



Between Risks and Opportunities: Social Policies in Contemporary Turkey

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1 Introduction

Studies on social policy and social expenditures are increasingly attracting researchers across the world. In Turkey, such studies have increased pronouncedly since the early 2000s. These studies have generally taken the form of case studies on specific policy areas – such as poverty, retirement, or health (Agartan 2012; Aysan 2013; Ceylan 2016) – rather than that of broader studies addressing the social policy system as a whole, though there have also been more extensive studies with conceptual and often ideological motives (Bugra and Adar 2008). Both sorts of studies have their flaws. While case studies are inadequate for researchers to situate macro social changes and social policy transformations correctly, more

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conceptual but non-empirical studies have generally been limited to generic criticisms of neo-liberalism.

In fact, no systematic study on the main roles of the welfare regime in Turkey has ever been published. This short chapter offers a modest step in this direction, focusing on the social policies of Turkey since the 2000s. It is based on a nation-wide empirical study (N: 1630) entitled “Understanding the Welfare Regime of Turkey: Institutions and Individuals” (Aysan 2016a). This study aimed to understand the effects of various welfare players, particularly social policy institutions, on welfare distribution and citizens’ welfare perceptions and satisfaction levels. In addition to the quantitative data obtained during the study, interviews with citizens and experts working in public and private institutions contributed a qualitative element to the research.

When social policies in Turkey are examined over the 2000s, two dominant trends stand out. First, it is possible to talk about a path dependency in the social policy regulations of the contemporary period. Populism and a family-centred social policy perspective constitute the foundation of this continuity. Hence, due to this path dependency, there has been confusion about the types of reforms and the logic of social provisions preventing the institutionalisation of social policies in Turkey. Secondly, there has been a remarkable increase in public social spending since the 2000s, which cannot simply be explained by the populism of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) or by the transition of the Turkish welfare regime to a Social Democratic one. The main causes of this rapid increase in public social spending include Turkey’s status as a latecomer welfare state, its increasing levels of prosperity, and structural factors such as an ageing population and new social risks leading to the rapid increase in public social spending in the 2000s. Hence, recent developments in Turkey’s social policies and social spending must be explained not only through global developments but also through the country’s own endogenous characteristics.

This paper consists of three main parts. The first part will detail the basic characteristics of the Turkish welfare regime and contemporary social policies. The second part will focus on the five basic pillars of social policy –education, social security, health, social services, and housing – to show how the basic arguments highlighted in the previous paragraph have

dominated Turkey's policy implementations since the 2000s. The third part will offer a brief discussion of some of the challenges facing sustainable social policies in Turkey and offer recommendations for addressing them.

2 The Main Characteristics of the Turkish Welfare Regime and Social Policies in Turkey

The welfare state classification has occupied much of the welfare state research focusing on social expenditures, inequality, and the commodification of public services since the 1990s (Esping-Andersen 1990; Ferrera 1996; Korpi and Palme 1998; Trifiletti 1999; Scruggs and Allan 2006). In light of these studies, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries can be examined in four welfare regime clusters: the social democratic, liberal, continental European, and southern European. Researchers have also studied and conducted comparative research on other parts of the world, especially post-Soviet countries or eastern Europe (Deacon 2000), East Asia (Gough 2001; Walker and Wong 2005), and the Middle East (Jawad 2009; Aybars and Tsarouhas 2010), which often have diverse historical and institutional characteristics that affect welfare distribution.

In welfare regime classifications, some comparative studies analyse Turkey under the southern European or Mediterranean welfare regime (Gough 1996; Bugra and Keyder 2006; Gal 2010; Aysan 2013), while others consider it to be part of the Middle Eastern group (Aybars and Tsarouhas 2010). Whether it is considered a member of these groups or not, the Turkish welfare regime has undergone substantial transformations since 2000. These changes stem both from global socio-economic determinants and from other factors that are peculiar to the social structure and demographic characteristics of Turkey.

