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EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

Ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis

submitted by

THE GOVERNMENT OF TÜRKIYE

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EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

Report on the Implementation of
The European Social Charter (Revised)

submitted by

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE

Ad Hoc Report on Cost of Living Crisis

Report on Articles 4§1, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 23, 30 and 31

for the period 31/12/2021 – 31/12/2023

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADEM	Family Support Center
AROPE	At Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion
ASDEP	Family Social Support Program
EU	European Union
ILO	International Labour Organization
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
MoEUCC	Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change
MoFSS	Ministry of Family and Social Services
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLSS	Ministry of Labour and Social Security
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
SODAMs	Social Solidarity Centres
SSI	Social Security Institution
SYDVs	Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations
TL	Turkish Liras
TOKİ	The Mass Housing Administration
TURKSTAT	Turkish Statistical Institute
UMT	Union of Municipalities of Türkiye
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAT	Value Added Tax

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In reference to the decision of the Ministers' Deputies adopted on 27 September 2022 concerning the new system for the presentation of reports under the European Social Charter and in accordance with the request of the European Committee of Social Rights and the Governmental Committee for an ad hoc report on the cost-of-living crisis; copies of this report have been sent to:

- TİSK (Turkish Confederation of Employer Associations),
- TÜRK-İŞ (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions),
- HAK-İŞ (Confederation of Real Trade Unions),
- DİSK (Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions),
- MEMUR-SEN (Confederation of Public Servants' Unions),
- TÜRKİYE KAMU-SEN (Confederation of Turkish Public Employees' Union),
- KESK (Confederation of Public Employees' Unions).

Question 1) Please provide information as to whether and how the statutory minimum wage is regularly adjusted/indexed to the cost of living. Please indicate when this last happened, specifically whether it has been adjusted/indexed since the end of 2021.

In Türkiye, the minimum wage holds significant sway in collective bargaining within both private and public sectors. In accordance with Article 39 of Labour Law no. 4857 and the subparagraph (f) of the first paragraph of Article 522 of the Presidential Decree No.1 on the Organizational Structure of the Presidency, the minimum amount of the wages for the workers (working under a labour contract and Labour Law or not) has been determined by the Commission for the Determination of Minimum Wage in line with the principles and rules set by the Regulation on the Determination of Minimum Wage. According to the aforementioned legislation, the amount of the minimum wage has to be determined biennially at the latest.

Since 1951, the minimum wage has been regularly reviewed and adjusted, traditionally on an annual basis. However, the frequency of adjustments shifted to semi-annual updates in 2021. This change in frequency is a response to the rising cost of living.

Other details including the procedures to be followed in this process and the rules for the convention of the Commission are set in detail by the Regulation on the Determination of Minimum Wages. For instance, Article 7 titled "*The rules for the determination of the wages*" includes the provisions below:

"Wages are determined biennially at the latest. While determining the amounts of the minimum wages, the Commission takes the social and economic situation of the country, the cost of living index for the wage earners or if not applicable the cost of living index in general, the general situation in relation to the actual wages and living conditions into consideration."

During this process, the Commission may cooperate with related public institutions and bodies and universities and may ask for the opinions of the workers' and employers' organizations. Furthermore, the Commission may also ask the opinions of the experts if necessary.

In the most recent decision dated 20.06.2023 and numbered 2023/1, the Commission increased the minimum daily wage to 447.15 Turkish Liras for the period between 01.07.2023 and 31.12.2023. This adjustment reflects the Commission's commitment to addressing the challenges posed by the rising cost of living and ensuring the adequacy of the minimum wage in relation to the social and economic context.

Question 2) Please provide information on any supplementary measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the minimum wage since the end of 2021.

The international standards for determining the minimum wage, particularly the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), emphasize the need for harmonizing economic conditions with the demands of workers and employers. In line with this approach, an optimal amount for the minimum wage in Türkiye is determined by taking into account internationally accepted criteria such as purchasing power parity, the ratio of minimum wage earners to all employees and the general economic situation of the country.

During the 2022 minimum wage determination process, the Commission, with consensus from employee and employer representatives, recommended excluding the income of all wage earners up to the minimum wage level from income and stamp taxes. In this regard, income and stamp taxes on minimum wage were completely abolished in January 2022. In addition, the part of the wages of employees whose wage income is above the minimum wage, equal to the minimum wage, are exempt from income and stamp taxes. This measure not only led to a significant increase in the net wages of all workers but also provided support for employment, production, and investment.

To mitigate the adverse effect of these measures on employers, the minimum wage support application, initiated in 2016, continued in 2022, providing monthly support to all workplaces, irrespective of the number of employees and sector. For 2022, minimum wage support of 100 TL per month was provided to all workplaces, regardless of the number of employees and sector.

Figure 1. Annual percentage changes of net amount of the minimum wage, poverty line and Consumer Price Index (CPI) 2007-2022

