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**MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
TURKIYE**

***Modernisation of the Education and Training Systems
Towards the 2010 common goals:
TURKEY***

**COUNTRY REPORT
for
Preparation of the 2006 Joint Council/Commission Report**

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1. INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA

Reforming education and training systems is among top priorities of the Turkish Government. Reform efforts have been catalyzed by EU funded projects such as Support to Basic Education Program, Strengthening Vocational and Technical Education Project and Modernization of Vocational Education and Training Project. These projects provide support for developing and implementing national lifelong learning policies aligned with Lisbon objectives. Priorities agreed under the Copenhagen and Bologna processes provided the direction and basic framework for reforming education and training system. As concluded in the “2004 Regular Report on Turkey’s Progress Towards Accession” the MoNE plans to continue its reform efforts in education and training. With a view to make vocational schools and universities more labour-market oriented. Turkey has been acting decisively to enhance links between labour market and education since 2003.

Current reform efforts are quite comprehensive taking a holistic approach to improve quality and relevance of education and training. These efforts include increasing enrolment in pre-school, extending compulsory education from eight years to 12 years, restructuring secondary education to adapt ISCED-97 classification, improving facilities, reforming curricula from preschool to 12th Grade, improving quality of teacher training and establishing teacher career system, establishing an effective guidance system, changing the concept of in-service training, integrating the use of ICT with education and training and integrating secondary school curricula with higher education.

Resources invested in human resources as indicated, but not limited, by budget allocations for education have been in steady increase. Education budget exceeded the defense budget for the first time last two budget years for decades. Proportion of education budget to GDP is reported as 3,09% as of 2005. However, this figure does not provide an accurate picture of spending in education. Therefore, the State Institute of Statistics has conducted an extensive study of costs of education and reported that actual figure including non-budgeted spending is 7,26% of GDP.

Scientific and Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) initiated a support program, namely “The Career Program”, which aims to encourage young researchers who have just completed their doctorate studies and are at the beginning of their career to become scientists. Moreover, TUBITAK continued to provide financial support for international scientific meetings, for the encouragement of international scientific publications and for project applicants under the Sixth Framework Program. The Turkish Technology Development Foundation continued to provide financial support for technology development projects. The budget of TUBITAK has increased by 35% in 2004 due to an increase in its activities.

The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) plans to extend compulsory education from eight years to 12 years, to include secondary education as part of compulsory education. In addition to basic skills of literacy and mathematics, the curriculum reform of primary and secondary education includes a package of key competencies, skills and values which forms a basis for employment, inclusion in social life, lifelong learning, personal fulfillment and development. Results of international achievement studies such as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA, and national assessment studies as well as the “benchmarks” provided a sound base for redesigning the curricula.

As an inter-ministerial decision making and advisory board, the Vocational Education Councils have been established at the MoNE and provincial level. There have been also institutional partnerships established with the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, other public authorities, trade and employers' unions, NGO's, and Chamber of Commerce through various protocols signed between the MoNE and these stakeholders or social partners to coordinate the implementation of the education and training elements of the Lisbon strategy. A draft law to establish the Institute for National Qualifications has been prepared and presented to public for critics and recommendations as a product of the partnership between the MoNE and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

The MoNE has been actively participating in international comparative studies to benefit to the fullest extent from quantitative international comparative data. A three day workshop hosted by the MONE with participation of experts from OECD to search for ways of establishing a comparable financial database in 4-6 May, 2005. As already noted, findings of international achievement studies such as TIMMS, PIRLS and PISA are used as valuable sources of information in reforming education and training system. Results of these studies are somewhat alarming and provide impetus for urgent action. Detailed analysis of findings has been used as diagnostic information in the reform process.

There has been an implementation gap in providing education and training for disabled children. A law of 1997 provides for compulsory pre-school education for disabled children, but the attendance rate of such children remains relatively low. Although financial incentives have been provided, the MoNE needs to make substantial efforts to provide facilities and to convince concerned families to send their disabled children to school.

In order to facilitate school attendance for children from poorer families, the Ministry of National Education has been distributing textbooks free of charge at the basic education level since the school year 2003/2004. There have been additional incentives provided to families to ensure equal access to basic education. This has contributed to increased attendance rates.

Existing limitations on access to higher education and decreases in employment opportunities due to labour market conditions, and decreased relevance of training to workplace requirements for the graduates of vocational education and training schools have led to a decline in enrolment in these schools. This trend has been persistent for more than a decade and MoNE is taking measures to increase attractiveness of vocational training. Social partners and stakeholders are actively participating in policy formulation, curriculum development and restructuring, and implementation of policies and curricula.

2. INVESTING MORE AND MORE EFFICIENTLY: FOCUSING REFORM ON THE KEY AREAS

2.1. Identification of national priorities for reform and investment

Modernization/reform efforts of Turkey's education and training systems concentrate in four areas: (a) improving physical capacity and facilities, (b) developing an up to date curriculum and instruction, (c) improving teacher training and quality of teachers, and (d) building information and communication technology infra-structure.

