

**YOUNG  
WOMEN  
BUILDING  
THEIR FUTURE**

WHITE PAPER

**Policy Recommendations  
for Young Women Not in Education,  
Employment, or Training  
(NEET) in Türkiye**



# Policy Recommendations for Young Women Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) in Türkiye

## White Paper: Policy Recommendations for Young Women Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) in Türkiye

© All rights reserved. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Ankara, March 2025.

This publication may be used and reproduced for educational and non-commercial purposes without written permission from the copyright holder, provided the source is cited. It cannot be reproduced for sale or commercial purposes without permission.

### United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Address: Oran Neighbourhood, Mustafa Fehmi Gerçeker Street, No:12, 06450, Çankaya, Ankara / Türkiye  
Phone: +90 (312) 454 11 00  
www.undp.org/turkiye

Prepared by: Prof. Dr. Kezban Çelik, TED University

Contributors: Dr. Hülya Bayrak, Arzu Karaarslan Azizoğlu, Dr. Aslı Çoban, Aslı Aygün Gürsoy, Deniz Şilliler Tapan, Simla Yavaş

Design: www.markapala.com

### Citation info:

White Paper: Policy Recommendations for Young Women Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) in Türkiye, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), March 2025, Ankara.

White Paper: This White Paper was prepared under the "Young Women Building Their Future Project" implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Sabancı Foundation, in partnership with the Ministry of Family and Social Services and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and supported by the Sabancı Foundation. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Sabancı Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), or the Republic of Türkiye.



You can click on the section you want to access.

You can return to this page by clicking on the sign  in the bottom left corner of each page.

# List of Figures

# List of Graphs



You can click on the figure or graph you want to access.

# Abbreviations

EU	European Union
ADNKS	Address-Based Population Registration System
MoFSS	Ministry of Family and Social Services
MoLSS	Ministry of Labor and Social Security
MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
ILO	International Labour Organization
İŞKUR	Turkish Employment Agency
DAs	Development Agencies
KOSGEB	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NEET-Y	Not in Education, Employment, or Training or Youth Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
MoH	Ministry of Health
PBoS	Presidential Directorate of Strategy and Budget
CHCs	Community Health Centers
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SODES	Social Support Program
GNAT	Grand National Assembly of Türkiye
TESK	Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen
MoAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
TOBB	Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye
TÜBİTAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye
TURKSTAT	Turkish Statistical Institute
NES	National Employment Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
NSP	National Internship Program
WHO	World Health Organization
CoHE	Council of Higher Education



# Foreword

The sustainability of social and economic development is directly tied to the presence of a qualified workforce and inclusive participation in the labor market. In recent years, the issue of young women who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) has emerged as a pressing concern in Türkiye, as it has globally, amidst rising inequalities. Women's participation in education and employment not only enhances their individual economic outcomes, but also significantly impacts economic growth, social development, and overall societal well-being.

In this context, the "Young Women Building Their Future Project" was implemented by the Sabancı Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Ministry of Family and Social Services (ASHB) and the Ministry of Labor and Social Security (ÇSGB) between 2021 and 2024. The project aimed to raise awareness of the problems and needs of NEET women aged 18-29 in Turkey at both the local and national levels and to develop mechanisms that focus on these problems and needs. The project conducted a comprehensive needs and problems analysis specific to NEET women. Based on this analysis, 6,000 NEET young women were reached over three years through capacity-building training, opportunity mapping, mentoring, and a grant program, contributing to the inclusion of 836 young women in the workforce.

According to the project's impact analysis, participants experienced significant increases in self-confidence, awareness, empowerment, employability, and psychological resilience. Using the Social Return on Investment (SROI) method, it was calculated that every 1 Turkish Lira invested generated 4.1 TL in social value-amounting to an annual social value creation of 45 million TL.<sup>1</sup> Since the project's implementation, a noticeable increase in research and initiatives addressing NEET women's issues has been observed. In addition to boosting visibility, one of the project's key objectives was to integrate this issue into both local and national agendas in a holistic manner. As a result, the 'White Paper' was prepared to present policy recommendations for NEET young women. This White Paper consists of two main parts. The first examines the historical development of the NEET concept, alongside international and national policy practices. The second presents key findings on NEET women in Türkiye, how the issue is addressed, and ultimately, policy proposals. Research in Türkiye demonstrates that young women's NEET status is influenced by numerous factors. However, given the large gap between young women and men in terms of employment participation and NEET rates, it appears that women and men equality is one of the key determinants of NEET status. In this regard, the policy recommendations developed in the White Paper have been prepared using a multi-dimensional, multi-sectoral, and holistic approach that addresses the problems and needs faced by NEET young women in their education, employment, and social participation processes from a women and men equality perspective.

While preparing the White Paper, in addition to reviewing studies on the subject in the relevant literature along with project outputs, a comprehensive field study was conducted. In the field study, in-depth interviews were conducted with NEET women in the project's target group, local project stakeholders, and project partners. In addition, a consultation workshop was held with the participation of relevant international organizations, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations. On this note, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to all project partners, local stakeholders, relevant international organizations, public institutions, and civil society organizations (CSOs) representatives who contributed to the preparation of the White Paper.

We hope this document will serve as a foundation for the development of national and local policies that promote equal access to education and employment for NEET young women, and that it will contribute as a guiding framework in the design of future services and projects aligned with these policies.



# Executive Summary

In emerging economies and evolving social structures, women's participation in education and employment is one of the key drivers of sustainable development. The formation of a qualified workforce and an inclusive approach to employment not only contribute to economic growth and productivity, but also enhance creativity-and therefore competitiveness-through increased diversity in the labor market. Women's presence in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields significantly promotes the mobilization of national potential in critical areas such as innovation, digital transformation, and the green transition. Beyond economic life, women's participation in social and cultural life helps reduce inequalities across various domains, strengthens social inclusion, and contributes to greater societal peace and well-being.

The issue of young women who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET) is considered one of the leading challenges in many parts of the world, driven by changes in technology, demographics, and the economy. Türkiye ranks among the countries with the highest NEET rates for young women within the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development). In 2024, the global NEET rate for the 15–24 age group was 20.4%, with the rate at 13.1% for young men and 28.2% for young women.<sup>2</sup> In Türkiye, the NEET rate for youth aged 15–24 is 22.9%, with 16.2% for males and 30.1% for females.<sup>3</sup> Among the 18–29 age group in Türkiye, 30% of youth, 17% of men, and 43% of women are classified as NEET.<sup>4</sup>

Many studies conducted to identify the challenges and needs of NEET young women in Türkiye have revealed that this group is heterogeneous due to differences in age, region, socioeconomic status, and cultural background. While there are numerous individual, familial, and environmental factors behind the higher proportion of NEET women compared to men, inequality between women and men in Türkiye appears to be one of the most significant determinants of this disparity. NEET young women face structural barriers such as limited access to education and employment opportunities, early school leaving, exclusion from the labor market due to caregiving responsibilities, workplace discrimination, and being marginalized from secure and productive jobs. Numerous national policy and strategy documents-including the Sustainable Development Goals-emphasize the importance of providing quality education through an inclusive and equitable approach, empowering girls and women to promote women and men equality, and ensuring sustainable economic growth by promoting decent working conditions.