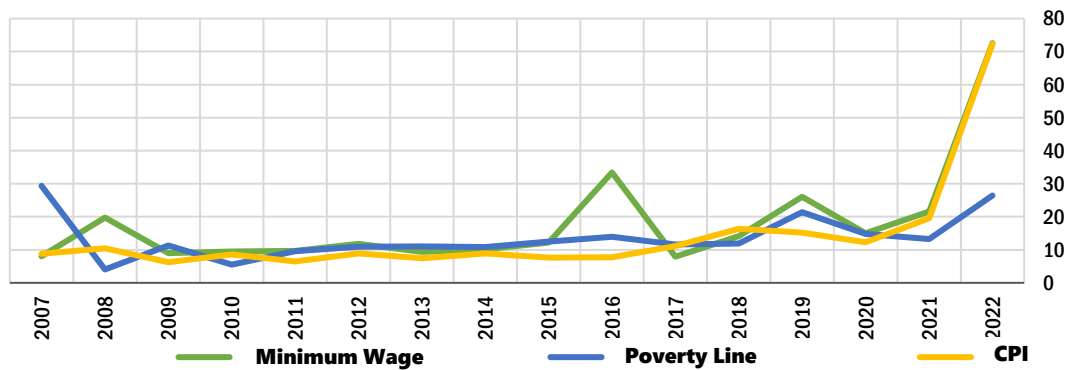
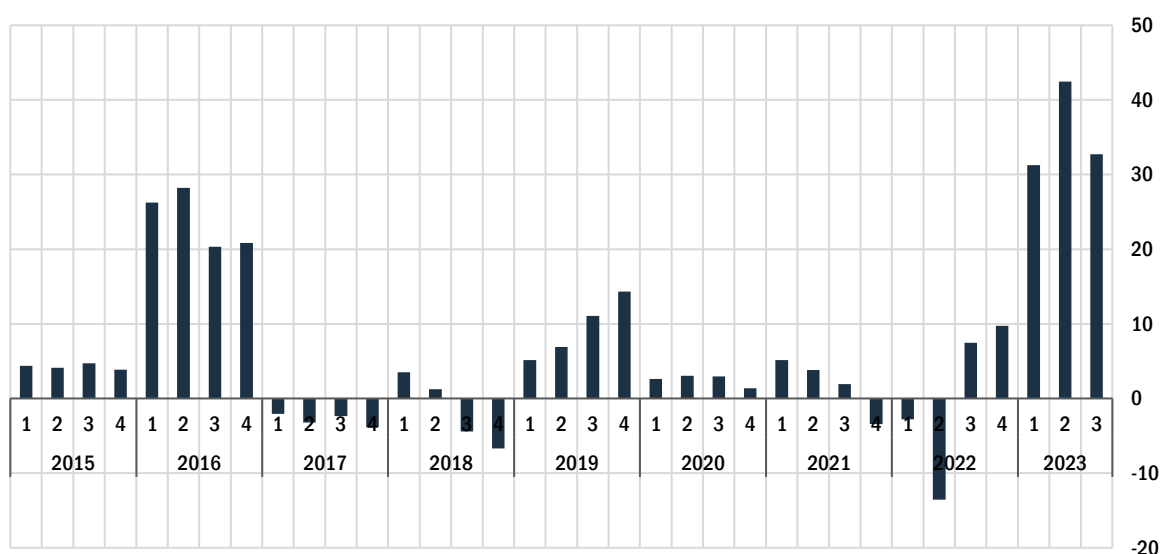


Figure 1¹ shows that minimum wage (*green*) increases are parallel to the changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (*yellow*), while a clear (positive) exception to this trend was observed in 2016. In 2021, while there was a 21% increase in the nominal minimum wage, this increase remained around 2% in real terms. Due to high inflation rates, the minimum wage was increased twice in 2022: a 50% increase in January and an additional 30% in June. Similarly, the minimum wage was increased by 55% in the first six months of 2023 and by 35% in the second six months. Despite the significant increases in the nominal wage, the minimum wage remained below inflation annually in the three quarters, but the real minimum wage continued to increase as of the third quarter of 2022 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Annual percentage changes in real minimum wages



According to the Income and Living Conditions Survey conducted by TurkStat, 50% of the median household disposable equivalent individual income is calculated as the poverty line. If these limits used in calculating relative poverty rates increase more than the minimum wage increase, it signals an extra burden on minimum wage earners. On the other hand, Figure 1 shows that the minimum wage increases and the courses of changes in the poverty line are parallel².

¹ All data in this report are retrieved from the database of TurkStat, Ministry of Labour and Social Security and Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye.

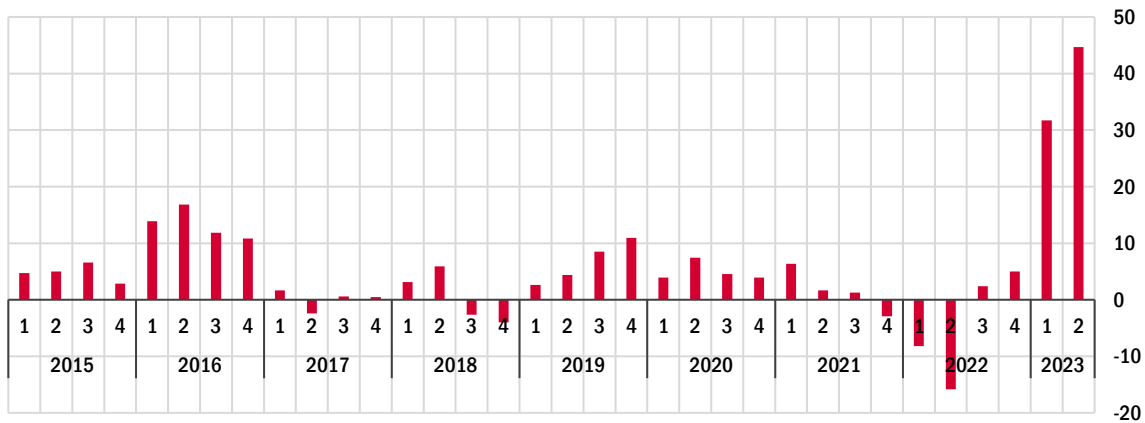
² Since the income reference period in the Survey is the previous calendar year, the comparison is made by taking this fact into account.

Figure 3. Real Earnings Index (2015=100)



Considering the development of real average earnings, it is evident that average wages across Türkiye follow a similar trajectory to the minimum wage (Figure 3 and Figure 4). The real average earnings index, increasing since the third quarter of 2022, rose by 31.7% in the first quarter of 2023 and 44.7% in the second quarter.

Figure 4. Annual percentage changes in Real Earnings Index



In summary, the practice of determining the minimum wage twice a year has positively affected the development of the real minimum wage. In addition, since the beginning of 2022, wages income up to the minimum wage level have been excluded from income and stamp tax. Although the regulation in question covers all employees, there has been a significant increase in the net wages of low-wage employees in particular. In order to prevent minimum wage increases from creating serious pressure on employers' wage costs, the minimum wage support application was put into practice.

