

**PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROTECTION EXPENDITURES IN TÜRKİYE
AND EUROPEAN UNION COUNTRIES**Nihat AKBULUT (Ph.D.)* **ABSTRACT**

The study compares Türkiye's education and social protection expenditures and educational aids with those of European Union countries. The study aims to analyze the adequacy and effectiveness of education expenditures and educational aids within the social protection expenditures and social benefits compared to those of European Union countries. The general screening model was used as the method in the study, and data on education expenditures, social protection expenditures, educational and social benefits in Türkiye, and EUROSTAT data were used compared to the European Union. Considering that public expenditures and social benefits for economically disadvantaged children and their families are low within the social protection benefits in Türkiye compared to European Union countries, in terms of the budget allocated, there needs to be increased social protection expenditures and social benefits and to this extent, the educational aids in favor of children and their families.

Keywords: Social Protection Expenditure, Social Benefit, Disadvantaged Children, European Union.

Jel Codes: E71, H31, H52.

**TÜRKİYE VE AVRUPA BİRLİĞİ ÜLKELERİNDE KAMU EĞİTİM ve SOSYAL KORUMA
HARCAMALARI****ÖZET**

Arařtırmada Türkiye'nin eğitim ve sosyal koruma harcamaları ile eğitim yardımları Avrupa Birliği ülkeleriyle karşılaştırılmaktadır. Çalışma, sosyal koruma harcamaları ve sosyal yardımlar içerisinde yer alan eğitim harcamaları ve eğitim yardımlarının yeterliliğini ve etkinliğini Avrupa Birliği ülkeleri ile karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Arařtırmada yöntem olarak genel tarama modeli kullanılmış olup, Türkiye'deki eğitim harcamaları, sosyal koruma harcamaları, eğitim ve sosyal yardımlara ilişkin veriler ile Avrupa Birliği ile karşılaştırmalı EUROSTAT verileri kullanılmıştır. Türkiye'de sosyal koruma yardımları içerisinde ekonomik açıdan dezavantajlı çocuklar ve ailelerine yönelik kamu harcamaları ve sosyal yardımların Avrupa Birliği ülkelerine göre düşük

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olduğu dikkate alındığında, sosyal koruma harcamaları ve sosyal yardımlara ayrılan bütçe ve bu kapsamda çocuklara ve ailelerine yönelik eğitim yardımlarının artırılmasına gereksinim bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sosyal Koruma Harcaması, Sosyal Yardım, Dezavantajlı Çocuk, Avrupa Birliği.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study compares Türkiye's education and social protection benefits with those in European Union (EU) countries. The study aims to analyze the adequacy and effectiveness of education expenditures and educational aids given within the scope of social benefits compared to EU countries. In the study, as a method, the data on education expenditures and social protection expenditures in Türkiye are discussed within the framework of the general screening research model, and these data are analyzed by comparing them with the social protection expenditures and social benefits in the EU countries.

The first part of the article presents public education policies and the general aims of educational aids as a conceptual framework. The second part mentions the economic and social education programs in the EU. In the third part, education expenditures and educational aids in Türkiye are discussed together with general social protection expenditures and social benefits. In the fourth part, social protection benefits in Türkiye and the European Union have been compared and analyzed based on EUROSTAT data.

2. GENERAL AIMS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION POLICIES AND EDUCATIONAL AIDS

Education contributes to the realization of social cohesion for children from different socioeconomic backgrounds. It increases women's labor force participation and contributes to eliminating gender inequalities. In addition to the benefits that cannot be directly calculated in terms of money in the short term, some benefits can be directly calculated economically, such as higher wages for the qualified workforce thanks to increasing education and the quality of labor.

Because of education's social benefits, the government intervenes in education services to ensure a fair social income distribution and thus to provide equality of opportunity. Particularly in primary and secondary education, the concept of "equality" is the main reason used to explain the existence of public interventions in education services. Equality of opportunity is accepted as a factor related to the concept of social justice and is an indicator of the presence of social justice (Barr, 1993:250). The fact that its social benefits are higher than its social costs and that it increases efficiency in the economy by ensuring human capital development distinguishes education expenditures from other public spending. The governments intervene in this area because a significant part of the education expenditures is considered social justice expenditures aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity; its positive externality is high, and primary education is considered among the virtuous services (Yılmaz, 2006:42).

