



Turkey Report

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Sustainable Governance in the
Context of the COVID-19 Crisis

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Executive Summary

Turkey has long suffered from political and economic instabilities. As widely observed, the authoritarian tendencies of the government strengthened following the Gezi Park protests in 2013 and reached a zenith in the aftermath of the failed coup attempt in 2016. The transition to a la Turca presidential system in 2018, which proponents argued would stabilize the political system, has proved to be a total disaster.

In recent years, Turkey's economic growth, which centered on construction, has been curtailed, and the major concerns of the government have been responding to currency shocks (devaluation) and minimizing soaring interest rates. Although the public budget was balanced for a long time, it was not transparent. At the same time, Turkey's labor market suffers from low wages, high unemployment, informality and income inequalities. Social welfare policies, which mainly included social assistance programs and cash transfers, have not been effective in alleviating such problems.

Although Turkey was politically and economically vulnerable before the COVID-19 pandemic, it swiftly responded to and contained the pandemic relatively quickly due to its strong healthcare infrastructure and intensive care personnel. To respond to the crisis, the government prepared an Economic Stability Shield Package on 18 March, which was timely but smaller in scope due to the country's economic downturn. The pandemic further undermined the fragile labor market, despite the provision of one-time cash transfers to millions of in-need households and the reinforcement of short-term work allowance. The social welfare policies of the government, however, largely failed to protect socially disadvantaged groups and refugees from the negative impacts of the coronavirus crisis. The recovery package imposed an extra burden on the public budget and led to a revision of the budget deficit estimate from 2.9% of GDP to 4.9% for 2020. While Turkey effectively used technology to track infected people, Turkey lagged behind other countries in the race to develop a vaccine. Meanwhile, Turkey's education system, which has proven incapable of creating a large skilled workforce, rapidly adapted to digital education, as new testing and learning methods have been implemented.

During the pandemic, media freedom as well as civil rights and liberties, which have long been under attack, were further curtailed. The judiciary remained under the influence of the government and was unable of independently reviewing the regulations of the executive. Political polarization deepened as the government tightened its authoritarian rule. However, this had little impact on the implementation of coronavirus measures since the presidential system centralized power and allowed regulation to be introduced through presidential decrees rather than parliamentary law.

In crisis governance, the government was most successful in the healthcare system. The Science Board, which has advised the government, was formed two months before the diagnosis of the first COVID-19 case. The measures taken in the first months of the coronavirus crisis were effective and largely contained the spread of COVID-19. However, with the relaxation of the rules in June, Turkey experienced a second wave, which was more severe and proved more challenging for the healthcare system. In this process, the government regularly amended the measures based on the extent of the coronavirus crisis. Public consultation was largely limited to pro-government organizations, however. The minister of health, Fahrettin Koca, was responsible for political communication and, in general, received a positive evaluation from the public. Although some coordination problems emerged across governmental actors (e.g., in the distribution of masks), the government commonly implemented COVID-19 measures immediately and effectively due to its one-party rule. National coordination was strong, despite the government's exclusionary policies toward opposition mayors who had captured Turkey's largest cities (e.g., Istanbul and Ankara) in the 2019 local elections. Legislative oversight and auditing were ineffective due to the transition to a presidential system.

Key Challenges

2020 was a year to test the resilience of Turkey to all kinds of crises from the coronavirus pandemic to an earthquake and from floods to war. Despite the extent of the challenges, however, the government refrained from producing a comprehensive crisis management program to tackle further waves of the pandemic or other future crises. Relevant institutions have not been strong enough to pursue their own agendas and drive public support.

Broadly speaking, Turkey's healthcare system proved to be successful in containing the spread of the pandemic. Although Turkey approached 2.5 million cases (3% of its population) as of mid-January 2021, its strong

intensive care infrastructure and the filiation team network prevented the collapse of the healthcare system, as seen in some developed countries.

Despite some achievements in managing the coronavirus crisis, there is still a long way to go. First, although Turkey has enough healthcare personnel and protective equipment to contain the pandemic, it needs to invest more in vaccine research. In the vaccine development race, Turkey lags behind countries of similar size and economic scale. This leaves the government with no choice but to import vaccines from abroad, regardless of their security or efficiency. Thus far, Turkey's agreements with vaccine developers have not supplied enough stocks to vaccinate its population.

Second, Turkey needs to strengthen its democracy. The transition to a presidential system in 2018 has made the executive's authoritarian tendencies more visible. What is striking is that because of the economic crisis and shrinking clientelist resources, the manipulation of ethnic and religious cleavages does not help the government to maintain its electoral base loyal as it did before. For that reason, the opposition now has psychological superiority, which is crucial in the context of electoral authoritarian regimes. The opposition's takeover of metropolitan municipalities including Istanbul and Ankara in the 2019 local elections is the strongest indication of such a trend. Likewise, the new parties that have emerged from splits within the AKP, namely DEVA and Gelecek, could further weaken the AKP and Erdoğan.

Turkey also needs to revise and restructure its economic and social policies. Recently, rising instabilities have shown that an economic growth strategy centered on construction is unsustainable. Therefore, Turkey needs to invest more in research and innovation to secure sustainable economic growth. Although the AKP government has expanded social benefits, including social assistance and care at home, it is far from being a comprehensive and inclusive social welfare program. Poverty is still prevalent and income inequality persists. The recent inflow of four million Syrian refugees increases the financial burden on the government budget and has added yet another cleavage to an already cleavage-ridden society. Moreover, the family policy of the government does not encourage women's participation in the labor market nor does it tackle the record number of cases of violence against women.

Finally, more transparency and accountability are needed. The lack of transparency and accountability is a pertaining feature of Turkey's new a la Turca presidential system, as judicial and legislative oversights have largely been curtailed by recent regulations. Government authorities manipulate numbers (e.g., rates of inflation, unemployment and, most recently, infected

people) for their own interest. More consistency is needed. During the pandemic, while opposition parties' political gatherings were banned due to potential violations of social distancing rules, Erdoğan's crowded meetings were allowed. These kinds of double standards undermine public trust in political elites, and generate inefficiency and undermine credibility in implementing necessary measures during the coronavirus crisis.

Resilience of Policies

I. Economic Preparedness

Economic Preparedness

Economic Policy
Preparedness
Score: 4

Before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, Turkey's economy was already vulnerable to internal and external shocks. Turkey's most significant economic problems are related to external imbalances. At present, the country's trade and current account balances are unsustainable. According to the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Turkey's gross external debt stock totaled \$436.9 billion at the end of 2019, amounting to 58% of its GDP. The country's net foreign debt was \$244.6 billion, accounting for 32.5% of its GDP (Anatolian Agency 2020a). Furthermore, short-term public sector debt rose by 9.6% to \$27.4 billion, while short-term private sector debt shrunk by 10% to \$80.9 billion (Anatolian Agency 2020b). These numbers indicate that the private sector is responsible for most short-term debt.

Due to the currency shock, the central bank increased interest rates from 17.75% to 24% in September 2018. In July 2019, the central bank governor was sacked after refusing to reduce the interest rate from 24%. Just before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, the interest rate was reduced to 9.75%. This means that in one and a half years, the interest rate was cut by 14.25 percentage points.

Turkey's GDP increased by 2.8% in 2018 and 0.8% in 2019 (World Bank n.d.). According to the Turkish Ministry of Treasury and Finance, GDP will grow by 0.5% during 2019. This estimation is optimistic if the projections of international institutes are considered. For example, the OECD (2020) expects that Turkey's GDP will decline by 8% in 2020, before a rebound of around 2% in 2021.

Although Turkey experienced high levels of economic growth prior to 2008, it was far from sustainable. The biggest obstacle to sustainable economic growth

was the dynamics of the growth itself, which centered on the expansion of the construction sector in the domestic realm, traditional growth sectors such as tourism, and (as yet unsuccessful) attempts to transform the production economy from focusing on low to medium innovative products to high-tech products. As the international economy began to falter in the mid-2010s, the Turkish lira came under pressure, conflicts and tensions close to and involving Turkey arose, and the cost of construction rose due to inflation and increasing credit rates, economic growth slumped. January 2019 numbers indicate that mortgage-based house sales dropped by 77.2% on an annual basis (TKGM 2019). As credit rates dropped sharply due to the rapid reduction in interest rates, however, the construction sector was given a chance to rebound and mortgaged house sales climbed 546.1% on an annual basis in January 2020 (TURKSTAT 2020).

Turkey is far from stimulating resource-efficient economic activity that might promote social well-being and economic empowerment. The government rarely backs eco-friendly policies in practice. The most notable exceptions include Turkey's desire to produce an electric car (TOGG) and investment in renewable energy. The OECD (2019) observes that Turkey's strong economic record is dissociated from eco-friendly policies that address air emissions, energy use, waste generation and water consumption. Furthermore, Turkey relies on imports to satisfy its energy needs. To reduce its import dependency, the government is constructing Turkey's first nuclear power plant in Mersin with the help of Russia. The government also endeavors to discover natural gas in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, despite the high level of geopolitical risk associated with it.

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Labor Market
Policy
Preparedness
Score: 4

Labor Market Preparedness

Turkey's population and workforce are growing significantly. Turkey's population rose by 1,151,115 people to reach 83,154,997 by the end of 2019. The annual population growth rate declined from 1.47% in 2018 to 1.39% in 2019. The average age increased by 0.4 years to reach 32.4 in 2019. For men, the average age increased to 31.7. Meanwhile, for women, the average age increased to 33.1 (TURKSTAT 2019).

The working-age population (i.e., those aged 15 years old and over) increased from 59.6 million in March 2017 to 62.2 million in March 2020. The seasonally adjusted labor-force participation rate rose from 46.6% in June 2016 to 53.7% in March 2020. A total of 27.4 million people were officially employed in June 2016, a figure that decreased to 26.1 million in March 2020. However, unemployment rates indicate that the government largely failed to implement an efficient labor market policy and that the National Employment Strategy of 2017 did not achieve positive results. In March 2020, the official unemployment rate was 13.2%, a 0.9% decrease on an annual basis. Excluding the agricultural sector, the unemployment rate was 15%, indicating a 1.1% increase. Sector-specific employment figures highlight a decrease of 248,000 jobs in construction, 903,000 jobs in the service sector and 538,000 jobs in the agricultural sector during the same period. The only increase occurred in the industrial sector, which recorded an increase of a mere 26,000 jobs (TURKSTAT 2020a).

Unregistered employment is a major problem in the labor market. Unregistered employment stood at 34.5% in 2019. High levels of unregistered unemployment also harm the social security system. In August 2019, the share of people who had no social security record peaked at 36.1% – the highest rate since 2015 (European Commission 2020a).

Another major challenge for the government is the need to create more and better-paying jobs for Turkey's young and growing population since many young people (15 to 24 years old) are not in employment, education or training. As an indication of this trend, the employment rate of young people decreased from 32.5% in March 2019 to 27.4% in March 2020 (TURKSTAT 2020b). In contrast to this trend, child labor declined from 893,000 to 720,000 between 2012 and 2019 (European Commission).

Labor market regulations are not efficient enough to create a sustainable labor market. A European Commission report (2020) observed that Turkey had not implemented its 2019 recommendations, which included removing barriers to trade union rights, enforcing labor law and promoting women's employment.