Significant amount of resources, especially private donations and contributions have been mobilized to build new schools and strengthen structure of existing school buildings for earthquake.

Curriculum development is a top priority as stated in Urgent Action Plan of the government. Curriculum development activities have been financed partly from MoNE's own resources and partly from a number of projects funded by EU and the World Bank. Curriculum reform involves major changes from Grade 1 thru Grade 12 and all of the programs at upper secondary education level. Curriculum change started with reforming the basic education curricula. Development of basic education curricula is partly financed under Support to Basic Education Program (DG1A-D/MEDTKQ/04-99). Curriculum development activities were not part of the planned program as it was started on September 2002, but curriculum development have been included in the Program. Later it was recognized that success of all components of the program heavily depends on development of an up to date curriculum. If the curricula are not relevant to economy and democracy or not up to date with scientific, social and cultural changes, improvement in management and teacher training components could only marginally contribute to overall development of basic education for a knowledge-based society. After extensive review of findings from international comparative data and national/local studies, all stakeholders agreed that curriculum reform is a national priority;

1. To increase relevance of instruction to economy and democracy,
2. To ensure a balance of gender issues in teaching-learning process,
3. To align curricular content and structure with Lisbon objectives in terms of "European reference framework" for basic skills and key competencies,
4. To ensure integrity of curricular content, structure and approaches thru the basic education from first grade to eight grade as well as appropriate linkages across subjects at each grade level,
5. To update curriculum in concert with developments in educational sciences and subject areas,
6. To increase the flexibility of the curriculum that the content and instructional strategies can be adapted to local situations,
7. To increase equality of opportunity by designing a more flexible curriculum, and
8. To establish multi-level, skill-concept-learning strategy relations in the curricular content.

Basic education (Grade 1 thru Grade 8) curricula for core subjects have been developed and curriculum development work for remaining subjects is continuing. Basic education curricula for basic skill areas, including mathematics, science and technology, social studies, Turkish language and life skills have been piloted in 120 schools in 9 provinces. New textbooks and instructional materials have been developed both by MoNE and private sector. Nationwide dissemination and implementation of new curricula for Grade 1 thru Grade 5 has already started as of September 2005. A stepwise approach will be employed to implement new curriculum¹.

It has been widely recognized that secondary school curriculum must be fully integrated with basic education and also appropriate linkages between secondary education and higher education must be established. All students either in general education or vocational education must acquire basic skills first. Therefore, core curricula for basic skill areas are being designed to be same for both academic secondary education and vocational education. All students take similar basic subjects during the first two years of education and they can choose to go to a different high school program such as a student enrolled in general high school program may switch to a vocational program.

Secondary education programs have been classified into 18 broad fields based on ISCED-97 by taking a holistic approach rather than a fragmented one based on separate subjects. One field is classified as general secondary education and 17 fields as vocational and technical education programs. Funding for secondary education curriculum development is partly provided by MEDA funds within scope of the Strengthening Vocational and Technical Education Project (SVET) and a loan agreement with the World Bank; Secondary Education Project (SEP). SVET project provides curriculum development support for 10 of 17 vocational and technical education fields and SEP for seven vocational and technical education fields plus general secondary education field. As part of these developments, Board of Education decided to extend three year high school education to four years and this decision is being implemented as of September 2005.

Associated with curriculum development for lifelong learning, new textbook and instructional material development has been in progress. New instructional materials are being designed for a student centered and constructivist learning. To increase quality of education and equal access to education, textbooks are provided free of charge at basic education level.

As part of curriculum reform process, all of approximately 2800 supervisors have been trained and training for 230000 classroom teachers will continue during 2005-2006 school year. Concept of in-service training for teachers going through a major transformation from limited opportunities at training centers to multiple avenues for lifelong learning and continuous improvement of quality of teaching force. These include, distance learning opportunities with interactive ICT use, providing printed and multi-media materials as well as implementing locally organized, school based training activities. Partnership between faculties of education and provincial level management

¹ New curricula and related documents are available full-text at following web-sites:
http://tkb.meb.gov.tr/ogretmen/modules.php?name=Downloads&d_op=viewdownload&cid=18
<http://iogm.meb.gov.tr/pages.php?page=program&type=education>,
<http://iogm.meb.gov.tr/pages.php?page=program&type=guide>

have been established for teacher training activities, primarily designed for dissemination and institutionalization of new curricula.

MoNE adapted a policy document for integrating ICT as an indispensable part of lifelong learning in 2004. Further detail will be provided in coming section on ICT policies.

2.2. Extent of correlation between national priority areas, and the common European objectives

Institutional and educational change initiatives are clearly in line with Lisbon objectives. A functional analysis of administrative structure of MoNE has been done with participation of relevant stakeholders such as NGO's and universities. Analysis indicated that current administrative structure is not conducive to efficient and effective operations of educational services. Structure is not aligned with tasks and functions to be performed. Based on this analysis functions of MoNE have been redefined through workshops with participation of high-level and mid-level administrators and other stakeholders. Restructuring of MoNE focuses on ensuring efficiency and effectiveness through establishing a transparent, leaner but functionally strengthened organizational structure. A draft law has been prepared to restructure the management and organization of the MoNE.