Question 3) For States Parties with no statutory minimum wage, please describe any measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the lowest wages since the end of 2021.

Not applicable, as Türkiye has a statutory minimum wage.

Question 4) Please provide information as whether the cost of living crisis has led to the extension of in-work benefits.

Türkiye Family Support Program

The “Türkiye Family Support Program”, initiated by the Ministry of Family and Social Services in June 2022, stands out as the most comprehensive social support initiative in Türkiye. This program is designed to address poverty without additional disadvantage criteria, encompassing citizens below the poverty line and those facing challenges such as working poverty, retired poverty, and individuals below a specified income level who may not benefit from regular social assistance programs. Originally planned for 12 months, the duration of the Program was extended for an additional year by the Presidency in August 2023.

Under the Türkiye Family Support Program implemented under Law No. 3294, monthly cash support is provided to citizens in need, taking the income criteria into consideration. Additionally, households with children receive supplementary payments through the Child Support Component of the Program. Furthermore, participants in the program receive assistance related to electricity consumption.

As part of the social assistance-employment nexus, employment incentives such as “Job Orientation Assistance” and “Job Start Assistance” are provided to beneficiaries capable of working.

In the case of employment of people who have benefited from regular cash social assistance at least once within a year before starting work, the State provided social security premium support to employers for one year in line with Additional Article 5 of Law No. 3294 in order to ensure sustained employment for social assistance beneficiaries.

Employment of Disabled People in the Public Sector

In accordance with Article 53 of Civil Servants Law No. 657, titled “Obligation to Employ Disabled Personnel”, public institutions and organizations are obliged to employ 3% of their workforce to individuals with disabilities. In 2011, an amendment to this article aimed to incentivize the employment of more disabled individuals within the public sector, allowing them to become civil servants through central examinations and lotteries.

Since 2012, six central exams have been conducted every two years. These examinations are meticulously designed to assess the knowledge, abilities, and skills of disabled individuals, accounting for variations in learning capabilities, perception levels, language development, and verbal communication difficulties within different disability groups. The exams are conducted in accessible centres to ensure equal opportunities for all candidates. As of August 2023, a total of 68.108 disabled civil servants have been successfully placed in various public institutions.

Question 5) Please provide information on changes to social security and social assistance systems since the end of 2021. This should include information on benefits and assistance levels and the allocation of benefits.

In Türkiye, social security benefits and assistance programs are subject to periodic adjustments to ensure they keep pace with the cost of living. In Türkiye, there are more than 50 social assistance programs implemented for people in need, and these aid programs are delivered to needy people by the MoFSS through Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDV), based on Law No. 3294 on Social Assistance and Solidarity Encouragement and Law No. 2022 on Retirement Pension Pays for Elderly Turkish Citizens Who Are Aged 65 and Over, In a Dependent Capacity with No Relatives and No Financial Income. The social assistance programs implemented are classified as regular and temporary family aid, housing and food aid, disabled and elderly aid, health aid, education aid and project support.

On the other hand, various assistance programs such as the Türkiye Family Support Program for needy citizens, Natural Gas Consumption Support, Death Assistance, Electricity Consumption Support for Chronic Patients, Transportation Expenses Within the Scope of Educational Aids, and Subcutaneous Continuous Glucose Meter Assistance Program For Children with Type-1 Diabetes have been implemented by the MoFSS.

93% of the social assistance programs implemented by MoFSS consist of cash aid. In addition, elderly and disabled citizens who are unable to leave their homes are offered the opportunity to receive aid at their homes.

Home Care Support Allowance

The Ministry of Family, Labor, and Social Services (MoFSS) introduced “Home Care Support Allowance” in 2006 to address the care needs of economically deprived disabled individuals within a family environment. The Regulation on Home Care Support Allowance³ was prepared in this context and came into force after being published in the Official Gazette No. 32202 dated 26 May 2023. The eligibility criteria, outlined in the Regulation, include:

- The average monthly income per capita in the household should be less than 2/3 of the monthly net amount of the minimum wage.
- Individuals over 18 must have a health board report indicating “fully dependent/severely disabled” and specific conditions for children.
- A care report must demonstrate the individual's significant inability to fulfil daily life requirements without assistance.

As of September 2023, 561.752 people benefit from home care support allowance.

Old Age Pension

With the enactment of Law No. 7438 on 1/3/2023, several amendments were made to the existing legislation, specifically targeting the provisions related to old-age and retirement

³ <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2023/05/20230526-2.htm>

pensions. Notably, the modifications to subparagraph (B) of the first paragraph of temporary article 81 of Law No. 506, the second paragraph of temporary article 10 of Law No. 1479, and subparagraph (B) of the first paragraph of temporary article 2 of Law No. 2925, along with the provisions of provisional article 205 of Law No. 5434, have paved the way for individuals to qualify for old-age pensions based on criteria beyond age.

Table 1. Number of People Entitled to Old Age Pension During the Year

Number of People Entitled to Old Age Pension During the Year	
Year	Number of People
2021	444.409
2022	370.059
2023/August	1.765.245

This regulatory change has yielded a significant increase in the number of individuals benefiting from old-age pensions in 2023 compared to previous years. As of August 2023, the Social Security Institution reports that 15.5 million people are now receiving income and pensions, marking a noteworthy surge in beneficiaries.

Table 2. Monthly Increase Rates by Periods

Monthly Increase Rates by Periods			
Years	Periods	4a – 4b	4c
2021	January	8,37%	7,33%
	July	8,45%	8,45%
2022	January	25,47%	30,95%
	July	42,35%	41,69%
2023	January	30,00%	30,00%
	July	25,00%	25,00%

Furthermore, adjustments have been made to the income and pensions received by these beneficiaries. The specific periods and amounts of these increases, as detailed by the legislative changes, have contributed to enhancing the financial well-being of the recipients.

Law No. 7161, through the addition of Additional Article 19 to Law No. 5510, played a pivotal role in uplifting the financial status of pensioners. The 1.000 TL lower limit for old-age, disability, and survivors' pensions underwent substantial increments. Initially increased to 1.500 TL in 2020, it rose to 2.500 TL and then reached 3.500 TL in 2022, 5.500 TL, and 7.500 TL in 2023.

