early school leaving, they have to be developed and invested more.

The findings also support that larger macro-economic structure of Turkey is unsupportive of youth employment. Lack of industrial infrastructure and investment in employment creating sectors along with marginal number of decent jobs is the other side of the coin in means of skills mismatch. Therefore, carrying out on dimensional policies for upskilling young people will fall short of achieving the expected results in decreasing NEET numbers. In this respect, though ALMPs are considered to be an

important component of the policy package to activate youth, the NEET phenomena requires refined and targeted policy action that exceeds the available capacity of ALMPs. Moreover, any policy intervention should be designed with the double impact of COVID-19 and digital transformation. The slow and disproportionate recovery after the pandemic and the ‘creative destruction’ that digital transformation will bring in the following decades are highly interrelated with the NEET youth.

Lastly, findings on the impact of global social governance on national policy making and delivery processes are investigated. It is found out that, what we can call as an ‘EU effect’ in the transfer of the global social governance agenda to Turkish policy making structure is obvious. The EU-acquis process accelerated from the onwards of 2000s and structural reforms had significant impact on national policy making and agenda setting in the policy discussion Turkey. The units in public institutions that are endowed with responsibilities of coordinating with the EU agencies led to transferal of social policy reforms in Turkey. In means of NEET policies, EU and ILO has been identified as the trendsetter agencies, with their reframing and dissemination of policy ideas and policy interventions. A complementary influence of UNDP can also be mentioned, as an international organization pushing for youth and women employment as top policy priorities. COVID-19 pandemic with global repercussions on national labour markets has also assumed an accelerator role in embracing policy issues related to youth on national level.

There exist two programmatic interventions within the scope of international cooperation for the time being; Labour Market Support Programme for NEETs (NEET PRO) Operation, Independent Expert in cooperation with the EU and Young Women Building Their Future Project in cooperation with the UNDP. Another program kick started by the Presidency of Turkey Human Resources Department is National Internship Program aiming to support school to work transitions of young higher education graduates. Assessing the outcomes of this programmatic interventions exceeds the limits of this study, however it can be claimed that there is a need to form a comprehensive policy package with NEETs at the core to connect and streamline these policy efforts in the future.

The research identified a need to higher investment in coordination and cooperation on international-national, national-national and national-local levels. Delivery of NEET policies spans across multiple institutions and a large geography, which requires active participation and ownership on behalf of multiple central and local agencies. The National Youth Employment Strategy and Action Plan is a reflection of the will to enhance institutional capacity of several organizations to address young people across country. However, implementation phase is going to require stronger commitment to reach the set targets and cooperation among institutions. A baseline study covering the whole country with regard to NEETs in relation to underlying factors to connect and coordinate the policy interventions is identified as a need at the end of the research. Presidency of Strategy and Budget, MoLSS and National Employment Agency being the leading agencies for such a study at the moment, higher participation and commitment of other agencies such as MoNE, MoYS, MoFSP and local administrations such as municipalities and development agencies is deemed necessary by all participants. Though level of awareness is found out to be low among civil society organizations and social partners, they are considered valuable assets in means of voicing of the needs and demands of young people and informing the employer side of the discussion.

One of the most contradictory result this research has reached is that though Turkish social policy agenda turns out to be in line with the global social governance of NEETs, international cooperation and coordination dimension in the transfer and delivery of policies seems to be lagging behind. Along with technical limitations to cooperation, alienation, bureaucratic conundrums and interruptions in institutional ownership decreases the effectiveness and efficiency of international cooperation. Sustainability is identified as the most prominent risk at the face of successful policy transfer due to above mentioned reasons. Fast paced bureaucratic shuffling and politicization among the higher echelons in bureaucracy results in limited impact on behalf of programmatic interventions without achieving of institutional ownership. Discursive and technical investment should be enhanced for achieving better results in international cooperation.

NEET youth is phenomena with social and economic roots as well as socio-economic costs. Long term inactivity among a large population, especially among a group which

is thought to be most resilient and active are deemed to bear individual and social setbacks. Long term inactivity at a life phase where one should invest in human capital wither by work or education diminishes future opportunities regarding income and life-long earnings. The NEET status is also found to be in relation with declining mental health and well-being. Apart from the scarring effects, the imbalance in social security system, entrenchment of gender discrimination in the society, brain drain and disruption of social cohesion and intergenerational equality are the possible effects that can be counted among high NEET rates in a country for long terms.

Turkey needs to develop a coherent and comprehensive youth policy to address these long term risks. Though there is a strong institutional will to address the disadvantages among young population, speaking of an existence of a coherent and comprehensive youth policy is difficult. The main obstacle in the face of development of a coherent and extensive youth policy which supports young people all through their transition to independence is the structural disposition in Turkish social policy rationale that family is the main provider of welfare and social security. Any youth policy to be designed should aim gradual de-familialization of young people as they go along institutional frameworks of education and employment and decreasing their dependence on family in times of economic or personal setbacks.

Further areas for future research

Further research can be derived based on the limitations of this research. A useful and ambitious study would be assessing and analyzing of the impact of programmatic interventions targeting NEETs started in the 2021 period. Whether these programmatic interventions will evolve into structural reforms is also another important question regarding the future of NEET discussion. Operationalization of the National Youth Unemployment Action Plan (NYES, 2021-2023) also remains as an important policy initiative to be assessed and analyzed in the future.

There are also gaps in the literature identified for future research. Cross country comparisons regarding NEETs particularly in terms of gender, education and employment both on institutional and academic level has been identified as a gap in

the literature. Analysis on cross country comparisons is an ambitious field of research, which provides a baseline for successful policy transfers.

Another gap identified in the literature is a research on NEETs based on urban-rural divide. Needs and thus, policy interventions tend to display differences between urban and rural NEETs. Therefore, profiling of the rural and urban NEETs separately with underlying factors to design informed and targeted policies is considered to be crucial. This kind of research should be conducted with keeping in mind the main criticism to NEET indicator, which tends to overlook young people working in insecure or precarious conditions, such as unpaid family workers particularly prevalent in the rural areas.

Access to policy makers from UNICEF, MoNE, MoFSS and MoYS could not be provided, therefore, research covering these institutions and their operations with a consideration of the NEET concern constitutes an important gap in the literature. A holistic and dynamic assessment of the policies of these institutions, that not only target NEETs but policy interventions interacting with the NEET status as a direct outcome or a side effect constitutes an area to be investigated in the future.

Lastly, a gap identified in the literature is research on relationship between specific levels of education and NEET status in Turkey. available literature on NEETs in Turkey tends to investigate the NEET status with the last graduated school, however, as the international literature points out, the quality and content of all levels and types of education is interrelated to the NEET status from kindergarten to higher education. Specific studies taking the relation between education and the NEET phenomena should be conducted for developing and delivery of preventive mechanisms.

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APPENDICES

A. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDELINES AND QUESTIONS

1. Key Informant Interview (KII) Guidelines:

Thank you for your time to participate in this study.

I am Senem and I am carrying out a research on the policy making processes regarding NEETs with the aim of understanding the interaction between the global social governance and national policy agenda setting processes. For this purpose, the interviewer followed the steps listed below.