One of the essential characteristics of the Turkish welfare regime is the role of families in the management of social risks, which has parallels with southern European and Middle Eastern countries. The Turkish welfare

regime can be characterised by a preference for family solutions to welfare problems. In this regime, people rely primarily on their families, some extended forms of kinship, or other social networks. In addition to the family, another important player in the Turkish welfare regime is local actors. These can take the form of a particular religious group or a network of people who migrated from the same rural region. The influence of religious values and regional ties is especially significant in the provision of social welfare in Turkey.

During the Ottoman period, *vakıfs* (foundations) undertook social responsibilities that the state did not or could not fulfil. Their services extended into the areas of education, health, shelter, infrastructure, and religion. Even though most of them have since disappeared, their functions continue to be carried out by non-profit organisations and non-governmental organisations heavily influenced by religious and traditional values. Such organisations provide social services both for Turkish citizens and for people in need outside of the country.

Another important feature of the Turkish welfare regime is the role of populism and patronage in welfare distribution. According to Ferrera (1996) and Gal (2010), populism and patronage in southern European countries are linked to historical commonalities, particularly those related to the process of political mobilisation and the establishment of state institutions in these countries. In countries like Turkey that experienced a rapid urbanisation process and high rural–urban domestic migration, populism and patronage are considered to be a general welfare distribution mechanism, where welfare benefits are offered in return for political support in elections. These clientel relations have been strengthened by ongoing political tensions among political parties and ideologies as well as by weak political institutions, especially in the 1980s and 1990s. For example, the decision to lower Turkey's official retirement age in 1992 was a populist move that negatively affected the long-term sustainability of the pension system and public budget (Aysan 2013). In cases like these, despite financial risk in the long term, politicians use populist policies to gain a majority of electors' votes for upcoming elections. Such populist policies are not peculiar to right-wing parties; on the contrary, they have been championed by all political parties in the 2010s. In the 2016 general-election campaigns, for example, one of the opposition parties prom-

ised a tremendous increase in the minimum wage and pension benefits without any economic explanation of how it would happen.

In Turkey, due to the historical strength of statist economic policies, the market did not have a significant role in any aspect of social life, especially in welfare distribution, until the 1980s. With the implementation of export-oriented industrialisation and neo-liberal policies, the private sector started to flourish after the 1980s. Parallel to neo-liberal trends in the world, new economic policies led to the privatisation of state-owned enterprises, the rise of subcontracting, and increasing flexibility in labour markets. These new policies affected welfare distribution in Turkey in two important ways. First, the state gradually withdrew from its important welfare role as an employer through the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. Second, neo-liberalism led private entrepreneurs to invest in various sectors that had traditionally been dominated by the state, such as healthcare and education. These trends brought new challenges to workers in relatively secure and well-paid jobs in the public as well as private sector.

Four main pillars determine the distribution of the welfare: the state, the family, the market, and local actors such as non-profit organisations, associations, and foundations. Figure 1 shows the role of these

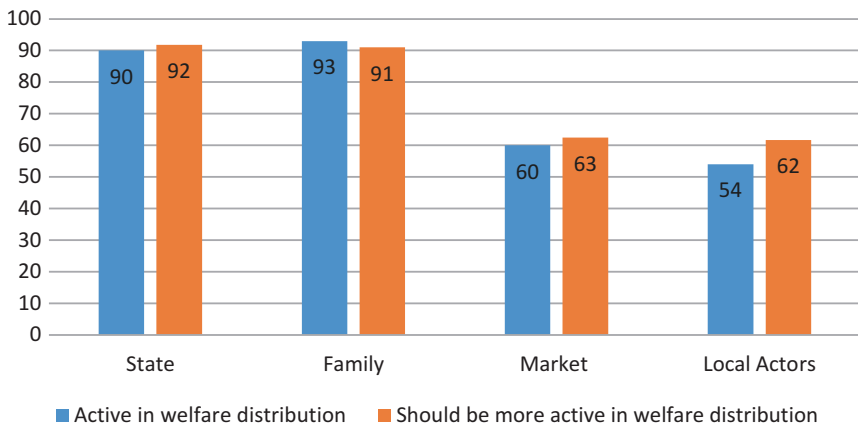


Fig. 1 The role of welfare actors in welfare distribution in Turkey (%), 2016 (Source: Aysan 2016a)

four welfare actors in Turkey. Family (93%) and the state (90%) are the most important welfare actors in Turkey, while market (60%) and local actors (54%) are less significant players in welfare distribution. When asked their view on the role these actors should play in future, 92% of respondents said that the state should play a more active role in welfare distribution; 91% said the same of the family, while 63% and 62% said the same of the market and local actors, respectively.