In brief, although there are discussions in the literature about government intervention in education, for whom, and how, there is a consensus on the requirement for governments to intervene in education services for various reasons, mainly because of their external benefits. Because of its crucial function and importance, completing education is vital for all, especially for children of school age. So, not having completed education is a critical issue. It is called early school leaving (ESL) or school dropouts. To prevent ESL, there needs to know its underlying reasons. There are several researches on this issue. Most of them show a direct or indirect relationship between ESL and their family's socioeconomic status (SES). SES is an essential indicator in explaining school dropouts. (Deschamps, 1992; Bradley and Renzulli, 2011; Marks, 2007; McHenry, 1997).

There are different definitions of socioeconomic status in relevant literature, but their content is almost similar. References in relevant issues focus on the impact of socioeconomic status. In the SES variable, the primary factor is the family's income status, followed by the education and occupation status of the parents. In the studies conducted by Deschamps (1992), Peng and Fetters (1978), Peng and Lee (1992), Prawatrungruang (2002), Rumberger (1983), and Wayman (2001), students from families in the lower socioeconomic group are more likely to come up with school dropout risk. Many domestic and foreign researches demonstrate high dropouts among students with low-income and ethnic minorities (Garnier et al., 1997; Traag Van der Veldan, 2008; Freeney and O'Connell, 2009). Bloomer's (1997) study stated that most children who dropped out of school were in a low economic situation. Therefore, they were disadvantaged regarding social, educational, and economic conditions (Bloomer, 1997).

Regarding the results in literature revealing that socioeconomic factors are among the prominent reasons for school dropouts, policies should be developed to support particularly disadvantaged pupils to attend their education. To achieve this goal, educational and social aids for pupils and their households are crucial.

3. ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS FOR EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

The main target of education-oriented policies and programs is that all individuals of education age complete their education within the anticipated time. In this framework, UNICEF's definition of inclusive education has been discussed on three different bases regarding educational, social, and economic reasons. On economic grounds, it has been stated that schools that provide education to all students are less costly than different kinds of schools with complex education systems (ERG-UNICEF, 2016). Here, it is seen that UNESCO emphasizes the social state aspect, where the state provides equal opportunities for everyone to access education (UNESCO, 2009).

According to the ERG-UNICEF (2016) report, inclusive education is a transformation and socioeconomic development opportunity that closely concerns everyone. First, determining who is most likely to drop out is necessary to prevent school dropouts. Equality of opportunity for students is the

most essential target of protection programs to be developed to avoid dropouts. In the programs designed to prevent school dropouts, it was stated that the situation of disadvantaged students should be monitored and supported financially, academically, or psychologically according to their disadvantaged status. Accessibility to education is defined in the 13th article of the UN Convention, which regulates the right to education by the United Nations (UN) signed by Türkiye in 2000 that accessibility should not have been legally or de facto discriminated against in education and should be physically and economically accessible. In the ERG-UNICEF (2016) report, it is stated that while it is seen that children with disabilities are placed at the center of the definition of inclusive education, gender and poverty are among the other factors that cause multiple disadvantages.

In all these definitions, it is seen that economic accessibility to education and economic equality of opportunity are emphasized in access to education. After explaining the scope of policies and programs to prevent school dropouts in an inclusive education approach framework, Ireland's practices in ESL are presented as an example of good practice. Furthermore, the practices for socioeconomically disadvantaged students in the policies and programs of the EU are emphasized. The National Strategy Document Against Poverty and the National Action Plan Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, developed by Ireland within the framework of the EU Lisbon Strategy, can be shown as good practice examples in terms of practices aimed at solving the problem of school dropouts. In this context, studies have been conducted in Ireland to take necessary precautions for educating disadvantaged children (3-18 years old). In the Education Act of 1998, a monitoring committee (Disadvantage in Education Committee) was established under the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) based on this regulation (DEIS, 2005:7-8). In Ireland, within the scope of the strategy and action plan for disadvantaged children in education, the Education Welfare Act was enacted in 2000. Based on this, a board (Educational Welfare Board) was established to monitor absenteeism from school. Within the framework of the mentioned plan, it is aimed to provide more support to disadvantaged schools, especially in rural areas, with the Schools Support Program. A more specific application in terms of our subject is the School Completion Program developed within the scope of this plan. The National Development Plan and the social funds of the EU supported the program. This program comprises the Teacher Support Project at the primary education level, the Home/School/Community Cooperation Plan, and the Disadvantaged Regions Plan. A School Books Donation Plan was made at primary and secondary education levels. (DEIS, 2005:8-10)