Furthermore, the Unemployment Insurance Law no. 4447 introduced several eligibility criteria that an individual must satisfy to receive unemployment insurance (e.g., paying the unemployment insurance premium for at least 600 days in the last three years). Turkey does not have a good collective agreement record either. Only six out of 100 workers benefit from collective agreements, which is the lowest rate among OECD members (Birgün 2020a). The net minimum wage was TRY 2,324 or \$391.50, which is lower than the hunger threshold (Birgün 2020b).

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Fiscal Preparedness

Fiscal Policy
Preparedness
Score: 5

The taxation system in Turkey can be divided into two categories: direct taxes (e.g., income tax on individuals and corporations) and indirect taxes (e.g., the value-added tax, the banking and insurance-transaction tax, the special consumption tax, and the telecommunications tax). In 2019, income tax rates for individuals ranged from 15% to 35%. The standard corporate tax rate was 20%, while capital gains were usually treated as regular income and taxed accordingly. Although the general value-added tax rate is 18%, a wide range of products are subject to 8% and some other products to a 1% tax rate.

While taxes accounted for 82.1% of central government revenue in 2018, this declined to 76.8% in 2019. Income taxes accounted for 24% of total central government tax revenue, while corporate tax comprised 11.7% and VAT comprised 20.5% in 2019. Turkey's taxation system is biased toward indirect taxes and does not take into consideration horizontal or vertical equity. This system reduces fiscal stability and political credibility, particularly concerning the special consumption tax, which comprised 16.9% of total revenue in 2019 (Bingöl 2020).

In recent years, the government increased wages and social transfers, and purchases of goods and services. For example, temporary tax reductions and an employment incentive scheme were introduced, and minimum wage subsidies were increased. According to the IMF's (2020) World Economic Outlook Database, general government revenue as a percentage of GDP is expected to decrease from 29.5% in 2019 to 28.9% in 2020, before decreasing slightly to 28.5% in 2021. General government expenditure as a percentage of GDP is expected to decrease from 36.8% in 2020 to 36.4% in 2021. The general government structural balance as a percentage of GDP, which was 5.7% in 2019, is expected to decrease to 3.2% in 2020 before climbing to 4.1% in 2021. The gross debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to increase from 32.9% in 2019 to 41.6% in 2020, before increasing to 45.5% in 2021. According to the IMF (2019), contingent liability and potential debt rollover pressures increased the vulnerability of the economy, which compels the government to follow tight monetary and quasi-fiscal policies.

The fiscal deficit figures presented above do not account for fiscal risks arising from public-private partnership (PPP) projects. PPP projects in the transportation, energy and healthcare sectors involve explicit minimum guarantees and components expressed in foreign exchange terms. Since detailed information on all issued guarantees and associated risks, and on the structure and risk composition of the overall PPP portfolio is not available, it is difficult to estimate the expected increases in the fiscal deficit to GDP and gross debt-to-GDP ratios. According to one credible source, PPP projects such as the Akkuyu nuclear power plant, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, Istanbul Airport and city hospitals – most of which were sponsored by pro-government businessmen – amount to \$150 billion (Cumhuriyet 2020). A substantial amount of this debt is expected to be paid by future generations. Particular importance must also be paid to the astonishing rise in President's Office spending, part of which is withheld from parliamentary or any other form of public control. Since 2014, when Erdoğan was first elected president, expenditure has increased by 1,506% (Birgün 2020).

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Research and Innovation

Research and
Innovation Policy
Preparedness
Score: 4

During the review period, the government continued to reinforce the country's research and innovation capacity. The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) is the agency charged with leading with conducting, funding and managing research. According to TURKSTAT (2020), total public and private R&D spending as a percentage of GDP increased from 1.03% in 2018 to 1.06% in 2019. During 2019, commercial enterprises accounted for the largest share of R&D expenditure, which stood at 64.2%. While universities accounted for 29.2% of spending on R&D, public institutions accounted for 6.6%. In 2019, 182,847 people worked full-time in the R&D sector, an increase of 6.2% compared to 2018. Universities employed 62.9% of R&D personnel, while 32.3% of R&D personnel worked in the private sector. Public institutions employed a mere 4.9% of R&D personnel. In terms of education, 32.8% of R&D personnel hold a doctoral degree or equivalent, 32.5% a bachelor's degree and 24.6% a master's degree.

As of February 2020, Turkey has 1,236 R&D centers of which 187 belong to foreigners or foreign shareholders. These centers have carried out 44,714 projects and own 20,220 patents. In terms of sectoral distribution, machine and equipment manufacturing centers topped the list (181), followed by the automotive subsidiary industry (130) and software centers (113) (Sanayi ve Teknoloji Bakanlığı n.d.).

In 2019, Turkey adopted the 11th Development Plan, covering the period 2019 – 2023. The plan aims to improve science, technology and innovation in order to promote innovative production and steady economic growth. The Supreme Council for Science and Technology (SCST) is the highest-ranking science and technology policymaking body in Turkey. In the last few SCST meetings, emphasis has been placed on intensifying R&D efforts in the energy, healthcare and biotechnology sectors.

According to a 2020 European Commission report, the share of R&D expenditure in GDP has doubled since 2005. This has mainly been achieved through tax incentives, and places Turkey ahead of Mexico and Greece. The percentage of people employed in R&D in Turkey is increasing, but remains a third of the EU average. The government cooperated with 12 research universities in Turkey to create five new investment funds for techno-entrepreneurs and startups worth €105 million. It also supports 85 technology development zones as of January 2020.

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II. Welfare State Preparedness

Education System Preparedness

Education Policy
Preparedness
Score: 5

In Turkey, children typically attend pre-primary education starting at age three, and the programs last between one and three years. Compulsory education begins at age five/six and ends at age 17. Turkey has made significant progress in increasing access to education. In the 2019 – 2020 school year, although the pre-primary education enrollment rate was quite low at 71.2%, according to the Ministry of Education, Turkey achieved almost universal primary-school enrollment (97.6%). During the same period, lower secondary-school enrollment was 95.9% and upper secondary-school enrollment was 85.0%. For the same period, the enrollment rate for higher education rose to 43.3%. In terms of gender, the female enrolment rate was 97.7% for primary education, 84.8% for secondary education and 40.5% for higher education (Anadolu Ajansı 2020). In 2020, Turkey did not rank highly (113 out of 144 countries) in terms of educational attainment, as scored by the Gender Gap Index of World Economic Forum (World Economic Forum 2019).

The government is actively seeking to expand secondary-school enrollment to comply with the new "4+4+4" law on education. Vocational education and training (VET) programs are available to students who leave the education system after primary school. The standard length of VET programs is four years, with almost all of this time spent in the workplace. The percentage of the population aged 25 – 34 with a tertiary level qualification was 33.0% in 2018. Gender distribution shows that 35% of 25- to 34-year-old women have a tertiary level qualification compared to 35% of men, while on average across OECD countries these numbers are 51% and 39% respectively (OECD 2019).

Admission to tertiary education is a selective process in Turkey, and is based on the results of central and national examinations administered at the end of upper secondary education. As a general tendency, an increase in education attainment brings more prospects for employment. For instance, young adults

who have below upper secondary education have an employment rate of 54%, while this is 73% for tertiary education and 84% for doctoral or master's degree holders (OECD 2019). In general, as the European Commission (2020) observes, the education system has failed to respond to labor market requirements, despite steps to align the education system with the labor market such as the Initial Vocational and Technical Education E-Graduate Tracking System and various active labor market programs.

Based on PISA 2019 results, Turkey showed some improvements compared to previous years – a sign of effective policymaking and implementation. However, Turkey still ranks at the bottom of the table, suggesting that there are serious issues with the overall quality of education. Turkey recorded a 10-point improvement in reading, an eight-point improvement in mathematics and a 15-point improvement in science scores in 2018 compared to 2015. Turkey recorded the highest increase in mathematics and science scores between 2015 and 2018 out of the 36 OECD countries. Only 3% of Turkish students aged 15 have a high level of reading skills; 63% of Turkish students have attained a secondary education in mathematics (compared to an OECD average of 76%) (OECD n.d.). Similarly, the education system does not secure high-quality learning for students. In the Higher Education Foundations Examination (YKS) in 2020, out of 1.5 million candidates, 83,678 candidates scored no correct answer in any of the 40 questions on the mathematics test (Birgün 2020).

The share of education spending in GDP was 6.0% in 2019 and the share of public education spending in GDP was 4.4% in 2019 (Anadolu Ajansı 2020). For the 2018 – 2019 education year, the number of teachers reached 1,077,307, with 907,567 teachers working in public schools and 169,740 working in private schools. There are 54,036 public and 12,809 private schools in Turkey. The number of classrooms totals 706,015 (NTV 2019).

To strengthen its technology infrastructure, the Ministry of National Education initiated the Fatih project in November 2010. The project aimed to increase the number of “smart” classes by providing classrooms with smart boards and each student with a tablet PC. Ultimately, the ministry failed to implement the project efficiently because of weak hardware and software infrastructure. In the 2020 budget, no financial resources were devoted to the Fatih project, which indicates that the project may have come to an end (CHP 2020).

Overall, Turkey's education system has been in transition in recent years and the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this trend. On 23 March 2020, the Ministry of National Education introduced a “distance education system” for 18 million primary, and lower and upper secondary class students. Since then,

the national education television network of EBA channels broadcasted more than 2,516 hours. The EBA website has become the third most clicked education website in the world with 3.1 billion clicks (Anadolu Ajansı 2020). For a detailed assessment concerning resilience, it remains to be seen how the existing education system has coped with the challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, and which reforms and innovations have become more urgent.

Finally, this applies not only to Turkish nationals, but even more so to foreign-born children, as equitable access for Syrian refugees to Turkey's education system remains a matter of concern. Turkey sought to ensure child refugees have access to education, with 63.27% refugee children now attending school. In general, children from marginalized social background as well as, for example, children with disabilities suffer both from non-specific approaches to their inclusivist needs, as well as from understaffed and poorly resourced schools (European Commission 2020).

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Social Welfare Preparedness

Social Welfare
Policy
Preparedness
Score: 5

Turkey's Gini coefficient increased from 38.6 in 2015 to 39.5 in 2019, indicating that income inequality has increased since 2015. Income distribution in Turkey continues to be among the most unequal in the OECD. According to TURKSTAT (2020), while the top 20% of earners received 46.3% of income, the bottom 20% of earners received 6.2% of total income.

The poverty rate fell from 23.8% in 2010 to 21.3% in 2019, which largely stemmed from an increase in earnings and employment. According to the World Bank (2018), poverty is particularly prevalent among people with lower educational attainment, workers in the informal sector, unpaid family careers and homemakers, and the elderly. As the currency crisis has affected low-income households more than others, the poverty rate seems to have increased over the short term, although it is not yet reflected in official statistics.

Since 2002, the AKP government has developed a fragmented and integrated social assistance scheme for elderly, widowed and disabled people, while excluding the homeless. Targeted assistance programs are also applied to encourage schooling and hospital visits. The schemes are supposed to rely on means-testing, however, there is room for public officials to take discretionary action where reliable indicators are missing (European Commission 2020). In this framework, for instance, 43 different programs led to the transfer of TRY 55 billion to 3.5 million households. Additionally, from 2011 to July 2020, 1,724,006 people benefited from at-home care services (Anadolu Ajansı 2020).