Although some researchers have described Turkey as a residual and weak welfare state (Bugra and Keyder 2006; Bugra and Adar 2008), the Turkish state has a significant role in welfare distribution, particularly in the areas of health, social security, and social services. The family is another important player in welfare distribution in Turkey, and people want these two players to continue their welfare roles. Even though market and local actors do not contribute to the welfare system in Turkey to the degree that the state and family do, they still serve some welfare distribution functions. In light of these four players, the main characteristics of the Turkish welfare regime can be summarised as follows:

- (1) Welfare is distributed through state- and family-centred institutional mechanisms.
- (2) Local actors based on traditional and religious values, such as non-profit organisations or religious or ethnic groups, have welfare functions.
- (3) The market has a relatively minor but increasing role in welfare distribution.
- (4) Populism and patronage are two important welfare distribution forms used by governments.

3 The State and Social Policies in the Early Twenty-First Century

According to Ferrera and Rhodes (2000), the erosion of ideological consensus and economic crises have led to a recasting of European welfare states. Economic globalisation has generated a debate on neo-liberal convergence, as states increasingly make cuts to their social expenditures and

people come increasingly to rely on the market for social services. The privatisation of social services and the individualisation of social risks are the main markers of the neo-liberalisation process. The convergence approach asserts that European welfare states' adoption of policies of retrenchment and neo-liberalisation has led to a process of neo-liberal convergence. Hence, the extent to which welfare regimes are stable and path dependent is under debate as a result of the neo-liberalisation process in various welfare regimes.

An analysis of public social expenditure is one way to assess these neo-liberalisation arguments. According to the OECD (2008, 499), public social expenditure is the provision of benefits and financial contributions by public institutions to households and individuals to provide support during circumstances that adversely affect their well-being, provided that the provision of these benefits and financial contributions constitutes neither a direct payment for a particular good or service nor an individual contract or transfer. Table 1 shows public social expenditure as a percentage of GDP in the OECD region and Turkey between 1980 and 2013. Turkey devoted only 4% of its GDP to public social expenditure in 1980, in contrast to the OECD average of 14.9%. Old-age and survivor spending, which covers pensions and other types of cash and in-kind benefits, was one of the biggest spending areas among these expenditures. The weight of this expenditure area increased, particularly in Turkey, from 2.3% in 1990 to 8.2% in 2013. Another important expanding policy

Table 1 Public social expenditure and selected branches as percentage of GDP, 1980–2013

	Turkey					OECD				
	Health	Age	Family	Other	Total	Health	Age	Family	Other	Total
1980	1.4	1.3	0.6	0.7	4.0	4.2	5.7	1.5	3.5	14.9
1985	0.8	1.4	0.5	0.5	3.2	4.2	6.2	1.5	4.6	16.5
1990	1.5	2.3	0.9	0.8	5.5	4.4	6.4	1.6	4.5	16.9
1995	1.8	2.7	0.2	0.9	5.6	4.7	7.0	1.8	5.3	18.8
2000	2.9	4.0	0.2	0.6	7.7	4.9	6.8	1.8	4.5	18.0
2005	3.5	6.0	0.3	0.5	10.3	5.4	6.8	1.9	4.7	18.8
2010	4.2	7.7	0.4	0.5	12.8	6.0	7.8	2.3	5.0	21.1
2013	4.0	8.2	0.4	0.8	13.4	6.0	8.2	2.1	4.8	21.1

Source: OECD (2017)

area is health services. In 2013, 4% of GDP in Turkey and 6% of GDP in the OECD was spent on public health services. Hence, contrary to some researchers who argue that there has been a retrenchment of the welfare state (O'Connor 1973; Offe 1984; Mishra 1999), the social expenditures of the welfare state have not decreased. In the Turkish case, public social spending increased from 4 to 13.4%, the highest increase in the OECD region, between 1980 and 2013.