Within this scope, the Young Women Building Their Future Project aims to make the challenges and needs of NEET young women aged 18–29 in Türkiye more visible and to support their empowerment by designing mechanisms tailored to these challenges and needs. As part of the project, in addition to fieldwork and training activities carried out with local and national stakeholders in pilot provinces, various services implemented across the country have enabled close observation of the diverse problems and needs of NEET young women. The effectiveness of the developed intervention tools was assessed, and other related studies were also reviewed. Considering that the NEET status among young women is shaped by the interrelated dynamics of multiple overlapping factors, there emerged a clear need to develop targeted policy recommendations for this group. This policy document aims to offer comprehensive and actionable recommendations to identify the challenges NEET young women in Türkiye face in education, employment, and participation in public life throughout their life course, to define their needs, and to support their effective engagement in these areas from a women and men equality perspective.

<sup>2</sup> ILO, 2025, World Employment and Social Outlook Trends ✨

<sup>3</sup> TURKSTAT, 2025. Youth neither in education nor in employment or training (NEET) by gender and education status-aged 15-24. Retrieved from TURKSTAT (TÜİK) data portal ✨

<sup>4</sup> TURKSTAT, 2024. Youth neither in education nor in employment or training (NEET) by gender and education status-aged 18-29 ✨

## METHOD

The study on identifying project stakeholders and their suggestions aimed to develop recommendations for the White Paper, highlight challenges experienced at the local level, and offer solution proposals for the issue of NEET young women in Türkiye. In line with this goal, a qualitative research method and specifically semi-structured interviews, which are one of the most commonly employed techniques of this method, were utilized. Within this scope, interviews were planned around three main target groups: i) experts and key stakeholder interviews, ii) face-to-face interviews with NEET young women and trainers participating in the project, and iii) online interviews with mentees and mentors involved in the mentorship program. Additionally, online interviews were conducted with two project coordinators involved in the supported grant program within the project, providing access to a rich dataset concerning both field applications and the experiences and recommendations of project implementers. The collected data set was primarily used as the foundation for the recommendations developed within the scope of the project.

As part of the research, interviews were conducted in the three pilot provinces where the project is being implemented. These interviews were carried out with the support of the field coordinators from each pilot province, and meetings were held with project stakeholders including institutions, NGOs, and local governments in each province. The purpose of the interviews was to understand the overall progress of the project, challenges encountered during implementation, as well as aspects that are going well and those needing improvement. During the interviews, the purpose was clearly communicated, and with consent obtained under appropriate conditions, the interviews were recorded.

### Expert and Key Stakeholder Interviews:

These interviews aimed to understand the details of the support, services, and training provided to NEET young women, evaluate the achievements, and identify areas for improvement. Interviews with experts and stakeholders representing public institutions, the private sector, and NGOs involved in various aspects of the project used an interview form composed of open-ended questions.

### Face-to-Face Interviews with NEET Young Women and Trainers:

Interviews were conducted with young women and trainers who participated in the vocational training organized in the pilot provinces in collaboration with local stakeholders. The interviews assessed the skills acquired by the young women and trainers through the trainings, the content of the trainings, the qualifications of the trainers, post-training job search processes, and the challenges faced.

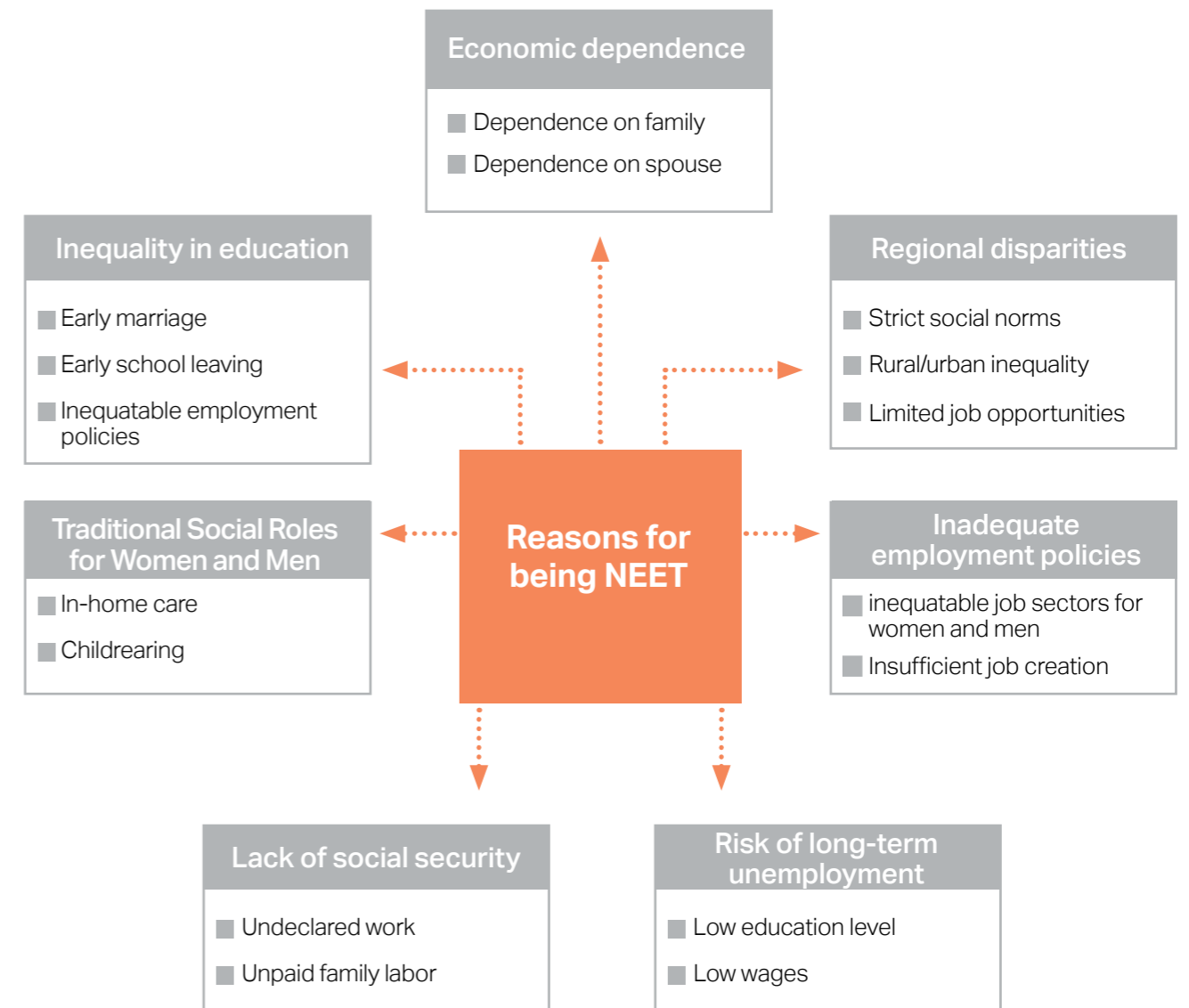
### Mentorship Program:

The mentorship program run within the project aims to bring together NEET young women and women working in various advanced career sectors to support young women's participation in the workforce and their personal development. In this context, online interviews were conducted with mentees and mentors participating in the program to evaluate its operation, contributions, and areas for improvement.