Proportion of education budget within government budget consistently increased last three years; 6,93% in 2003, 8,25% in 2004 and 9,07% in 2005. Proportion of education budget to GDP is respectively 2,87%, 2,95%, 3,09%. Education budget with inclusion of higher education budget represents 14% government budget. These figures do not provide a fully accurate picture of spending on education, as private donations, contributions and non-budgeted costs covered by parents are not included in these figures. A recent research by State Institute of Statistics reports total educational expenditures is 7.26% of GDP. This study indicates that 32,85% of total educational expenditures are covered by households².

MoNE has been taking measures to increase quality and effectiveness of education and training systems by improving education and training for teachers, developing skills for the knowledge society thru new curricula, improving ICT access for all students and facilitating more effective and efficient use of resources. In Turkiye's case, there is no need to take any measures to increase the recruitment to scientific and technical studies, as majority and most talented of students already choose to study in scientific and technical fields. All components of reform efforts echoe with the "common European objectives". However, due to immature level of development in some areas, starting point may differ from most of EU countries.

2.3. Monitoring and evaluation of educational policies

Research, Planning and Coordination Department (APK) continuously collects and analyzes data to provide constant feedback to related departments for overall monitoring and assessment of education and training systems. However, assessment and evaluation of implementation most often conducted as part of the each project. Information about

² DİE. (2002). Türkiye Eğitim Harcamaları Araştırması, Ankara.

progress of reform is also reported by related departments on a monthly basis to the undersecretary's office and state of the reforms evaluated at the highest level.

In addition to governmental monitoring and assessment of reform process, there have been numerous independent studies and assessment work undertaken by independent third parties and NGO's. For example, a number of NGO's have been conducting independent studies of conceptual and theoretical assessment of new curricula³.

3. PUTTING IN PLACE TRULY COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

3.1. Main policy/measures

Strategies for lifelong learning include providing accessible and effective non-formal education opportunities for all citizens, increasing enrollment in pre-school education especially for the disadvantaged children and 12 years of universal compulsory education which is only eight years at the mean time. In addition to quantitative objectives, Turkish education system has been tackling with the issue of reforming curricula at all levels to increase relevance of content and instructional strategies to real life situations in social and corporate life.

Lifelong learning is often used with reference to non-formal education and training activities. However, its meaning has been extended to cover "*all learning activity undertaken throughout life*" including formal and non-formal learning activities. Non-formal learning activities primarily focus on completion programs (reading-writing and basic education); programs designed for obtaining skills for a profession or social skills development programs such as family, health, environment, citizenship and democracy, human rights, environment and consumer consciousness education. Comprehensive activities are undertaken in order to expand in all layers of society the culture of lifelong learning, and to offer institutional education services for all citizens somehow earlier in their life excluded of the system.

It is somewhat difficult to provide a complete picture of the current status of lifelong learning policies and actions in Turkey. Lifelong learning activities are provided by government institutions, private sector and increasingly by NGO's. It is easier to provide an inventory of lifelong learning services -either formal or non-formal- provided by government organizations. However, data on lifelong learning activities of NGO's and private sector are not systematic. Therefore, presentation of services provided by NGO's and private sector is primarily qualitative and descriptive. NGO's have been increasingly active in fund raising for lifelong learning activities of public institutions as well as providing learning opportunities through their own activities ranging from vocational skills training to diverse learning opportunities in human rights, citizenship, socio-cultural areas, prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

There are various government education institutions at different levels offering choices

³ Eğitim Reformu Girişimi, (2005). Yeni Öğretim Programlarının Değerlendirilmesi, İstanbul.

and lifelong learning opportunities for skill development, personal interest and needs. The General Directorate of Apprenticeship and Non-formal Education within the Ministry of National Education is the largest provider of non-formal education, and has the broadest organization net with more than 900 public education centers across the country. In cooperation with public schools, especially at primary level, these centers provide opportunities for citizens at any age to continue/complete their basic education. This creates opportunities for these citizens to get further training and education.

For the year 2004, 3.451.515 people attended public education centers affiliated to the General Directorate of Apprenticeship and Non-formal, formal or private non-formal education institutions under the Ministry of National Education⁴. This number is roughly about 10% of adult population of Türkiye. Other ministries, universities, public institutes, non-governmental organizations and volunteer organizations also provide adult education activities which is not included in this figure.

There has been a continuous effort to build sustainable partnership between MoNE and NGO's for lifelong learning. NGO's have been playing an active role in the curriculum development process for various types and levels of educational programs. A large number of NGO's participated in workshops, meetings and/or made intellectual contributions in many different forms.⁵ General Directorate for Girls' Vocational Education alone has signed 25 protocols with various NGO's and corporations to improve relevance of vocational and technical education to corporate life.