Starting the KII:

- States the aim and scope of the KII,
- Informs the informant regarding why their point of view is consulted and is important to collect the information specific for this research,
- States the expected duration of the interview,
- Asks for the permission to record,
- Asks the informants if they have any questions or comments before starting.

After the KII:

- If time permits, summarizes the major comments heard throughout the interview and confirms the accuracy of information,
- Asks the informant if they have any additional information, requests or comments to add,
- Communicates through e-mail in case of any clarification is needed.

2. The purpose of the KII is as follows:

1. To understand how the NEET concept made a difference in the Turkish policy making processes and how it was received among the policy community
2. To analyze the main factors underlying and determining the NEET phenomena and to evaluate the future consequences

3. To identify the impact of global social governance on national policy responses and analyze the scope and opportunities for international cooperation and coordination regarding NEET policies.

3. Interview Questions:

Theme 1: The NEET Concept and its relevance in the Turkish context

1. What does the concept NEET serve for? What are the differing qualities of the concept/indicator NEET from youth unemployment? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the NEET indicator over youth unemployment?
2. The NEET concept has acquired negative connotation in some countries like Spain, Japan and the UK to a certain extent. What do you think about the reception of the concept NEET in Turkey by policy makers and researchers? Does it have country specific connotations attached to it in the Turkish context?
3. Eurostat, the ILO, the OECD have adopted the following definition of the NEET rate: *the percentage of the population of a given age group (between the ages of 15-29) and sex who is not employed and not involved in further education or training* as the NEET-standard indicator? Some scholars offered different age brackets or break down of the NEET category to overcome the problem of heterogeneity. Do you think OECD NEET-standard indicator meet the need to define and address the Turkish NEETS for effective policy making? Or does Turkish context make it necessary to develop a NEET-restricted indicator? Does Turkish context have its intrinsic qualities that needs to be addressed for NEETs?
4. The NEET category is a very heterogeneous one, with vulnerable and unskilled young people with lower chances of employability and higher risk of social exclusion on the one end of the scale, while young mothers or skilled young people unable to find matching jobs with different needs and young people taking their time off from education or labour market to travel or develop artistic skills stand on the other end. How the problem of heterogeneity of the NEET concept to design targeted policies can be or has been overcome in the Turkish context? Which parameters are used to identify and outreach the NEET groups in Turkey by institutions (your institution)? What do you think the main

parameters to identify and address NEETs should be and which groups should be prioritized (Gender, geography, poverty, education level, etc.)?

Theme 2: Causes and Effects of the NEET phenomena in Turkey

5. Turkey displays the highest NEET levels among OECD countries. What do you think could be the structural factors and more contemporary reasons behind this?
6. Turkey displays large rates of NEET among women. What do you think could be the structural factors and more contemporary reasons behind this?
7. Are there institutional research and baseline studies targeting the breakdowns among women NEETs?
8. How do you think the education system effects NEET levels in Turkey?
9. How do you think school to work transition systems effect NEET levels in Turkey?
10. How do you think welfare arrangements concerning young people effects NEET levels in Turkey?
11. Are there similar patterns among Turkey and other countries concerning the NEET profile?
12. Are there similar patterns among Turkey and other countries concerning the causes and effects of being a NEET?
13. What are the larger sociologic, political and economic consequences of large cohorts of NEETs for Turkey on long term?

Theme 3: Policy Responses and Global Social Policy

14. How do you think an interest towards NEET concept has emerged in Turkey? Do you think Turkey's cooperation with international agencies has specific, identifiable effect exist?
15. Which causes/factors (individual, familial, educational, environmental, labour market sourced) and effects (individual, familial, environmental, political participation, labour market) are in need of urgent policy response? Which groups of NEETs are in need of urgent policy targeting? Which factors/consequences or NEET groups are prioritized in Turkey on which grounds during policy development? What are the risks expecting them on the short and long term?

16. Which policy responses are dominant in Turkey for addressing NEETs? (Vocational training, Job creation, School related measures) Which one needs to be paid more attention in your opinion?
17. On what trends and tendencies the policy design process is grounded while prioritizing the policy responses in Turkey (international reports, Turkey based baseline and outreach research, good practices from abroad, certain vocations or jobs Turkish labour market is in need of)? What are priorities for policy development? How are these priorities identified for the Turkish context?
18. What is the effects of international cooperation mechanisms impact the policy design and implementation process targeting NEETS? Does Turkey engage in policy transfer processes (transfer of good examples or certain policy measures from countries with similar NEET profiling or public administration structures)?
19. Which institutions are required to coordinate and collaborate in policy design and implementation processes for NEETs? What are the capacities and limitations for coordination and cooperation among national actors? Which institutions should assume more proactive role in policy design and implementation targeting NEETS? Which institutions should put more cooperative effort?
20. What are the limits of cooperation and coordination with international institutions in the policy design and implementation process for NEETS?
21. What are the main problems, obstacles and resistance points in developing effective policies targeting NEETS in Turkey?
22. What is the level of inclusion of private sector, local administrations and civil society organization in policy design and implementation targeting NEETS in Turkey?

B. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER



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Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

13 EYLÜL 2022

Gönderen: ODTU İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAİK)

İlgili: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Ayshe İdil AVDARS


Danışmanlığınızı yürüttüğünüz Senem ERTÜRK'ün "**NEPİY** Gençlere Yönelik Politikalarını Küresel Yönetim Balımından İncelenmesi ve Türkiye Örneği" başlıklı araştırması İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay **0492-ODTUİAEK-2022** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.


Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.


Prof. Dr. Mine MISIRLIŞOY
Başkan

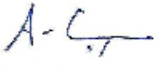

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Üye

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Giriş

Küreselleşme, emek piyasasındaki dönüşümler ve buna bağlı olarak eğitim ihtiyaçlarının dönüşümü gençlere yönelik politikaları hem küresel hem de ulusal sosyal politika gündemlerinin merkezine oturtmuştur. Giderek daha fazla araştırmacı ve uzman, kurumsal konfigürasyonların gençlerin eğitimden iş piyasasına geçiş süreci üzerindeki etkilerine dair çalışma yürütmeye başlamıştır. Bu bağlamda, son on 20 yıl içinde, gençlerin eğitim, çalışma ve yaşam koşulları hakkındaki tartışmaları ortak paydada yürütmeyi sağlayan bir kavram olarak NEİY (ne eğitimde, istihdamda, ne de yerleştirmede) ön plana çıkmaktadır.

NEİY, ortaya çıkışı ve farklı ulusal bağlamlarda ele alınışı açısından tarihsel ve sosyolojik olarak oldukça özel ve karmaşık süreçlerin sonucu olarak ortaya çıkmış bir kavramdır. Zira hem bir kavram, hem bir gösterge, hem bir grubu imleyen bir terim olarak kullanılmaktadır. Öncülü olan genç işsizliği araştırma alanından farklı olarak, sınırlı zaman aralıklarını ölçüt olarak gençlerin işgücü piyasası durumlarını anlamanın ötesinde, eğitim ve istihdam boyutlarını da göz önünde bulundurarak okuldan işe geçiş sürecinin neredeyse tamamını kapsamak suretiyle, gençlerin yaşam ve çalışma koşullarını çok daha geniş bir zeminde ele almaya imkan veren bir göstergedir. Bu açıdan NEİY, daha kapsayıcı olma özelliğinin yanı sıra, daha karmaşık bir politik düşünüş tarzının yansımasıdır.