Five essential components are included in the National Strategy Action Plan Against Poverty: Disadvantage in education, Unemployment (especially long-term unemployment), Income deficiency (Income distribution), Disadvantaged city regions, and Rural poverty. Social Integration Office and Social and Family Affairs units were established under the Ministry to take measures regarding these components. The National Economic and Social Council and a Forum were also founded. In addition, the Lisbon European Council envisaged that the EU member states would develop an Action Plan

against Poverty and Social Exclusion (DEIS, 2005:16-17). Within the scope of the action plan, studies on School Meal Programs and the EU School Milk Plan were carried out in cooperation with the two ministries, MES and the Ministries of Agriculture and Food (MAF). With such programs, it aims to increase children's attendance at school. In addition, special projects have been produced for disadvantaged youth. The plan includes 1.25 miles for primary and secondary education in three phases from 2005-2008.

4. PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL AIDS IN TÜRKİYE

Since the research on the subject shows that the reasons for school dropouts are mainly socioeconomic, policies should be developed to improve the socioeconomic status of individuals and society as a whole, with economic and social policies toward the solution of the problem. For this reason, it is crucial to implement public finance policies to increase the efficiency of education expenditures and educational aids, especially within the scope of social expenditures in the broad sense and social protection expenditures and social benefits in the narrow sense applied in Türkiye as solution proposals. With these policies and programs, it is crucial to reduce the socioeconomic barriers to access to education, to provide equal opportunities in access to education, and to support the disadvantaged groups economically due to poverty. It seems a requirement to ensure that educational aids such as scholarships, dormitories, clothing, and meals for financially disadvantaged students reach those in need with more effective methods and that the families of these students also benefit from social benefits that improve their socioeconomic status. For this reason, this section focuses on the solution to the problem of school dropouts in terms of educational expenditures and educational aids within the social protection benefits in Türkiye compared to the EU.

4.1. Public Educational AIDS

Public educational aids for students within the scope of social benefits in Türkiye; paid with resources transferred from the Fund (SYDTF) to the budget of the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MFLSS); Direct aids in the form of educational material aids, conditional education aids, lunch aid, free textbooks, student transportation, accommodation, and subsistence aids, free transportation of disabled students, as well as indirect aids in the form of dormitory construction; Cash aids given by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) as scholarships and pocket money to disadvantaged students within the scope of a free hostel and scholarship payments, and in-kind aids as clothing, stationery and hostel expenses; these are the scholarships given to the needy students in primary and secondary education by the General Directorate of Foundations (GDF) and the scholarship payments made by YURTKUR to the disadvantaged students in higher education. The total of public education aids in 2018-2019 is given in Table 1:

Table 1. Educational Aids with Public Resources (2018-2019)

(000 TL)	2018	2019
Total Education Aids Financed out of the Fund (SYDTF as TR's original institution name)*	2.177.860	3.160.450
MoNE Social Protection Expenditures****	1.855.437	2.293.879
YURTKUR (as TR's original institution name) Student Payments** (towards Higher Education students)	2.253.784	2.401.727
General Directorate of Foundations Student Scholarships**	29.730	32.068
Total Educational Aids***	6.316.811	7.888.124
Ratio to GDP (percent)	0,168	0,182

***Ref:** The Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MFLSS). 2018 and 2019 Annual Activity Reports.

** **Ref:** The Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, The Head of Strategy and Budget Department, 2021 and 2022 Presidential Annual Programs