Pre-school education shows lasting effects on later learning processes and outcomes. Pre school enrollment rate is relatively low (17%) in Turkey. However, there has been a significant increase in pre-school enrollment from 8% to 17% in last two years and 25% enrollment is targeted for 2006. MoNE recognizes the importance of providing pre-school education especially for socio-economically disadvantaged children. There has been an active campaign in cooperation with NGO's to increase enrollment in pre-school education. Increasing pre-school enrollment to reach at least 70% within next ten year is a priority in Turkish education system. This should be considered as an early intervention to prevent social exclusion, since pre-school education has lasting effect on academic achievement.

Enrollment ratio at basic education (Grade 1 through Grade 8) is still around 97,4%⁶ and there have been eager efforts to bring this up to 100%. Central government provides, as noted earlier, textbooks for all students free of charge to increase equal access to education. Financial incentives are provided as direct payment⁷ to families as they ensure their child will attend and continue to attend basic education. Since the alternative cost for girls' education is higher especially in rural areas, government provides higher financial incentives for girls to attend basic education. There have been several other measures to increase enrollment in basic education, including building more boarding schools, The Support Campaign for National Education, The Campaign for Girls' Education (Haydi Kızlar Okula), and 100% Support for Education Campaign. 100%

⁴ Enrollment data is based on figures provided by MoNE at; <http://apk.meb.gov.tr/yayinlar/2004-2005%20Milli%20Egitim%20Sayisal%20Verileri.zip>.

⁵ http://programlar.meb.gov.tr/prog_giris/prog_giris_11.html, website provides a list of NGO's participated in the curriculum development process for basic education.

⁶ Data for 2003; <http://nkg.die.gov.tr/goster.asp?aile=3>

⁷ Amount of incentive payment is usually around 18€ for boys and 24€ for girls, but varies according to local conditions and depending on assessment of alternative cost, it may be higher than given amounts.

Support for Education Campaign alone created considerable amount of resources within last two years. Legislation dated 23/04/2003⁸, mandates that all contributions in the various forms of donations or contributions by non governmental parties or individuals are 100% tax deductible. This legislation resulted in an unprecedented support for education at all levels; a total 960 new school buildings, 32 Vocational and Technical Education Centers (METEM) have been built and 4189 schools have been renovated as of September, 2005. As part of the campaign, 355.737 square meters of land have been donated for building educational facilities⁹. All together, support within this campaign generated resources valued over €2.000.000.000 for education and the support has been increasing as the campaign gets more and more publicized. The Campaign for Girls' Education also resulted in significant improvement in providing equal access to education¹⁰.

Secondary education has been extended from three years to four years coupled with a restructuring of programs and curricula. Current enrollment rate at secondary education level is about 63,5%¹¹. Restructuring secondary education focuses on both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Increasing enrollment to 100% at secondary level is the quantitative target. However, it seems that more attention is given to qualitative improvements in terms of developing lifelong learning skills and competencies for all citizens. Activities under EU funded vocational education projects and the World Bank funded Secondary Education Project emphasizes the relevance of education to economy and democracy. Capacity of NGO's and enterprises has been mobilized to an unprecedented extent through these projects to reach lifelong learning objectives of the Lisbon Strategy.

Basic education curriculum and secondary education curriculum have been in the process of transformation as noted in previous section. There are eight key competencies clearly defined in new curriculum, must be common competencies for all citizens, regardless of the education programs they are enrolled in. These competencies including critical thinking, creativity, communication, research and reasoning, problem solving, information and communication technology skills, entrepreneurship and communication are defined as key competencies across all subjects through the entire curricula of basic education and secondary education. In addition to these key competencies, seven inter-disciplinary learning domains are defined: (1) disaster awareness and safe living, (2) entrepreneurship, (3) human rights and citizenship, (4) special education, (5) guidance, (6) health culture, and (7) sports culture and Olympic education. **These key competencies and inter-disciplinary learning domains together provide initial lifelong learning skills and competencies in basic education and then facilitate the further development of lifelong learning at the secondary education level.** Regardless of an individual's vocational or educational path to follow, lifelong learning skills/competencies acquired during the k12 will enable this person to learn more and adapt to new work and life situations.

Key competencies defined across the primary education and secondary education curricula overlap with competencies defined in "basic framework for key competencies".

⁸ <http://rega.basbakanlik.gov.tr/Eskiler/2003/04/20030424.htm#17>

⁹ <http://www.egitimedestek.meb.gov.tr>

¹⁰ Increases in enrolment ratios provided for 2004 is provided at the following web-site; http://www.haydikizlarokula.org/uygulama_sonuclari_2004.php

¹¹ Enrollment data is based on figures provided by MoNE at; <http://apk.meb.gov.tr/yayinlar/2004-2005%20Milli%20Egitim%20Sayisal%20Verileri.zip>.

However, these competencies are based on needs assessments and other studies in Turkish context.