1980li yıllardan bu yana yaşanan neoliberal dönüşüm ve bu dönüşümün beraberinde getirdiği yapısal değişimler sonucu, okuldan işe geçiş süreçlerinin daha uzun, karmaşık, kesintili ve kimi zaman döngüsel hale gelmesi, eğitim ve sosyal hareketlilik arasındaki bağın gevşemesi uzun süredir genç sosyolojisinin gündemini meşgul eden konulardan biridir. Ancak bu esnemiş ve düzensizleşmiş yetişkinliğe geçiş süreçlerinin, sosyal ve ekonomik açıdan atıl (inactive) olma hali sorunsallaştırılarak kamu politikaları bağlamında ele alınışı NEİY teriminin çatısı altında öne çıkmaktadır.

NEİY kavramı ilk kez 1999 yılında Birleşik Krallık'ta Sosyal Dışlanma Birimi tarafından 16-18 yaş aralığında eğitimde, işte ve yerleştirmede olmayan gençleri, bu gençlerin karşı karşıya olduğu sosyal dışlanma riskleri temelinde ele almak ve politika müdahaleleri geliştirmek amacıyla kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. Kavramın kullanımı ve yaygınlaşması, farklı dezavantajlara sahip, örgün veya mesleki eğitimden kopmuş, geleceğe dair imkanları sınırlı bu gençlere yönelik eğitim ve işe geçiş süreçlerindeki sorunları tespit etme ihtiyacından doğmuştur. Bahsi geçen raporda NEİY olgusunun coğrafi dağılımına bakıldığında, sanayisizleşen ve buna bağlı olarak haneadaki istihdam oranı ve hane geliri düşen bölgelerde yaygın olduğunun tespit edilmesi şaşırtıcı değildir. Ekonomideki yapısal dönüşümler, toplumsal yaşamda da dönüşümü kaçınılmaz kılmış ve neoliberal dönüşümün 'geride bırakılanları' için yeni kavram setleri ve politikalar üretmeyi zorunlu kılmıştır. Ses getirdiği kadar eleştiriye de maruz kalan bu çalışma, NEİY olgusunun sosyal politika gündemine girişini imler.

NEİY kavramının diğer ülkeler ve özellikle Avrupa Birliği tarafından benimsenmesi ise 2007-2008 küresel finansal krizinin akabinde gerçekleşecektir. Ekonomik krizin küresel ölçekteki etkisi işgücü piyasasının en kırılgan gruplarından olan gençlerin yaşam koşullarına eğilmeyi zorunlu kılmıştır. Dünya Çalışma Örgütü (2013) raporuna göre 2009'dan beri genç işsizliğini azaltmaya yönelik çok az ilerleme kaydedilmiştir. İktisadi İşbirliği ve Gelişme Teşkilatı (2016) raporuna göre ise 2007-2014 yılları arasında 30 yaş altı nüfusun sahip olduğu her on işten bir tanesi geri gelmemek üzere yok olmuştur. Krizin etkilerinin en yoğun yaşandığı ülkeler olan Portekiz, İspanya, Yunanistan, İrlanda ve Slovenya'da genç istihdamı yarıya inmiş, bu ülkelerin kimilerinde ağırlıklı olarak gençlerin çalıştığı işlerde üçte bir oranda kayıp yaşanmıştır.

Küresel krizin istihdam üzerindeki etkilerini en derinden hisseden grupların başında özellikle güvencesiz koşullarda veya süreli kontratlarla çalışan, beceri yoksunluğundan mustarip gençlerin geldiği açıktır. Fakat uluslararası kurumları ve ulusal politika yapıcılarını NEİY kavramına çeken asıl faktör, toplumun en dinamik ve dirençli olduğu düşünülen kesim olan gençlerin arasında yaygınlaşan 'atıl olma' halidir. 2015 yılında dünya çapında 400 milyon civarı olan NEİY gençlerin üçte ikisinin iş aramadığı, inaktivite oranlarının özellikle Türkiye, Meksika, İtalya, Kore ve Şili'de yüksek olduğu belirtilmektedir (OECD, 2016). Aynı raporda, işsizlik

rakamlarının iş döngüsüyle beraber dalgalanma trendine karşın, inaktivite oranlarının sabit kalması yapısal sorunlara işaret etmektedir. Yüksek oranlarda ekonomik ve sosyal inaktivite halinin bireysel ve uzun erimli sonuçlarının yanı sıra kamu sağlığı, suç, artan sosyal yardım ödemeleri ve vergi ve sigorta primi kayıpları (OECD, 2016; Eurofound, 2012) göz önünde bulundurularak politika söylemi üreten uluslararası aktörlerin ulusal hükümetleri bu yönde eyleme geçmeye davet etmesine yol açmıştır. Küresel krizin etkilerinin beklenenden yavaş bir hızda iyileşme süreci devam ederken, 2019 yılında COVID-19 pandemisinin başlamasıyla gündelik hayata giren kapanma ve sosyal mesafe koşullarının eğitim ve okuldan işe geçiş süreçlerine olumsuz etkisi de NEİY olgusuna yönelik politika müdahalelerini acil ve elzem kılmıştır.

Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma NEİY kavramının küresel bağlamda ortaya çıkışının akabinde Türkiye bağlamında ele alınışını ve bu yönde uygulamaya konan politika çerçevesinin eleştirel bir analizini sunmayı hedefler. NEİY politikalarına yönelik bir ilginin takriben 2015 sonrasında doğmuş olduğu tespitiyle beraber, bu politikaların son yıllarda hız kazanmasının ardında yatan faktörler ve küresel sosyal politika gündemiyle ilişkisi mercek altına alınacaktır.

Araştırma Soruları

Çalışma, kuramsal çerçevesi küresel sosyal politika olmak üzere, NEİY olgusunun ve politikalarının ulusal düzeydeki yansımalarına odaklanacaktır. Araştırma soruları, küresel ve ulusal olmak üzere birbiriyle ilişkili iki düzeyde tasarlanmıştır:

- NEİY olgusuna yönelik politikalar hangi küresel bağlam sonucu ortaya çıkmıştır? Küresel sosyal politika yönetişimi olarak ifade edilebilecek bir alanın aktörleri sayılan uluslararası ve ulus üstü kuruluşların bu sürece etkisi nedir?
- NEİY kavramının uluslararası nitelikte bir gösterge olarak kabul edilmesine yönelik tepkiler nelerdir?

