

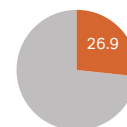
## “Country recommendation

Türkiye should take measures to develop social work practices that include prevention, protection, and intervention in children's well-being at micro and macro levels.

Country  
Profile 2023



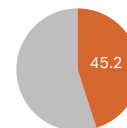
# Türkiye



**Child Population:**

**22,738,300**

26.9% of total population (2021)



**Child Poverty:**

**10,283,297**

45.2% (2021)

▲ +1.8% compared to 2020

**RESPONDENT ORGANISATION(S):**

Hayat Sende Youth Academy Association

## Children's Rights in Türkiye

The Ministry of Family and Social Services is responsible for Children's Rights in Türkiye. It is also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the principles and provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

There is a [sub-committee](#) covering different topics of children's rights in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM).

### Child participation

Eurochild member Hayat Sende observes that meaningful participation of children in Türkiye appears to be lacking. Despite the government's numerous programmes aimed at promoting children's participation, it seems that these initiatives do not genuinely prioritise and value the opinions of children.

### Child safety and well-being online

The Ministry of Family and Social Affairs in Türkiye has launched a [campaign](#) aimed at safeguarding children online, and different projects are currently underway to protect children in various aspects of their lives. However, a critical challenge in ensuring the protection of children in the digital realm is the lack of awareness among families and teachers about their crucial roles in keeping children safe online. Further, the scarcity of quality time that families spend with their children also serves as an additional barrier to children's protection.

### Child protection system

In Türkiye, the Ministry of Family and Social Services plays a central role in child protection and alternative care processes. Caseworkers, the majority of whom are social workers, assess the socioeconomic and psychological well-being of children and their families. The process usually commences with

the Ministry of Family, but the protection order is granted by the Ministry of Justice based on social inquiry reports.

Two key national laws govern the field of child protection: [Child Protection Law 5395](#) and [Social Services Law 2828](#). Most regulations related to children's rights are derived from these laws. However, while these legislations outline measures for children growing up under state protection in detail, they offer limited guidance for children from other vulnerable groups. Specific groups such as children in contact with the law, refugee children, and children with disabilities are mentioned in the legislation, with the expectation that they will benefit from various services. Unfortunately, these laws lack a detailed framework for implementation.

More comprehensive legislation is required tailored for each of these groups of children. In the absence of detailed legal frameworks, circulars issued by the Ministry are often used as guidelines.

However, these circulars are typically not made accessible to the public and do not offer a holistic service implementation model. Consequently, different interpretations arise, depending on individual perspectives within the Ministry. This has negatively impacted the accountability of implementation.

The Child Protection Law encompasses five primary injunctions, or state interventions, designed to ensure the protection of children. These injunctions are applied in some cases when children remain with their families and in other cases when they are placed in alternative care. In 2021, 607 children were placed under care, while 6,107 children received support through these injunctions:

1. Counselling Injunction: Training and psychosocial support for parents concerning the care of their children.
2. Education Injunction: Special monitoring of a child's school attendance.
3. Care Injunction: Protection and care of children under state

- supervision in alternative care.
4. Accommodation Injunction: Shelter provision for individuals with children or pregnant women.
  5. Health Injunction: Guarantees the child's access to health services and ongoing health monitoring.

In the execution of these injunctions, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Labor share responsibilities with the Ministry of Family and Social Services.

Although the legislation assigns responsibilities for child protection based on a division of tasks among these various ministries, in practice, child protection is often treated as the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Family and Social Services.

The capacity of the child protection system is inadequate. Following the war in Syria, mass migrations, and earthquakes, the number of children requiring protection

has surged. However, the system's capacity has not grown accordingly. Consequently, the system currently only offers immediate protection and lacks preventive measures, counselling, empowerment, and more. There is a significant absence of coordination among governmental bodies responsible for monitoring children at risk.

The welfare of at-risk children and those under state protection is of utmost concern. The protection system exhibits delayed responses to potential risks, leading to the identification of many children as victims of violence and abuse at an advanced age. Furthermore, there is a notable absence of monitoring and follow-up of services. For instance, modifications are introduced annually to the alternative care system, yet authorities do not assess its effectiveness. There are no consequences for professionals who fail to safeguard children, resulting in a system reliant on the discretion

of individuals. This, in turn, fosters a reckless approach among professionals.

Another substantial issue within the child protection system is the conflation of various disciplines such as social work, psychology, and sociology. While each possesses distinct skill sets, the government has enacted laws that categorise all these professions as 'social work/services officers'.