Distance education is provided to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, and to support the education provided at primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. Distance education includes open primary schools (AOI; 266.743 students enrolled in year 2005), open high schools (AOL; 252.030 students), vocational and technical open high schools (62.743 students), and Open University.

In addition open school practices, an apprenticeship training system has been established. The overall objective of the apprenticeship education is to provide theoretical and practical training for those who have started working at a workplace after completing their basic education. A total of 333.255 students enrolled in apprenticeship training programs during the year 2004. Private sector provided various types and levels of training for 1.843.712 students for the same year. The cost of the vocational education given through apprenticeship training is lower than the cost of the vocational training given at secondary schools. Therefore, apprenticeship training seems to be a viable alternative to vocational training in secondary schools. There are reported cases of university graduates enrolled in apprenticeship training as it provides better employment opportunities. Those holding the certificate of foremanship can attend mastership training courses, which are offered after work hours. In accordance with provisions of the Law no 3308, individuals who do not have Mastership Certificate cannot run their own business and work as a master. According to this legislation, those who graduated from academic high school programs can attend vocational programs to get a certificate or diploma in vocational areas.

MoNE has adopted a policy document outlining strategies to integrate use of ICT in education and training systems for both teachers and students. This policy document states that “MoNE will provide continuously the most advanced information and communication technologies for schools.” ICT initiatives that have been completed or in progress indicate that the government is committed to use of ICT for management, education and training purposes. Most of countrywide operations such as student assessment at national level, personnel allocation and other administrative operations have been fully computerized, and a decision support system has been initiated. The ICT infra-structure has been significantly improved during the last several years, including 8950 ICT classrooms established in year 2004, 6400 ICT classroom planned for year 2005 and distribution of 45064 PC’s for use of teachers in year 2005.

A giant leap has been realized by providing broadband Internet access options like satellite, ISDN or ADSL for all of 42.534 school; connection for about 20.000 schools have been provided and the contract mandates that work to be completed for remaining schools by end of the year 2005.

These hardware components are supported by related instructional and administrative software and web based applications. Integrating use of ICT will create opportunities for more cost effective ways of teacher training. That is particularly important for successful implementation of lifelong learning strategies and new curricula for an education system with more than 18.000.000 students. As noted earlier in this report, all of approximately 230.000 classroom teachers will be trained before implementation of new curricula. However, continuous training and information sharing will be primarily web based. The

Board of Education has already established a web-site for teachers¹². MoNE is establishing an “education portal” to create a digital system to serve educational needs of teachers, pupils and community to improve quality of education and to use ICT in education as part of educational policy.

The MoNE states in the ICT policy document that the use of ICT facilities in schools should be open to public, especially after school hours, holidays and weekends. Learning centers a joint initiative of the MoNE, TKV (Turkish Development Foundation) and UNICEF, has been established to provide e-learning environment for public. These centers facilitate learning opportunities for students of Open Primary School and Open High School and provide educational materials. Learning centers serve both for open education students and other parts of the society both as an information resources center and as an internet cafe, a private course, a center where student support services or student counseling and guidance services are provided. These centers provide unlimited learning environments formed by the combination of new technologies.

3.2. Obstacles and areas for further progress

Despite, significant improvement and progress has shown during last several years, resource constraints are very tight and it is unlikely that there will be more resources available from the government budget. Therefore, it is crucial to create tax incentives and other creative solutions to generate additional funding for education. Focus on quantitative aspects of education may overshadow qualitative improvements. As lifelong learning is commonly refers to non-formal education, it will take some time to create a culture of lifelong learning with an understanding of flexibility and adaptability.

Although there has been a significant shift in paradigms of curriculum and instruction, transforming these new ideas into practice by teachers may prove to be difficult task ahead. International and national assessment data indicates that Turkish teachers are very effective in teacher centered activities but not in student centered learning which is crucially important for implementation of lifelong learning strategies.

ICT policy document states that “ICT resources should be accessible to public. However, experience indicates that many school administrators have a protective mind set to keep public outside of the school.

4. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION¹³

http://www.yok.gov.tr/duyuru/akademik_deger.pdf

4.1. Main policies / measures

Turkish National Agency has established a National Team of 12 Bologna Promoters in July 2004 and completed the first term work. A new team has been established and started to work for school year 2005-2006. Bologna Promoters team provides

¹² <http://ttkb.meb.gov.tr/ogretmen/>

¹³ This section is prepared based on information provided by General Directorate of Higher Education and the report prepared/excerpts by Council of Higher Education; “Towards the European Higher Education Area: Bologna Process”, 2005, http://www.yok.gov.tr/duyuru/bologna_sureci.doc.

consultancy services to higher education institutions in quality assurance, three-tier systems and academic recognition¹⁴.

The activities concerning the ECTS and Diploma Supplement implementations in Turkey have been carried out by the universities under the supervision of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). Universities have been participating in the mobility schemes within the context of EU education, training and youth programs with the coordination of the National Agency.