Araştırmanın ortaya çıkarmayı hedeflediği ana araştırma konusu ise, kavramın Türkiye bağlamına taşınışında küresel sosyal politika yönetişimi süreçlerinin ulusal politika düzeyindeki etkileridir. Bu çerçevede formüle edilen sorular şunlardır:

- NEİY olgusuna yönelik bir ilginin Türkiye bağlamında ortaya çıkışında uluslararası yönetim süreçlerinin etkisi ne yöndedir?
- Türkiye’de NEİY olgusuna yönelik politikaların tasarım ve uygulaması hangi yönde ve ne aşamadadır?
- Bu doğrultuda, gençlere yönelik istihdam ve inaktivite temelinde şekillenmiş bir söylem ve politika dönüşümünden söz edilebilir mi?

Bu sorular çerçevesinde tasarlanan saha çalışması ile NEİY gençlere yönelik küresel sosyal politika gündeminin ulusal düzeyde ne şekilde ele alındığı ve uluslararası bağlamın ulusal politika yapım süreçlerine ne şekilde yansıdığını ortaya çıkarması hedeflenmiştir. Küreselleşen liberal ekonomik sistemin, ulus devlet seviyesinde ortaya çıkan sosyal sonuçlarının benzeşmesi sebebiyle ve aynı zamanda bir zaman ve maliyetten tasarruf yöntemi olarak politika transferinin Türkiye bağlamında mümkün, gerekli veya faydalı olup olmayacağı soruları da bu araştırmanın cevabına ulaşmayı hedeflediği sorular arasındadır. Çalışmanın nihai hedefi, elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda, NEİY gençlere yönelik politika yapım süreçlerindeki (varsa) boşlukların ve tıkanıklıkların yanı sıra avantaj ve fırsatlara dikkat çekerek politika önerileri geliştirmektir.

Metodoloji

Bu araştırmanın yürütülmesinde nitel araştırma yaklaşımından faydalanılmıştır. İlk adımda NEİY kavramının ortaya çıkışı, gelişimi ve farklı bağlamlarda ele alınışı, ardından Türkiye özelinde bu kavram üzerinden yapılan araştırmaların sonuçları mevcut politika dokümanları temel alınarak incelenmiştir. Literatür taraması NEİY olgusunun bir ülkedeki mevcut eğitim ve istihdam altyapısının yanı sıra gençlere yönelik refah devleti düzenlemeleriyle yakından ilişkili olduğunu işaret etmektedir. Bu minvalde, Türkiye’de NEİY olgusuyla mücadele etmek ve refah devleti müdahalelerinde bulunmak amacıyla üretilen resmi politika dokümanları söylemsel ve içeriksel analize tabi tutulmuştur. Yasal mevzuatta gençlerin ne şekilde ele alındığı ve Türkiye’de NEİY olgusuna yönelik bir ilginin doğuşundan itibaren söylemsel ve operasyonel seviyede bir politika dönüşümü gerçekleşip gerçekleşmediği incelenmiştir. Mevcut mevzuattaki devamlılık ve dönüşümler tespit edilerek, gelecekte üretilecek politikaların yönünü tayin etmek üzere saha araştırması tekniğine başvurulmuştur.

Analizin ikinci adımında ise kilit bilgi sahibi kişiler ile derinlemesine görüşme tekniğine başvurulmuştur. NEİY kavramının operasyonel hale getirilmesi ve NEİY politikalarının uygulanması politika alanındaki pek çok farklı aktörün söylem ve eylem düzeylerinde harekete geçmesini gerektirdiği için farklı görev ve işlevlere sahip tarafların görüşü alınmak üzere bu alanda politika üreten kurumlar ve alan çalışanları tespit edilerek iletişime geçilmiştir. Politika söylemi ve uygulaması geliştirilen ‘evrenin’ içinde bulunan aktörlerin dengeli temsil edilebilmesi amacıyla çeşitli işlev ve faaliyet alanlarına sahip her grup kuruluştan en az bir tane görüşmecinin araştırmaya dahil edilmesi hedeflenmiştir. Saha araştırması üç temel temanın etrafında şekillendirilmiştir: (i) NEİY kavramı ve Türkiye bağlamındaki kullanımı, (ii) NEİY olgusunun sebepleri ve sonuçları, (iii) Politika müdahaleleri ve küresel sosyal politika bağlamında Türkiye’de NEİY alanındaki politikalar. Araştırılan konunun bütün boyutlarını kapsaması ve görüşülen kilit bilgi sahibi kişiden olabildiğince detaylı bilgi almak amacıyla derinlemesine mülakat tekniğine başvurulmuştur.

NEİY politikalarının oluşturulmasında katkı sağlayan farklı kurum ve kuruluşların görüşlerinin ve uygulamalarının farklılıklar gösterebileceği göz önünde bulundurularak, soruların açık uçlu ve doğrudan bir hedef belirtmeyen nitelikte olmasına dikkat edilmiştir. Aynı cihetle, iletişime geçme ve araştırmanın kapsamına dair bilgi verme yöntemi olabildiğince standartlaştırılmıştır. Sorular basitten karmaşığa, konuya dair temel kabullerden yapısal ve karşılaştırmalı analizlere doğru ilerleyecek şekilde tasarlanmıştır. Saha çalışması, gerekli olduğu durumlarda kurumlardan izin alınarak ve görüşülen kişilerin uygunluğu ve arzusu dahilinde çevrimiçi veya yüz yüze görüşmeler ile tamamlanmıştır. Çevrimiçi görüşme fırsatı, araştırmacının bulunduğu şehir veya ülkenin dışında yaşayan kişilerle görüşmeye ve görüşülen kişinin kendi için uygun zaman ve mekanı seçmesine imkan vermesi açısından önemli fayda sağlamıştır.

Bulgular

Araştırma bulguları, NEİY kavramının Türkiye bağlamındaki yeri ve ele alınışı, bu kavram temelinde Türkiye’ye özgü dinamiklerin anlaşılması ve küresel sosyal politika gündemi ile ilişkili olarak Türkiye’deki NEİY politikalarının yönü ve kapsamı hakkında önemli sonuçlara işaret etmektedir. NEİY gençlere yönelik politika tasarım süreçleri, uluslararası işbirlikleri ve politika transferinin yanı sıra sistemik tikanlıkların anlaşılması bakımından da bulgular elde edilmiştir.

Analiz bulguları, kamu ve kamu dışı, ulusal ve uluslararası, politika tasarımında rol alan ve çeşitli programlar aracılığıyla politika uygulayan kurumlar gibi farklı seviyeler ve işlevlere sahip yapılar arasındaki yakınsamaları ve ıraksamaları da ortaya dökmektedir. Araştırmanın bu yöndeki tasarımı, farklı işlev, görev ve çıkarlara sahip paydaşların bakış açılarını serimlemekle beraber, NEİY gençlere yönelik politika müdahaleleri geliştirme ve uygulama süreçlerine dair analizlere yönelik zenginleştirici bir işlev sunmuştur.