### Why are young women more likely to be in NEET status?

The main issues raised in discussions with project stakeholders can be summarized as follows:

Figure 1. Reasons why women are more likely to be in NEET status



## FINDINGS

The findings and policy recommendations identified in the White Paper regarding NEET young women can be summarized as follows:

**NEET youth rates are among the indicators with the largest disparities between women and men.** Türkiye, when compared to the employment participation rates of the total population and youth, the gap between NEET rates for young women and men shows a much wider divide between women and men. This situation highlights that dynamics between women and men play a major role in the formation of NEET status.

**The NEET status has effects that spread across all stages of life.** From a life cycle perspective, it's apparent that deficiencies in education, employment, and social participation during youth will accumulate over the years and create lasting impacts on individuals.

**The life-stage impact of NEET status must be fully recognized.** Longitudinal studies that reveal all dimensions of this life-course effect should be conducted. Moreover, initiatives that raise awareness among young women, families, and society need to be put into action.

**Solving the NEET young women issue will seriously reduce inequality between women and men in Türkiye.** In this respect, the relatively high prevalence of NEET status among young women reveals that inequalities between women and men in income, employment, and career success are driven by this dynamic in Türkiye. Furthermore, drastically reducing the number of young women classified as NEET has the potential to create a major momentum toward eliminating inequalities between women and men across all stages of life.

**The issue of NEET young women is multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional.** The reasons why young women get pushed into NEET status and can't get out are deeply rooted in inequalities between women and men spread across all social institutions and processes. Solutions, therefore, must also be holistic, targeting many institutions at once. For this reason, there's a need for a multi-sectoral, multi-actor policy and action plan supported by necessary resources and time-bound goals as well as a mobilization effort based on this plan.

**Continuity of education for women is one of the key vulnerabilities between women and men.** Studies in the literature show that women's continuation in education is more sensitive compared to men, influenced by family preferences, economic status, accessibility of education, and expectations from education. For families, ensuring girls' and young women's access to education often requires more detailed arrangements deemed appropriate for their sexes and ensuring their safety. These arrangements can become more difficult and fragile due to factors like daily mobility needed to attend school, living and accommodation needs in another city, safety concerns for young women, and conformity to behavioral norms based on women and men. In the case of Türkiye, post-COVID-19 data shows that the NEET rate among women with lower education levels has not yet returned to 2019 levels as of 2023 (TÜİK, 2023). This situation calls for equality-sensitive policies to monitor and facilitate access to and continuity in education.

Moreover, developing policies that include case-based studies and prioritizing investments aimed at increasing girls' access to education are becoming increasingly important.

**Early school dropouts cause women to be socio-economically inactive.** Girls and young women leaving education early are much more likely than boys and young men to enter a period of economic inactivity. Early marriages and/or young women's unpaid labor within the household-taking on housework and caregiving-render women's absence from the paid economy invisible or justifiable, allowing it to continue. Efforts for young women to return to education, participate in training programs, or enter employment become more difficult because these initiatives also require solving the problem of the resulting unpaid labor gap at home. Social norms about men and women that place the entire burden of unpaid care and housework on women, along with insufficient external support services, create a household demand for women's labor that pulls them away from education and the labor market. Meanwhile, marriage significantly increases the likelihood of young women being NEET, while it sharply limits this risk for men. Ultimately, the NEET status of women is more persistent and harder to overcome compared to their male peers.

**Discrimination against women and inequalities in the labor market render women's employment more fragile, thereby increasing the risk of becoming NEET.** Disadvantages between women and men in labor force participation and job retention are among the key reasons why young women are disproportionately represented in the NEET category. Gender-based disparities in education fields also place women at a disadvantage in accessing STEM-related, high-status professions and jobs. Due to societal biases suggesting that young women may not remain in the workforce long-term, it is well-known that they often struggle to access the same status-level jobs as their male peers during the hiring process. Moreover, assumptions that they may interrupt their professional or career lives lead to their being channeled into lower-skilled, lower-status positions-ones that can be quickly filled by others if they leave. For the same reasons, the investment employers make in developing women's skills and career paths also tends to remain limited. The employment opportunities available to women and men at the level of jobs, occupations, and positions are reflected in the wage gaps between women and men that exist in the market.

**Addressing the NEET issue requires tackling informal employment, workplace discrimination, and violence.** Undeclared work is also more common among women and increases their vulnerability in the labor market. Since these jobs do not involve adherence to protective and supportive legislation-such as maternity leave-they often result in women quickly withdrawing from working life in cases of pregnancy, work-related accidents, illness, or emergencies within the family. Furthermore, insurance coverage, especially long-term insurance schemes, fails to have an encouraging effect on job continuity. The insufficient dissemination of equality policies aimed at combating discrimination and harassment in the workplace-outside of large, institutional companies and the public sector-is another source of women's negative work experiences and challenges regarding job continuity.

**Addressing the NEET issue depends on strengthening women's employment.** All these factors contribute to job opportunities available to women being less attractive compared

to those available to men. Low-paid jobs with no career path and lacking job security-when combined with the burden of unpaid domestic work-create a powerful dynamic that makes it more difficult for women to exit NEET status. At this point, the importance of all initiatives aimed at ensuring women's access to declared, secure, high-status jobs that include rights related to leave and work-life balance becomes evident. Strong and urgent intervention is needed to combat direct and indirect forms of discrimination that steer women toward jobs deemed 'appropriate for women' and often of lower status. In addition, labor force skill development and reskilling programs aimed at integrating women into high-status jobs should be designed and implemented strategically and based on data.