The major tool for the contribution to promote the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area is Erasmus Mundus program supported by the European Commission. In principle, the Erasmus Mundus program is open to the participation of the candidate countries for accession to the EU. However, as the official participation of Turkey in the program has not yet been formalized through the relevant instruments governing the relations with the European Community, Turkish higher education institutions are not eligible for 2005-2006 Erasmus-Mundus program. Therefore, it is expected that with participation of this program, the overseas promotion of the Turkish university system in the context of EHEA will be realized.

There are 14 universities where the medium of instruction is English, in one university, all courses are offered in French and in some universities only some courses are offered in English, French and German.

Within the context of the Law no. 2922 and the regulations in accordance with the Article 7 of this law, through the bilateral cooperation protocols with foreign states, the state provides scholarships for the third country nationals to pursue undergraduate and graduate education in Turkish universities. In addition, according to the above-mentioned Law and regulations, the governmental scholarships are available for the European and the third country nationals through cultural agreements and cultural exchange programs with foreign governments and institutions.

By law, it is the responsibility of the Council of Higher Education and the Interuniversity Council to see to it that a national system of quality assurance with a structure and function comparable to its transnational counterparts is established and implemented. In their last meeting, both the Council and the Board have expressed their willingness to establish a national quality assurance system and re-acknowledged that the establishment of this action line has top priority in their agenda after being briefed about the existing practices by some higher education institutes in Turkey. It is expected that there will not be any need for a legislative change and, hence, the process will be completed before the 2007 ministerial meeting.

The pioneering higher education institutions in search of international recognition of some of their programs invited ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology-USA) in the first half 1990's. Most of the engineering programs of 4 universities were evaluated by ABET at different times and received "substantial equivalence" from ABET (ABET's only accreditation for countries outside the USA). These universities have since then been co-operating with ABET for quality assurance of their engineering programs and more higher education institutions followed them afterwards. This co-operation has also motivated all the engineering faculties to establish

¹⁴ http://www.ua.gov.tr/portal/page?_pageid=218,36010&_dad=portal&_schema=PORTAL&p_cotno=396

a national system quality assurance for engineering programs. The meetings and the workshops of the deans of all the engineering faculties, which started in late 1990's, gave birth to a national accreditation system of engineering programs-MÜDEK-, similar to ABET2000. Although MÜDEK does not yet have any official recognition by the responsible bodies, it stands a good chance of being a part of the national system for engineering programs after some revisions with due regard to the requirements of the Bologna process (e.g.: international peers in the governing body); since it is already a partner in EUR-ACE (European Accreditation Program for Engineering, an ongoing Socrates program) and since it has already seen a warm welcome by the universities.

Among other international quality assessments exercised by the higher education institutions in Turkey are several reviews by EUA through its Institutional Review Program (IRP) and the accreditation process of Joint Commission of International Accreditation for hospitals (for the case of university hospitals).

Three universities participated in the first phase of the Quality Culture Project conducted by EUA, in 2002-2003. For the second phase of the Quality Culture Project, which took place in 2003-2004, one Turkish university was chosen as one of the 45 participants from 24 European countries that were selected. Two universities were selected for the third phase of the above-mentioned project that will be carried out in 2005.

A pilot project, named "Turkish University Quality Assessment Project" was conducted by the Council of Higher Education in 1997 in co-operation with the British Council, Ankara and the UK Higher Education Management Consultants, Universitas. The selected 13 departments of the 8 universities participated in the Project. The Project covered a wide variety of programs and higher education institutions but did not result with the establishment of a national quality assurance system.

As stated in the report¹⁵ to the Council of Higher Education "the objective of the Project was the development of an academic assessment mechanism and structure, and eventually leading to the establishment of a model accreditation and quality assurance system similar to the OECD and EU countries. Within the context of the Project, an opening conference, 2 workshops, 4 study visits were organized; 2 pilot assessments were carried out and a final Project report was produced. The general purpose of quality assessment in Turkey was a combination of accountability, improvement, information and accreditation. Particularly, it was aimed to base the Turkish system on the convergence on self-evaluation, peer review, supporting performance measures, published report and national agency". The report concluded that, "there is a need felt by the government, society, the employment sector and the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) to promote and secure Turkish universities' reputation internationally, particularly, within other OECD and EU countries".

The 2001 regulations for quality assurance accepted by the Interuniversity Board, the practices and the pilot project mentioned above now provide a solid background to establish a national system, including all the desired elements in it, like international participation, co-operation and networking.

¹⁵ The Feasibility of Establishing a System of Quality Assessment in Universities in Turkey.

Almost all the universities have "continuous education center"s contributing to Lifelong Learning. These centers offer seminars, conferences and refresher courses to those who wish to be kept up to date in their profession or to those who would like additional skills and/or knowledge in a different field. Even though the Turkish private sector is very keen on keeping its personnel fully equipped with the state of the art knowledge; the State does not yet have any compulsory measures for the professionals to follow the new developments to continue practicing their profession.