İlk olarak NEİY kavramının kapsam ve işlevinin yanı sıra Türkiye’de politika müdahaleleri geliştirme ve uygulama süreçlerinde yer alan paydaşlar tarafından ne şekilde ele alındığına dair bulgulardan söz etmek mümkündür. Araştırma bulguları, NEİY kavramının Türkiye’deki politika gündemine üç önemli katkısından söz edilebilir. İstisnasız bütün taraflar NEİY kavramının politika müzakerelerine girmesinin gençlerin yaşam koşullarına ilişkin farkındalık seviyesinin yükselmesine katkı sunduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Kavramın en önemli katkısı atıl olma haline dikkat çekerek politika söyleminde fiilen görünmez olan bu grubun görünür kılınmasıdır. NEİY kavramının politika yapıcılara genç işsizliğinden farklı olarak gençlerin eğitim, istihdam ve işe geçiş süreçlerini daha yakından anlamak ve takip edebilmek adına önemli avantajlar getirdiği konusunda uzlaşılmaktadır. NEİY kavramı, farklı ülkelerde atıl olma halini ifade etmek için ortaya çıkan ‘ev genci’, ‘ev kızı’ ‘ne-ne de nesli’, ‘hikikomori’ veya ‘sıfır noktasındaki gençler’ gibi öncüllerinin yerini alarak, atıl veya işsiz olma haline, söz konusu gençlerin adına bir tercih veya çalışmaya karşı bir çekingenliğin ötesinde sosyal ve yapısal bir olgu olarak yaklaşılmasında önemli bir rol üstlenmiştir. Bu yönde bir algı değişikliğinin bir önemli sonucu ise yüksek oranlarda cinsiyet eşitsizliği ve cinsiyetten kaynaklanan dezavantajların görünürlüğüne yöneliktir. NEİY kavramı, Türkiye’de yaygın şekilde ‘ev kızı’ olarak nitelendirilen, eğitimi yarım kalmış, çalışmayan, bekar ve neredeyse tamamen ailesine bağımlı genç kızların eğitim ve istihdam alanlarındaki dezavantajlarını tartışmaya açmak ve ifade etmek adına önemli bir boyut sunmuştur.

NEİY kavramının, Türkiye’deki sosyal politika gündeminde oldukça yeni ve henüz tanınmayan bir kavram olduğunu ifade etmek mümkündür. Kurumlarla NEİY kavramının normatif ve çıkarımsal anlamları üzerine yapılan görüşmeler, bilgi sahibi politika yapıcılarında NEİY olgusunun yapısal ve sosyal faktörlerden kaynaklı

bir durum olduđu konusunda bir uzlaşđ olduđunu göstermektedir. Buna karşđn NEİY kavramı, kamuoyu nezdinde yaygın olarak bilinmemektedir, dolayısıyla NEİY statüsüyle ilgili herhangi bir olumsuz yönde anlam kazanma halinden bahsedilemez. Bu araştırmanın kapsamı dışında kaldığından dolayı, NEİY gençlerin kendilerini ne şekilde algıladıkları veya bu yönde bir sosyal sınıflandırmadan haberleri olup olmadığına dair yorum yapmak güçtür. Fakat kavramın ortaya çıkışından bu yana geçen süre zarfında toplumsal cinsiyet boyutuyla beraber, NEİY gençlerin sorunlarına yönelik istikrarlı bir kurumsal farkındalık ve irade oluştuđu kesindir.

NEİY kavramı politika yapıcılara avantajlar sunduđu gibi, uluslararası tanımının farklılıklar göstermesi açısından politika yapıcılarının karşısına sınamalar da çıkarmaktadır. Bu açıdan çalışma, Türkiye'nin politika uygulamalarında NEİY kavramını operasyonel hale getirmek için ağırlıklı olarak hangi kriter setini kullandığını, bu tercihin altında yatan sebepleri ve mevcut duruma uygunluđunu sorgulamaktadır. Bulgular, Türkiye'deki NEİY kriterlerinin büyük oranda Avrupa Komisyonu'nun tanımıyla uyumlu olduđunu işaret etmektedir. Bunun birkaç temel sebebi bulunmaktadır. Avrupa Birliđi müktesebatı süreci doğrultusunda Türkiye'deki kurumlar 2000li yılların başından itibaren Avrupa Birliđi kurumları ile uyumlanma sürecine girmiştir. Bu sürecin veri toplama standartları üzerindeki etkisinin yanı sıra, Avrupa Birliđi - Türkiye ortaklığında yürütölen projeler de bu yönde bir tercihin temelini oluşturmaktadır.

Planlayıcı ve uygulayıcı konumundaki uluslararası kurumlar arasında Avrupa Birliđi ve Dünya Çalışma Örgütü'nün tanımının korunması veya ek unsurlar eklenmesi konusunda ayrışma gözlenmiştir. Uygulayıcı konumundaki uluslararası kurumun uzmanı saha çalışmalarının NEİY profillerini oluştururken Türkiye'ye has alt kırılımların oluşturulması ihtiyacını gösterdiğini belirtmektedir. Saha araştırmaları yürüten sivil toplum örgütünün de görüşü bu yöndedir. Planlayıcı devlet kurumları ve bir uluslararası kurum uzmanı ise ihtiyaçlar doğrultusunda kriterlerin ölkede özelinde düzenlenebileceğini, önemli olanın tanımın kapsayıcılığının ve temsil niteliğinin yüksek olması olduđunu belirtmiştir.

NEİY kavramının operasyonel hale getirilmesinde bir diđer sınama da heterojenlik boyutudur. Literatür taramasında görölebileceđi üzere, kavramın en çok eleştirildiđi

yönlere biri olan heterojenlik farklı ülkeler ve politika tasarlayan yapılar tarafından aşılma çalışılmıştır. NEİY grubuna yönelik politika üretilirken, hangi grupların hangi politika müdahalelerine ihtiyacı olduğunu anlamak veya öncelikleri tespit edebilmek ve amacına uygun politikalar tasarlamak için heterojenlik konusunun dikkate alınması gerekmektedir. Türkiye’de bu konuda ilk ve en acil müdahaleye ihtiyaç duyduğu konusunda üstünde uzlaşılan grup kadın NEİY gençlerdir. Toplumsal cinsiyetin ardından dikkate alınması gereken kriterler, eğitimi erken yaşta bırakmış ve düşük beceri setine sahip olma, yoksul ve hane halkı geliri düşük olma, engelli veya sağlık sorunlarına sahip olma, coğrafi olarak izole ve istihdam yoğunluğunun düşük olduğu bölgelerde yaşama ve dezavantaj temelinde bir etnik azınlık grubuna ait olma olarak tespit edilmiştir. Heterojenlik sorununu aşmak için uygulayıcı uluslararası kuruluşlar kendi çözümlerini üretme yoluna gitmiş, planlayıcı kurum ve bir uluslararası kurum ise kriterlerin ön istatistikî çalışmanın yapılması akabinde ihtiyaca göre düzenlenebileceğini belirtmiştir. NEİY tanımı ve kapsamı konusunda tamamen görüş birliğine sahip olan iki kurum DÇÖ ve İŞKUR olarak tespit edilmiştir.