**Women's first work experiences influence their risk of becoming NEET.** Women's first work experiences influence their risk of becoming NEET. The importance of the first paid work experience in shaping women's attitudes toward employment in a positive way was also highlighted in the needs and problem analysis conducted within the scope of the Young Women Building Their Future Project. Experiences gained in jobs that could be considered indecent work-such as informal, temporary, low-skilled, precarious jobs without protection policies-negatively affect women's perceptions of working life and can undermine their motivation to cope with all the other challenges posed by negative social norms and domestic burdens. On the other hand, it has been observed that women working in such so-called 'bad jobs' and who are at risk of becoming NEET in the future still tend to express feeling happier and more hopeful compared to women currently in NEET status.

**Preventive interventions are just as important as corrective ones.** Another key point highlighted by global experience and the evaluation of the literature is that, in relation to the issue of NEET women, preventive approaches are more effective and more cost-efficient than corrective ones. In this context, it is of great importance that risk management and monitoring approaches are given as much space as corrective programs in solution-oriented initiatives.

**Programs focusing on "return" to education and employment should be developed.** Facilitating women's return to both education and employment is a fundamental requirement in addressing the issue of NEET young women. Expanding catch-up programs in both schools and the labor market-particularly those targeting women who have dropped out of education or employment-can effectively convey the message "it's not too late" to the intended group of young women. This, in turn, can help prevent the prolongation and deepening of NEET status.

**Social support programs should aim to empower women in the labor market.** In social support programs designed to address poverty and welfare needs, it is essential to avoid explicitly or implicitly encouraging women's withdrawal from education, employment, or public life, or their engagement in undeclared work. These support mechanisms must be integrated with context-appropriate activation programs that specifically target women. Combating social norms that expect women to be the sole and unpaid caregivers responsible for household and care work, and instead guiding them toward active roles in public life, should be among the core and cross-cutting principles of the social support system.

**Stereotypes suggesting that women should assume household care responsibilities render the phenomenon of NEET women invisible.** The social belief that women should primarily take on unpaid domestic duties-on their own-and that their participation in the labor force is only desirable under certain conditions and as a secondary priority lies at the root of why the NEET woman phenomenon is often perceived by society as invisible or insignificant. This perspective finds both implicit and explicit reflections within the social policy regime. For this reason, public policies and interventions must systematically and emphatically convey the message that women are active participants in education, employment, and social life, and that their socioeconomic inactivity is neither normal nor acceptable. This approach should aim to eliminate societal blind spots and inertia.

**Solutions addressing the care economy have a multiplier effect in solving the NEET issue.** Within the social protection system, it is urgently necessary to develop solutions that do not assume women's withdrawal from education and employment due to unpaid domestic care work and family emergencies. Institutional and home-based care systems aligned with principles of family unity, intergenerational justice, active aging, and independent living for children, the elderly, the sick, and individuals with disabilities will both reduce women's unpaid care burdens and enable them to achieve higher employment rates by working in emerging jobs in this sector. The widespread availability of reliable, high-quality, and accessible daycare centers and preschools that operate in harmony with working hours will rapidly increase women's labor supply. Such initiatives, by creating an equitable foundation for child development and ensuring intergenerational justice, will also prevent young women, especially those expecting to have children, from sliding into NEET status. Similarly, care services tailored to the diverse health and social needs of the elderly and disabled, delivered on an individualized basis, will facilitate women-often the primary caregivers in families-in maintaining their careers and employment. Solutions developed in the care economy and investments in this sector will strengthen governance by defining the roles and contributions of new actors such as civil society, social enterprises, and the private sector. Alongside regulations for workforce training and matching, this will contribute to the emergence of a new, robust sector in which women play active roles in management and implementation. Efforts in this field will also provide key solutions to demographic challenges such as rapid population aging and declining fertility rates in society.

**Empowering women within the family supports their continuity in employment.** When women gain strength and autonomy within the family, they not only gain greater control over their own lives but also contribute to healthier decision-making regarding the household, children, and family life. Expanding access to health and social care services that support women in planning pregnancies, accessing pregnancy-related healthcare, and making decisions about child-rearing conditions is critically important for helping women balance family responsibilities with their professional lives.

**NEET young women do not form a homogeneous category.** When analyzing the issue of NEET young women, it's crucial to recognize that this category does not represent a uniform whole. First off, the experience of being NEET varies from person to person, creating a unique

trajectory and touching on different sociological challenges in each individual's personal story. Systematically examining the entire process leading to this status from a life-course perspective is a fundamental requirement for designing inclusive programs. Additionally, solutions must be tailored to individuals facing multiple disadvantages or inequalities. Women living in rural areas, women with disabilities, migrant women, young women from marginalized groups, those exposed to violence, and early mothers are some of the groups who experience NEET risk and status differently. It is essential that policy designs specifically consider the unique needs of these groups, ensuring they are included among the target beneficiaries.

**The issue of NEET young women is not merely a subtopic.** Although NEET young women share many challenges with their male peers in the same status, their experiences and the outcomes of those experiences differ significantly. Moreover, the issue of NEET young women should not be framed solely as an unemployment problem, considering that these young women often move repeatedly and rapidly between periods of employment and unemployment. Therefore, instead of placing the NEET young women problem as a subcategory under broader headings such as NEET status or youth unemployment, addressing it as a standalone issue within the agenda of women's empowerment will yield more effective results. The so-called "trickle-down" approach—which assumes that policies not differentiating between women and men will also benefit women—significantly limits its impact because the NEET women issue has unique dynamics on sexes. Similarly, in solution programs addressing general issues like youth unemployment or NEET status, biological sex effects must be rigorously evaluated. Through an inclusion-mainstreaming approach, it is essential to assess how and to what extent NEET young women or those at risk of NEET status benefit from these programs, ensuring that program designs carefully plan for this impact.

**Changes should be turned into opportunities for NEET young women.** The transformation dynamics of today, with all their risks and possibilities, should be viewed as a window of opportunity for solving the NEET women issue. The agendas of digital transformation, just transition, and green jobs should be integrated with perspectives focused on empowering women in the jobs of the future and strengthening the care economy. Young women represent a crucial yet underutilized talent and workforce that must be mobilized amid the major societal and economic transformations underway. Moreover, women's employment acts as a stabilizing factor during periods of upheaval and crisis experienced by families, communities, and businesses, thereby enhancing societal resilience. The care economy not only reduces the unpaid care burden on women, unlocking this vast potential, but also represents one of the most resilient occupational groups against the risk of elimination due to digital and other technological advancements. In this respect, it holds the power to regulate labor markets and sustainably improve social welfare.