In accordance with Additional Article 18 added to Law No. 5510 by Law No. 7143, the holiday (eid) bonus of 1.000 TL, which is paid twice every year to those who receive salary and income within the scope of the Law No. 5510, has been increased to 1,100 TL. Furthermore, it was increased to 2.000 TL with Article 11 of Law No. 7447 dated 3/2023.

Table 3. Statistics of Holiday Bonus

Statistics of Holiday Bonus		
Year	Number of People	Total Payment (TL)
2021	12.993.985	24.942.923.264
2022	13.047.842	25.033.251.168
2023	14.611.365	52.068.410.958

Healthcare Benefits

Sickness-related temporary incapacity benefits, specifically designed for illness-related situations, have also increased. In 2021, the average benefit was 861 TL, which rose to 981 TL in 2022 and notably surged to 1.709 TL in 2023.

Table 4. Sickness-related Temporary Incapacity Benefits

Sickness-related Temporary Incapacity Benefits		
Years	Number of Medical Reports	Total Payment
2021	6.789.040	5.850.806.635
2022	7.768.086	7.620.776.591
2023/August	3.802.832	6.499.387.596

Benefits for Work Accidents and Occupational Diseases

Allowances for temporary incapacity due to work accidents and occupational diseases have experienced substantial growth. In 2021, the average amount paid was 1.120 TL, increasing to 1.738 TL in 2022, and further escalating to an average of 2.939 TL in 2023. These increments align with the overall rise in income and salaries.

Table 5. Allowances for Temporary Incapacity due to Work Accidents and Occupational Diseases

Allowances for Temporary Incapacity due to Work Accidents and Occupational Diseases		
Years	Number of Medical Reports	Total Payment
2021	508.839	569.974.867
2022	527.543	917.179.929
2023/August	347.491	1.021.544.669

Maternity Benefits

The breastfeeding allowance, which stood at 232 TL in 2021, also witnessed an increase to 316 TL in 2022 and reached 520 TL for the year 2023.

Table 6. Breastfeeding Allowance Statistics

Breastfeeding Allowance Statistics		
Year	Number of Medical Reports	Total Payment
2021	496.193	115.982.856
2022	505.275	160.248.487
2023/August	298.958	153.991.426

Additionally, temporary incapacity benefits received due to maternity have been positively impacted.

Table 7. Temporary Disability Benefits Due to Maternity

Temporary Disability Benefits Due to Maternity		
Years	Number of Reports	Total Payment
2021	491.581	1.793.333.427
2022	474.541	2.665.462.619
2023/August	295.237	2.819.260.100

Funeral Grants

Funeral grants within the scope of Articles 4/1-(a) and 4/1-(b) of Law No. 5510, amounting to 918 TL in 2021, rose to 1.250 TL in 2022 and further increased to 2.054 TL in 2023. Similarly, funeral grants under 4/1-(c) of Law No. 5510 have increased from 3.149 TL in 2021 to 4.473 TL in 2022 and surged to 8.240 TL in 2023.

Table 8. Funeral Grants Statistics

Funeral Grants		
Years	Number of People	Total Payment
2021	314.267	309.025.627
2022	279.499	399.041.702
2023/August	174.096	435.795.220

Marriage Assistance

In 2021, the average marriage assistance provided to individuals was 17.914 TL, which saw a significant increase to 28.423 TL in 2022 and 46.303 TL in 2023.

Table 9. Marriage Assistance Statistics

Marriage Assistance Statistics		
Years	Number of People	Total Payment
2021	21.714	388.990.511
2022	21.441	609.431.663

The Payment of Social Security Premiums

Effective from January 2022, a regulation enacted in August 2021 allows self-employed insured individuals in the agriculture sector and those engaged in agricultural work with temporary service contracts to pay their premiums on a semi-annual basis instead of monthly.

Furthermore, as a result of Law No. 7326 in 2021 and Law No. 7440 in 2023, individuals with outstanding premium debts have been provided options for repayment. They can either settle their debts in cash with a discount or choose to pay in instalments over a period of up to 48 months, with a predetermined interest rate.

Social Assistance for Young People in Need

Social assistance for young people, especially those facing disabilities, is a key focus of the inclusive education policy of Türkiye. In the initial ten months of 2023, a total of more than 63 million TL was provided to support 5.577 disabled students through scholarships, recognizing their priority status in our educational system. Moreover, in 2023, we extended scholarships to 574.085 students pursuing higher education both within the country and abroad. Additionally, we facilitated 870.369 student loans to ensure that financial constraints do not hinder the pursuit of education. Overall, a comprehensive approach was taken to support a total of 1.444.454 students through a combination of scholarships and loans, aiming to provide a safety net for both high-achieving and financially challenged students.

Question 6) Please provide information as to whether social security benefits and assistance are indexed to the cost of living, as well as information in particular on how income-replacing benefits such as pensions are indexed. Please indicate when benefits and assistance were last adjusted/indexed.

The amount of financial support provided to disabled and elderly individuals as stipulated by Law No. 2022 on Retirement Pension Pays for Elderly Turkish Citizens Who Are Aged 65 and Over, In a Dependent Capacity with No Relatives and No Financial Income as well as home care support allowance, chronic disease aid, and funeral grants are determined by multiplying the indicator figure of the aid with the monthly coefficient of civil servant salaries. These amounts are subject to periodic increases parallel with adjustments/changes in civil servant salaries.

Adjustments to social assistance provided under the Social Assistance and Solidarity Encouragement Law No. 3294 are made through Presidential Decrees, responding to periodic needs. The amount of social assistance provided to those in need significantly increased (nearly 100%) following economic challenges during and after the COVID-19 pandemic period, with the approval of the Presidential Office.

Furthermore, in order to ensure continuity of social assistance from the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASF), both periodic and additional resources are transferred. These additional resources, provided on the basis of SASF requests or proactively, aim to mitigate the adverse impact of the rising cost of living. In this regard, the additional support amounts

provided to SASF can be increased in order to provide more support to those in need against the high cost of living.

