

Profile on economic inclusion for people with disabilities and older workers: Turkey

Purpose and scope: This profile responds to the three pillars of the EBRD's *Economic Inclusion Strategy* (access to employment and skills, finance and entrepreneurship, and services) and aims to provide targeted support to the efforts of the EBRD and its partners to better understand the needs of people with disabilities (PWD) and older workers. It is not intended to be an exhaustive overview of all issues affecting people with disabilities and older workers in this country. It was prepared for the EBRD using publicly available sources.

<p>Country context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population: Turkey's population of 83 million is highly urbanised, with only 7 per cent living in rural areas. The population is relatively young, with a median age of 32 (TUIK, 2020). • Economy: Turkey is an upper middle-income country with a GDP of US\$ 761 billion in 2019 and GDP per capita of US\$ 9,225 (World Bank, 2020a). Services accounted for 54 per cent of GDP in 2018, industry for 29.5 per cent and agriculture for 5.8 per cent. The manufacturing sector, particularly textiles and automotive, is significant, contributing 19 per cent of GDP (World Bank, 2020c; PRTIO, 2019). • Prevalence/responses to Covid-19: Turkey has had over 389,000 confirmed cases as of November 2020 (WHO, 2020a). The authorities implemented a partial lockdown in March, with total lockdown for over-65s, weekend curfews and quarantines in specific cities (World Bank, 2020e; BBC, 2020). The government also increased the level of social assistance to mitigate the economic impact of the crisis (Gentilini et al., 2020).
<p>People with disabilities (PWD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the Population and Housing Census last conducted in 2011, Turkey has around 4.9 million PWD, of whom 43 per cent are men and 57 per cent women. Labour market participation of PWD is estimated at 22 per cent (35 per cent among men and 12.5 per cent among women), compared to an overall labour market participation of 51 per cent (Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services, 2020). • Employment and skills: The Disability Law (Art 14) prohibits employment discrimination on grounds of disability, requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for the employment of PWD and provides for specially-designated state-supported sheltered workshops. The Labour Law (Art 30) mandates a 3 per cent disability quota for the public sector and private employers of over 50 persons, although the quota is not applicable to the majority of Turkish enterprises, which are small and medium enterprises employing under 50 employees (Yilmaz, 2020). Employers are exempted from social security contributions for employees with disabilities up to the 3 per cent quota and from 50 per cent of contributions for employees exceeding the 3 per cent requirement (LL, Art 30). The Directorate General of Services for Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly (EYHGM) coordinates service delivery across institutions while employment support is provided by employment agency İŞKUR. Turkey's National Employment Strategy 2014-23 highlights and sets objectives to address limitations in current employment policy implementation (MoFLSS, 2017). These include improving the implementation of quotas, as employers have been reported to engage in pseudo-hiring of PWD wherein PWD are registered in employment but not required to work (Yilmaz, 2020). Other issues affecting PWD's access to employment and skills include inaccessible and insufficient physical infrastructure in workplaces and discriminatory practices in hiring, working conditions, wages and access to social benefits, as well as provision of reasonable accommodation by employers (Yilmaz, 2020). Women with disabilities are affected by intersecting gender discrimination (Tekin, 2018). • Finance and entrepreneurship: State programmes offer targeted entrepreneurship support to PWD, with KOSGEB, the state SME development organisation, and İŞKUR providing business training and financial support to entrepreneurs with disabilities (Kosgeb, 2020; İŞKUR, 2016). A range of tax reductions apply to PWD, including income, VAT, real estate, special consumption, customs and motor vehicle taxes which reduce the tax burden on self-employed PWD (Topgul, 2018). The Regulation on the Accessibility of Banking Services introduced accessibility rules for customers with disabilities in 2016, stipulating the provision of documentation in braille, sign language and audio format, as well as changes to ATM functions and security (Moroğlu, 2016). However, there is little information on the enforcement of accessibility standards in banking (UN CRPD, 2019a). Additionally, the websites of many