The government is currently implementing the Integrated Social Assistance Information System, which uses a single proxy means test to target benefits more effectively. As of the end of 2018, about 17 million people had received social assistance. The number of households that received social assistance from the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation increased from 3.2 million (2017) to 3.5 million (2018) (Deutsche Welle 2020). The government also integrated its social assistance system with the Turkish Employment Agency (ISKUR).

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Healthcare System Preparedness

Health Policy
Preparedness
Score: 7

Thanks to a series of healthcare reforms that have been implemented since 2003, Turkey achieved near-universal health insurance coverage by 2014. This enabled everyone to equally benefit from the healthcare system, which is

widely regarded as well-functioning. Vaccination programs has been broadened, the scope of newborn screening and support programs have been extended, community-based mental healthcare services have been created, and cancer screening centers offering free services have been established in many cities. The key challenge is to keep costs under control as demand for healthcare increases, the population ages and new technologies are introduced. Total health expenditure rose to TRY 201 billion in 2019 with a 21.7% increase in comparison to 2018. The total health expenditure to GDP increased to 4.7% in 2019 from 4.4% in 2018 (TURKSTAT 2020). In 2019, 1,538 hospitals actively served patients. This included 895 Ministry of Health hospitals, 68 university hospitals and 575 private hospitals. For the same year, actively used hospital beds increased by 5,591 and reached 237,504. The number of Ministry of Health hospital beds was 143,412 in 2019. Nursing beds increased by 4.9% compared to 2018 and reached 39,955. Adult intensive care beds rose from 24,071 in 2018 to 25,364 in 2019. While pediatric intensive care beds increased from 1,625 to 1,778 in 2019, neonatal intensive care beds rose from 12,402 to 12,813. The bed occupancy rate was 66.3% in 2019 (Sağlık Bakanlığı 2020).

To tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health in 2020 attempted to increase the quality of healthcare facilities and protect public health in accordance with the EU Directives on Communicable Diseases and WHO International Health Regulations. During the coronavirus pandemic, testing and hospitalization in public hospitals were free of charge, while private hospitals could charge patients a maximum of TRY 250 (European Commission 2020). During the first days of the pandemic, testing capacity was low. Therefore, at the end of March 2020, Turkey imported two million early detection packages from China (NTV 2020). But shortly afterward, Turkey rapidly increased its testing capacity, although testing capacity is still lower than in developed economies. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Turkey has usually had enough intensive care beds and ventilators.

Despite some serious coordination problems in distributing masks in the early weeks of the pandemic, there have been sufficient reserves of protective materials, disinfectants and masks throughout the pandemic. Thanks to its strong textile industry, Turkey was able to rapidly increase the production of protective materials. On 30 March 2020, Erdoğan declared that 24 million surgical masks, over three million NP5 masks, and over one million protective gowns and googles had been distributed to hospitals (Bloomberg 2020). As of 19 December 2020, only 41.5% of ventilator capacity and 55.8% of hospital beds were in use. A relatively high rate of 73.7% of intensive care beds have been occupied. Turkey enjoys a large number of healthcare personnel able to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of physicians increased

from 153,128 in 2018 to 160,810 in 2019. Meanwhile, the total number of healthcare personnel increased from 1,016,401 to 1,033,767 in 2019 (Sağlık Bakanlığı 2020).

Citation:

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Families

Family Policy
Preparedness
Score: 4

Inequalities between men and women in balancing participation in the labor force and parenting persist in Turkey. Most strikingly, no regulation has been introduced relating to part-time work for working parents in the public sector. For the year 2019, the employment rate of men (68.3%) was double that of women (32.2%). In June 2019, 26.8% of the female labor force was employed in agriculture, 15.1% in industry and 58.1% in services. 43.3% of women were unregistered and thus had no record in any social security institution. In 2020, women comprised 32.9% of the total labor force compared to 29.3% in 2002. This modest increase means that Turkey remains behind advanced economies, such as Germany (46.3%) and France (48.1%) (World Bank n.d.). The gender pay gap is observed for all levels of educational attainment. In 2018, the pay gap was 15.6%. The wage gap tends to deteriorate as educational attainment and age increase (ILO 2020). As the U.N. Women reports, women's burden of household and care work has increased during the coronavirus pandemic, despite a widespread belief that the burden must be shared. In 2019 alone, 500,000 women left their jobs in order to take on more household responsibilities, while more than 12 million women were unable to enter the workforce because of household affairs (DISK/GENEL-IS 2020). The closure of schools due to COVID-19 led to an increase in demand for domestic and care services. Such demand resulted in an increase in paid and unpaid work hours for women. For instance, for women who continued to go to work, total work time typically exceeds 10 hours per day (UNDP 2020). These statistics highlight the need for new regulation to balance care and household work between couples. Several national and local-level initiatives in recent years have ostensibly aimed to help women become more employable, find more and higher-quality jobs, and in general remove obstacles to women's participation in the workforce. For instance, the government initiated a

mother-at-work project, which provides financial support for employment-guaranteed vocational training courses and on-the-job training for mothers who have children aged under 16. However, only 316 out of 18,288 participants with children aged between two and five benefited from additional childcare support. Furthermore, half-time work allowances were distributed to 7,132 beneficiaries in 2019 (European Commission 2020). There have been many shortcomings in the implementation and proper monitoring of these policies. For instance, national policy documents overlook gender balance. In general, the government's conservative stance on women and family affairs (e.g., concerning the number of children or women's roles) has had a negative impact on gender equality in the labor market. AKP officials' have criticized the Istanbul Convention, which protects women from violence within the family, arguing that it is incompatible with Turkish family values (Cumhuriyet 2020). As a result, Turkey finally withdrew from the convention on 20 March 2021.

Citation:

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III. Economic Crisis Response

Economic Response

Economic
Recovery
Package
Score: 6

To mitigate the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, the government legislated an economic recovery package, which was officially known as the Economic Stability Shield Package on 18 March 2020, a week after the diagnosis of the first coronavirus case on 11 March. This makes the recovery package very timely. It would, however, be misleading to argue that the recovery package was comprehensive and well-targeted.

Initially, government officials claimed that the size of the recovery package was TRY 100 billion. This included TRY 75 billion (.6 billion or 1.5% of GDP) in fiscal measures as well as TRY 25 billion (.8 billion or 0.5% of GDP) to double the credit guarantee fund. The ratio of the recovery package to GDP remained very low in comparison to developed countries. On 13 May, the finance minister claimed that the size of the recovery package reached 5% of GDP (Anatolian Agency 2020).

The package mostly targeted small and medium-sized businesses that were adversely affected by the pandemic. To compensate for production losses, the limit of the Credit Guarantee Fund was doubled and stock finance support was introduced for exporters. The follow-up period for postponed repayments on loans has been increased from 90 days to 180 days. Public banks are also involved in mitigating the negative impact of the pandemic, with public banks offering four types of loan packages (home, car, social life and holiday support) to encourage consumption. Furthermore, credit principal and interest payments owed to banks by firms whose cash flow has deteriorated have been deferred for three months. So far, 450,000 tradesmen have received TRY 8.4 billion, while 120,000 companies have also received TRY 8.4 billion. To increase mobilization, the accommodation tax has been deferred. For domestic air transport, the VAT rate was reduced from 18% to 1% for three months. For priority sectors (e.g., retail, transportation, food and textiles), which have been most affected by the coronavirus pandemic, payments for concise, VAT and SGK (social security) premiums have been postponed for six months. With regard to workers, layoffs have been temporarily banned. Furthermore, the two-month compensation work period has been increased to four months. Between March and June 2020, more than three million people benefited from short-term work allowances. Those who were forced to take unpaid leave have received TRY 1,170 per month in government support. The minimum wage for retired individuals was increased to TRY 1,500 per month. TRY 1,000 was given to 5.5 million families in need of social assistance, while TRY 40 billion was distributed to 6.7 million families who have a monthly income of less than TRY 5,000 per month (Anadolu Ajansı 2020). The government also initiated the “We are self-sufficient, Turkey” donation campaign under the authority of the president to help the most vulnerable segments of society. As a result, 2,053,282 families have received TRY 1,000 (Biz Bize Yeteriz Türkiye! 2020).

Trade unions have described the recovery package as pro-capital. The unions asked that the Unemployment Fund (TRY 130 billion) be used to benefit workers rather than save employers. What is more, while the credit debt of employers was postponed without interest, the same provision was not offered to employees. The package also did not offer compensation for basic needs,

such as electricity, water, telecommunications and gas, for workers who lost their jobs or whose income fell sharply. It remains to be seen whether the measures have been implemented in an effective and sustainable way – especially in economically important sectors such as services and tourism – to mitigate the pressures of the pandemic on the economy, businesses, and the labor and consumer markets, and to limit public expenditure and public debt to a sustainable extend.

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Sustainability of Economic Response

Recovery
Package
Sustainability
Score: 3

As the OECD (2019) observes, the Turkish government does not follow eco-friendly policies enough given Turkey’s potential to do so, and its legislative initiatives and communicated political ambitions. Although demands for a sustainable economy have increased worldwide and in Turkey, sustainable economic policies did not find a place in the recovery package. This mainly stemmed from the ongoing economic crises in Turkey, which have meant that achieving a sustainable economy has fallen down the government’s agenda. Accordingly, the recovery package, which it is claimed amounts to 5% of GDP, centered on the economic aspect of the coronavirus crisis, and did not include any provisions to transition to a greener and cleaner economy. It must be noted that the extent of the economic crises also impacts on the public whose main focus is on short-term financial benefits. Therefore, public pressure for an eco-friendly economy has not been strong.

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Labor Market Response

Labor Market
Policy Response
Score: 6

Since mid-March 2020 when Turkey began implementing coronavirus containment measures, the number of people who have requested support from the short-term work allowance scheme (a scheme that provides up to three-month income support to workers whose employment has been suspended)

increased sharply. This was because the government eased the eligibility criteria for the allowance, which corresponds to 60% of the minimum wage. On a monthly basis, the number of people who benefited from short-time work benefits was 2.48 million in June, 3.28 million in May and 3.24 million in April. According to an ISKUR report, the number of people who received unemployment benefits was 464,930 in June, 530,102 in May, 592,130 in April, 594,577 in March, 592,810 in February and 610,287 in January (Bianet 2020). The allowance is paid for a maximum of three months. An additional TRY 75 monthly minimum wage support for employees was in force throughout the coronavirus crisis.

Additionally, the government paid a one-time TRY 1,000 to more than four million households, 2.1 million of which were benefiting from regular social assistance. The government also assisted people in need through a national solidarity campaign, which provided a one-time transfer of TRY 1,000 to more than two million families. As the European Commission (2020) observes, the measures were not effective for unregistered workers.

According to official statistics, unemployment has shown a contradictory trend during the coronavirus pandemic, despite the ban on layoffs. In August 2020, the unemployment rate was 13.2%, a 0.8% decrease on an annual basis. The unemployment rate for non-agricultural sectors declined to 15.7%. The number of people in the labor market increased from 30,104,000 to 31,749,000 between March and August 2020. Over the same period, the number of unregistered people rose from 3,971,000 to 4,194,000 (TURKSTAT 2020). Although official statistics set the number of unemployed people at 4,154,000 in August, DISK-AR research – drawing on ILO calculations – estimates that there are 10.5 million unemployed people in Turkey (Evrensel 2020).