Bulgular Türkiye’de yüksek NEİY rakamlarının en önemli sebebinin yüksek oranda kadın NEİY rakamları olduğunu göstermektedir. Toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, istihdam piyasasında yaygın görülen cinsiyet ayrımcılığı ve bakım hizmetlerine yönelik altyapı sorunları, yüksek kadın NEİY oranlarının altında yatan en önemli faktörlerdir. 2000lerden bu yana yapılan kanun değişiklikleri ile işveren-işçi ilişkileri kadınların lehine düzenlenmeye çalışılsa da toplumda yerleşik toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini veya iş piyasasında kadınlara yönelik ayrımcılığı aşmak mümkün olmamıştır. Bunun temel sebebinin ise Türkiye’de yaygın, erişilebilir ve kaliteli bakım hizmetlerinin sınırlı oluşu işaret edilmektedir. Ancak çalışma, NEİY politikalarının çıkmış olduğu neoliberal bağlama uygun bir şekilde yalnızca bir eğitim ve istihdam sorunu olarak ele alınmasının, Türkiye bağlamında kadın NEİY bireylerin hedeflenmesinde yeterli olmayacağını ortaya koymaktadır. Gelişen bir ekonomi ve dönüşen bir toplum yapısına sahip Türkiye’de, yüksek oranda kadın NEİY sorununu aşmak için sosyal ve kültürel dönüşümü hedefleyen politikalara ihtiyaç söz konusudur.

Türkiye’de NEİY statüsü ile ilişkili faktörlere bakıldığında ise eğitim ve istihdam alanındaki yapısal sorunlar ve politika boşlukları ön plana çıkmaktadır. NEİY rakamlarının yüksek olmasının en temel sebepleri olarak yükseköğretim ve mesleki

eğitimdeki planlamaya ilişkin sorunlar, okuldan işe geçiş mekanizmalarının zayıf olması, mesleki eğitimin hedef odaklılığının ve kalitesinin sorgulanır olması, erken okul bırakma oranının yüksek olması ve eğitimde edinilen ve iş piyasasında arzulanan becerilerin uyuşmaması işaret edilmiştir. Son yıllarda artan yükseköğretim mezunu sayısı etkin bir planlama ve okuldan işe geçiş sistemlerinin kurulmasını ve/veya iyileştirilmesini zorunlu kılmış, ancak yükseköğretimdeki genişleme bu iki politika süreciyle desteklenememiştir. Bunun yanı sıra eğitim kurumları ve işverenler arasındaki işbirliğinin düşük seviyede olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Okulu erken bırakmaya yönelik önleyici mekanizmalar bulunsa da yeterliliğinin artırılmasına yönelik çalışmalar gerekmektedir.

Bulgular daha geniş makro-ekonomik politikaların ve iş piyasasının yapısının NEİY statüsü ile ilişkili olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Genç işsizliğin Türkiye bağlamında yapısal bir problem arz ettiği görülmekle beraber, iş piyasasının daha yüksek oranlarda genç istihdamını desteklemediği sonucu çıkartılmıştır. Ulusal bağlama ek olarak, 2019 yılında dünya çapında etkilere neden olan COVID-19 pandemisi ve ardından gelen küresel ve ulusal düzeylerde ekonomik küçülmenin yanı sıra son on yılda iş piyasası üzerindeki etkilerini daha yoğun şekilde gösteren dijital dönüşüm sürecinin de NEİY statüsü ile ilişkili olduğu düşünülmektedir.

Bulgular, kamu politikaları, uluslararası örgütler ve sivil toplum seviyesinde Türkiye'deki NEİY politikaları ve NEİY gençlerin profillerine yönelik farklı ülke karşılaştırmalarına ilişkin çalışmalarının oldukça sınırlı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu sınırlılık, NEİY olgusuna yönelik kurumsal ve düzeyde literatürde bir boşluk olarak saptanmıştır. Geleceğe yönelik araştırmalar için toplumsal cinsiyet bazında veya demografik ve ekonomik altyapı veya eğitim seviyeleri bakımından benzerlikler gözetilerek çalışmalar yürütülebileceği belirtilmiştir.

NEİY olgusunun uzun vadeli etkilerine yönelik çeşitli görüşler mevcuttur. Türkiye'deki yüksek NEİY oranlarının gelecekteki etkisine ilişkin en sıklıkla işaret edilen sonuçlar sigorta prim ödemelerindeki aktif-pasif dengesinin bozulması, toplumsal cinsiyet ayrımının derinleşmesi, beyin göçü ve nesiller arası eşitliğin ve sosyal uyumun zedelenmesidir. Bir katılımcı ise NEİY olgusunun politika yapıcılarını

daha alıřılmadık önlemler almaya ve evrensel gelir üstüne düşünmeye itebileceđini belirtmiřtir.

Son olarak, Türkiye’de NEİY politikalarının yapım ve uygulama süreçleri ve uluslararası sosyal politika yönetiřim süreçlerinin bu iki unsur üzerindeki etkisi incelenmiřtir. NEİY kavramının ve NEİY olgusuna iliřkin politikaların Türkiye’nin sosyal politika gündeminde yer almasında ađırlıklı olarak AB müktesebatı sürecinin etkileri gözlemlenmektedir. 2000li yılların bařından bu yana kamu kurumlarının kapasitelerini artırmaya yönelik programlar ve artan politika diyalođu, üyelik sürecinin çıktıları olarak NEİY politikalarına yön vermiřtir. Bunun yanı sıra politika yapım süreçlerine ve aktörlerin eyleme geçmesinde itici güç görevi üstlenmiřtir. NEİY olgusunun politika yapıcılar tarafından ilgisini çekmede rol oynayan diđer iki uluslararası yapının DÇÖ ve BMKP olduđu tespit edilmiřtir. Burada iki taraflı bir politika diyalođundan bahsetmek mümkündür. Küresel düzeyde, eđitimden ve istihdamdan kopmuř genç nüfusa yönelik politika müdahaleleri geliştirme ihtiyacından dođan NEİY kavramı, uluslararası sosyal politika müzakereleri bu yapıların Türkiye’de faaliyet gösteren yerel ofisler ve bađımsız arařtırmacı ve uzmanlardan oluřan epistemik bir topluluk ile Türkiye’ye tařınmıř ve ulusal kurumlarda karřılılık bulmuřtur. Türkiye’deki kamu kurumlarının uluslararası gündemi takip etme ve politika geliştirme görevinden sorumlu birimler bu kavramın benimsenmesinde ve çerçeve politika belgelerinde yer almasında öncü rol oynamıřtır. Bu bağlamda kurumlarda, uluslararası iřbirliđi kapsamında NEİY gençlere yönelik programlar ve politika transferi giriřimleri bařlatılmıřtır.

2010lu yılların ikinci yarısından itibaren Türkiye’de NEİY olgusuna ve politikalarına yönelik hem ulusal kurumlar hem de uluslararası kurumların Türkiye merkezleri nezdinde artan bir ilgi söz konusudur. COVID-19 pandemisinin bu süreçte hızlandırıcı rol oynadıđı açıktır. Türkiye’nin bu bakımdan, uluslararası sosyal politika gündemi ile yakından bađlantılı olduđu sonucuna ulařılmıřtır.

Analiz bulguları ulusal kurumlar arasının yanı sıra uluslararası koordinasyon ve iřbirliđi bağlamında ele alınmıřtır. Bu bölümde, politika koordinasyon ve yapım süreçlerindeki risklere, kısıtlamalara ve fırsatlara dair önemli bulgular elde edilmiřtir.