**NEET young women are key players of today and tomorrow.** Women who are currently NEET or at risk of becoming NEET should not be seen merely as a disadvantaged group, but rather as a large population experiencing the deepest effects of social and structural inequalities. The young women confronting the NEET issue today hold the potential to boost the well-being and

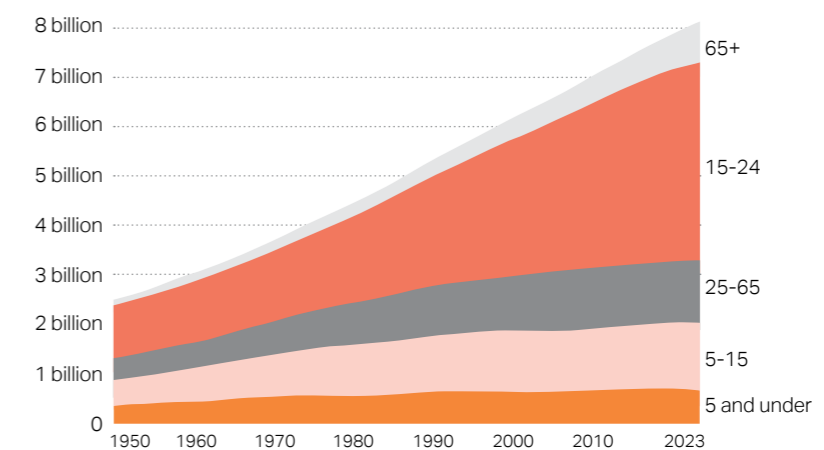
resilience of tomorrow's society. It is crucial both for society and institutions to recognize that they share in this positive potential, and for young women themselves to realize their capacity to contribute—starting from their own lives and extending to broader social and economic spheres. This awareness is vital for shaping a brighter, stronger future.

Beyond identifying the NEET young women issue in Türkiye, the White Paper aims to develop solution-oriented national and local policies with the participation of all stakeholders, strengthen policy advocacy, and lay the groundwork for project development.

# 1 Introduction

About 15% of the world's 8.1 billion people are youth aged 15-24, making this the "largest youth population" in history. Since the 1960s, with mass education and longer compulsory schooling, the share of higher education graduates in the population has been rising globally-though it varies by country-and today's youth are the "most educated young generation" compared to previous ones. While young people are staying in education longer, their participation in the workforce is dropping, widening the gap between youth and adult unemployment rates. Although youth unemployment varies geographically, it's generally trending upward, and in 2023, the estimated youth unemployment rate was 3.5 times higher than that of adults.<sup>5</sup>

Figure 2. Change in World Population by Age Group over Time (UN World Population Prospects, 2024)



Data source: UN, World Population Prospects (2024) OurWorldinData.org/population-growth | CC BY

### Youth Unemployment Rate Compared to Adults



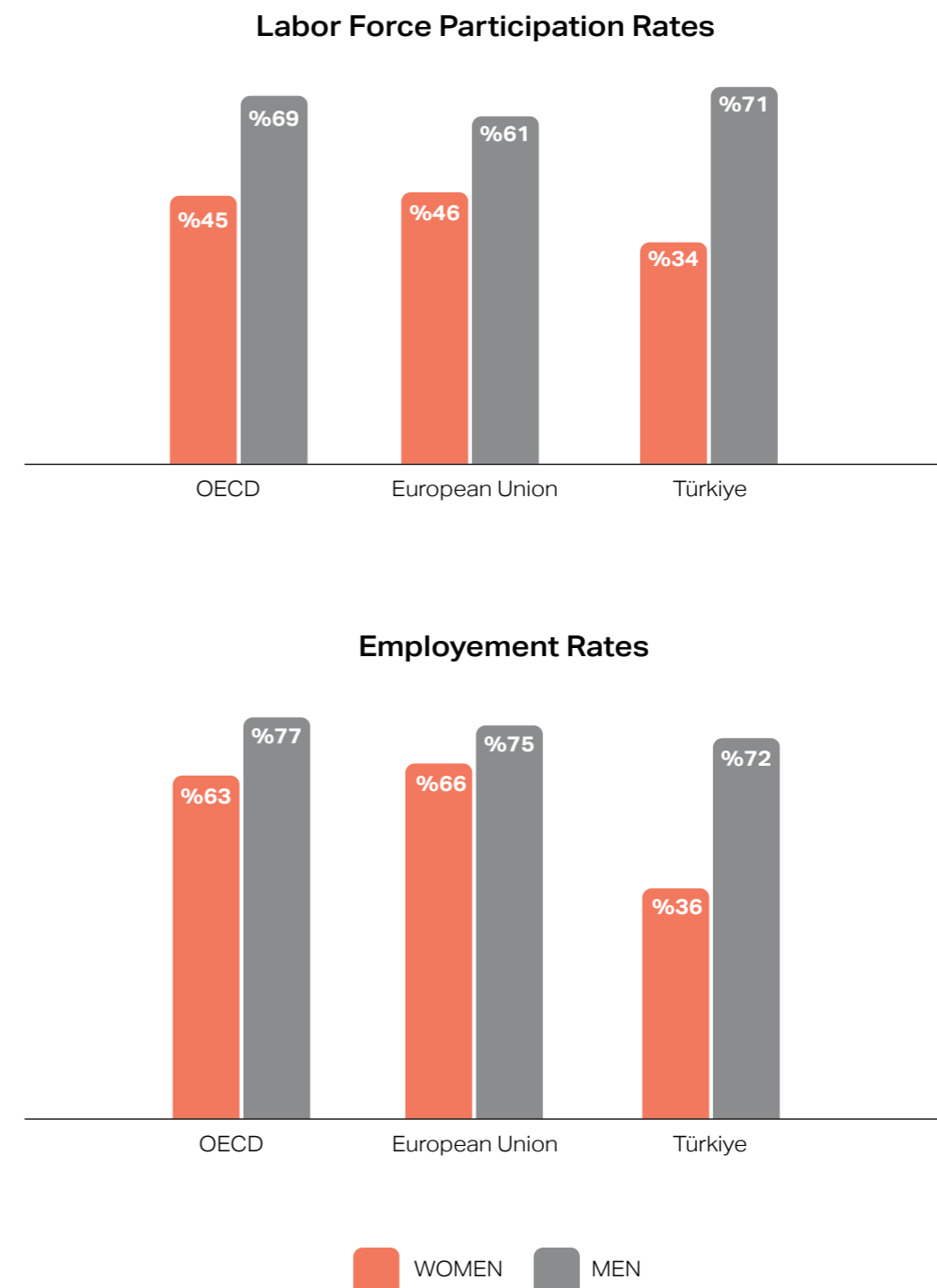
<sup>5</sup> United Nations Development Programme. (2022). Uncertain times, unsettled lives: Shaping our future in a transforming world. UNDP.

In the post-pandemic world, increasing uncertainty driven by the climate crisis, political polarization, and technological upheaval is making it more difficult to shape the future. It is emphasized that while these uncertainties affect everyone, they especially impact young people who are in the process of becoming adults. The global shifts and transformations being experienced are disrupting young people’s development of autonomy across areas such as education, employment, housing, social protection, and financial stability-making their “transition from youth to adulthood” more fragmented, unpredictable, and complex. This has led to the emergence of groups that can be described as “no longer young, but not yet fully adult.”