In addition to the abovementioned social assistance provided by MoFSS, invalidity, old age and survivor's pensions as well as permanent incapacity and survivor's incomes undergo routine increases in January and July each year, considering inflation figures. Additional measures may be taken when necessary to protect the purchasing power of incomes and pensions and to mitigate the adverse effects of the rising cost of living.

For example in order to protect the purchasing power of people benefiting from invalidity, old age and survivor's pensions, amendments to Law No. 5510 gradually increased the lower limit for these pensions which was 1.000 TL. In this regard,

- With the Law No. 7226 dated 25/3/2020, this lower limit was increased to 1.500 TL.
- With the amendment made by Article 13 of Law No. 7351 dated 19/1/2022, the lower limit monthly salary was increased to 2.500 TL.
- With the amendment made by Article 16 of Law No. 7417 dated 1/7/2022, the lower limit was increased to 3.500 TL.
- With the amendment made by Article 3 of Law No. 7431 dated 12/1/2023, the lower limit was increased to 5.500 TL.
- With the amendment made by Article 12 of Law No. 7447 dated 30/3/2023, the lower limit was increased to 7.500 TL.

In accordance with Additional Article 18 added to Law No. 5510 by Law No. 7143, the holiday bonus of 1.000 TL, which is paid twice every year to those who receive salary and income within the scope of the Law, has been increased to 1,100 TL, with the article 14 of the Law no. 7318 dated 29/4/2021. It was increased to 2,000 TL with Article 11 of Law No. 7447 dated 3/2023.

In accordance with Additional Article 18 added to Law No. 5510 by Law No. 7143, the holiday (eid) bonus of 1.000 TL, which is paid twice every year to those who receive salary and income within the scope of the Law No. 5510, has been increased to 1,100 TL. Furthermore, it was increased to 2.000 TL with Article 11 of Law No. 7447 dated 3/2023.

Furthermore, in order to increase the purchasing power of retirees, it was decided to pay a one-time bonus of 5.000 TL to all retirees who are not actually working.

The increase rates of pensions paid by SSI since 2021 are shown in the table below.

Table 10. Monthly Increase Rates by Periods

Increase Rates of Pension by Periods			
Year	Periods	4a – 4b	4c
2021	January	8,37%	7,33%
	July	8,45%	8,45%

2022	January	25,47%	30,95%
	July	42,35%	41,69%
2023	January	30,00%	30,00%
	July	25,00%	25,00%

When analyzing the inflation-adjusted real increase rates of these increases in the table below, it is evident that the purchasing power of pensions has been effectively preserved during this period, with pension increases surpassing inflation figures.

Question 7) Please provide information as to whether any special measures have been adopted since late 2021 to ensure persons can meet their energy and food costs, such as price subsidies for energy, fuel, and basic food items.

Several special measures have been adopted in Türkiye since late 2021 to assist individuals in coping with the rising cost of living. These measures include:

Tax Reductions

- In 2022, the VAT rate on basic food products was reduced from 8% to 1%.
- The VAT rate on electricity transmission to residential and agricultural irrigation groups was reduced from 18% to 8% in 2022.
- In 2022, the VAT rate on cleaning products and baby diapers was initially reduced from 18% to 8%, and in July 2023, this rate for cleaning products was increased to 20%.
- In 2022, the VAT rate for all food and beverage services was set at 8% and in 2023, this rate was increased to 10%.
- The VAT rate for the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines until the end of 2021 was applied as 1%.
- With Presidential Decree No. 4938 published on 21 December 2021, the practice of covering the price increases in gasoline, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) products from taxes, which was initiated in May 2018 in order to shield consumers from fuel price surges, was gradually abolished. This practice ended for diesel and LPG as of 25.12.2021 and for gasoline as of 01.03.2022.

Housing Rents

- Law No. 7409, published in the Official Gazette on June 11, 2022, introduced a provisional article to the Turkish Code of Obligations No. 6098, modifying the housing rent increase rates that were previously tied to the Consumer Price Index. Under this provisional article, any increases in the rental price during lease periods renewed between June 11, 2022, and July 1, 2023, are capped at a maximum of 25% of the rental price from the previous lease year. It is noteworthy that this regulation has been extended for an additional year.

Electricity, Fuel and Food Subsidies

- Since March 2019, the Ministry of Family and Social Services has been providing Electricity Consumption Support up to 150 kWh hours per month, depending on the number of people in the household, to meet the minimum needs of households benefiting from regular social assistance.
- Moreover, Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDVs) provide coal support to households in need covered by Law No. 3294 within the scope of heating assistance.
- The Natural Gas Consumption Support Program was launched in 2022 to support the heating expenses of households covered by Law No. 3294 or those identified by SYDVs falling in periodic need and unable to meet their basic needs. Within the scope of the program, households determined to be in need are provided support at varying amounts according to the climatic conditions of the region in 2 periods.
- In addition to this Program, expenses related to the household's natural gas consumption, up to 25 cubic meters, have been covered since May 2023. This support will continue to be applied until May 2024.
- Furthermore, in order to meet the basic needs of families in need, SYDVs provide food aid as needed, especially before Ramadan and Eid al-Adha, and throughout the year.

Question 8) Please provide up-to-date information on at-risk-of-poverty rates for the population as a whole, as well as for children, families identified as being at risk of poverty, persons with disabilities and older persons. Please show the trend over the last 5 years, as well as forecasts for upcoming years.

The Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS) spearheads over 50 impactful social assistance programs in line with the provisions of Law No. 3294 on Social Assistance and Solidarity Encouragement and Law No. 2022 on Retirement Pension Pays for Elderly Turkish Citizens Who Are Aged 65 and Over, In a Dependent Capacity with No Relatives and No Financial Income. These initiatives aim to address poverty and ensure the well-being of various segments of society, with a particular focus on preventing intergenerational poverty transfer.