Consequently, individuals from diverse backgrounds, including teachers, sociologists, psychologists, social workers, and even nurses working within the Ministry of Family and Social Services are tasked with responsibilities that should be carried out by trained social work professionals. This situation has adverse consequences, as teachers or sociologists are ill-equipped to identify and intervene effectively with traumatised children. Ultimately, children suffer as a result of this practice.

## Children impacted by war and conflict

The child protection system applies uniformly to all children, regardless of their nationality, whether they are citizens from Türkiye or not. All children, including Ukrainian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghan children, receive equal support in Türkiye. However, a significant issue arises for children under state alternative care. Children from Türkiye, upon leaving state care, have access to various financial and employment opportunities.

However, children of other nationalities do not have access to these services after they reach the age of 18. This is problematic because continued support after leaving care is crucial for the well-being of these children.

## Children's mental health

Currently, there is no comprehensive strategy in place to safeguard the mental health of children. While hospitals do have psychiatrists, psychologists,

and social workers, access to these professionals is often limited to families who visit the hospital. Government hospitals, in particular, allocate very brief periods for mental health care, typically around 10-15 minutes.

Private mental health services come with high costs, making it challenging for families to access qualified care when a child requires mental health support. Additionally, identifying children in need of mental health assistance is difficult due to the absence of implemented prevention and protection strategies.

## Education

Mental health supports for children in schools also appear to be lacking in Türkiye. This is especially important given the widespread effect that digital products have on children's and teenagers' mental health. Teachers often struggle to identify and intervene when children are at risk. Although schools have counsellors (known as PDR teachers - Psikolojik Danışmanlık

ve Rehberlik), they may be unable to provide comprehensive assistance to children and families, due to schools and community systems lacking the necessary tools and support structures.

Hayat Sende strongly recommends the introduction of social workers within schools. Their holistic approach and understanding of children's support needs can help prevent and mitigate risks more effectively.

## Poverty and Social Exclusion – Experiences of children, families, and communities

### Child poverty in Türkiye

Türkiye has a total child population of 22,738,300 (2022). In 2021, the child poverty rate stood at 45.2%, marking an increase in child poverty levels from 2020 (43.4%).

This surge in poverty across Türkiye can be primarily attributed to economic disparities and

imbalances in recent years. The repercussions of this trend include a heightened risk of neglect, child abuse, child labour, and early marriages within impoverished families. The most effective means of mitigating these risks is for adults to actively participate in the labour market and secure an adequate income. Without this, safeguarding children from these hazards becomes exceedingly challenging. Children residing in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, those raised by single parents, Roma children, and migrant children are particularly vulnerable.

## Countries in Accession

Every year, the European Commission publishes the Enlargement Package that assesses the state of play in accession countries, including progress concerning upholding human rights and children's rights. Eurochild and Hayat Sende contributed to the [2023 consultation on the Enlargement Package](#) to provide a child-rights perspective and insights on the

situation for children in need. To address the pressing issues in Türkiye, the five policy priorities have been identified:

1. Stabilising the economy and providing financial support for families and communities to ensure a stable economic environment - extending financial support to families and communities are essential steps to alleviate child poverty.
2. Implementing prevention and protection initiatives at the local level to establish prevention and protection mechanisms in localities such as villages, neighbourhoods, and rural areas to safeguard vulnerable children.
3. Establish community-based support structures to assist families and children in need.
4. Expand the social work profession to address emerging needs of children such as abuse and bullying and develop the prevention programmes and counselling for children at risk.
5. Ensure adequate education and skills for professionals involved in social services, psychological support, and prevention

programmes. Regular monitoring and evaluation by responsible public authorities is needed to ensure children receive the best quality support.

Influencing national policy is a complex endeavour. This complexity arises from the constant changes that occur with each new ministerial appointment. While Hayat Sende has been invited by the government to participate in various policy meetings and have proposed several policy initiatives, it remains a challenging and uncertain process. While it shows promise, participation in these meetings does not guarantee the shaping of policy.

Furthermore, Eurochild member from Türkiye is actively engaged in several EU-funded projects aimed at driving positive change:

- the [Hand in Hand, Empowering You](#) project to strengthen the organisation's capacity and eliminate the labelling and discrimination faced by young people.
- the [UN Women, Strong Civil Society](#) project aims to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women and girls in public and private spaces.
- the [Let's Break Down Social Walls](#) project, with the support of the European Union's Civil Thinking Programme, aims to address erroneous discourses in the media and society towards children and young people under state protection and create a common more constructive communication with and for these children and young people.



Eurochild advocates for children's rights and well-being to be at the heart of policymaking. We are a network of organisations working with and for children throughout Europe, striving for a society that respects the rights of children. We influence policies, build internal capacities, facilitate mutual learning and exchange practice and research. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is the foundation of all our work.



**Eurochild**

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