According to Spicker, social policy focuses on the provision of social services, and the welfare state provides social services through the big five social policy areas: education, social security, health, social services, and housing (1995, 3). Important social policy reforms occurred in these areas during the 2000s. In Turkey, social security and health reforms in 2006 and the establishment of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in 2011 were particularly important in helping to cope with long-term demographic and economic problems. The following section will analyse these five social policy areas to provide a better understanding of the social policies being implemented in them and any changes that have taken place to these policies over the past decades.

3.1 Education

Education is principally considered in terms of schooling, though in actuality it extends far beyond this to various sorts of training aimed at social development and employment. While the main emphasis within this is on children, there is scope for education for all age groups through the lifelong learning approach (Spicker 2014, 152). The Turkish National Education System consists of formal education and non-formal education. While formal education refers to the regular education conducted within a school for individuals in a certain age group, informal education provides all people regardless of their education level and age with the opportunity for education to help them adjust to scientific, economic, technological, and cultural developments.

According to statistics from the Ministry of National Education (2017), the formal education system has improved significantly since 2002. The percentage of primary-school-age children enrolled in school increased from

91% in 2002–2003 to 95% in 2015–2016. The number of students going on to higher education increased from 15% in the 2002–2003 academic year to 41% in 2015–2016. During this period, a number of important new laws and administrative reforms were implemented. Compulsory education was expanded to 12 years as of the 2012–2013 school year. The number of teachers also increased significantly, and the infrastructure of schools was improved. For example, the student–teacher ratio in primary education improved from 28:1 in 2002–2003 to 18:1 in 2016–2017. Similarly, the student–teacher ratio in secondary education improved from 16:1 in 2002–2003 to 13:1 in 2016–2017. The number of students per class was also lowered through the creation of new schools. Even though the total number of secondary-school students increased from 2.4 million to 5.2 million between 2002 and 2017, the number of students per class declined from 30 to 20 during the same period.

During the 1990s and 2000s, the market started to play a more active role in welfare distribution in the educational sector in Turkey. The number of students in private schools increased nearly eightfold from 51,000 to 390,000 over the period between 2002 and 2017. In the 2016–2017 academic year, 15% of all types of schools from kindergarten to high schools were private schools, which covers about 8% of all students (TURKSTAT 2017). In 2017, there were 112 public universities, 65 private universities, and 6 private vocational schools in Turkey.

3.2 Social Security

Despite efforts to address the fragmented structure of the Turkish social security system in 2006, the system maintains a threefold structure, with the Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu (Social Insurance Institution, henceforth SSK) for blue-collar workers, Emekli Sandığı (Retirement Fund, henceforth ES) for white-collar employees working in public institutions, and Esnaf ve Sanatkarlar ve Diğer Bagimsiz Calisanlar Sosyal Sigortalar Kurumu (Social Security Institution for Craftspeople, Tradespeople, and Other Self-Employed People, henceforth Bag-Kur) for craftspeople, merchants, agricultural workers, and other self-employed people.

In 1950, active insured people who contributed to the social security system and their dependents constituted only 4% of the total population. The institutionalisation of social security services led to an increase in the insured population over the following decades. By 2015, the percentage of insured people (active insured, dependents, and pensioners) increased to 86% of the total population (Social Security Institution 2017). Nevertheless, the total number of active insured people contributing to the system has not increased considerably over the past 70 years. The significant increase in the total insured population has been due mainly to an increase in pensioners and dependents. In 2015, the active–passive (insured–pensioner) ratio was only 1.92 to 1.0 (Social Security Institution 2017).

Pension income is provided by the state for those who have paid old-age pension premiums. Pension benefits are central instruments that help the state distribute welfare (Aysan 2013). The Turkish state plays a more active role in the welfare of older people than of other age cohorts. In spite of Turkey's relatively young population, the share of public pension spending in total government expenditure is relatively higher in Turkey compared to more aged populations such as Canada and Denmark.