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Fiscal Response

Fiscal Policy
Response
Score: 5

Between January and September 2020, tax revenue was TRY 578.7 billion. With the increase in the risk premium of the Turkish economy, TRY 107.8 billion will be paid in interest payments. The budget deficit was TRY 140.6

billion. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, budgetary expenditures increased to TRY 870 billion (9.5 billion) for the first nine months of 2020. This amounts to a 17.6% increase on an annual basis (Anatolian Agency 2020). The New Economic Program 2020 – 2022 initially anticipated that the budget deficit would be 2.9% of GDP. However, due to the outbreak of the pandemic, this number was later revised to 4.9%. The medium-term program anticipates the budget deficit to GDP ratio will be 4.3% for 2021. Although this deficit is less than most other countries, it is still significant (Diken 2020).

The depreciation of the Turkish lira since 2018 had already put Turkey's payment obligations at risk prior to COVID-19. Reuters sources estimate that the central bank of Turkey sold more than \$100 billion in foreign currency to protect the lira from further currency shocks (BBC 2020). TEPAV (2020) reports that expansionary fiscal policies since 2016 have had a negative impact on the budget. While the government set the deficit at 2.9% of GDP in the 2020 budget, in reality the rate was closer to 5%. Over recent years, the low level of Treasury debt stock has increased due to the growing budget and primary deficits. The government's attempt to balance the deficit through collecting one-time revenues rather than through implementing structural adjustments increased the share of interest expenses in the budget. The primary surplus, which had been maintained since 2002, reverted to a primary deficit from 2019, following one balanced year in 2018, due to expansionary fiscal policies.

Thus far, the government has not outlined the timeline for ending its expansionary measures. Intergenerational justice is not considered while the budget is being made. Given the decreasing popularity of the government in recent years, the AKP pushes for policies that have the potential to appeal to the largest segment of society. Such policies seem to be pursued even if they put the wealth of future generations at risk, such as the Istanbul Canal project, which it is estimated will cost \$145 billion (Yeniçağ 2020).

Since 2009, transfers from the central government to municipalities via the Bank of Provinces have taken into consideration the number of inhabitants and the locality's relative position on development indices. However, the new model has not eased the difficult financial situation of Turkey's municipalities, which are seriously indebted to central government institutions. The 2019 budget predicts that the resources allocated to metropolitan and other municipalities, and special provincial administrations will increase by 28.4% and reach TRY 93.6 billion (Anadolu Ajansı 2020). According to reports by the Turkish Court of Accounts, most metropolitan municipalities have substantial debts. Therefore, most local projects in major metropolitan municipalities are run by the central government. Yet, due to the deteriorating

economic situation and for political reasons, the government halted the building of metro lines in Istanbul, which have subsequently been financed through international borrowing by the Istanbul metropolitan municipality (Deutsche Welle 2020).

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Research and Innovation Response

Research and
Innovation Policy
Response
Score: 6

The government benefited from technological advances to contain the spread of the coronavirus. Immediately after the first cases were reported in Turkey, the Health Ministry developed HES (Life Fits Home) mobile application to track infected people as well as their contacts. Since September 2020, it has not been possible to enter public buildings or shopping malls without a HES code. Furthermore, intercity travel by plane, railway or buses can only be authorized with an HES code. The HES application also shows areas with infected people and people who have come into contact with an infected person.

Turkey lags behind in vaccine development research. Refik Saydam National Public Health Institute, which has worked on public health and vaccine development since 1928, was closed down by the AKP by a decree in law. At the moment, 15 vaccine research projects are underway in Turkey. As of December, Erciyes University is the only institution that has completed phase one trials (Bianet 2020). The lack of infrastructure in vaccine development leaves the government with little option but to import vaccines from abroad. Thus far, Turkey has reached an agreement with the Chinese firm Sinovac for the delivery of 50 million doses of inactive vaccine by February 2021.

Pfizer/BioNTech and Sinovac conducted some parts of their phase three trials in Turkey (BBC 2020). President Erdoğan pledged that a domestic vaccine will be available by April 2021 (TRT Haber 2020). Turkey has better prospects in delivering medicine for the treatment of infected people, however. Since June, Favipiravir has been manufactured in Turkey, a Japanese medicine with hydroxychloroquine which is used to cure COVID-19 (Anadolu Ajansı 2020).

Regarding international cooperation, the Turkish government made an agreement with the European Commission to mobilize savings and contingencies to foster the national COVID-19 response. In the COVID-19 Global Response Summit held on 4 May, Turkey promised €75 million to support vaccine research (European Commission 2020). However, Turkey has not become a member of COVAX, a global initiative of 64 high-income countries and manufacturers, which aims to develop and provide COVID-19 vaccines to the most vulnerable people in the world (WHO 2020).

TUBITAK coordinated research projects relating to the coronavirus pandemic. For instance, it cooperated with the Directorate of Health Institutes (TÜSEB) to aid the clinical trial phases of related projects. TUBITAK also cooperated with the private sector. Its “Struggling with COVID-19” call on 26 March – which relates to the production of intensive care devices, protective equipment, drugs, disinfectants and test kits – explicitly targeted the private sector. Young researchers are encouraged to work on COVID-19-related projects through a specific scholarship call, “STAR- Intern Researcher Fellowship Programme,” which was released in April (OECD 2020). Other than these, the government has not produced a comprehensive program to develop social innovations to better handle future pandemics or other emergencies.

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IV. Welfare State Response

Education System Response

Education
Response
Score: 7

All schools in Turkey were closed down on 13 March 2020, a week before the diagnosis of the first coronavirus case. In a short period of time, however, primary, middle and high schools as well as universities established digital platforms to continue to provide education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online education for pre-university students was conducted through the EBA platform, which initially included 1,600 courses and over 20,000 interactive activities. Through EBA, student participation rates can be observed and learning performance can be tracked. During the pandemic, the exam style was also subject to change. Upper secondary school and tertiary education exams went ahead, but their scope was narrowed. For vulnerable children and families, 5 – 8 GB of free internet data was provided to students by internet providers in addition to free tablet PCs. Furthermore, provincial call centers contacted and supported children with special educational needs (OECD 2020). On 21 September, face-to-face education resumed one day a week for kindergarten and first-grade students. In October, second, third, fourth, eighth and 12th-grade students resumed face-to-face education, while in village schools face-to-face education resumed for all levels. In early November, the scope of face-to-face training expanded. Fifth and ninth-grade students were allowed to attend school two days a week, although participation remained optional. On 16 November, the mid-term break started. As COVID-19 cases began to rise over the following days, schools were again closed down. In December, the authorities declared that all kindergartens would undergo face-to-face training as of 15 December while distance learning for other classes was extended until 15 February 2021. Meanwhile, first semester exams were canceled (Hürriyet 2020). The government targeted economically vulnerable students through several instruments. First, scholarship amounts were increased for 452,000 students. Scholarship amounts rose from TRY 550 to TRY 600 for bachelor students, from TRY 1,100 to TRY 1,300 for master's students and from TRY 1,650 to TRY 1,950 for doctoral students (TRT Haber 2020). In addition, the government offered TRY 75 per month to female students, TRY 50 to male students and TRY 150 to orphaned students within the framework of the Conditional Educational Assistance from the Social Assistance Foundation (Mynet 2020).

Citation:

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Social Welfare Response

Social Welfare
Policy Response
Score: 6

The economic conditions of already vulnerable people deteriorated with the outbreak of the coronavirus crisis. In response, President Erdoğan announced a national solidarity campaign entitled "We are self-sufficient, Turkey" on 30 March 2020. More than two million households received cash payments of TRY 1,000 through the campaign. In addition, the government softened the eligibility criteria for receiving in-kind assistance. The Vefa Social Support Group provided assistance to meet the demands of people who have chronic diseases and are over 65 years old, as these groups were not allowed to go out. The minister of family, labor and social services stated that the monthly fund allocated to solidarity associations rose from TRY 135 million to TRY 180 million (BBC 2020). Furthermore, at-home care services have been provided during the coronavirus pandemic. Meanwhile, three public banks reduced their interest rates for household credit. For first or second-time house purchases, low-interest financing for up to 15 years with a grace period of up to 12 months has been offered (Anadolu Ajansı).

Artists were one of the groups most affected by the pandemic, as theaters and cinemas remained closed from 16 March to 1 July 2020. Support for artists, however, has not come from central government but from metropolitan municipalities. For instance, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality provided a stage and supported artists with digital publications (Gazete 2020). As late as December, the minister of culture and tourism pledged TRY 1,000 to support musicians (Evrensel 2020).

During the pandemic, Turkey provided aid to more than four million refugees of which 90% were Syrian. Turkey hosts the largest refugee population in the world. The refugees were negatively affected by the coronavirus as most of them lost their jobs and income. However, the government has not introduced a special program targeted at refugees. Instead, the government has collaborated with international actors to ease the financial burden on the

budget. For the year 2020, the European Union allocated €485 million to guarantee the maintenance of projects related to refugees' basic needs and access to education (European Commission 2020).

Citation:

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Healthcare System Response

Health Policy
Response
Score: 8

The healthcare system responded swiftly to the COVID-19 pandemic thanks to its strong healthcare infrastructure. Turkey had experience of pandemic management due to the influenza pandemic that affected Turkey a year ago. At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government rapidly put new hospitals into operation. The government opened Okmeydanı hospital (Istanbul) at the end of March 2020. The hospital included 600 beds and 81 intensive care units. Additionally, two large-scale hospitals were opened in Istanbul, which added around 2,000 more beds (Anadolu Ajansı 2020). These additions helped Turkey to mitigate the healthcare system crisis during the first peak in coronavirus cases. As of December, however, it is widely reported that the healthcare system in metropolitan cities is suffering from a lack of beds and intensive care units.

The government mobilized additional staff to deal with the pandemic. In March, the minister of health employed 32,000 new staff, most of whom were nurses and healthcare technicians (Sözcü 2020). In November, the minister of health announced that a further 12,000 healthcare staff, including 7,000 extra nurses, would be employed (Sabah 2020). The government also pledged to offer extra payments to healthcare workers who are actively working in the field for three months. Furthermore, the ministry established contact tracing teams. In August, the number of contact tracing teams reached 9,344 (Euronews 2020). Although Turkey's testing capacity was low in the early weeks of the pandemic, Turkey managed to increase its testing capacity to over 200,000 tests per day by December 2020. To tackle the possible shortage of ventilators, the export of ventilators was banned on 26 March. The law remained in force until 2 May.

While the pandemic was largely restricted to metropolitan areas until the summer, with the softening of measures and the return of people from holidays, the pandemic spread all over Turkey. A weekly situation report by the Ministry of Health stated that 40% of total cases were in Istanbul, with large numbers of cases also in Ankara, İzmir and Bursa. For the period between 19 October and 25 October, the seven-day incidence per 100,000 population was 31.7 in Istanbul, 13.8 in Aegea, 7.8 in the Eastern Black Sea and 12.1 in Southeastern Anatolia. The number of deaths per 100,000 population was 21.0 in Istanbul, 8.5 in Aegean, 7.7 in the Eastern Black Sea and 11.9 in Southwestern Anatolia (Ministry of Health 2020).