***Educational aids within the social benefits of municipalities are not included.

**** The Ministry of Education (MoNE). 2019 and 2020 Budget Final Accounts

Among these aids, Conditional Education Aid is a program implemented as a solution to the problem of school dropouts due to the provision of school attendance. Other education aids with resources transferred from SYDTF are mostly goods in-kind or services, while Conditional Education Aid (CEA) is given as cash aid. Although it is seen that the CEA, which is explicitly applied to ensure school attendance, has a positive effect on absenteeism rates, it is seen that the amount of these payments per student is meager. Because there has been almost no increase over the years, it has lost its real value in purchasing power parity (PPP). An increase should be indexed to inflation for payment amounts to be meaningful to students and their families. Thus, it is considered that identifying students in need and making payments regarding PPP may prevent students from leaving formal education due to economic difficulties.

4.2. Social Protection Benefits in Türkiye

In Türkiye, the rate of public social expenditures (education, health, and social protection expenditures) to GDP increased from 11.4% in 2000 to 16.9% by the end of 2016. This rate has risen to 9.2% as Social Protection and Security in the narrow sense (Karadeniz and Yılmaz, 2018:96). In a broad sense, public social expenditures increased to 17.3% between 2017 and 2019 in Türkiye, and social protection expenditures in the narrow sense (retirement pensions and other expenditures, social assistance and non-contributory payments, direct income support payments) decreased in 2017. It increased again (8.4%) and reached 9.5% in 2019 (Table 2).

Table 2. Public Social Expenditures in Türkiye (2019-2021)

	2019		2020		2021	
	(Current Prices, Million TL)	(To GDP, Percent)	(Current Prices, Million TL)	(To GDP, Percent)	(Current Prices, Million TL)	(To GDP, Percent)
EDUCATION	161.805	3,8	170.315	3,4	211.957	2,9
HEALTH	164.480	3,8	207.371	4,1	292.057	4,0
SOCIAL PROTECTION	412.292	9,6	510.935	10,1	594.562	8,2
Pensions and Other Expenditures	368.995	8,6	447.285	8,9	508.402	7,0
Social Benefits and Non-Contributory Payments	39.147	0,9	59.038	1,2	79.039	1,1
Direct Income Support Payments	4.150	0,1	4.613	0,1	7.121	0,1
TOTAL	738.578	17,1	888.621	17,6	1.098.576	15,2

Ref: The Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2022). Public Sector Social Expenditure Statistics, 2021

The ratio of public social protection expenditures to total public social expenditures increased from 52.8% to 55.8% between 2017 and 2019. The percentage of social benefits to public social protection expenditures decreased from 10.7% to 9.5 % (Table 2). Although the ratio of public social protection expenditures to GDP increased by 1.1% from 2017 to 2019, the reason for the decrease in the percentage of public social benefits to public social protection expenditures was that the ratio of pensions and other payments to GDP increased by 1.1 % from 2017 to 2019. The effect of benefits remaining constant at 0.9% in this period is seen (Table 2).

Table 3. Public Social Benefits in Türkiye (2019-2021, Million TL)

	2019	2020	2021
Total Public Social Expenditures	739.504	888.621	1.098.576
Public Social Protection Expenditures	412.429	510.935	594.562
Public Social Benefits and Non-Premium Payments	39.284	59,038	79.039
Public Social Protection Expenditures to Public Social Expenditures (%)	55,8	57,4	54,1
Public Social Benefits to Public Social Protection Expenditures (%)	9,5	11,5	13,3

Ref: The Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services (MFLSS). 2018 and 2019 Annual Activity Reports

Considering the distribution of social benefit expenditures based on institutions providing social benefit services and the amounts of social benefits, most of these benefits are provided by the MFLSS for pensions for the elderly and disabled person, support payments to families and children, home care payments, education, health, etc. from the MFLSS. Social benefits, general health insurance premium payments, scholarships given by the MoNE to needy students in primary and secondary education,

scholarships made by the YURTKUR to disadvantaged students in higher education, and scholarships given to needy students in primary and secondary education by the GDF. Apart from this are the needy pensions the GDF gives to orphans and people with disabilities, welfare payments, the coal benefits distributed by the Turkish Coal Enterprises Institution, and other social benefits (Table 4).