Owing to various systemic changes based on populist measures, the retirement system for the young Turkish population has faced many problems since the late 1960s. A 1992 law replaced the minimum age requirement for retirement with a minimum period of attachment to the social security system. The 1992 legislation effectively brought down the pension eligibility age to 38 for women and 43 for men for those who started to work at the age of 18. Therefore, owing to the option for early retirement, Turkey has the longest average period of pension eligibility among OECD countries (OECD 2011, 29). Numerous changes in pension laws show how populism has played an important role in pension policies. Most of these pension laws were passed before elections in order to get political support. These early retirement policies also highlight the populist characteristics of the welfare regime. These populist regulations were promoted by the governments not only as a gift for current employees who retired at very young ages but also as an employment opportunity for unemployed youth. Considering the present high unemployment rates for the 15–24 age group in Turkey, which stood at 21.9% in April

2017 (TURKSTAT 2017), increasing conflicts in domestic politics, and global economic fluctuations, it seems likely that similar populist regulations will once again be implemented in the near future. Hence, as Esping-Andersen (1999) and Myles (2002) have shown for the continental and southern European welfare regimes, early retirement options have been used by governments to reduce persistent high unemployment rates.

3.3 Health

Healthcare is another significant service that influences the well-being of citizens through social security. Basic healthcare is provided by the state for those who pay social security premiums. Spouses and dependent children of the insurant also enjoy healthcare benefits through three different social security institutions (ES, SSK, and Bag-Kur). The AK Party government first introduced a 10-year health system reform called the health transformation programme, which aimed to develop a public universal healthcare system for all citizens. Various reforms during the 2000s increased the number of social services provided by the market. For example, the healthcare reform, Law 5502 on Universal Health Insurance, was enacted in 2006. This law, which accompanied Law 5510 on Social Security and Universal Health Insurance, aimed to unify the health services of different occupation-based social security institutions (ES, SSK, and Bag-Kur). These new reforms led to a rapid expansion of health insurance coverage and access to healthcare services for all citizens, especially for the poor in Turkey (Atun et al. 2013). In addition to dependents of insured people, the poor and children under 18 years are entitled to benefit from the same healthcare services without paying social security premiums. When dependents and people who have general health insurance are included, the healthcare system covered 98% of the total population as of 2015 (Social Security Institution 2017).

The proportion of government and compulsory health insurance schemes as a percentage of current expenditures on health increased from 70% in 2002 to 77% in 2015, while the OECD average increased only from 72 to 73% during the same period (OECD 2017). The total number of medical institutions rose from 9,685 to 30,449 between 2002 and 2015.

During the same period, owing to the increase in the number of medical institutions, the number of hospital beds per 1,000 people increased from 2.48 to 2.66. Healthcare improvements such as the introduction of family-medicine-centred primary care, the expansion of hospital capacity, and health-insurance coverage for the poorest citizens increased the quality of healthcare services and helped lower mortality rates. Life expectancy at birth for both sexes increased from 72 to 78 between 2002 and 2015, while infant mortality (deaths per 1,000 live births) declined from 29.6 to 10.7 in the same period (OECD 2017).

3.4 Social Services

Social services are a range of public services provided by the state, market, and voluntary organisations to deal with the social risks individuals, families, and communities may face in their life course. The main objective of social services is to increase the individual and collective well-being of citizens. Care that necessitates a variety of types of personal and medical assistance and counselling is a key part of social services. In Turkey, the Ministry of Family and Social Policies provides three principal groups with care services: people with disabilities, children, and older people.

Long-term care service is the institutional care provided by state or private organisations. With the new incentives provided by the state for private nursing homes, the number of private nursing centres increased gradually from 10 in 2007 to 156 in 2015. The number of clients at such centres also increased rapidly from 351 to 10,823 during the same period. In contrast, the number of official nursing centres run by the ministry tripled from 64 to 203, and the total number of clients who received services rose from 4,000 to almost 7,000 during the same period. Hence, the increase in state-based nursing centres is relatively lower compared to the significant increase in private nursing centres and home-based nursing.

In spite of the significant increase in institutional formal care, there is considerable evidence that informal care substitutes for formal care. Long-term care at home has been mostly carried out by mothers and daughters who have limited or no education (Aysan and Aysan 2016).