	<p>Turkish banks do not meet the international Web Content Accessibility Guidelines aimed at making web content more accessible for PWD (Akgül, 2018).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services: The Disability Law stipulates that private and public transport systems and ICT services must be accessible to PWD, and planning, design and construction of the built environment must ensure accessibility (Art 7). Numerous accessibility standards are in place. PWD are also entitled to the use of public transport free of charge, although this is limited to persons with a minimum 40 per cent disability (Law on Tariffs for Goods and Services Produced by Public Institutions, Art 1). The Medium Term Programme 2018-20 states the objective of improving the social and physical environment for PWD to facilitate participation in social life (Republic of Turkey, 2017a). Some progress has been made on transport accessibility, but accessible physical infrastructure in cities remains insufficient (Daily Sabah, 2019), as do ICT services in rural areas (UN CRPD, 2019a). Building and infrastructure accessibility standards are reportedly poorly enforced (CDT, 2018; EC, 2019). • Covid-19: Government policy to mitigate the economic impacts of Covid-19 has not focused expressly on PWD, although some PWD received cash support payments. The right to free transport on trains was reportedly suspended when train services restarted in May, with civil society organisations calling for its reinstatement (Raily News, 2020).
<p>Older workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older workers' labour market participation rate is low. In 2017, only 35.6 per cent of the 55-64 age cohort was in employment (OECD, 2017). In 2018, workers aged 55-64 comprised 9.1 per cent of the total workforce. Some 66 per cent were working informally (Ulukan, 2020). • Employment and skills: Discrimination on grounds of age is prohibited (Human Rights and Equality Institution Law, Art 3). The retirement age of 58 and 60 for women and men respectively is not compulsory in the private sector but if one wishes to work beyond these ages the state pension cannot be deferred (Merican, 2020). Employers are permitted to set ages at which termination of a contract is possible by contract, collective bargaining or unilaterally (EC, 2020b). The government has recently signalled its intent to establish "flexible conditions" to facilitate the employment of people over 50 (Republic of Turkey, 2020). Overall, however, the government's focus has been on youth employment policies rather than older workers. There are a number of issues affecting older workers' access to employment, including low levels of education and lack of necessary skills (AARP, 2017). There are reports that older people experience discrimination when accessing education and training (AARP, 2017). • Finance and entrepreneurship: There are no specific legal measures which promote older workers' access to finance and entrepreneurship, and potential entrepreneurs over the legal retirement age may be excluded from access to entrepreneurship training through İŞKUR (İŞKUR, n.d.b). Older women are likely to be affected by gender bias, reported in banks' small business lending, with women more likely to be required to have a guarantor (Brock and De Haas, 2019). Access to finance and other entrepreneurship support services is limited in rural areas, which tend to have an older age profile (Bozkurt and Karakuş, 2020; Cullen, 2019; Öztürk et al, 2018). • Services: Accessibility standards are in place, however, there are no specific provisions aimed at enabling access to services for older workers. A number of national programmes are in place to provide access to and raise community awareness of lifelong learning opportunities (Republic of Turkey, 2019a; Republic of Turkey, 2019d; MoFLSS, 2017). Older adults are under-represented within public training programmes and ICT access is reportedly limited by a lack of ICT training designed for older people (AARP, 2017). There is a need to improve the accessibility of public and transport infrastructure (AARP, 2017). • Covid-19: There has been no specific policy response focused on older workers. People over the age of 65 were placed under a strict stay-at-home order in April 2020, although civil servants over the age of 60 have reportedly been granted administrative leave and, in some cases, the option to work from home (BBC, 2020; Daily Sabah, 2020b). Job losses in the informal sector have affected its large share of older workers, who have had reduced work opportunities and been unable to access state support available to formal sector employees (Reuters, 2020). 71 per cent of civil society groups working on the rights of older individuals have reported an increase in demand for their services due to the pandemic (Tusev, 2020).

Disclaimer: This publication has been produced with the assistance of the EBRD. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of Ergon Associates and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EBRD. The EBRD does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of the information provided in the Profile. The Profile is copyrighted, and to the extent that it reflects opinions, they are the opinions of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EBRD, its staff or Directors. Nothing in this Profile should be taken as legal advice.