Türkiye uluslararası sosyal politika yönetişimi ile yakından ilişkili olsa da, uluslararası işbirliğinin seviyesinin bu ilgiye denk bir seviyede seyretmediği tespit edilmiştir.

İlk olarak, Türkiye'deki NEİY politikalarına bir altyapı oluşturacak bir saha araştırması ihtiyacı tespit edilmiştir. Hazırlık aşamasında olan bu araştırmanın öncüleri Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Daire Başkanlığı, Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı ve İŞKUR'dur. NEİY olgusuna yönelik veri toplama ve politika uygulama süreçlerinin kurumlar arasında yüksek seviyede koordinasyon ve işbirliği gerektirdiği neredeyse bütün katılımcılar tarafından üstünde uzlaşılmış bir husustur. Gençlik ve Spor Bakanlığı, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı gibi ulusal kurumların ve yerel yapıların işbirliğine katılmasının, isabetli ve etkili politikalar üretilmesi ve uygulanmasında elzem olduğu açıktır. İşbirliği ve koordinasyon boyutu hem bir risk hem de fırsat olarak değerlendirilmektedir.

Politika tasarım süreçlerinin koordinasyon süreçlerinden sorumlu kurumlardan Çalışma ve Sosyal Güvenlik Bakanlığı bu riski aşabilmek adına dijital bir veri işleme sistemi kurmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra Ulusal Genç İstihdamı Eylem Planı'nda ilgili politika girişimlerinden sorumlu kurumlar politika yapım sürecine aktif katılım sağlayarak eylemlere dair mutabakata varmıştır. Ancak koordinasyonun başarı seviyesi üzerine bir tahmin yapmak bu aşamada mümkün değildir ve bu çalışmanın sınırlarını aşmaktadır.

NEİY gençlere yönelik halihazırda mevcut politika araçları arasında iş ve meslek danışmanlığı, mesleki ve işbaşı eğitimler, girişimcilik eğitimi ve danışmanlığı ve toplum yararına program başlıkları altında toplanan aktif istihdam politikaları önde gelmektedir. Bunun yanı sıra son dönemde ulusal bir girişim veya uluslararası işbirliği bağlamında uygulamaya konmuş olan Ulusal Staj Programı, Ne Eğitimde Ne İstihdamda Olan Gençlere Yönelik İşgücü Piyasası Destek Programı Operasyonu (NEET PRO) ve Geleceğini Kuran Kadınlar Projesi programlarından bahsetmek mümkündür. İlerleyen dönemde bu politika girişimlerinin bağlantılandırılmasına ve NEİY gençleri merkezine alan kapsamlı bir politika uygulamasının işler hale getirilmesine ihtiyaç vardır.

Katılımcılar aktif istihdam politikalarının gençleri aktive etmekte merkezi öneme sahip olduğunu belirtmekle beraber, NEİY olgusu özelinde politikalar geliştirilmesinin gerekliliğine dikkat çekmişlerdir. NEİY olgusu, gençlerin eğitimden istihdama uzanan süreçlerini yakından anlamak ve bu sürecin çok yönlü bir değerlendirmesini sağlamak için tasarlanmış olup, bu yönde mevcut politika araçlarının uyumlu hale getirilmesinin yanı sıra yeni politikalara ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.

NEİY politikalarının etkin bir şekilde uygulanmasının önündeki bir önemli sınıma ise yerel aktörlerin sürece dahil edilmesi ve süreci sahiplenmeleridir. Analiz bulguları gelecek dönemde NEİY gençlere erişim, farkındalık artırma ve yerel girişimleri koordine etmek açısından yerel aktörlere önemli roller düşeceğini ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu aktörlerin öncelikle programa temelli girişimler aracılığıyla sürece dahil edilmesi, sonrasında ise kendi stratejilerini oluşturması beklenmektedir. Bu konudaki örnek uygulamaların yaygınlaştırılması ve merkezi ve yerel yönetim arasındaki işbirliğinin daha kapsamlı ve standardize hale getirilmesi gerekliliği vurgulanmıştır.

Türkiye’de NEİY olgusunun, demografik ve ilişkili olduğu faktörler bağlamında coğrafi dağılımına ilişkin kurumsal ve akademik literatürde boşluk olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bundan sonraki süreçte bu boşluğun ulusal ve uluslararası kurumların öncülüğünde giderileceği ümit edilmektedir.

Bir diğer işbirliği alanı ise sivil toplum, işverenler ve NEİY gençler arasında kurulacak diyaloga yöneliktir. Sivil toplum ve sosyal ortakların NEİY olgusuna yönelik farkındalığının düşük olduğu tespit edilmiş, gelecekte bu konuyu daha yüksek oranda sahiplenmeleri gerektiği vurgusu yapılmıştır.

Uluslararası işbirliği ve politika transferlerine dair en önemli riskin devamlılık olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Üst düzey yetkililerin kısa süreler dahilinde değişmesi kurumsal sahiplenme kültürünü olumsuz yönde etkileyebilmekte, program bazlı müdahalelerin etkisi kısa vadeli ve kurum içinde sınırlı kalabilmektedir. Uluslararası organizasyonların değişime açık gündemleri ve teknik uyumsuzluklar da işbirliğinin sınırları belirlemektedir.

Bu araştırma kapsamında Birleşmiş Milletler Uluslararası Çocuklara Acil Yardım Fonu, Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, Aile ve Sosyal Hizmetler Bakanlığı ve Gençlik ve Spor Bakanlığı bünyesindeki ilgili politika yapıcılara ulaşılammıştır. Bu kurumların ve faaliyetlerinin NEİY olgusuyla ilişkisi literatürde önemli bir eksikliğe işaret etmektedir. Bu kurumların, yalnızca NEİY gençleri hedefleyen politikalarının yanı sıra diğer alanlardaki faaliyetlerinin de NEİY olgusu üzerindeki doğrudan veya dolaylı etkilerinin incelenmesi bütüncül ve dinamik bir analiz için elzemdir.

Sonuç olarak, küresel sosyal politika yönetim süreçlerinin ve uluslararası kurumların söylemsel güçlerinin ulusal politika gündemine yön vermedeki etkisi açıktır. Ancak bulgular, etkili bir uluslararası koordinasyon ve politika transferi için teknik işbirliği mekanizmalarına daha yüksek oranda yatırım yapmak gerektiğini işaret etmektedir. Bir diğer gözden kaçırılmaması gereken husus, NEİY olgusunun gelişmiş ülkelerde marjinallik, yoksulluk ve göçmenlik geçmişine sahip, büyük oranda dezavantajlı ve sosyal dışlanma riski altındaki genç erkeklere ilişkin bir sorunken, Türkiye ve benzeri gelişmekte olan ülkelerde en temelde toplumsal cinsiyet ve ekonomik altyapı yetersizlikleri sonucu ortaya çıkan bir sorun olduğudur. Politika tasarım ve politika transferi süreçlerinde başarıyı sağlayabilmek için küresel ölçekte etkili olan 'yönetişim' paradigması ile ulusal gündeme taşınan politika konularının, tarihsel ve mekânsal bir bağlama oturtulduğunda anlam ve sonuçlarının farklı olabileceği politika aktörleri ve savunucuları tarafından göz önünde bulundurulması gereken bir husustur.