“Second University” project has been carried out by Anadolu University since 2001 with the aim of enabling students to study in another field and improve their qualifications. According to the project the holders of the Associate’s and the Bachelor’s degrees or the undergraduate students currently enrolled in higher education programs other than the programs of Distance Education of Anadolu University, can apply to any of the distance education programs of Anadolu University without taking the central university entrance exam, ÖSS. The Bachelor’s Degree holders apply to both of two-year or four-year programs, while the Associate’s Degree holders can apply only to the two-year programs. Within the context of the project, current number of enrollment in various distance learning programs of the university is 33,500.

16 technological development regions (providing significant benefits to parties from industry and the academic staff working there by the law enacted on 6 July 2001 and the relevant regulations enacted on 19 June 2002) in the campuses of higher education institutions were established and this gave added momentum to the university-industry partnership. 5 new requests are being evaluated.

4.2. Obstacles and areas for further progress

One of the main challenge is to make two-year vocational higher schools, (MYO)'s, attractive enough to increase enrollment in these schools. The high rate of unemployment among university graduates is expected to decrease once the job market is revitalized with stability in the economy and relevance of education and training in two-year vocational higher schools.

Turkish higher education institutions have shown a remarkable success in publishing their research results in internationally reputable journals and managed to rank 21st in 2003 for material published in journals listed in ISI's SCI, SSCI and AHCI. The university-industry partnership, however, is far from being satisfactory. Research work has not yet produced a sufficient number of patents and industrial products; and this is another major challenge for Turkish higher education institutions.

Although most stakeholders agree that higher education legislation must be changed for improving efficiency and effectiveness of of higher education in both administrative and academic aspects, related parties have not been able to reach to an agreement about the scope and means of the legal change.

Although there have been significant increases in research and development activities during last several years, Turkey’s capacity in the area of science and research remains limited, but it is devoting continuous efforts to increase its participation in the research and development programs and activities.

5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

5.1. Main policies/measure

A legislative proposal to establish the Institute for National Vocational Qualifications has been prepared¹⁶. The institute will be responsible for establishing a common quality assurance framework and common principles for validation of non-formal learning. Vocational qualifications/standards have been developed for 250 vocations. This legislation mandates that the MoNE in cooperation with the Ministry of Labor and other related parties must adapt these standards and align vocational curricula with these standards within 180 days of approval of the legislation.

Two projects funded by EU also are designed to develop vocational and technical education. Strengthening Vocational Education and Training System Project (SVET) is being implemented to improve quality of vocational education and to increase relevance of training to work place. The project is in progress to develop an up to date modular curricula and vocational qualifications/standards for 17 vocational fields, a national vocational qualifications system, increased/strengthened cooperation between related parties, quality assurance system and lifelong learning policy. MoNE recently hosted a symposium on Lifelong Learning and Employment Towards Accession to EU with participation of social partners and stakeholders. The final outcome of the project will be a strengthened VET system supported by a National Qualification System with national and international credibility.

Modernization of Vocational Education and Training Project (MVET) is designed to improve quality of teachers and support adaptation of vocational teacher training system to developments in EU countries. Final outcomes and success of the SVET, translating national vocational standards and curricula into instructional practices heavily depends on successful implementation of the MVET, developing quality of teaching and teachers.

Development of vocational education policies to increase quality and attractiveness of vocational education requires reliable and accurate data about outputs/graduates of the vocational education system. To this end, Vocational and Technical Secondary Education Graduates Monitoring Project has been started in 2005. This project establishes a database to follow graduates from vocational and technical secondary schools starting with year 2001 to up to date. This database will provide information on employment status, match between training received in school and skills needed at work place and work performance ratings. This information will be used to strengthen the link between vocational training and work place and to develop more effective and efficient education and training.

Vocational and technical education regions were established as of 2002 to implement the provisions within the scope of the Law no 4702 which entitles the graduates of vocational and technical secondary schools to have access to two-year colleges of technology, two year vocational and technical higher education institutions, to continue further programs in their field of study or follow the closest programs without taking the university entrance exam. A vocational and technical education region is composed of one or more two-year colleges of technology and vocational-technical institutions at secondary level which are interrelated within the integrity and continuity of the curricula. 81 such regions have been established, one in each of 81 province.

Implementation of Vocational and technical education regions is intended to increase attractiveness of vocational training at secondary level as well as increasing effective use

¹⁶ <http://www.iskur.gov.tr/bulten11.html>

of resources by sharing facilities of secondary vocational schools with two-year higher education institutions. However, initial findings from the implementation indicate that this policy is definitely in need of further improvement in terms of its flexibility and relevance of curricula to workplace skills. Corrective measures can be taken as part of current developments in vocational education and training.

Decisions on the planning, development and assessment of formal and non-formal vocational education and training including apprenticeship training and training at workplaces are taken by Vocational Education Council at the MoNE composing of representatives from relevant ministries, trade and employers' unions, NGO's, higher education institutions and chamber of commerce. The council assembles at least once a year to ensure that vocational and technical education and training is continuously adjusted to the needs of relevant sectors.