Table 4. Educational Aids and Other Social Benefits for Children and Families (2017-2019)

Institutions	Social Benefits	2017		2018		2019	
		Beneficiary	Amount Allocated	Beneficiary	Amount Allocated	Beneficiary	Amount Allocated
The MFLSS	SEA (<i>low-income families</i>)	161,493	834,691	185,766	1 096,121	198,907	1,389,135
The GDF	Bursaries (<i>primary and secondary school</i>)	21 290	20 302	20 741	29 730	21 453	32 068
The MoNE	Bursaries (<i>primary and secondary school</i>)	142 205	330 228	386.413	665 572	147 166	472 765
The YURTKUR	Bursaries (<i>high school/university students</i>)	548 156	2 053 739	557 475	2 253 784	569 747	2 401 727

Ref: The Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye. (2020). The Presidential Annual Program 2021. The Head of Strategy and Budget Department.

5. COMPARING PUBLIC EDUCATION EXPENDITURES AND SOCIAL BENEFITS IN TÜRKİYE WITH THOSE EU COUNTRIES

The Social Assistance and Solidarity Encouragement Fund (transferred to the SYDTF in MFLSS) provided most social benefits for children and families in Türkiye, such as food, shelter, etc. Other benefits for children and families provided by MFLSS are: benefits for soldiers and their children, widowed women, maternity and multiple birth aids, etc. Those benefits are provided by the resources assigned to the MFLSS from the public budget. Some of the educational aids discussed in detail in the next section are covered by the MFLSS, and some are financed from the government budget. On the other hand, there are educational and social adaptation benefits provided for foreigners funded by the EU (Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı, 2019: 140)

Within the scope of public educational aids, the ratio of those benefiting from the government's other scholarships, free hostel, scholarship, and social and economic support (SES) payments in secondary education other than CEA payments in secondary education is 6.1% according to the 2019-2020 data, and this is also true when private school students are excluded in terms of economic opportunities. It is seen that the rate of students who benefit from public social benefits, free hostel, and

scholarship opportunities is below the rate of 15% of students who are not registered in formal education according to the net enrollment rates of 2019-2020. This rate shows that scholarships and free hostel opportunities are insufficient even for students out of formal education, mainly for socioeconomic reasons. Therefore, there is a need for more scholarships, free hostels, and other educational aids for socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

5.1. Social Protection Benefits in EU Countries

Government social protection expenditures to GDP varied from 8.7 % to 24.8 % across EU member states. Social protection expenditures represented the most significant public government expenditure in 2021 in all EU member states. The ratio of government social protection expenditures to GDP is as follows (Table 5):

Table 5. EU General Government Expenditures on Social Protection by Function (% of GDP)