Nevertheless, the number of applicants for long-term, care at home options have increased since such an option was first established in 2007. While there were about 30,000 people with disabilities who received homecare support in 2007, this increased to 508,000 in 2015. Since new people are receiving information about homecare support in increasing numbers, the number of homecare beneficiaries is projected to increase in the near future. The total amount paid by the state for homecare nursing increased from 35 million Turkish lira (TL) to 3.8 billion TL between 2007 and 2015.

The gendered division of labour also affects the labour force participation rates of women in Turkey. This is mainly due to a lack of childcare support for families and the traditional role of women in childcare. In Turkey, early childhood education and care are centralised under the authority of the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Despite an emphasis on increasing the availability of services and programmes for young children and families since the early 1990s, preschool remains non-compulsory and the preschool enrolment rate among children aged 3–5 is very low, at 31% in 2015 (OECD 2015). For children aged 0–35 months, there is no public provision of childcare services mandated by law. For children aged 36–47 months, public provision of childcare services is very limited. Moreover, full-day childcare options are mainly provided by the market, while public preschools generally operate either in two half-day shifts or only on a half-day basis (World Bank 2015, 22). The high cost of institutional childcare is another problem for Turkish mothers. Public care services are very limited in terms of age (for all mothers) and hours of operation (for working mothers in particular).

3.5 Housing

According to Spicker (2014), the root of many problems in Europe is a shortage of adequate housing. This shortage means that households have to fit into a limited number of available dwellings, which are often expensive for middle-income citizens. Many of the key issues in deprivation and inequality are related to housing and neighbourhood characteristics.

In Turkey, the Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı (Housing Development Administration, henceforth TOKI), established in 1984, is the key public institution responsible for providing affordable housing for citizens. New regulations in the early 2000s helped TOKI to broaden its scope. Today, TOKI operates in various fields, such as social housing, urban renewal projects, disaster housing applications, migrant dwellings, and income-sharing projects, based on a revenue-sharing model.

This new scope and new development strategy led to a significant increase in the number of houses constructed by TOKI. While approximately 44,000 residential buildings were produced by TOKI between 1984 and 2002, it constructed over 500,000 residential units between 2003 and 2011. TOKI aims to construct an additional 700,000 housing units by 2023 (TOKI 2017).

A detailed analysis of TOKI projects shows that it is mostly upper-middle-class citizens who benefit from TOKI projects. About 41% of the social housing projects benefited the targeted middle-income groups, while only 23% were for the low-income group. Urban transformation projects have recently become increasingly significant, with 15% of housing projects done by TOKI. Resource-development projects developed in partnership with big construction companies are also an important part of TOKI's activities. About 17% of its housing projects are produced through such collaborations, yet these houses are generally very expensive even for middle-income citizens.

4 Policy Recommendations for the New Challenges Ahead

According to Pierson (2007), there are three main challenges –globalisation, demographic changes, and new social risks – for the welfare regimes of the twenty-first century. These problems are also valid for Turkey. First, globalisation has given rise to various economic challenges to the post-Second World War economic system. The production system has evolved from a Fordist one based on large stocks (just-in-case), standardised products, and mass production to a post-Fordist production system based on

flexible machinery, lean production, minimal stocks (just-in-time), and differentiated products (Krahn et al. 2007). In addition, the characteristics of the labour market have changed since the 1980s. Rifkin (2004) interpreted technological developments and deskilling as the main characteristics of a new era in which fewer workers are needed to produce goods and services. Competitive global trade and profit maximisation goals have led multinational companies to move their production to newly industrialising countries that have less regulation and job security. The impact of outsourcing and the increase in precarious jobs also have a significant impact on unskilled workers and their social security in Turkey.

Second, the continuing change in the demographic structure of the Turkish population poses noteworthy challenges in terms of meeting the needs of the ageing population. Population ageing has a negative effect on economic growth owing to the old-age dependency ratio – the ratio of the population aged 65 and older to the population aged 15–64. In the contemporary world, it is difficult for ageing populations to sustain generous retirement benefits and increasing health costs due to slow economic growth. The Turkish welfare regime faces a double burden. First, despite its younger population, its pension system suffers from budget deficits (Aysan 2013, 158). Second, according to projections, Turkey will have lost its demographic opportunity by the 2050s, meaning that the financial constraints on the pension system will become more intense. Despite the significant progress of a 2006 reform in achieving a sustainable and fair social security system, more needs to be done to encourage standard employment opportunities and intergenerational justice.