Politika Önerileri

Mevcut analizin ışığında, Türkiye'de NEİY olgusuna yönelik politika süreçlerine ilişkin politika önerileri üç grupta toplanabilir. Bunlar, kavramın yaygınlaşması ve ulusal bir kriter seti üzerinde uzlaşılması, NEİY olgusunun ilişkili olduğu faktörlerin çok yönlü ve uzun vadeli bir şekilde alınarak politika geliştirilmesi ve uluslararası işbirliği ve koordinasyona yönelik teknik kapasitenin geliştirilmesi olarak ifade edilebilir.

Türkiye'de NEİY olgusuna yönelik kurumsal ve kamusal açıdan farkındalık sağlamaya ihtiyaç vardır. NEİY kavramının toplum nezdinde tanınır olmaması hem bir risk hem de avantaj teşkil etmektedir. NEİY gençlerin sorunlarının, ihtiyaçlarının

ve taleplerinin ifade edilmesinde kamu kurumlarına ve daha önemlisi sivil topluma önemli görevler düşmektedir. Kendinden önceki nesillere kıyasla bilgi teknolojilerini yetkin bir şekilde kullanabilen, dünyanın farklı coğrafyalarındaki yaşlıları ile koşullarını karşılaştırabilen gençlerin ihtiyaç ve taleplerinin çalışmaya karşı bir çekingenlik veya isteksizlik yönünde gündelik siyasi söylemlerle boğulması en büyük risk olacaktır. Bu bağlamda NEİY olgusunun merkezi ve yerel düzeylerde politika uygulayıcısı kurumlar arasında olduğu kadar, kamu nezdinde de doğru tanıtılmaya ihtiyacı vardır.

Türkiye’de NEİY olgusunu ele almak için fiilen AB ve DÇÖ kriterleri temel alınmaktadır. Ancak NEİY olgusuna yönelik araştırmalar ve uygulamalar derinleştikçe Türkiye özelinde ortaya çıkacak ve diğer ülkelerden farklılık gösterebilecek NEİY gruplarını görünür kılmak ve hedef almak için farklı kriterlere ihtiyaç olabileceği göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır. Bu yönde bir çaba oldukça iddialı olmakla beraber, uluslararası NEİY literatürüne katkı sağlaması açısından önemli bulunmaktadır.

Toplum nezdinde yerleşik toplumsal cinsiyete ilişkin roller ve eğitimde ve istihdamda cinsiyet ayrımcılığı NEİY politikalarının etkin şekilde uygulanması için Türkiye bağlamında önemli bir engel teşkil etmektedir. Genç kadınlar arasında NEİY statüsü, bu engelleri aşmak üzere tasarlanan politika söylemleri ve uygulamalarıyla beraber hedef alınmalıdır.

NEİY, eğitim ve istihdam boyutlarıyla pek çok farklı faktör temelinde ele alınması gereken bir olgudur. Bu boyutlarının birinin tek boyutlu politikalar ile hedeflenmesi, arzu edilen sonuçları sağlamakta yetersiz kalacaktır. Türk eğitim sisteminin NEİY olgusu bakımından mevcut en temel iki eksikliği, önleyici mekanizmaların ve okuldan işe geçiş sistemlerinin yetersiz olmasıdır. Birey bir kez NEİY statüsünde ele alınacak koşullara ulaştığında, NEİY statüsünden çıkarılmasının çok daha zor ve maliyetli olduğu hem literatür hem de görüşülen politika yapıcıları tarafından vurgulanmaktadır. İstihdam boyutunda ise sadece gençlerin beceri setlerinin geliştirilmesi veya iş deneyimi kazanmalarına yönelik tek boyutlu aktif istihdam politikaları uygulamak, bu politikaların etkinliğini düşürecek bir risktir. Zira yapısal sorunlar arz eden insana yakışır iş miktarının azlığı, gençlerin çalışabileceği yaratıcı veya istihdam üreten

sektörlere yatırımın düşüklüğü, işverenler nezdinde yaygın görülen gençlere yönelik ayrımcılık boyutlarının da hedef alınması gerekmektedir. İşveren farkındalığını artırmak ve okul-işveren işbirliğini güçlendirmek için sosyal ortakların sürece daha çok dahil edilmesine ihtiyaç vardır.

Bunların yanı sıra eğitimde edinilen becerilerin iş piyasasında arzu edilen becerilerle uyumsuzluğu da önemli bir sorun teşkil etmektedir. Beceri uyumsuzluğu hedef alınırken ulusal iş piyasaları üzerinde etkiye sahip küresel dönüşümler dikkate alınmalı, ancak gençlerin uzun vadeli beceriler edinmesi ve hayat boyu öğrenme kapasitelerini destekleyici uygulamaların tercih edilmesi gerekliliği gözden kaçırılmamalıdır. Gençlerin kısa vadeli, sadece işveren tarafının ve mevcut iş piyasası koşullarına cevap verecek nitelikte beceriler ile donatılması bu politika uygulanması açısından bir risk arz etmektedir.

Gençler pek çok politika müdahalesinin ve sosyal yardımın muhatabı olmasına rağmen, geçlere yönelik kapsamlı bir refah devleti politikasından bahsedilememektedir. Türkiye’de, tikel politika müdahalelerini koordine eden ve belli bir değer sistemi temelinde tutarlı bir gençlik politikası geliştirilmesine ihtiyaç vardır. Gençlerin okuldan işe geçiş süreçlerinde, aileye bağımlılığın azalması yönünde destekleyici politikalar üretilmesi için Türkiye’de ailenin fiilen bir sosyal güvenlik ağı olarak görülmesine dair bakış açısının aşılması gerekmektedir. Gençlere yönelik sosyal yardım mekanizmaları ve sosyal politikalar düzenlenirken, eşitsizliği giderici ve gelecek nesillerin aile veya sosyal yardım bağımlılığını azaltacak bir hassasiyetle tasarlanması gerekmektedir.

NEİY politikalarının etkin bir şekilde uygulanması için ulusal-uluslararası, ulusal-ulusal, ulusal-yerel seviyede olmak üzere aktörler arasında üst seviyede koordinasyon ve işbirliğine ihtiyaç vardır. Türkiye, uluslararası sosyal politika gündemi ile uyumluluk gösterse de, uluslararası işbirliği ve başarılı örneklerin transferi noktasında potansiyelinin altında kalmaktadır. Türkiye’nin, üye veya aday ülke statüsünde içinde bulunduğu küresel yönetim sisteminin aktörlerinden olan uluslararası veya ulus üstü yapılardan daha üst düzeyde faydalanmaya ihtiyacı vardır. Bu yöndeki ulusal yapıların kapasitesi, bürokratik kesintiler veya yabancılaşma ile akamete uğramamalı, uluslararası teknik işbirliği açık ve etkin bir iletişimle üst seviyeye çıkarılmalıdır.

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