Total general government expenditure on social protection, 2021, % of GDP										
	Social protection	Sickness and disability	Old age	Survivors	Family and children	Unemploy-ment	Housing	Social exclusion n.e.c.	R&D Social protection	Social protection n.e.c.
EU*	20.5	2.9	10.8	1.5	1.9	1.7	0.3	1.0	0.0	0.3
euro area 19*	21.2	2.9	11.1	1.7	1.8	1.9	0.4	1.1	0.0	0.3
euro area 20*	21.2	2.9	11.1	1.7	1.8	1.9	0.4	1.1	0.0	0.3
Belgium	21.0	3.7	9.6	1.5	2.2	2.1	0.3	1.2	0.0	0.5
Bulgaria	13.4	0.6	10.0		1.8	0.5	0.1	0.1		0.3
Czechia	13.6	2.5	7.9	0.5	1.8	0.2	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
Denmark	21.1	4.6	8.0	0.0	4.2	1.9	0.6	1.3	0.0	0.5
Germany*	20.9	3.3	10.0	1.9	1.9	2.0	0.3	0.7	0.0	0.7
Estonia	13.5	2.1	7.4	0.1	2.5	0.9	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2
Ireland	8.7	1.1	3.5	0.4	1.0	1.7	0.8	0.1	0.0	0.2
Greece	20.6	1.6	13.9	2.4	1.1	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.0	0.0
Spain*	20.6	2.9	10.7	2.5	1.0	2.7	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.1
France*	24.8	3.1	13.2	1.4	2.2	2.3	0.9	1.5	0.0	0.2
Croatia	14.1	1.7	8.4	1.2	2.1	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.2
Italy	23.4	2.0	14.3	2.6	1.1	1.5	0.0	1.7	0.0	0.1
Cyprus	12.5	0.4	6.3	1.4	2.5	0.4	0.0	1.3	0.0	0.1
Latvia	13.8	2.6	7.5	0.2	1.7	0.9	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.3
Lithuania	14.3	4.1	6.4	0.3	1.9	0.9	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.2
Luxembourg	18.3	3.2	9.4	0.0	3.3	1.3	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.2
Hungary	13.1	2.1	6.6	0.7	2.3	0.3	0.1	0.9	0.0	0.2
Malta	11.0	0.9	6.9	1.2	1.0	0.1	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.4
Netherlands	16.6	4.3	6.6	0.1	2.1	0.8	0.5	2.4	0.0	0.0
Austria	21.9	1.8	13.6	1.4	2.1	1.8	0.1	1.1	0.0	0.2
Poland	17.3	2.1	9.9	1.7	2.9	0.3	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.1
Portugal*	18.3	1.5	11.9	1.8	1.5	0.8	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.4
Romania	13.3	1.2	9.7	0.1	1.5	0.1	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.5
Slovenia	17.9	2.6	10.4	1.3	2.0	0.4	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.1
Slovakia	16.2	4.1	8.4	0.8	1.2	0.3	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.2
Finland	24.6	3.2	13.9	0.6	3.0	2.0	0.6	0.9	0.0	0.3
Sweden	18.6	3.4	10.2	0.2	2.4	1.3	0.3	0.8	0.0	0.0
Iceland	13.2	3.5	3.3	0.0	2.5	2.5	0.4	0.6	0.0	0.5
Norway	18.6	6.5	6.9	0.2	3.1	0.7	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.4
Switzerland	14.4	3.0	6.7	0.3	0.6	2.1	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0

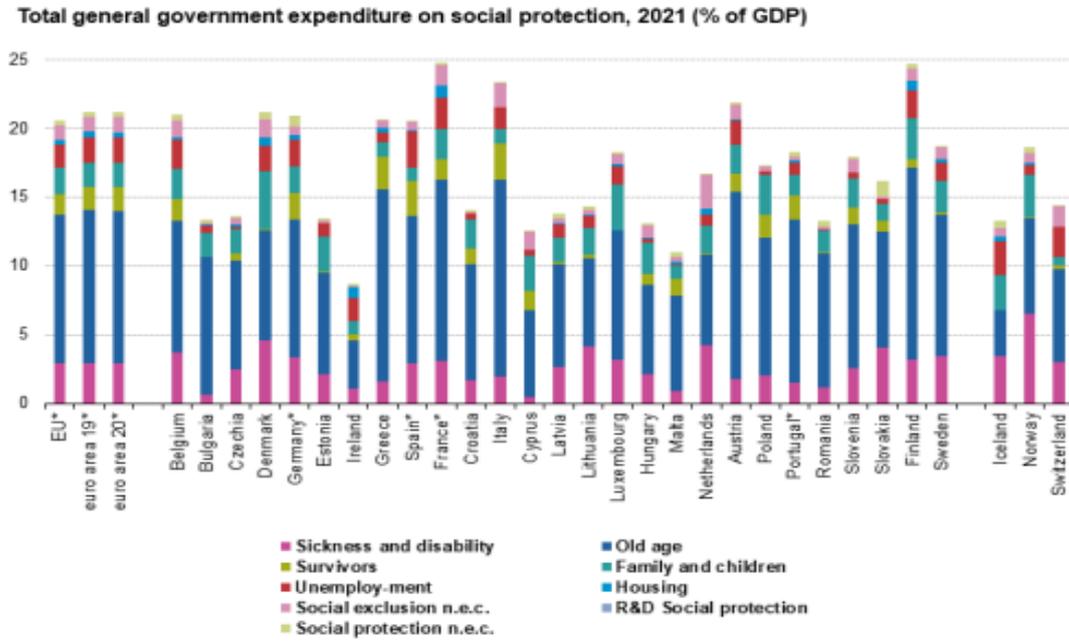
Ref: EUROSTAT. (2023a). Expenditure on social protection benefits by function, 2020, (spr_exp_sum)