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Family Policy Response

Family Support
Policies
Score: 4

The coronavirus pandemic has the potential to deepen already high income and social disparities between men and women. According to research conducted by U.N. Women in Turkey, gender-based inequalities deepened during the pandemic. More specifically, 19% of paid working women lost their jobs compared to 14.4% for working men. Among those who are self-employed, 27% of women and 16% of men lost their jobs. Among employed workers, this rate is 19% for women and 8.7% for men, respectively. Additionally, 15.7% of women took unpaid leave compared to 11% for men. Women's role in childcare played an important role in this disparity (Habertürk 2020). During the pandemic, more women than men switched jobs and started working from home. The number of women who reported that the pandemic had had a negative impact on their mental or emotional health is greater than the number of men (UN Women 2020).

Despite the extent of the problems relating to the distribution of parenting and household work within households, the government has been reluctant to take more initiative. For instance, the central government has not offered care or

kindergarten support to working families. Instead, metropolitan municipalities such as Istanbul have taken the lead by building new kindergartens to respond to the rising demand. Furthermore, the government has not provided emergency childcare for families in which both parents participate in the labor market, or differentiated between families in urban or more rural areas where women mostly stay at home. Instead, the government supported families with cash transfers. At the outbreak of the pandemic, for instance, the government sponsored a program that provided TRY 1,000 to nearly six million households. In addition, within the scope of a co-funded project with the European Union to increase women's participation in the workforce, working mothers received cash transfers to help with providing care (Habertürk 2020b).

Citation:

Habertürk. "Koronavirüs Kadınları Daha çok Vurdu." November 17, 2020a. Accessed December 25, 2020. <https://www.haberturk.com/koronavirus-kadinlari-erkeklerden-daha-fazla-etkiledi-2872927-ekonomi>.

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International Solidarity

International
Cooperation
Score: 8

During the coronavirus pandemic, the government was willing to show international solidarity in the fight against the pandemic. From the outset, Turkey cooperated closely with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) within the scope of the EU-funded project. It used positive control material that had been donated for SARS-Cov-2 testing, which was developed by the Joint Research Centre (European Commission 2020). The International Cooperation Department of TÜBİTAK (the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) also took the initiative for bilateral and multilateral COVID-19 cooperation with other countries, including with China and Thailand (OECD 2020).

Turkey's foreign minister reported that of 135 countries that asked for help with the delivery of medical equipment and protective materials, Turkey has helped 81 of them. At the end of April 2020, Turkey sent 500,000 surgical masks, 400,000 protective coveralls and smocks, and 2,000 liters of sanitizer to the United States in addition to 500,000 test kits. Turkey also sent 450,000 masks to Italy and Spain, 100,000 to Serbia, 82,000 to Iran, and 30,000 to Iraq (Deutsche Welle 2020). The Turkish Red Crescent was involved in assistance efforts and delivered cash assistance to 11 countries. It also sent 1,338,323 humanitarian aid materials to over 20 countries (Turkish Red Crescent 2020). Furthermore, Turkey evacuated up to 70,000 Turkish citizens from 115

countries (NTV 2020). Finally, Turkey did not admit sick persons from other countries.

Citation:

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Resilience of Democracy

Media Freedom

Media Freedom
Score: 1

The constitutional guarantees of freedom of the press and freedom of expression are rarely upheld in practice. The current legal framework and practice are restrictive and do not comply with EU standards. The government appoints the general director of the country's public broadcaster, Turkish Radio and Television (TRT). In practice over recent years, this has meant tutelage over the public-media organization's administration: Several TRT channels regularly broadcast pro-government programs and invite experts allied with the government party to appear on these programs.

The mainstream (pro-government) TV channels and newspapers frequently use the same headlines to address readers (Freedom House 2020). Many media organizations of various political tendencies have parted ways with long-time columnists who refused to "adapt to the new political period." Journalists and media organizations critical of the government have faced threats, physical attacks and fines. TV and radio channels have been disbanded. Seven journalists from *Sözcü* newspaper, which is known for its ultra-secular columnists and readers, were sentenced to prison for allegedly being members of the religious-based Gülenist Terror Organization (Deutsche Welle 2020). As of November 2019, a total of 115 journalists and other media workers had been imprisoned. Some of the convicted journalists (e.g., Ahmet Altan and Nazlı Ilıcak), detained during the 2016 to 2018 state of emergency, have since been released from jail for various reasons, although several were immediately detained again.

Turkey Report, a media-monitoring organization, has found that there are high risks for three indicators of media pluralism (regulation, political independence and social inclusiveness) and a medium risk to market plurality. On the other hand, free and independent media is one of the components of non-governmental checks on governmental power. While small-scale digital-born brands continue to provide alternative perspectives, they have not managed to achieve significant reach. Many showcase stories from international brands (e.g., BBC Turkish, DW and Euronews) as they have limited staff to generate original content. Other perspectives are provided by

foreign media outlets, such as Russian-backed Sputnik and a new Turkish version of the (UK-based) Independent. The latter example is financed and run by the Saudi Research and Marketing Group, which has close links to the Saudi royal family.

The economic interests of media owners constitute a key problem for media freedoms. The European Commission (2020) reports that concerns relating to a lack of transparency in media funding, ownership structures, the effect of politics on editorial board decisions and the independence of regulatory authorities persist. Media freedom has been further undermined by the strengthening of a few pro-government oligarchs in the media sector.

In 2019, monetary fines were imposed 57 times on a large number of radio and TV channels. Furthermore, 24 programs were suspended. In October 2019, RTUK announced that voices opposing the ongoing military operation in Turkey were being silenced. The government seems to be taking further steps to undermine the country's already fragile media freedoms. For instance, a new law concerning the arrangement of internet publications and combating crimes committed through internet publications, was passed in July 2020. Online content producers that do not comply with the regulations face heavy fines and restrictions on internet bandwidth. The law is widely perceived as an attempt to silence the opposition, which broadcasts on YouTube.

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Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights and
Political Liberties
Score: 2

With the government's recent authoritarian turn, political and civil liberties have been put in further jeopardy. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic extended the possibilities for restricting civil rights and political liberties. Throughout the pandemic, individuals over 65 and under 20 years old (later revised to under 18 years old) were subject to a curfew, except for select hours at the weekends. On 5 May, the curfew was extended to younger people. On 1 June, the curfew was lifted for people over 65 years old. One of the most common measures taken by governorships was to ban the right to assembly. Religious practices were also restricted throughout the pandemic. Mosques were closed to mass worship on 16 March. Some mosques were reopened on

28 May for noon, afternoon and Friday prayers on condition that social distancing and hygiene rules were respected (BBC 2020). During the pandemic, freedom of movement was curtailed as well. On 30 April, the government banned entry to and exit from 30 metropolitan cities, and the city of Zonguldak, where lung ailments are common. As of 1 June, intercity travel restrictions were fully abolished. International flights were halted on 28 March. Turkish Airlines started flights to Europe on 10 June and Pegasus on 16 June.

With the decline in infection rates toward summer, a transition plan was released for the easing of COVID-19 measures. Reportedly, Vice-President Fuat Oktay prepared the four-stage normalization plan. The plan encompassed the period from 11 May 2020 to 1 January 2021 when a COVID-19 vaccine was expected to be available (Evrensel 2020). The rapid rise in COVID-19 cases toward the end of summer made the plan completely unfeasible.

Penalties were introduced for violating regulations. Those who do not comply with the curfew rules have to pay TRY 3,150. The penalty for not wearing a mask is TRY 900. On 20 May, a woman traveling without a mask in Bolu province was fined by the police. The court later annulled the penalty, because it was found to violate the woman's constitutional rights (Sözcü 2020a). Despite the court's ruling, violators are still fined by law enforcement officers. On 22 September, President Erdoğan stated that people who did not pay their fines would not benefit from certain public services (Sözcü 2020b). This put an end to public discussion on the issue.

Citation:

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Judicial Review

Judicial Review
Score: 2

Following the state of emergency and during the ongoing transition toward a presidential system, the absence of a law concerning general administrative procedures, which would provide citizens and businesses with greater legal certainty, has complicated administrative procedures and exacerbated administrative burdens. The main factors affecting legal certainty in public administration are a lack of issue-specific regulations, the misinterpretation of

regulations by administrative authorities (mainly on political grounds) and unconstitutional regulations adopted by parliament or issued by the executive.

Democratic backsliding in recent years has restricted judicial supervision and independence. Although it is against law, President Erdoğan and AKP officials publicly comment on most political hearings. Former HDP chairman Selahattin Demirtaş and businessman Osman Kavala are two prominent figures who are openly targeted by members of the government. Further undermining judicial independence, local courts sometimes fail to implement the legally binding rulings of the Constitutional Court or the European Court of Human Rights. This tends to occur with the pressure of the political authority over the judiciary in the trials of prominent political figures, such as the trials of former vice-chair of CHP Enis Berberoğlu and former co-chair of HDP Selahattin Demirtaş.

Following CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu's "March for Justice" from Ankara to Istanbul in 2017 in protest against the illegal detention of the former vice-chair of CHP, Enis Berberoğlu, demands for justice have occupied a central place in political debates. Despite the huge public pressure for comprehensive reform of the judiciary, no significant change has so far been introduced. Instead, patronage, partisanship and nepotism have prevailed as the main criteria for recruiting and promoting judges and prosecutors (European Commission 2020). Each year, large-scale transfers occur among judges and prosecutors. On 31 May 2020 alone, 3,722 judges and prosecutors were relocated (Habertürk 2019). The government often uses this as a weapon to punish judges and prosecutors who were unwilling to bow to political pressure.

Since the courts are not independent and the new presidential system extols presidential decrees over parliamentary law, judicial review has been restricted and become ineffective (if not impossible) during the coronavirus pandemic. Most proceedings were postponed by a presidential decree that was published in the Official Gazette; hearings were postponed until from 13 March to 15 June. Furthermore, judges and prosecutors over the age of 60 have been placed on administrative leave (Adalet Bakanlığı 2020). Similarly, the meetings of the General Assembly of the Constitutional Court were postponed from 19 to 30 March (Anayasa Mahkemesi 2020).

Citation:

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Informal Democratic Rules

Informal
Democratic Rules
Score: 5

Polarization, fragmentation and volatility have long been chronic maladies of the Turkish party system, especially in the 1970s and 1990s (Özbudun 2013). After winning the general election in 2002, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) turned the party system into a “predominant” one following its landslide victories in three elections in 2011. Since then, the authoritarian tendencies of Erdoğan have become clear, particularly after the Gezi Park protests in 2013. Considering the AKP’s declining electoral performance, Erdoğan pushed for a transition to a presidential system. After the failed coup attempt organized by Gülenists in July 2016, Erdoğan’s hand was strengthened as he was able to rule the country through state of emergency decrees. With the constitutional referendum in April 2017, the presidential system was approved by a very small margin (1.8%). Erdoğan won the presidential elections in June 2019 and became the first president of the new system.

