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# Harnessing the Power of Youth:

An Analysis of Youth Not-in-Employment,  
Education or Training (NEET) in Turkey and  
Policies and Civil Society Models that Promote  
Active Youth Engagement



## SUMMARY

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research study was conducted within the scope of the “Enhancing Advocacy Capacities of Youth CSOs in Turkey: Guiding CSOs through Research” project jointly executed by Development Analytics and the Young Guru Academy (YGA). This project is financed within the scope of second phase of "Civil Society Support Programme" which is supported by EU and coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Directorate for EU Affairs. The report aims to contribute to the analytical and academic evidence base on the issue of youth, not in employment, education or training in Turkey, as well as to provide a stocktake of available models of youth empowerment from existing CSOs and to highlight these models to a policy audience.

Turkey has a young and dynamic population currently going through the demographic transition, however, more than one-in-four young people (ages 15-29) are neither in employment nor in education or training (NEET). Turkey has the highest ratio of NEETs among all OECD member states and also stands out in global data with regards to the gap between young men and women in terms of NEET rates. This report aims to highlight the issue of NEET in Turkey and provide more details on the profiles and determinants of NEET youth, especially focusing on gender dimensions, while analysing their time use, labour force attachment and civil society participation. The study uses three primary data sources to analyse these patterns: Survey on Income and Living Conditions (2017), The Household Labour Force Survey (2017) and Time Use Survey (2015), all collected by TURKSTAT. The second part of the report focuses on policies to address the problem of NEET youth both from the government side as well as civil society models that aim to engage, activate and empower young people.

Gender is an important determinant of being NEET in Turkey, as three-quarters of NEET youth in Turkey are women. Another important determinant of NEET status is the location in Turkey: the likelihood of becoming NEET among the youth is highest in south-eastern Turkey. Educational attainment is another important correlate of NEET status, while household wealth is less strongly correlated with being NEET. NEET men and women have some common profiles, but they are inherently different in terms of age and demographics. For both young men and women, several individual characteristics like low education or having bad health increase the likelihood of being NEET, though education makes a greater difference for women than it does for men in terms of being NEET. While young NEET men almost entirely (93%) live with their parents, only one-third of NEET women live with their parents and NEET women in Turkey are more likely to be married (66%).

- **Time-Use Patterns:** According to the Time Use Survey (2015), time use patterns of NEET men and women are entirely different. While NEET women's time use on household production (unpaid work) activities on average almost matches up to the employment activities of non-NEET women and non-NEET men, NEET men spend more of their time on leisure and sleep. Hence young women who have NEET status, are not necessarily idle – most of the time they are engaged in household chores or unpaid care work. A woman's educational attainment (more than household wealth or her husband's educational level) is a determinant of whether she spends most of her time on household chores.

- **Labour Market Attachment:** According to Labour Force Survey (LFS 2017), in Turkey, while a significant proportion of NEET youth has worked in the past, currently the majority (63.5%) of NEET youth are not looking for a job or do not desire to start one even if they found one.

This finding is mainly driven by women in the data: the majority of NEET youth women are not looking for a job or willing to start a job even if they found one while this is not the case for men. The reasons for not looking for a job differs between young NEET men and women: for women, the most cited reasons for not looking for work are being engaged with household chores and looking after children or incapacitated adults. The level of education of the NEET individual makes a difference in their labour market attachment, especially for women and if they have completed university education.

- **Civil Society Participation:** Civic participation of youth also remains critically low in Turkey. Similar to the findings in global literature, in Turkey as in other countries, a strong connection exists between low economic participation and low civil society participation. Civic participation among youth is lower in Turkey compared to European countries. While young people in Turkey have very low levels of civic engagement, NEET youth are even more disengaged. The largest difference between NEET youth and non-NEET youth is due to CSO membership. Volunteering (i.e. active participation) in the last month is already low among the youth in Turkey, and it is even lower for NEET youth. Among youth, civic engagement is higher among men, older youth, youth with higher education and youth living in wealthier households. Not being in employment, education or training is negatively associated with civic engagement controlling for other individual and household characteristics.

### **Cost of NEET and Policies to Activate Youth**

Being NEET has serious costs for the individual and society. Being NEET has detrimental and long-lasting effects on future employability and future earnings of the individuals. High levels of NEET also have social costs. NEET youth are also often considered to be at risk of problematic psychosocial outcomes given that they are more likely to be coming from disadvantaged backgrounds. The cost of being a NEET is often estimated in public finance

costs and resource costs. In this report, we make an estimation based on existing methodologies for estimating the cost of NEET youth simply by looking at the income in lost wages for NEET youth and find that the cost of NEET youth women ranges between 1.62 and 2.49 percent of the GDP while the cost of NEET youth men is less than half of these values and ranges between 0.67 and 0.74 percent of the GDP as of 2017. As detailed under 3.1. Costing the Problem section, since the NEET rate is higher for women, the cost of NEET women is estimated to be higher than NEET men.

### **Policy Options for Addressing NEET Youth**

Reducing the rate of economic and social participation of youth poses a challenge for governments and policymakers.

In this regard, the social investment approach in the literature provides an important avenue within which new social risks such as rising youth unemployment and increasing early school dropout rates are discussed and the new welfare state approach is suggested.<sup>1</sup> This approach defends the design of social interventions ensuring to upkeep the quality and capability of human capital across generations, make sure welfare states stabilise the labour market and provide citizens with a buffered zone in the labour market where they can fulfil their potential without social and economic barriers.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, delving more into the Turkish context reveals that certain policies to address challenges of youth exist but without much emphasis on NEET youth and sustainably enhancing their skills, improving labour market conditions and opportunities and addressing gender-based disaggregation among NEET youth. To provide an overview of policies addressing the problems of NEET youth, this report seeks to unpack active labour market policies (ALMPs), social care service provisioning, employment opportunities for and educational attainment of the disabled and civil society participation of youth. Despite the existence of policy efforts to address the problems of NEET, this report argues that these policy efforts have a gendered character leaving females behind in the labour market and should have a diverse approach to address the heterogeneous structure of needs of youth.

### **Alternative CSO Models for Positive Youth Development**

Alternative models to engage youth that are already being implemented by youth CSOs are worth exploring and can be useful resources to contribute to the policy discussions. Civil society organisations (CSOs) are important players for activating and empowering young people in society. As part of this study, we have selected 4 youth CSOs in Turkey and have analysed their action models as case studies on how to increase economic and social engagement and involvement of youth in society. The case studies selected for study are: Young Guru Academy (YGA), Girls Without Barriers Project, Community Volunteers Foundation and Toy Youth Association. These CSOs each have different operating/action models, means of engaging young people in their activities

and different target/beneficiary audiences. Even though these CSOs do not specifically target and work with NEET youth, they present positive models of youth engagement and empowerment that provide opportunities for youth to engage and become more active citizens. Based on certain definitions that focus on positive youth development and empowerment, the final section of this report looks at possible ways of increasing youth activities in the labour market and more widely in community and civil society actions by considering the models of these selected youth NGOs.



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