Numerous social assistance programs geared towards supporting children are being actively implemented:

- Birth Assistance,
- Multiple Birth Assistance,
- Orphan Aid,
- Assistance for Military Personnel's Children,
- Türkiye Family Support Program-Child Support Component,
- Disabled Relatives' Pension,

- Conditional Health Assistance,
- Free Textbooks,
- Conditional Education Assistance,
- Free Transportation of Disabled Students,
- Educational Material Assistance,
- Housing-Transportation-Food Assistance for Students,
- Lunch Assistance,
- Dormitory Construction,
- Assistance to Cover Transportation Expenses within the Scope of Education Assistance.

Moreover, a range of social assistance programs focused on households in need are in place:

- Türkiye Family Support Program,
- Electricity Consumption Support,
- Food Aid,
- Regular Cash Support Program for Families of Military Personnel,
- Shelter Aid,
- Soup Kitchens,
- Fuel Aid,
- Terrorism Damage Aid,
- Disaster/Emergency Aid,
- Natural Gas Consumption Support,
- Death Assistance,
- Job Orientation and Job Start Assistance,
- Assistance for Martyrs' Relatives and Veterans,
- Housing acquisition and on martyrs, widows, and orphans,
- Social Housing Projects,
- Family Support Center (ADEM) Projects,
- Social Solidarity Center (SODAM) Projects,
- Accommodation Projects for Homeless People.

Furthermore, specific social assistance programs catering to disabled and elderly citizens include:

- Disability Pension,
- Disabled Relatives Pension,
- Elderly Pension,
- Home Care Pension,
- Free Transportation of Disabled Students,
- National Loyalty Program
- Disabled Needs Assistance
- Home Care Assistance for Severely Disabled Individuals (561.752 beneficiaries as of September 2023)

Individuals with incomes below a specified threshold compared to the general level of society are classified as poor in relative terms. The primary data source for “Poverty and Living Conditions Statistics” is the “Income and Living Conditions Survey”, which uses the previous calendar year as a reference for income information. In the calculation of income and poverty statistics, household incomes are transformed into “equivalised disposable household income”, accounting for factors such as household size and composition.

The table below, derived from the “Poverty and Living Conditions Statistics” published by TurkStat, illustrates the relative poverty rates based on equivalised disposable household income, covering the years 2018 to 2022.

Table 11. Poverty Rate by Equivalise Disposable Household Income, 2018-2022

Poverty Rate by Equivalise Disposable Household Income, 2018-2022					
Year of Survey	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Income Reference Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Based on 40% of the median income	7,9	8,3	8,9	8,5	7,6
Based on 50% of the median income	13,9	14,4	15	14,4	14,4
Based on 60% of the median income	21,2	21,3	21,9	21,3	21,6
Based on 70% of the median income	28,5	28,5	29	28,7	29,3
<i>TurkStat, Income and Living Conditions Survey</i>					

The table below analyses the poverty rates of the elderly population by sex, covering the years 2017 to 2021. During the period 2017-2021, there was a notable improvement in the poverty rates for both elderly men and women. The poverty rate for elderly men decreased from 13.5% in 2017 to 9.9% in 2021, indicating a positive trend. Similarly, the poverty rate for elderly women also saw a significant decline from 17.0% in 2017 to 12.6% in 2021.

Table 12. Poverty Rate of the Elderly Population by Sex, 2017-2021 (%)

Poverty Rate of the Elderly Population by Sex, 2017-2021 (%)						
Years		2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total						
	Total	20,1	21,2	21,3	21,9	21,3
	Elderly (65+)	15,5	16,4	14,2	16,7	11,4
Men						
	Total	19,6	20,5	20,8	21,3	20,8
	Elderly (65+)	13,5	14,4	12,1	15,6	9,9
Women						
	Total	20,7	21,8	21,8	22,5	21,8
	Elderly (65+)	17	17,9	15,9	17,6	12,6
<i>TurkStat, Statistics on the Elderly, 2022</i>						

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the concept of social exclusion alongside poverty. The At Risk of Poverty and Social Exclusion (AROPE) indicator has gained prominence as a comprehensive measure proposed by Eurostat within the framework of the Europe 2020 targets. AROPE is a composite indicator that corresponds to the sum of persons who are either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived or living in a household with a very low work intensity. The table shows the proportion of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion, by sex and age group for the period 2018-2022.

Table 13. Proportion at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion by Age Groups (AROPE), 2018, 2022 (%)

Proportion at Risk of Poverty or Social Exclusion by Age Groups (AROPE), 2018, 2022 (%)					
Age groups/Years	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	30,4	32,1	32,1	32,9	32,6
0-17	39,7	41,8	42,3	43,7	42,7
18-64	27,6	29,3	30,3	30,7	30,2
65+	20,8	20,5	17	16,8	20,5
Men					
Total	28,2	30,1	30	30,8	30,4
0-17	38,9	41,1	41,9	42,8	41,9
18-64	24,4	26,5	27	27,5	27
65+	18,6	18,3	15,4	15,5	18,7
Women					
Total	32,7	34	34,2	35	34,8
0-17	40,5	42,6	42,7	44,7	43,5
18-64	30,8	32,1	33,6	33,9	33,4

65+	22,6	22,3	18,3	17,9	21,8
<i>TurkStat, Income and Living Conditions Survey</i>					

Since the Poverty and Living Conditions Statistics does not compile information on persons with disabilities, poverty rates are not available for these persons.

Question 9) Please provide information on what measures are being taken to ensure a coordinated approach to combat poverty as required by Article 30 of the Charter, and to diminish reliance on last-resort relief, such as food banks and soup kitchens.

The Ministry of Family and Social Services in Türkiye is actively engaged in enhancing the accessibility of social assistance beneficiaries to various public services through the transition to the “Integrated Social Protection Era”. This comprehensive approach involves social service officers conducting household visits for citizens applying for social assistance, and sharing crucial information with the Family Social Support Program (ASDEP) staff. The ASDEP staff then informs citizens about available public services and communicates their needs to relevant institutions.