France (24.8 %), Finland (24.6 %), Italy (23.4 %), Austria (21.9 %), Denmark (21.1 %), Belgium (21.0 %), Germany (20.9 %), Greece and Spain (both 20.6 %) – devoted at least 20 % of GDP to social protection with Norway being the highest among EFTA countries (18.6 %). At the other end of the scale, Ireland (8.7 %), Malta (11.0 %), Cyprus (12.5 %), Hungary (13.1 %), Romania (13.3 %), Bulgaria (13.4

%), Estonia (13.5 %), Czechia (13.6 %) and Latvia (13.8 %), as well as Iceland among the EFTA countries (13.2 %) each spent less than 14 % of GDP on social protection.

Chart 1 shows the general government's total expenditure on social protection according to the COFOG).

Chart 1. General Government Expenditures on Social Protection in EU Countries (% of GDP)



Ref: EUROSTAT. (2023b). Expenditure on social protection benefits. (spr_exp_sum)

As a percentage of GDP, expenditure on social protection in 2021 is 20.5 % of GDP. Over the period between 1995 and 2021, the expenditure on 'social protection' as a ratio to GDP increased from 19.4 % of GDP in 1995 to 20.5 % of GDP in 2021. In the EU in 2021, expenditure on social protection stood at €2 983 billion, equivalent to 20.5 % of GDP and 39.9 % of total expenditure. By far, the most significant group in this division, 'old age' (10.8 % of GDP), relates mainly to pension payments. Expenditure in 'sickness and disability' (2.9 % of GDP), the second largest group, represents particularly social payments in cash or kind related to social insurance schemes. In the EU in 2021, the groups' family and children (1.9 % of GDP), 'unemployment' (1.7 % of GDP), 'survivors' (1.5 % of GDP), 'housing' (0.3 % of GDP), 'social exclusion not elsewhere classified' (1.0 % of GDP) at the EU level in 2021.

The data above shows that the most significant social protection expenditure is allocated to the old age group. Looking at the share for the family and children groups, it is the third highest group with a rate of %1.9 of GDP.

5.2. Social Protection Benefits in Türkiye Compared With EU Countries

Table 6 shows Türkiye's ratio of social protection benefits to GDP compared with EU countries (EU27 average). This rate, which was 12.8% in Türkiye in 2016, remained almost at the same level until 2020. While the EU27 country average was 28.5% in 2016, it increased to 31.7% in 2020. It is observed that the ratio of social protection expenditures to GDP has increased in the EU countries (EU27 average) and remained almost stable in Türkiye. In other words, the gap has widened.

Table 6. Türkiye EU Comparative Social Protection Benefits (2016-2020)

Total Social Protection Benefits (Ratio of GDP)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
EU27	28,5	28,1	27,9	28,0	31,7
Türkiye	12,8	12,2	11,9	12,6	13,0

Ref: EUROSTAT. (2023c). Total Social Protection Benefits (Ratio of GDP)

There was no substantial change in the distribution of the social protection benefits (Table 7) between 2014-2018 in EU countries. Pension and old-age pensions (11% of GDP in 2014, 10.7% of GDP in 2018 projection) are still the first highest percentage as a ratio of GDP, followed by sickness and health expenses (8% of the GDP in 2014, 9.8% of the GDP in 2018), the share of family and children (2.2% of GDP in 2014, 2.2% of GDP in 2018) is in the third highest percentage.