Third, new social risks, particularly changes in family formation and gender roles, pose important challenges to welfare regimes (Pierson 2007, 222–223). Welfare in Turkey has traditionally been distributed on the basis of the gendered division of labour in the family, reproducing the well-known male-breadwinner model (Aysan 2013). Men have been responsible for meeting the economic needs of the household, while women have been responsible for unpaid domestic labour and caring for children and older people (Aysan and Aysan 2016, 43). However, this situation is changing. The rise in women's educational level and rates of participation in the labour force has challenged traditional gender roles in society as well as within families. Especially in the early twenty-first

century, Turkish families underwent rapid changes, such as increased flexibility in modes of entry into and exit from the labour force, increased variability in work-force participation across families, changes in the social meaning of fatherhood and motherhood, and new associations between gender and family earnings (Koc et al. 2015; Aysan 2016b). Changes in family structure and increases in labour force participation among young and educated women challenged the family's dominant role in traditional welfare distribution in Turkey. Another important social challenge has been the huge migration flows from Syria and other neighbouring countries into Turkey. As of 2017, there are over 3 million immigrants in Turkey. In addition to the security issues these migrants pose, their social and economic adaptation to Turkey will pose some of the greatest challenges for the Turkish welfare regime in the years ahead.

Alongside these three global trends, two other challenges peculiar to the Turkish welfare regime limit the success of social policy reforms: populism and patronage. As highlighted earlier, populism and patronage have been two indirect welfare distribution mechanisms since the beginning of Turkey. Governments use them not only to secure citizens' electoral support but also to distribute welfare in a developing and rapidly urbanizing country. These welfare mechanisms now pose a significant threat to the sustainability of social policies and recent gains in social citizenship. Both politicians and citizens must work hard to get rid of these traditional and archaic welfare mechanisms.

In light of these challenges and the global and local dynamics with which they are intertwined, some regulations can be proposed for the Turkish case. While some of the regulations are relevant to the challenges pointed out in this article, some of them are key to improving social policies and associated institutions. Their successful implementation will be crucial for the future of the Turkish welfare regime:

1. The Ministry of Family and Social Policies must be the central actor in social policies, and its institutional infrastructure must be developed.
2. Longitudinal and cross-sectional data on social assistance, social policies, and the needs of citizens must be collected regularly.
3. Comprehensive and detailed social policies must be designed to meet the overlapping needs of various groups.

4. Equity and justice must be the key determinants of social policies for all types of groups, whether based on gender, ethnicity, age, class, or religion.
5. There must be sustainable social policies that will not threaten inter-generational equity and younger generations' welfare.
6. New policies and regulations that address the needs of different types of families must be developed to strengthen families.

5 Conclusion

This study has argued that the Turkish welfare regime is undergoing significant transformations through the impact of internal and external dynamics. Contrary to what has been documented in other countries, it is difficult to argue that the Turkish welfare regime has transformed either into a liberal welfare regime dominated by market actors or into a social democratic welfare regime based on a universalist and rights-based system. While Turkey's EU accession process, ageing population, and increasing living standards have led the state to play a more active role in the welfare of citizens, its increasing social expenditures have forced the state to collaborate with other actors, particularly the market. Populist policies and family-centred regulations – used in the 1990s by various parties – remain valid welfare distribution mechanisms in the 2010s.

In light of the particular challenges Turkey faces in the twenty-first century, further empirical research is needed to elaborate the Turkish welfare regime. Given the multiple challenges facing the Turkish welfare regime, any research contributing to the literature must have a broad and analytical perspective. Comparative studies focusing on Turkey and other welfare states are especially needed to understand how and in what ways the Turkish case differs from that of other welfare regimes. Such comparisons can also help Turkey to draw lessons from ageing welfare states where welfare institutions are already well established and their responses to similar socio-economic challenges in the twenty-first century.

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