KONDA (2019) survey has shown that political polarization is extensive in Turkey. Typically, voters are polarized along religious (secular vs. Islamist) and ethnic (Turk vs. Kurd) lines. In its first term, the AKP addressed voters mainly through redistributive politics as the economy was for the most part doing well. Following the 2008 economic crisis, however, Turkey’s economy became more vulnerable to external and internal shocks. This led the government to abandon redistributive politics, as clientelist resources shrunk, and embrace a policy centered on the manipulation of ethnic and religious cleavages. When this policy was combined with the authoritarian tendencies of the government, political polarization deepened.

Growing political polarization, especially in the run-up to the March 2019 municipal elections, continues to preclude constructive parliamentary dialogue. The opposition – most notably the People’s Democratic Party (HDP) – remains marginalized and many HDP lawmakers have been detained. The long-standing shortcomings associated with the system of parliamentary immunity remain unaddressed. In June 2020, based on court convictions, two members of the HDP and one member of the CHP lost their seats. The former HDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş, who is currently in prison, is frequently called a “terrorist” by the government. CHP’s Istanbul provincial chair, Canan Kaftancıoğlu, was sentenced to 9.5 years for her social media posts. Furthermore, a number of İYİ (the Good Party) deputies and journalists have been assaulted (Yeniçağ 2018).

The success of the opposition parties that formed an alliance in Istanbul's local 2019 elections and the resounding victory of mayoral candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu – who emphasized the need to overcome divisions – suggests a shift is underway. The consolidation of votes around strong leaders shows how political polarization leads to strategic voting (Arslantaş, Arslantaş and Kaiser 2020; Arslantaş and Arslantaş 2020). The establishment of two center-right parties, DEVA and Gelecek by former Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu and former Minister of Economy Ali Babacan respectively, has the potential to further undermine the power of the AKP in the next election.

Although polarization has remained very tight, it has not greatly affected the implementation of measures during the coronavirus pandemic since the new system empowered the executive (i.e., the president) at the expense of the legislative. In addition, municipalities controlled by the opposition have not formulated antagonistic policies but have instead cooperated with the government as much as they can during the pandemic. Nevertheless, political polarization has sometimes led to coordination problems between the central government and metropolitan municipalities ruled by the opposition. For instance, the Istanbul and Ankara metropolitan municipalities initiated a campaign to raise donations for vulnerable groups during the pandemic. Fearing that this move would increase the popularity of the opposition, the ministry of interior quickly froze the bank accounts of the municipalities, arguing that the municipalities did not receive the necessary permission from the relevant governorships (Sözcü 2020a). Furthermore, opposition municipalities launched a big donation campaign and paid the bills of tens of thousands of vulnerable people (Sözcü 2020b).

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Sözcü. "İşte Askıda Fatura'da Son Durum!" May 18, 2020. Accessed November 28, 2020b. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/iste-askida-faturada-son-durum-5821696/>.

Resilience of Governance

I. Executive Preparedness

Crisis Management System

Crisis
Management
System
Score: 7

The Ministry of Health published the Pandemic Influenza National Preparation Document in 2019 (Ministry of Health 2019). The document was prepared in consultation with academics and public officials from a wide array of institutions. It included the preparation of risk management and public communication strategies, and a working plan. It also outlined the distribution of responsibilities among public institutions. This helped the Ministry of Health set up the Science Board for the COVID-19 pandemic in January, two months before the diagnosis of the first COVID-19 case. The Science Board produced a risk management plan and determined the organizational structure of the crisis administration. Furthermore, the Science Board prepared the COVID-19 Information Sheet, which was distributed to 81 provinces (Ministry of Health n.d.). All ministries, as well as municipalities, prepared an emergency action plan to tackle the pandemic. The diagnosis of the first case in mid-March, one and a half months after France, gave Turkey enough time to increase its national stock of personal protective equipment. Similarly, Turkey's strong textile industry enabled Turkey to rapidly increase production of protective equipment. On March 30, President Erdoğan declared that 24 million surgical masks, three million N95 masks, and more than one million protective gowns and goggles had been delivered to hospitals. Erdoğan also reported that production of these materials would be further increased. Although during the early weeks of the pandemic medical supplies were scarce due to the rapid increase in the number of infected people, this supply problem was soon resolved. Accordingly, Turkey achieved a position that enabled it to export personal protective equipment to foreign countries. In April, the minister of industry and technology declared that Turkey had the capacity to produce 25 million masks a day. The government introduced some incentives to support the production of disinfectants, gloves, masks and protective glasses. For instance, the Small and Medium Industry Development

Organization (KOSGEB) provided up to TRY 6 million in credit to producers and manufacturers of disinfectants and protective equipment. The production of materials used in the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 have also been supported by TUBITAK. Similarly, development agencies supported projects that proposed rapid solutions to the pandemic with a budget of TRY 220 million (Anadolu Ajansı 2020).

Citation:

Ministry of Health. "Pandemik Influenza Ulusal Hazırlık Planı." 2019. Accessed November 20, 2020. https://www.grip.gov.tr/depo/saglik-calisanlari/ulusal_pandemi_plani.pdf.

Ministry of Health. "Yeni Coronavirüs (COVID-19)." Accessed November 24, 2020. <https://dosyasb.saglik.gov.tr/Eklenti/36665,a-6brosurpdfpdf.pdf?0>.

Anadolu Ajansı. "Türkiye'nin 'Maske Başarısı' Adım Adım Geldi." April 08, 2020. Accessed November 23, 2020. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/koronavirus/turkiyenin-maske-basarisi-adim-adim-geldi/1796739>.

II. Executive Response

Effective Policy Formulation

Effective Policy
Formulation
Score: 6

To determine a strategy to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic, the government formed the so-called Science Board on 10 January 2020. This was two months before the detection of the first COVID-19 case in Turkey. The board is composed of medical experts who predominantly have expertise in infectious diseases, intensive care, virology and public health. The number of board members has increased over time. At the moment, it has 36 members. The board published the "2019-nCoV Disease Guide" in January. In addition, the board advised the government on policy measures such as the closure of schools and religious places, the ban on international flights, and the introduction of a curfew for elderly and young people. The Pandemic Action Plan prepared by the Science Board is subject to change based on the extent of the coronavirus crisis.

To supplement the Science Board's medical expertise, the so-called Social Science Board, which comprised experts from sociology, theology and psychology, was formed in June. The Social Science Board makes recommendations relating to the social and psychological effects of the pandemic on citizens, especially young and elderly people who have long been subject to curfews (Hürriyet 2020).

Since the outset of the crisis, members of the two boards have regularly appeared on TV to inform the public of developments. Although board members and government officials usually make similar statements,

coordination problems and disagreements sometimes arise. The most notable example concerned the first curfew introduced in metropolitan areas on 10 April. The public announcement was made by the Ministry of Interior only two hours before the start of curfew, which led citizens to suddenly rush to the stores. This was heavily criticized by Science Board members as it boosted the spread of the virus (Gazete Duvar 2020). The status of the Science Board has also led to tensions. There is a widespread belief that the recommendations of the boards and the measures taken by political authorities do not overlap. It is known that board members usually defend more restrictive measures, while Erdoğan primarily considers the economic costs of measures and refrains from implementing all of the proposals (Birgün 2020).

Meanwhile, the opposition has widely criticized the exclusive composition of the Science Board and Social Science Board. For instance, Turkish Medical Association (TMA) members are excluded from the Science Board for being aligned to the opposition. Accordingly, the TMA formed its Monitoring Committee. The head of the MHP, an ally of the ruling AKP, denounced the TMA as a group of “left-wing terrorists” and suggested closing it down. Other health organizations – such as the Public Health Experts Union, the Turkish Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases, and the Turkish Intensive Care Union – also could not find a suitable place on the boards.

Citation:

Hürriyet. “Toplum Bilimleri Kurulu Nedir, Kaç Kişiden Oluşur? Bakan Koca Toplum Bilimleri Kurulu’nun Görevlerini Açıkladı.” June 11, 2020. Accessed November 29, 2020. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/galeri-toplum-bilimleri-kurulu-nedir-kac-kisiden-olusur-bakan-koca-toplum-bilimleri-kurulunun-gorevlerini-acikladi-41538588>.

Gazete Duvar. “İddialar: Sağlık Bakanı Sokağa Çıkma Yasağını Gece Öğrendi, Bilim Kurulu İstifa Ediyordu.” April 12, 2020. Accessed November 28, 2020. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2020/04/12/iddialar-saglik-bakani-sokaga-cikma-yasagini-gece-ogrendi-bilim-kurulu-istifa-ediyordu>.

Birgün. “Bilim Kurulu Üyelerinden Erdoğan’a ‘Sorumlusu Onlar’ Sitemi.” November 29, 2020. Accessed November 29, 2020. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/bilim-kurulu-uyelerinden-erdogan-a-sorumlusu-onlar-sitemi-324768>.

Policy Feedback and Adaptation

Policy Feedback
and Adaptation
Score: 6

The AKP government frequently changed and/or reversed its policies relating to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the diagnosis of the first coronavirus case, schools were closed down and take-away services became the norm for the restaurant industry. As the pandemic was largely contained in May, steps toward normalization were introduced from 1 June onwards. The new normal included the elimination of intercity travel restrictions, and the opening of restaurants, cafes, tea gardens, swimming pools and museums in accordance with the established rules. Public employees, who were on administrative leave or included in the flexible work system, were also allowed to return to normal shifts from 1 June (Sözcü 2020).

As the number of patients increased after the end of the summer break, the government reintroduced some restrictions in line with the recommendations of the Science Board. From 20 November onwards, shopping centers, markets, hairdressers and beauty centers only offered services between 10:00 and 20:00 local time. Restaurants, bakeries and cafes could serve between 10:00 and 20:00 local time on condition that they only provide take-away services. Cinema halls were closed until 31 December, while coffee and tea houses, internet cafes, billiard halls, and bars remain closed until a new decision is made (Hürriyet 2020).

At the end of the reporting period, tensions heightened between scientists and government officials, as government officials are reluctant to implement the measures advised by scientists because of the economic costs. Nevertheless, as a general tendency, the government frequently assesses its COVID-19 response and adapts measures when circumstances or the available body of expert knowledge changes.

Citation:

Sözcü. "1 Haziran'dan Hangi Dükkanlar Açılacak? 1 Haziran Normalleşme Adımları..." May 31, 2020. Accessed November 20, 2020. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/1-haziranda-ne-olacak-1-haziran-normallesme-adimlari-neler-5846477/>.

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Public Consultation

Public
Consultation
Score: 4

The number of civil society organizations has recently increased in Turkey. As of September 2020, Turkey hosts 311,608 associations, of which 121,026 are active. Among them, 31.2% concentrate their efforts on professional and social solidarity. The European Commission (2020) observes that administrative difficulties for national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) continue to hamper civil society activities and the government does not have a consistent or comprehensive strategy for cooperating with civil society.

Turkey's national development plans emphasize the importance of cooperation between NGOs and the public sector. The EU-funded public-civil society dialogue projects promote the participation of civil society in public decision-making. The relationship between government and society, and parliament and society are not based on a systematic and structured consultation mechanism. Due to the increasing political polarization, the government has increased

restrictions on public access to policymaking processes and tended to consult only with pro-government actors.