Table 7. Türkiye-EU Social Protection Benefits by Function (As GDP Ratios, 2014-2018)

	Türkiye (%)		AB27* (%)	
	2014	2018	2014	2018 (t)
Total Social Protection Benefits**	11,8	11,8	27,7	26,7
Illness/Health Care	3,6	3,2	8,0	9,8
Disability/Retired	0,5	0,4	2,1	2,0
Pensioners and Old Ages-Allowances	5,7	5,9	11,0	10,7
Families/Children	0,4	0,5	2,2	2,2
Unemployment	0,2	0,3	1,6	1,2
Social Exclusion	0,2	0,2	0,6	0,6

Ref: TURKSTAT. 2019. "Social Benefit Statistics, 2019", TURKSTAT Newsletter, 2019, No: 33668

*Ref: EUROSTAT. (2021). Expenditure on social protection benefits by function (As GDP Ratios)

**All public or private institutions/organizations providing social protection services are covered.

(t): Forecast (provision)

When the distribution of social protection benefit rates in Türkiye is compared with the EU countries rates, Türkiye's most significant share of social benefits (5.9% of GDP in 2018) is allocated to

pensioners and old age pensions, followed by sickness and health expenses (3.2% of GDP in 2018). The share of family and child (0.5% of GDP in 2018) remains relatively low. As per the EU average, this rate is 340% higher than in Türkiye.

Table 8 shows that the rate of the social benefits given to families and children is around two times that of Türkiye in the EU countries (EU27 average). This rate, 3.7% in Türkiye in 2016, increased to 4.8% in 2020, while the EU27 country average was 8.2% in 2016, it remained at 8.3% in 2020. It is seen that while the rate of the social benefits given to families and children within the social protection expenditures remained at the same rates in the EU countries (EU27 average), there was a significant increase in Türkiye, so the difference has been decreasing. However, it is still almost half of the EU average.

Table 8. Social Benefits for Family and Children within Social Protection Benefits (2016-2020)

Social Benefits to Families and Children (Ratio of GDP)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
EU27	8,2	8,3	8,3	8,4	8,3
Türkiye	3,7	3,9	3,8	4,3	4,8

Ref: EUROSTAT. (2023d). Social Benefits to Families and Children (Ratio of GDP)

In the study of Karadeniz and Yılmaz (2018) regarding the distribution of social security expenditures in the EU and Türkiye, the percentage of expenses for families and children in Türkiye could be more effective by increasing the social aid expenditures in favor of families and children, as in the EU (Karadeniz & Yılmaz, 2018: 56).

On this issue, the UNICEF report states that in the analysis of the social benefits in terms of the beneficiaries, it was noted that the current social security system was not effective in reducing child poverty, that more than 90% of the social protection expenditures made by the public were allocated to the premium system expenditures, namely pension expenditures, and that the health expenditures. The report mentioned that it is ineffective in the struggle of child poverty (UNICEF, 2011:63).

6. CONCLUSION

Education has lots of benefits, both individually and socially. Individually, it provides higher income thanks to having more skills to find a better job. Socially, it contributes to the realization of social cohesion for people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. In this framework, education is vital both individually and socially. So, early leaving education is a crucial issue. Knowing the main reasons for the problem is essential to prevent youth from leaving education early.

Regarding the results in literature revealing that socioeconomic factors are among the main reasons for school dropouts, policies should be developed to support particularly disadvantaged pupils to attend their education. Because of education's social benefits, the government tries to ensure a fair social income distribution and thus provide equality of opportunity with its social and macroeconomic policies. In this context, educational and social benefits within the social protection expenditures for children, youth, and their families are essential policy tools for this goal.

Compared to EU countries' average distribution of social protection benefit rates as of GDP in Türkiye in 2018, the most significant share of social benefits is allocated to pensioners and old age pensions, followed by sickness and health expenses. The percentage of family and child remains relatively low. Data on this issue for 2016-2020 indicate that the ratio of social benefits for families and children to social protection benefits increased in Türkiye, and the gap between the EU average has been decreasing as a trend. However, it is still almost half of the EU average.

To conclude, educational and social benefits within the social protection expenditures for children, youth, and their families should be managed effectively as an essential policy tool. To this end, the share of expenses for families and children in Türkiye should be increased by allocating public budget resources for the most essential requirements.

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