Provincial Vocational Education Councils forms decisions and make recommendations to provincial governorships on the planning, development and assessment of vocational education and training. Provincial councils, which meet twice a year, are comprised of representatives from various provincial public authorities, trade and employers' unions, NGO's, vocational schools-training institutions and chamber of commerce. The Vocational Training Councils at both national level and provincial levels provide the ground for multilateral structure between the vocational and technical education, and training systems and social partners.

Cooperation with social partners has been enhanced by the projects under implementation. Taking into consideration the needs of society, the MoNE shows sustained effort to cooperate with private sector and NGO's in all areas including curriculum development, generating additional resources, more efficient and effective use of existing human resource capacity, and aligning vocational education and training with realities of workplaces. This approach increases the attractiveness of vocational education and training as it improves the link between education and employment.

5.2. Obstacles and areas for further progress

Most of the developments noted in this section are still in implementation process and institutionalization requires sustained effort and significant amount of resources. Partnership between public education authorities and social partners should be further developed to increase quality of vocational education and training. As noted in the "2004 Regular Progress Report" for Turkey, access to higher education should be re-examined to increase attractiveness of vocational education and training. However, focusing on "access" issue alone, should not result in underestimating diminishing effects of outdated curriculum and practices on quality and attractiveness of vocational education.

6. CONSOLIDATING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1. Increase mobility through removing obstacles and active promotion

Considerable progress has been made by the Turkish National Authorities and the Turkish National Agency concerning the participation in **Community Programs**, Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth. Turkey has completed the necessary preparatory

measures and participates fully in the programs since April 2004. The Turkish National Agency has developed its implementation capacity in terms of both staff and institutional structure and first experiences of program implementation have been largely successful. Increasing number of applications to participate in Community programs indicate that both the public and private sector is highly motivated to participate in mobility activities.

Turkish education and training systems adapted needed measures to validate qualifications and competences acquired in EU countries. However, some problems have been experienced for outgoing students and staff:

1. Difficulties in getting visa for outgoing students and staff (in terms of length and requirements),
2. Insufficient supplementary funding schemes for outgoing students,
3. Lack of information or misunderstanding of ECTS applications among the faculty members (that cause problems during the approval of learning agreements),
4. Lack of up-to date course information (course offerings) of the partner institutions (that causes reluctance of students to participate in exchange),
5. Residence permit process for incoming students,
6. Lack of knowledge among European students about the quality education in Turkey,

Some of these problems may be solved by providing further information and establishing more effective networks of information. For example, some institutions provide up to date information to their students and employees about opportunities under mobility programs through e-mail groups and other web-based solutions.

Turkish National Agency provides information and guidance to schools in cooperation with the MoNE. Turkish National Agency has been organizing and participating in Contact Seminars in order to promote international coordination between schools through School Partnerships.

The National Agency has been very active and effective in promoting community programs. Number of participation of Turkish students and staff in these programs for 2005 will be approximately¹⁷;

- ERASMUS; 1150 students and 350 faculty members.
- COMENIUS; 510 students and 430 teachers,
- GRUNDTVIG; 353 participants,
- YOUTH; 6100 participants, and
- LEONARDO Da VINCI; 3350 participants.

6.2. Consolidate the European dimension of education

Number of measures have been initiated to encourage a European dimension of learning and to ensure that pupils have, by the end of their secondary education, the knowledge and competences they need to play their role as future citizen of their country, Europe and the wider world. The MoNE has been renewing foreign languages curricula in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages which facilitates a clear definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods and

¹⁷ Data provided by Turkish National Agency.

provides the necessary tools for assessment of proficiency. The Board of Education has decided to add a second compulsory foreign language into Anatolian high schools, fine arts high schools, social sciences high schools and science high schools, and plans to extend this decision to all secondary school in near future.

The renewed curricula at basic education and secondary education clearly emphasize the teaching of universal values for all citizens as well social values of their own. These values include values of human rights and citizenship, social justice, equality, and tolerance to diversity and so on. These values together with core skills/key competencies defined in this report earlier are designed to provide a solid base for preparing individuals as future citizen of their country, Europe and the wider world.

Restructuring of secondary education will ensure that all citizens will gain knowledge and competencies which can be validated and recognized across the EU countries. Although most of the work on establishing vocational qualifications standards has been developmental and still being pilot tested, full scale implementation of restructured secondary education programs will be phased out to next couple years.

Despite a sustained focus on qualitative aspects and European dimension of improving education and training system, underdevelopment of quantitative aspects represents a major obstacle to development initiatives. The problems that we face in the field of education stem from the rapid increase of population, migration from the rural to the urban areas, and financial constraints imposed by recent economic crises. Therefore a large proportion of resources and efforts are directed at solving problems related to over crowded classrooms, unsatisfactory enrollment rates, building an effective ICT infrastructure, allocation of qualified teachers and teacher training.