Several civil society organizations (e.g., TÜSIAD) jointly established the Relations with the Parliament and Public Institutions delegation, which organized several meetings with government representatives. In general, government authorities consider public consultation to have a “slowing” effect on policymaking (e.g., on progressive projects such as urban renewal or the planning of hydroelectric power plants). Draft policies and laws are not subject to public consultation, despite legal requirements.

Recently, to develop a new judicial reform package, the minister of justice, and the minister of treasury and finance met with representatives of TÜSIAD, TOBB and MÜSIAD (Dünya Gazetesi 2020). The ministers, however, have not met with representatives of public or private sector unions, advocates for young people or women, or bar associations to exchange reform ideas. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has targeted social actors that have been critical of the reform package. The government and its ally, MHP, sought to marginalize the Turkish Medical Association by targeting its representatives in the media. Furthermore, the government has constantly targeted left-wing trade unions. Although at the outset of the pandemic, the meeting was held with union representatives, the right to strike was forbidden shortly afterwards. This is not surprising given that the AKP government has so far disbanded 17 strikes concerning 194,039 workers (DISK-AR 2020).

Citation:

European Commission. “Commission Staff Working Document.” October 6, 2020. Accessed November 14, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf

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Crisis Communication

Crisis
Communication
Score: 6

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the main channel of communication with the public has been the minister of health. In the first months of the pandemic, the minister of health, Fahrettin Koca, informed the public about the coronavirus situation on a daily basis via his Twitter account. This led to a rapid increase in the number of his Twitter followers from 391,000 in March to 6.7 million in December (Euronews 2020). He became a popular figure among the opposition as well because of his positive stance in press conferences. As the second wave of COVID-19 hit, the minister of health stopped publishing daily numbers via Twitter and started publishing figures from an official webpage

prepared for it. The webpage included information on the daily and cumulative numbers of tests, deaths, hospitalized patients, intubated patients, patients in intensive care and recovered patients. The minister of health also hosted regular press conferences following Science Board meetings in which he highlighted what had been discussed and addressed questions from members of the press. In addition, communication campaigns and public announcements prepared by the Ministry of Health were crucial in communicating government measures to the public.

Science Board members have also been actively involved in informing the public about the current situation of the coronavirus crisis. Board members have regularly appeared on TV or informed the public via social media. The president announced government measures following cabinet meetings. The minister of interior also frequently communicated with the public, as he was responsible for the supervision of measures in the public sphere.

During the pandemic, there were instances of severe communication failures as well. For instance, curfew in the metropolitan municipalities was declared for the first time on 10 April. The minister of interior informed the public only two hours before the introduction of the curfew. This decision led to chaos, as people rushed to shopping centers. According to Science Board members, this had a considerable impact on the transmission of the virus in big cities (Cumhuriyet 2020a). The government's contradictory policies also led to miscommunication with the public. Although the government was strict in implementing coronavirus measures, the gathering of hundreds of thousands of people to mark the conversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque was tolerated if not encouraged (Cumhuriyet 2020b). Crowded gatherings for Erdoğan's public meetings represented a double standard as well.

Following the second wave, it has become clear that the AKP government has not been fully transparent in publicly sharing the real numbers related to the pandemic. The most concrete evidence of this has been the contradictory public statements made by chief physicians, provincial health directors and the minister of health regarding the number of infected people. Due to pressure from the Turkish Medical Association and opposition mayors, the minister of health had to declare the real numbers, confessing that the number of infected people was changed to the number of patients with COVID-19 symptoms on 29 July. On 10 December, the minister declared that the number of cases was 1,748,567.

Citation:

Euronews. "Toplumu Covid-19 Salgını Hakkında Bilgilendiren Yetkililer Kim?" April 08, 2020. Accessed December 26, 2020. <https://tr.euronews.com/2020/04/08/covid-19-salg-n-ile-ulkelerinin-medyatik-yuzleri-oldular-toplumu-bilgilendiren-yetkililer>.

Cumhuriyet. “İktidar Eliyle Kaos.” April 12, 2020. Accessed December 20, 2020a. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/iktidar-eliyle-kaos-1732594>.

Cumhuriyet. “Doç. Dr. Sarp Üner: ‘Ayasofya Açılışında 3 Bin Kişiye Korona Bulaştı’.” August 8, 2020b. Accessed December 27, 2020. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/doc-dr-sarp-uner-ayasofya-acilisinda-3-bin-kisiye-korona-bulasti-1756936>.

Implementation of Response Measures

Implementation
of Response
Measures
Score: 8

Measures relating to the COVID-19 pandemic were swiftly implemented due to Turkey’s transition to a presidential system in 2018, which increased the power of the executive over the legislative and judiciary. Throughout the pandemic, the constructive stance of the oppositional parties also facilitated the implementation of coronavirus-related measures. However, since the beginning of the pandemic, critical voices that warned of risks and blamed the government for mismanagement have been silenced. Thus, the coherence of implementation has been supported by restrictive means.

During the pandemic, COVID-19 tests and hospitalizations were made free for all individuals irrespective of their social security coverage. However, there is no external assessment available on the capacity of the Turkish healthcare system. Turkey set up a task force of experts to coordinate COVID-19 containment, which proposed stringent measures, including the closure of schools and public places, weekend curfews, and the strict confinement of young and elderly persons (European Commission 2020).

Although the financial capacity of the government was limited, as it devoted only a small share of its GDP to cope with the pandemic, it had the necessary administrative capacity to implement measures effectively. In this framework, the minister of health introduced the “Life Fits Home” app in March. This mobile app provides information on the COVID-19 risks of persons. It also includes risk maps based on location. Over time, presenting the HES code, which is embedded in the app or can be drawn from the e-state application, has become mandatory in order to enter certain places. For instance, intercity travel by bus, train or airplane can only be undertaken if a person can provide a clean code. Since 23 September, people cannot enter a public institution without an HES code (İçişleri Bakanlığı 2020).

The government established a comprehensive network of filiation teams across all provinces to contain the spread of the virus. The number of filiation teams reached 11,800 in October. The filiation teams are typically composed of doctors, assistant personnel, healthcare professionals and public servants. The teams are responsible for checking whether infected people or people who have had contact with an infected person remain in quarantine, collecting test samples and delivering medicine (BBC 2020). Recent Ministry of Health

statistics show that the filiation teams have been successful in identifying 99% of contact persons within eight hours (Sağlık Bakanlığı 2020).

The government has also made use of a large number of security force personnel. People who violate quarantine or curfew rules can be fined TRY 3,150, while people who violate mask rules can be fined TRY 900.

Citation:

European Commission. "Commission Staff Working Document." October 6, 2020. Accessed November 14, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf.

İçişleri Bakanlığı. "HES Uygulaması Hayata Geçirildi." September 23, 2020. Accessed December 20, 2020. <https://www.icisleri.gov.tr/hes-uygulamasi-hayata-gecirildi>.

BBC. "Filyasyon Nedir, Koronavirüsle Mücadele İçin Türkiye’de Nasıl Uygulanıyor?" April 14, 2020. Accessed December 28, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-52287355>.

Sağlık Bakanlığı. "COVID-19 Durum Raporu." 2020. Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/>.

National Coordination

National
Coordination
Score: 6

The victory of the main opposition party (CHP) in metropolitan areas, including Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, Antalya and Mersin, in the 2019 local elections weakened ties between national and local governments. Similarly, the government’s relations with the HDP have deteriorated. Since the 2019 local elections, the Ministry of Interior has appointed 48 trustees to the 65 municipalities won by the HDP. The Ministry of Interior has also not issued a certificate of election for six municipalities (Evrensel 2020).

High levels of political polarization have led to coordination problems between central and local governments. For instance, the Ministry of Interior launched investigations against the mayors of Istanbul and Ankara over local campaigns to provide aid to vulnerable people. Another source of tension has been the lack of transparency and credibility relating to the coronavirus situation in the country. On 4 December, 10 mayors of metropolitan municipalities (CHP) asserted that the actual number of deaths was two to three times greater than the official numbers stated by the Ministry of Health (Sözcü 2020). In this context, President Erdoğan pursued an exclusive stance and chose to conduct coordination meetings only with AKP-held municipalities (Yeni Şafak 2020).

In order to implement locally adapted policies, the central government empowered the governorships. Pandemic Boards were set up in every city to discuss and implement city-specific measures (COVID-19 Health System Monitor 2020). City-specific measures have been in force throughout the pandemic. These typically include restrictions on entering crowded places (e.g., Taksim Square) as well as bans on entering and exiting some cities on

certain days or hours as implemented in 30 metropolitan municipalities and Zonguldak throughout April and May. The governors' stance toward the opposition has not always been constructive. For instance, the mayor of Istanbul metropolitan municipality, Ekrem İmamoğlu, was not invited to the pandemic meeting in Istanbul, despite Istanbul accounting for almost 40% of the total cases in Turkey (Birgün 2020). This shows how political polarization hinders coordination among relevant actors.

Citation:

Evrensel. "HDP'nin 65 Belediyesinden 48'i Kayyumla, 6'sı Mazbata Verilmeyerek Gasbedildi." October 2, 2020. Accessed December 28, 2020. <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/415521/hdpnin-65-belediyesinden-48i-kayyumla-6si-mazbata-verilmeyerek-gasbedildi>.

Sözcü. "CHP'li 10 Büyükşehir Belediye Başkanı Duyurdu: Vefat Sayıları Açıklanandan 2-3 Kat Fazla." December 04, 2020. Accessed December 28, 2020. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/chpli-10-buyuksehir-belediye-baskani-duyurdu-vefat-sayilari-aciklanandan-2-3-kat-fazla-6153792/>.

Yenişafak. "Başkanlarla Koronavirüs Buluşması: AK Partili Belediyeler Bugün Erdoğan Başkanlığında Toplanıyor." August 19, 2020. Accessed December 28, 2020. <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/baskanlarla-koronavirus-bulusmasi-ak-partili-belediyeler-bugun-erdogan-baskanliginda-toplaniyor-3553829>.

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Birgün. "Pandemi Toplantısına İmamoğlu'nun Çağrılmamasına Valilik Bahanesi: Ani Gelişti." October 23, 2020. Accessed December 29, 2020. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/pandemi-toplantisina-imamoglu-nun-cagrilmmasina-valilik-bahanesi-ani-gelisti-320240>.

International Coordination

International
Coordination
Score: 8

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus crisis, Turkey has contributed to international efforts to contain the negative impacts of the pandemic. In collaboration with the authorities and relevant institutions of other countries, the government brought more than 100,000 Turkish citizens back to Turkey as of 13 November. Turkey is also closely involved in the health problems, funeral arrangements and material problems of the infected Turkish citizens abroad. At the request of their families, the government brought the corpses of 954 citizens back to Turkey. Furthermore, from 17 March to 11 June, Turkey allowed 37,682 foreigners to be evacuated from Turkey (TRT Haber 2020).

Turkey has also cooperated with vaccine developers. For instance, phase three trials of Chinese firm Sinovac's CoronaVac vaccine have been conducted in Turkey. In addition, Turkey responded to requests for assistance from 156 countries with donations and surplus production. Requests for medical assistance from various international institutions, including UNICEF, the OECD and NATO, have also been partially or wholly met (TRT Haber 2020). Since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis, Turkey has collaborated with the WHO. In general, the WHO's stance to Turkey has been favorable because of Turkey's success in containing the pandemic, especially in the first few months of the pandemic.