With ongoing changes in the environment, economy, technology, and social structures, it is predicted that youth labor force participation will continue to decline. Among the vulnerable groups most likely to be affected by this trend are NEET young women-those not in education, employment, or training. In most countries, women are more likely to be NEET compared to men. In 2024, the global NEET rate among youth aged 15–24 is 20.4%, with 13.1% for men and 28.2% for women. These figures show that nearly one in five young people worldwide are not engaged in employment, education, or training. In Türkiye, among those aged 18–29, 30% of youth are NEET-17% of men and a striking 43% of women.

When NEET young women do enter employment, they are often concentrated in low-paid, precarious, and low-skilled jobs across the globe. As a result, this vulnerable group is more likely to face negative experiences early in their careers, increasing their risk of falling back into-or remaining in-NEET status. A growing number of studies in the international literature show that being NEET at a young age negatively impacts labor market participation in later years, revealing a significant correlation between the two. On a global scale, when examining labor force participation and employment rates by sex, it is evident that in Türkiye, as well as in OECD and European Union countries, men are more likely to be employed and participate in the labor force (see Graph 1).

**Graph 1.** Labor Force and Employment Participation Rates by Sex



Source: World Bank, 2023

## 2

# Findings Regarding NEET Young Women

The most widely agreed-upon aspect of the NEET category is that it is highly heterogeneous. Young women within the NEET category belong to subgroups with diverse skills and needs, varying in terms of educational background, marital status, and socioeconomic history. On the other hand, there are also several common factors that contribute to the high NEET rate among young women. These include difficulties in accessing and continuing education, discrimination and inequality faced in the labor market, insufficient social care services, and the expectation that women provide unpaid caregiving due to traditional social roles between women and men all of which have a negative economic impact on women.

Therefore, globally, the majority of NEET youth are young women. In countries where policies and services are designed without considering women and men equality and where institutional care is weak, the rate of NEET young women tends to be significantly higher.

Developing solutions to address the problems of NEET young women is a particularly complex challenge. This is because there is no universally agreed-upon explanation for the causes of NEET status. The factors involved range from micro to macro levels, including individual, family, structural, and global factors. These factors shaping the experience of being a NEET young woman can be classified as shown below.

Figure 3. Factors Affecting the Status of NEET Young Women

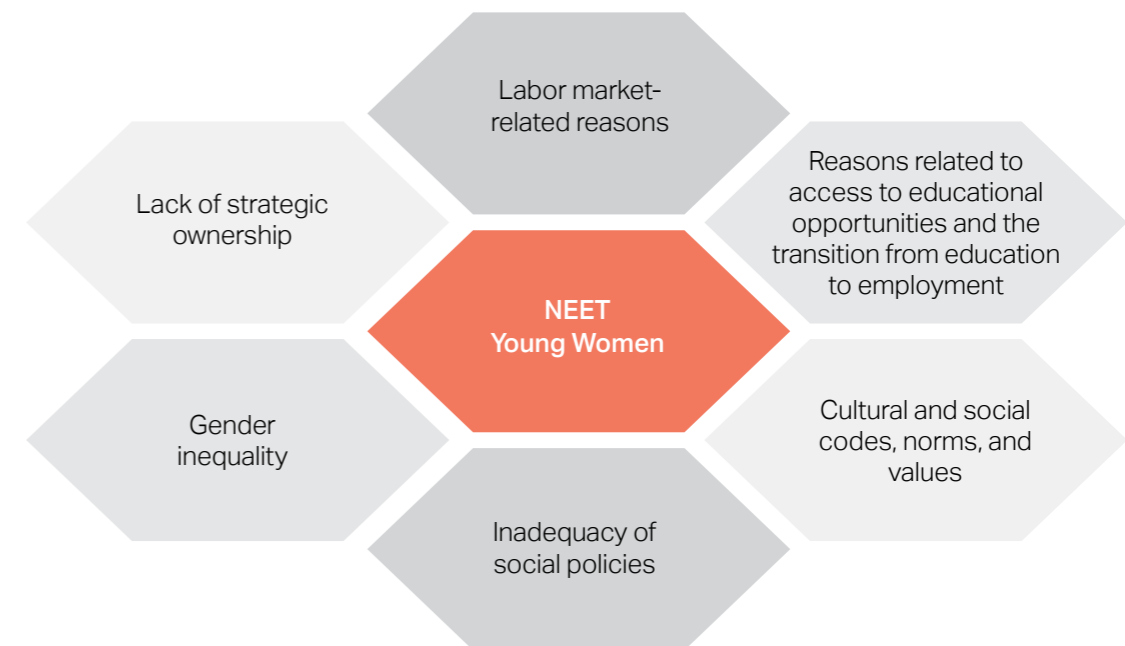
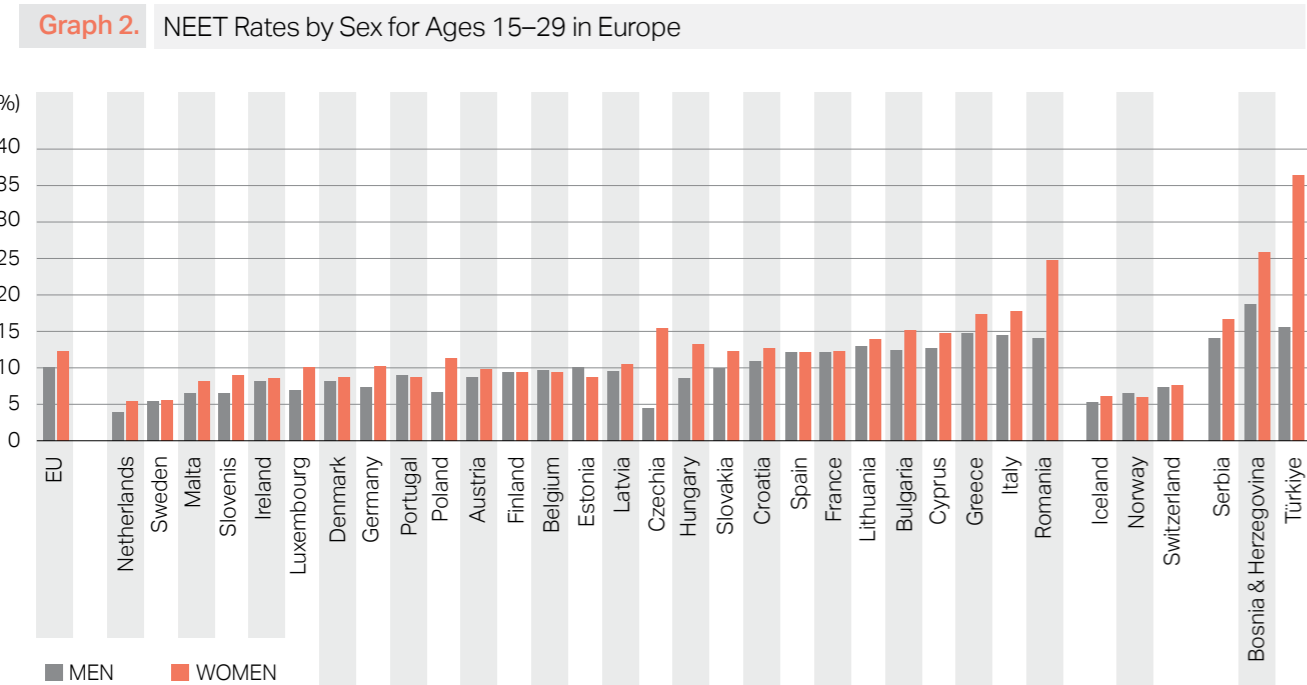


Figure 2 presents NEET rates by sexes among 15- to 29-year-olds in Europe. In most countries, women are more likely to be NEET than men.