Integrated Social Assistance Information System

The backbone of this initiative is the “Integrated Social Assistance Information System”, which facilitates seamless electronic management of social assistance programs involving 29 different institutions. This system ensures efficient coordination and continuous improvement in social assistance through an expanding database.

Support for Individuals with Disabilities

In addition to addressing the requests of individuals who have difficulties in adapting to social life and meeting their daily needs due to the loss of physical, mental, spiritual, sensory and social abilities to various degrees due to any reason, whether congenital or acquired, as well as the demands of individuals with disabilities who need protection, care, rehabilitation, counselling and support services, residential care requests received from disabled individuals are determined by the Provincial Directorates of Family and Social Services and Social Service Centers based on Social Investigation Reports prepared as a result of the social investigation conducted by the social worker about the disabled person and their family in the place where the disabled person lives or is located. The procedures of abandoned/disappeared and orphaned disabled and elderly individuals with no relatives are carried out urgently.

Social Service Centers

Social service centers, affiliated with the MoFSS, play a pivotal role in providing protective, preventive, supportive, developmental, guidance, and consultancy-oriented social services. These services are provided to children, youth, women, men, men, disabled and elderly individuals and their families in cooperation with public institutions and organizations, local administrations, universities, non-governmental organizations and volunteers. Article 7 of the Regulation on Social Service Centers published in the Official Gazette dated 09.02.2013 and numbered 28554 on the functioning of these centers stipulates that one of the main duties is to

identify, support and guide individuals and families in need of protection, care and assistance to the necessary services.

Twelfth Development Plan (2024-2028):

The Twelfth Development Plan, prepared with the 2053 vision and adopted on 31 October 2023, serves as a holistic roadmap for the period 2024-2028 that mobilizes the potential of Türkiye in the centenary year of our Republic, thus ensuring the realization of the goal of sustainable and inclusive growth.

Within the framework of the Plan, the focus on “Social Services, Social Assistance, and Fight against Poverty” aims to ensure a coordinated approach to combat poverty comprehensively. The main objective is to ensure that segments of society in need have the best possible access to social services such as care, rehabilitation and psychosocial support, to increase the effectiveness of social assistance, to minimize the risk of social exclusion with a family-oriented approach, to eliminate poverty by combating all aspects of poverty, including access to basic services such as education, health and housing, and to ensure social inclusion.

In this regard, the Twelfth Development Plan defines the following key measures:

- The effectiveness of social services and assistance programs will be increased through the Family Social Support Program (ASDEP), which is designed to prevent social problems before they arise and to ensure an effective fight against these problems by strengthening the link between social services and assistance.
- By diversifying and expanding social service models, the quality of these services will be improved.
- In care services, primarily homestay or home care will be encouraged, and support services and daycare services will be expanded.
- A robust monitoring, evaluation and supervision mechanism will be established by setting standards for social services.
- Encouraging homestay or home care in care services, alongside expanding support and daycare services.
- Establishing a robust monitoring, evaluation, and supervision mechanism for social services.
- The quality of personnel operating in the field of social services will be increased and efforts will be made for specialization of personnel in the field of social services.
- Volunteerism will be encouraged by ensuring awareness of social services and assistance, and promotional and informative activities will be carried out for the participation of citizens and civil society in social services and assistance.
- Community-based care services will be prioritized in the field of social services.

- The resilience of the entire population, primarily the poor, women, children, disabled and elderly, to disasters and economic, social and environmental problems will be increased.
- To mitigate the impacts of climate change and drought-induced poverty in rural areas, agricultural activities will be diversified and effective and efficient use of agricultural lands will be ensured.

The table below shows the data for the income and living conditions survey conducted by TurkStat for the period 2022-2023 as well as the targets for 2028 in the Twelfth Development Plan.

Table 14. Relative Poverty and P80/P20 data

Value / Years	2022	2023	2028 Targets
Relative Poverty	21,3	21,6	20,1
P80 / P20⁴	7,6	7,9	6,9

Furthermore, the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) provides free lunches to students who are provided with catering services within the framework of the Student Transportation Practice through tenders, catering service procurement in line with the protocol and soup kitchens. Many students within this scope are placed in boarding houses affiliated to the Ministry. Food and accommodation services are provided by these hostels.

Question 10) Please provide information on steps taken to consult with, and ensure the participation of, the persons most affected by the cost of living crisis and/or organisations representing their interests in the process of designing of measures in response to the crisis.

The Turkish government has implemented various measures to consult with and ensure the participation of individuals most affected by the cost of living crisis and organizations representing their interests in the design/implementation of response measures.

Minimum Wage Determination Commission

Labour legislation in Türkiye has been meticulously crafted to align with the dynamic requirements of the labour market and in adherence to international norms. Necessary adjustments are made within the framework of the principle of social dialogue, ensuring a balanced representation of employers, workers, and government officials. The pivotal decisions regarding the minimum wage are entrusted to the Minimum Wage Determination Commission, a tripartite body comprised of an equal number of representatives from employers, workers, and the government.

Within this Commission, each member holds one voting right, and a simple majority vote is the requisite for decisions to attain finality, replacing the need for unanimity. This approach

⁴ P80/P20: Ratio of the income of the 20 percent of the population with the highest income to the income of the 20 percent of the population with the lowest income.

streamlines the decision-making process and ensures a responsive and efficient mechanism for minimum wage determinations.

International standards for minimum wage determination, particularly as outlined in the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), underscore the importance of harmonizing economic conditions with the demands of workers and employers. Embracing this global perspective, Türkiye endeavours to establish an optimal minimum wage, taking into account internationally accepted criteria such as purchasing power parity, the ratio of minimum wage earners to all employees, and the overall economic situation of the country.

Strategies for Disabled and Elderly People

The design of the "2030 Barrier-Free Vision Document" aimed at guiding policies for persons with disabilities involved extensive consultations with individuals, advocacy groups, and other stakeholders. The subsequent "National Action Plan on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities between 2023-2025", the implementation tool of the 2030 Barrier-Free Vision Document, was developed through multilateral cooperation, ensuring the active participation of civil society organizations representing persons with disabilities. The Presidential Circular on the implementation of the Plan was published in the Official Gazette dated 2 February 2023 and numbered 32092.