At the institutional level, Turkey cooperated and shared data with the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) within the framework of an EU-funded project. The European Union transferred €83 million to Turkey to support its efforts to limit the adverse impacts of the pandemic on refugees. Furthermore, Turkey pledged to contribute €75 million to fund vaccine research in the COVID-19 Global Response Summit on 4 May (European Commission 2020). At the interministerial level, Turkey signed the memorandum by the COVID-19 International Coordination Group on the Maintenance of Basic Global Connections, which is led by Canada, on 17 April (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2020).

Citation:

TRT Haber. "Türkiye Koronavirüs Salgını Sürecinde Aktif Dış Politika İzledi." November 27, 2020. Accessed December 29, 2020. <https://www.trthaber.com/haber/gundem/turkiye-koronavirus-salginisurecinde-aktif-dis-politika-izledi-534494.html>.

European Commission. "Commission Staff Working Document." October 6, 2020. Accessed November 14, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Koronavirus Salgınındaki Rol Ve Vizyonumuz." 2020. Accessed December 24, 2020. <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/koronavirus-salginindaki-rol-ve-vizyonumuz-6-11-2020.tr.mfa>.

Learning and Adaptation

Learning and
Adaptation
Score: 6

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Turkey already had experience in dealing with a pandemic. A year before the emergence of COVID-19, the Ministry of Health prepared the Pandemic Influenza National Preparation Plan. This plan facilitated the establishment of the Science Board for the COVID-19 pandemic two months before the diagnosis of the first coronavirus case in Turkey (Ministry of Health 2019). Due to its strong intensive care system, Turkey contained the negative effects of the pandemic better than most other countries.

To improve its crisis management system, the government invested in a wide range of fields. For instance, the measures taken in the healthcare sector include the opening of two large hospitals in Istanbul. City hospitals, which have been a source of tension between the government and the opposition due to intergenerational fiscal costs, can also serve a function in containing future pandemics. In regards to the education sector, the transition to digital learning through EBA for pre-university students has the potential to alleviate the negative effects of future pandemics on education. To contain future pandemics rapidly, most governments invested heavily in local vaccine development. Despite huge public pressure, however, the AKP government has not taken steps to advance the vaccine development capacity of Turkey. The reopening of the Public Hygiene Institute (Hıfzıssıhha Enstitüsü), which

was closed down by an AKP government decree in 2011, might be a good beginning for such an intention (Sözcü 2019). Finally, the government has not reformed its economic or social policies to better prepare the country for future crises.

Citation:

Ministry of Health. "Pandemik Influenza Ulusal Hazırlık Planı." 2019. Accessed November 20, 2020. https://www.grip.gov.tr/depo/saglik-calisanlari/ulusal_pandemi_plani.pdf.

Sözcü. "Kapatarak Yok Ettiler." March 31, 2020. Accessed December 26, 2020. <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/kapatarak-yok-ettiler-5714439/#:~:text=HIFZISSIHA>

ENSTİTÜSÜ: Refik Saydam Hıfzıssıhha, 2011'de KHK ile kapatıldı.

III. Resilience of Executive Accountability

Open Government

Open
Government
Score: 5

The steering committee of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) designated the government of Turkey as inactive in the OGP on 21 September 2016. Due to Turkey's failure to meet the requirements, Turkey's participation in the OGP ended in September 2017. As part of its fight against corruption, Turkey prepared an action plan for 2012 – 2013, which included launching four web portals (for transparency, expenditure, electronic procurement and regulations), identifying areas at risk of corruption, developing relevant measures, minimizing bureaucratic obstacles, and promoting integrity, transparency and accountability.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health constantly published daily reports on the current situation of the pandemic, which included the number of daily tests, COVID-19 patients in intensive care (this was later changed to seriously ill) and recovered COVID-19 patients as well as bed occupancy rates. The Ministry of Health also prepared daily and weekly online information sheets (in both English and Turkish) about the geographical distribution and age of patients with COVID-19 symptoms.

By the end of September, Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca acknowledged that data published by the state was only a partial record of confirmed COVID-19 cases. Koca said reported cases were limited to patients with COVID-19 symptoms being cared for in hospitals or elsewhere, and excluded asymptomatic individuals who tested positive for the virus. This announcement led to criticism from medical groups and citizens regarding a lack of transparency and the issuing of inaccurate data. Since 25 October, the

Ministry of Health has not published detailed weekly reports and since 23 November it no longer publishes detailed daily reports. In addition, the minister of health regularly tweeted about the coronavirus situation in certain localities and warned the public about the need to comply with social distancing rules. The Science Board also published documents, including the Management of Pandemic and Working Guide on 1 October, which proposed measures that would affect barbers, shopping malls, parks and hotels.

Citation:

Open Government Partnership. "Turkey (Withdrawn)." July 06, 2020. Accessed December 20, 2020. <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/turkey-withdrawn/>.

Cumhuriyet. "Sağlık Bakanlığı, Covid-19 Günlük Ve Haftalık Raporlarını Yayımlamayı Durdurdu." September 01, 2020. Accessed December 20, 2020. <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/saglik-bakanligi-covid-19-gunluk-ve-haftalik-raporlarini-yayimlamayi-durdurdu-1762670>.

Diego Cupolo. "Turkish Health Ministry admits to posting partial COVID-19 data." October 1, 2020. Accessed February 10, 2021. <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/10/turkey-health-ministry-partial-virus-data.html>.

Legislative Oversight

Legislative
Oversight
Score: 3

The Turkish Grand National Assembly was closed down on 15 April due to coronavirus measures and remained closed until 2 June (Euronews 2020). After a brief return to normal working routines, the assembly intermitted for summer break from 29 July to 1 October. With the rise of cases during the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, visits to the parliament were canceled from 2 to 30 November. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, a large number of deputies, as well as administrative personnel, have been infected by the virus. As of 19 November, 81 deputies had been infected (13.5%) and one AKP deputy, Burhan Kuzu, had lost his life due to coronavirus (Haber Global 2020).

Parliamentary oversight of the executive was weak even before the pandemic, despite the increase in the number of deputies from 550 to 600 following Turkey's transition to a presidential system in 2018. This stemmed from the prevalence of presidential decrees, which marginalized the legislative's role in more recent changes. More specifically, in the new political system, the president has the authority to promulgate decrees in a wide range of fields, including socioeconomic policy areas that typically remain under the jurisdiction of the parliament. Against this, the legislature has no supervisory powers over presidential decrees. Similarly, the new system removed the motion of no confidence mechanism as well as the right of parliament to question ministers. As the European Commission (2020) observes, the lack of legislative oversight extends the room for corruption. The quality of democratic governance has further been undermined by high levels of polarization in the parliament. This restricts constructive parliamentary dialogue over matters of vital importance.

Citation:

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Independent Supervisory Bodies

Auditing
Score: 2

According to Article 160 of the constitution, the Turkish Court of Accounts (TCA) is charged on behalf of the Grand National Assembly with auditing all accounts related to revenues, expenditures and properties of government departments that are financed by the general or subsidiary budgets. The court's auditing capacity was limited by Law 6085 in 2010, but the Constitutional Court annulled Article 79, which regulated how the TCA would audit the accounts of public institutions. In December 2012, the Constitutional Court also annulled the provision that limited performance auditing. Currently, the TCA has three functions: auditing, financial trials and reporting. The TCA conducts regulatory audits and performance audits. Contrary to the Constitutional Court's decision, the current law prohibits the TCA from conducting propriety audits. The TCA law is in line with the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI) standards. It provides for an exhaustive audit mandate and gives the TCA full discretion in discharging its responsibilities. As of February 2020, the TCA had 1,861 personnel including 804 auditors (Sayıştay 2020).

The TCA published a 2019 – 2023 strategic plan, which foresees the development of risk-based auditing and human resource capacity. The TCA reports – but is not accountable – to the parliament. Four audit reports are sent to the parliament each year: the External Audit General Evaluation Report; the Accountability General Evaluation Report; the Financial Statistics Evaluation Report; and the Report on the State, which was considered by the parliament only during its deliberation of the government budget. The reports of the TCA are only considered by the parliament (European Commission 2020). The parliament elects the TCA president and members. The TCA members must be graduates of universities or higher education institutions of law, political science, economics or administrative sciences who have at least 16 years of public service experience.

The auditors are selected from a pool of university graduates through a series of written and oral examinations. If a criminal act is found during the audits and investigations, the relevant auditor notifies the president of the TCA

immediately. If a public criminal case is required, the chief prosecutor of the TCA sends the documents either to the relevant public authority or to the chief public prosecutor of the republic (the highest level of prosecutor in the country). A TCA report is taken as the basis of a trial but is shared only with those responsible and not disclosed to the public.

There are credible concerns regarding the fiscal discipline, transparency and accountability of the Turkey Wealth Fund (TWF), now directly affiliated with the president of the republic and not fully subject to the direct audit by the TCA. The law allows only a limited number of companies within the TWF to be audited by the TCA. What is more worrisome is that the audit is conducted by auditors appointed by the president, who is also the chairman of the TWF. Moreover, the transition to the presidential system further undermined the accountability of agencies as well as internal control and auditing since the roles and responsibilities of different institutions have yet to be clarified (European Commission 2020).

Given that the reports of the TCA were only considered by the parliament during parliamentary budget deliberations in December, the TCA was not in a position to monitor the financial actions of the government during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Citation:

Sayıştay. "T.C. Sayıştay Başkanlığı 2019 Yılı Faaliyet Raporu." February 2020. Accessed December 24, 2020. [https://www.sayistay.gov.tr/tr/Upload/76662805/files/SAYIŞTAY 2019 İdare Faaliyet Raporu.pdf](https://www.sayistay.gov.tr/tr/Upload/76662805/files/SAYIŞTAY%2019%20İdare%20Faaliyet%20Raporu.pdf).

European Commission. "Commission Staff Working Document." October 6, 2020. Accessed November 14, 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/turkey_report_2020.pdf.

Data Protection
Score: 4

Before 2016, Turkey had no specific legislation that oversaw personal data protection. In April 2014, the Constitutional Court ruled that new regulation must be introduced to protect personal data, as personal data had become a valuable resource for businesses (KVKK n.d.). In 2016, Turkey ratified the Council of Europe Convention 108 for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data and its additional protocol dated 1981. The Personal Data Protection Authority is now operational and its nine-member board has been appointed. Of the nine members, five of them are appointed by the legislative and four by the president. Law No. 6698 on Protection of Personal Data dated 2016 does not fully conform to the EU acquis, especially in relation to the powers of the Data Protection Authority, and the balancing of data protection with freedom of expression and information. Turkey has not signed the 2018 protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Council of Europe, CETS No 223). The lack of harmony with the EU acquis hinders possible cooperation with Eurojust and Europol in specific policy areas. The European Commission (2020) report

raises concerns regarding exceptions for law enforcement and the independence of the Data Protection Authority (European Commission 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, no specific measures have been taken on data protection.

Citation:

KVKK. “100 Soruda Kişisel Verilerin Korunması Kanunu.” Accessed December 30, 2020. <https://www.kvkk.gov.tr/SharedFolderServer/CMSFiles/7d5b0a2f-e0ea-41e0-bf0b-bc9e43dfb57a.pdf>.

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