Source: EUROSTAT, 2023

According to the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) 2024 Global Gender Gap Report, the global gender gap score for 146 countries in 2023 was calculated at 68.4%. The report states that, at the current pace of progress, it will take 131 years to achieve full women and men equality, and no country has yet fully closed the gender gap. The report evaluates gender disparities across key areas including women’s economic participation (covering income, employment, and leadership roles), educational attainment (measured by literacy rates and enrollment), health and survival (such as life expectancy), and political empowerment (including women’s representation in parliament, ministerial positions, and years with a male or female head of state).

Building on these findings, the Policy Document aims to make the problems and needs of NEET young women more visible and to develop policy recommendations to address these issues. Although the likelihood of being a NEET young woman varies sharply between countries, research highlights three key common points: “Young women from poor households have a higher probability of being NEET; the NEET rate increases among young women as they age; young women with higher education have a lower likelihood of being NEET.” Based on these commonalities, one important factor determining young women’s NEET status across their life course is that welfare regimes are directly related to countries’ levels of development. Therefore, when addressing the issue of NEET young women, three main factors must be considered:

- i) Institutions regulating the school-to-work transition
- ii) Labor market regulations
- iii) The presence of social policies that encourage and support women’s participation in education, employment, and social life.

These three factors are seen as two key elements determining the life course status of NEET young women: participation in education and marriage. Fundamentally, it is understood that young women who do not receive sufficient support from their families and public mechanisms during their education and employment process have a higher risk of becoming NEET. Weakening family support affects access to education and the duration of schooling, thereby shaping young women’s life trajectories.

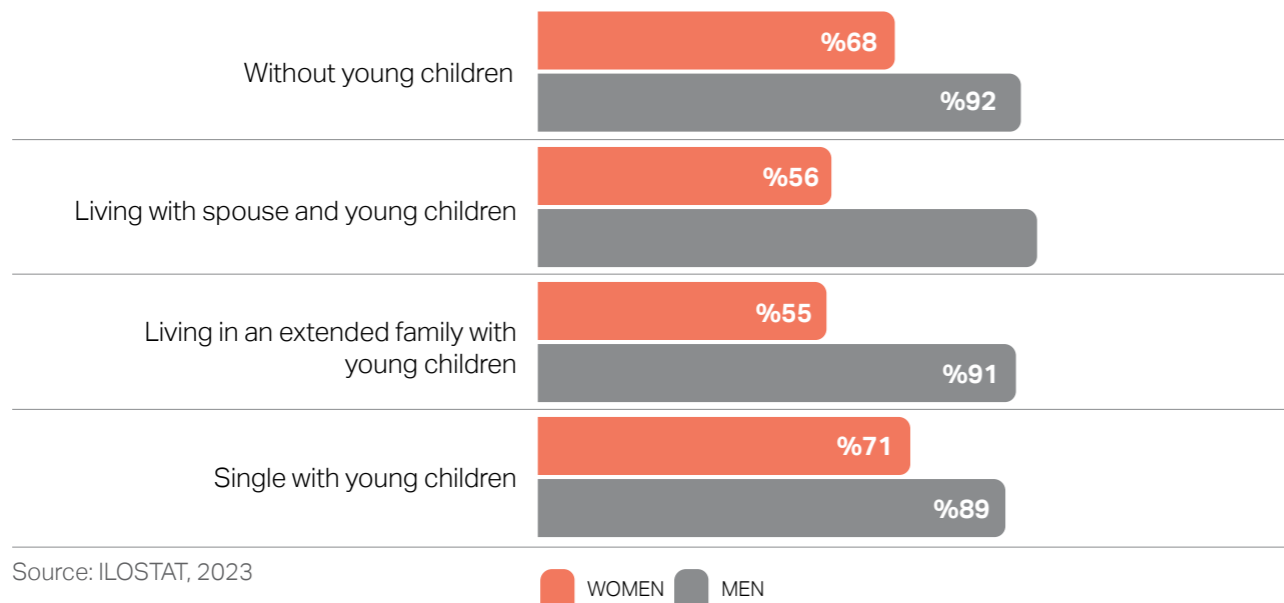
The existence of structural barriers that prevent NEET women from participating in the labor force points to weaknesses in public mechanisms. The primary reasons for women’s low participation in the labor market are associated with the disproportionate burden of household chores and childcare placed on women. Studies on women’s labor force participation and NEET risks reveal the following findings:<sup>6</sup>

- The labor force participation and employment rates of young women are lower than those of young men.
- The labor force participation rate of married women is lower than that of single women.
- On average, young mothers have a higher risk of being NEET compared to women without children.

When examining labor force participation in childcare by household type worldwide, it is observed that there is no significant difference between men and women in terms of labor force participation in cases where men do not have young children, care for young children with their spouses, care for young children with their extended families, or care for young children on their own. In all of these cases, the labor force participation rate for men is above 89%. For women, the labor force participation rate is 68% for those without young children, 56% for those who care for their young children with their spouses, 55% for those who care for their young children with their extended families, and 71% for single mothers who care for their young children on their own. In other words, marital status and child care affect women’s labor force participation more than men’s.

<sup>6</sup> Eyüboğlu, A., Özar, Ş., & Tanrıöver, H. T. (2000). Socioeconomic and cultural dimensions of women’s participation in working life in urban areas. KSSGM.