Similarly, the formulation of the "Vision Document on Ageing" and the "National Action Plan on the Rights of Older Persons" included collaboration with relevant public institutions, non-governmental organizations, and academicians. Through this inclusive approach, a range of activities and action areas were identified to address the specific needs of elderly people, contributing to the economic security of this demographic. In this direction, 183 activities determined within the scope of 51 action areas for 16 targets that take into account the age-related differentiated needs of older individuals will be implemented.

Municipalities

In the process of designing measures in response to the cost of living crisis, municipalities take several steps to consult with and ensure the participation of the persons most affected, as well as organizations representing their interests.

According to Municipality Law No. 5393 and Metropolitan Municipality Law No. 5216, everyone has the right to participate in municipal decisions and services, to be informed about municipal activities and to benefit from the assistance of the municipal administration in the place of residence.

Municipalities have various duties, including social services, assistance, housing, and vocational training, particularly targeting disadvantaged groups such as the elderly, disabled, women, children, and youth. To foster social inclusion among low-income households, municipalities deploy various forms of social assistance, encompassing cash aid, in-kind aid, health support, education aid, housing assistance, fuel aid, food provision, home care, and cleaning aid. Furthermore, both metropolitan and district municipalities shoulder the responsibility for critical infrastructure, such as health centres and hospitals, and are actively

involved in providing social and cultural services, vocational courses, and support for individuals with disabilities.

In the design and implementation of social services and social assistance, municipalities have implemented various strategies to ensure active participation and consultation with those most affected by the cost of living crisis:

- **Establishment of Communication Channels:** Municipalities have set up accessible communication channels such as telephone hotlines, online platforms, and WhatsApp lines, as well as physical application desks in municipal offices.
- **Involvement of Neighbourhood Mukhtars:** Neighbourhood mukhtars play a crucial role in identifying individuals in need within their communities. They notify the municipality, facilitating the delivery of aid directly to those affected.
- **Collaboration with NGOs:** Municipalities actively collaborate with local non-governmental and voluntary organizations to enhance outreach and support mechanisms.
- **Engagement through Local Assemblies:** Local city councils, neighbourhood assemblies, or working groups provide a platform for residents to convey their needs and demands to the municipality. These groups also play a vital role in fostering increased participation, transparency, and collaboration in decision-making processes within the municipality, ensuring a more inclusive and effective governance model.
- **Voluntary Participation:** Programs encouraging voluntary participation and cooperation with NGOs are implemented to enhance community involvement and solidarity.
- **Coordination with Schools:** Municipalities collaborate with school administrators to identify needs within the educational community and implement targeted measures.

The Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (UMT) has also taken proactive steps to engage with and ensure the participation of individuals and organizations most affected by the crisis. With 1393 municipalities as natural members, UMT operates at the national level and plays a crucial role in shaping municipal service units to meet the needs of citizens.

Recognizing the importance of citizen involvement in administrative processes, UMT organizes various initiatives such as training sessions, awareness-raising programs, and forums for sharing good practices and experiences related to participation mechanisms. These efforts are aimed at incorporating the diverse needs of different segments of the population into municipal plans and programs.

In line with their commitment to strengthening civic engagement, UMT has established a Participation Working Group. This group focuses on enhancing the capacities of municipalities regarding citizen participation. As part of their initiatives, UMT is currently implementing the Strengthening Civic Engagement for Enhancing Democratic Local Governance in Türkiye Project, which is funded by the European Union (EU) and conducted in collaboration with the

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) Directorate General for Relations with Civil Society.

This project specifically aims to improve civic participation, increase the involvement of civil society in decision-making processes, and create a roadmap for the Ministry of Interior on volunteering. Importantly, the project includes the provision of grants to civil society organizations to foster collaboration with municipalities, ultimately enhancing cooperation between local governments and civil society in addressing the challenges posed by the cost of living crisis.

Social Housing

In Türkiye, addressing the housing needs of low- and middle-income groups and disadvantaged populations is a priority. The Housing Development Administration of the Republic of Türkiye (TOKİ) plays a significant role in providing social housing with favourable payment conditions. The focus is on disadvantaged groups, including low- and middle-income families, persons with disabilities, families of martyrs, and pensioners.

TOKİ employs design principles such as "horizontal architecture" and the "neighbourhood concept" to create socially comfortable environments. The organization collaborates with local administrations for urban renewal projects and has delivered over 1,3 million social houses between 2003 and October 2023, constituting 88% of social houses in Türkiye.

TOKİ also offers social facilities along with housing projects, including schools, universities, hospitals, and more. The ownership right remains with TOKİ until the purchaser's debt is fully paid, minimizing default rates. TOKİ ensures the affordability of housing through reasonable prices and payment plans tailored to the financial capacity of target groups.

TOKİ launched the Social Housing Initiative on 13 September 2022: a total of 500 thousand social houses, 1 million housing plots and 50 thousand workplaces are planned to be built during the period between 2023 and 2028. Under this Initiative, progress is being made in the construction, contracting, and delivery of social housing, land projects, and workplaces while more than 62 thousand houses have been delivered to their right holders.

To address the cost of living crisis, TOKİ's projects offer repayment alternatives with low down payments and long-term instalments, aligned with citizens' monthly income and savings. Additionally, interest-free housing loans are provided to specific groups, such as martyrs' families and citizens with disabilities.

Furthermore, in response to the earthquake in Kahramanmaraş in February 2023, TOKİ promptly initiated the construction of permanent houses to meet urgent housing needs in the affected areas, demonstrating a commitment to addressing crises. As of October 2023, approximately 111.590 houses have been tendered by TOKİ in 11 provinces affected by the earthquake, and the tender process for 8.877 houses is ongoing. It is planned that a total of 37.356 houses will have been delivered in the earthquake region at the beginning of 2024.