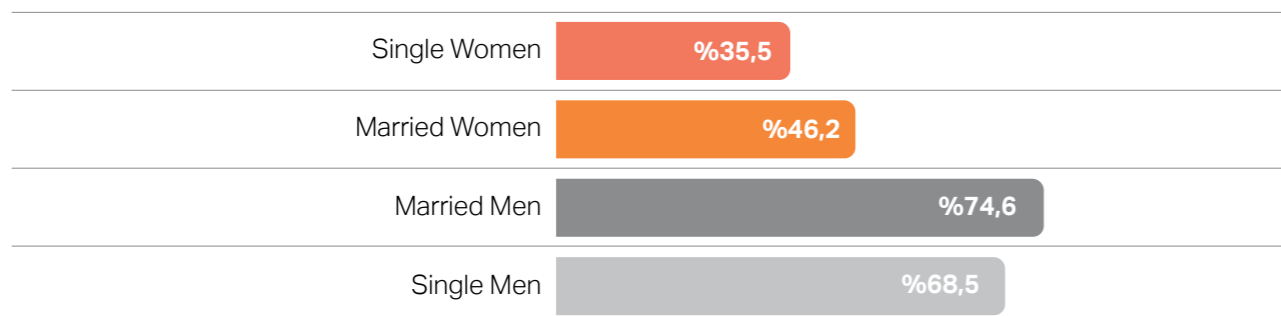
**Graph 3.** Global Labor Force Participation Rates in Childcare by Sex and Household Type



Source: ILOSTAT, 2023

When examining the effect of marital status on labor force participation in Türkiye, the labor force participation rate for single men is 68.5%, while that for married men is 74.6%. Among women, the labor force participation rate for single women is 46.2%, while that for married women is 35.5%.

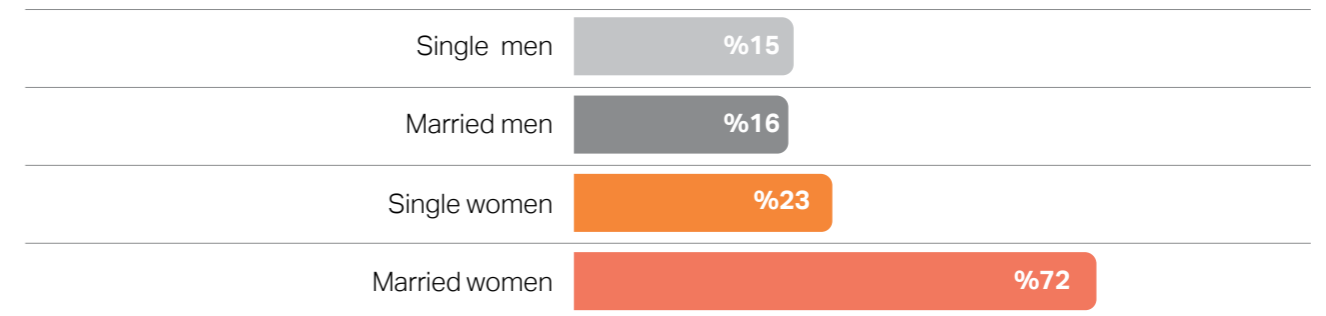
**Graph 4.** Labor Force Participation Rates in Türkiye by Sex and Marital Status



Source: ILOSTAT, 2023

When examining NEET rates among women and men in Türkiye according to marital status, it is seen that the rate of single NEET men is 15% and the rate of married NEET men is 16%. The rate of single NEET women is 23%, while the rate of married NEET women is 72%. According to these data, marital status does not create a significant difference in the NEET status of men, but it does create a significant difference in women.

**Graph 5.** NEET Rates in Türkiye by Sex and Marital Status



Source: ILOSTAT, 2023

As in the ILO's global study, there is no data in Türkiye examining the relationship between household type by sex, childcare, and NEET rates. In order to properly address the relationship between young motherhood and NEET when developing institutional policies in the context of differences between women and men and family policies, it is necessary to produce data and conduct research on this issue.

## 2.1 International and National Policies and Strategies Related to Factors Affecting NEET Status Among Young Women

Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) defined by the United Nations to end poverty worldwide, protect the environment, address the climate crisis, promote fair distribution of wealth, and ensure peace, the following are directly related to the issue of NEET young women: **SDG 4 - Quality Education** (ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all); **SDG 5 - Gender Equality** (achieving women and men equality and empowering all women and

girls); **SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth** (promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all); **SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities** (reducing income and opportunity inequalities and ensuring full social, economic, and political participation of groups requiring special policies). Many countries, particularly those in the European Union, have developed policies and strategies for NEET youth. In addition to the OECD Youth Policy Tools, the Youth Guarantee implementation plans prepared by countries based on the European Youth Strategy are among the most important of these documents.

In the **12th Development Plan** (2024-2028), several goals have been set to promote women's participation in economic life, including the expansion of entrepreneurship, financial, and digital literacy programs (**728.2**); provision of quality and accessible care services; support for women's entrepreneurship in rural areas (**728.6**); and the broadening of training programs aimed at enhancing women's professional skills. This plan has

become one of the key policy documents prioritized by policymakers to increase women's labor force participation and ensure women and men equality. Furthermore, the plan emphasizes the importance of **women and girls acquiring skills to adapt to digital and green transformations**, ensuring access to education at all levels and continuity, as well as improving social services, **in order to accelerate Türkiye's sustainable development (654)**. Additionally, the 12th Development Plan underlines the critical need for concrete steps toward full and effective participation of women in employment, greater inclusion in decision-making mechanisms within public and private sectors and politics, and establishing work-life balance. In this regard, it should be noted that policies promoting women's employment are not limited to the 12th Development Plan but are also comprehensively and robustly addressed within the framework of the National Employment Strategy (2025-2028), particularly targeting young women in NEET status.

In the **Medium-Term Program (2025-2027)**, prepared based on the Development Plan, measures include increasing access to institutional care services aimed at boosting women's employment, implementing programs that consider vocational training, competencies, and skills to encourage the participation of NEET youth in education and employment, and increasing grant support for young entrepreneurs.

In the **Women's Empowerment Strategy Document and Action Plan (2024-2028)**, policies targeting NEET young women include women and men equality training, encouraging men's participation in women's

empowerment processes, monitoring, evaluation, and impact analysis activities, as well as cooperation with local governments, NGOs, universities, and the private sector. Under the education heading, strategies aim to increase enrollment and retention rates of girls and women at all levels of education, conduct research to ensure women and men equality in education, and build institutional capacities accordingly. Under the economy heading, efforts focus on reviewing and improving legislation to facilitate women's entry into the labor market and increase their employment in decent jobs, equipping women and girls with new skills and competencies needed for the twin transitions (green and digital transformation) in the labor market, supporting women's economic empowerment for sustainable development through equality- and inclusivity-based transformation of public and private sectors, supporting women's entrepreneurship across all fields, and strengthening women's cooperatives. Within the policy framework aimed at increasing women's employment in Türkiye, **the National Employment Strategy (2025-2028)** leads efforts to create an inclusive and sustainable labor market. The strategy presents comprehensive policy proposals designed to boost women's labor force participation, reduce youth unemployment, and strengthen the employability of groups requiring special policies, especially young women in the NEET category. In particular, concrete targets include **raising women's labor force participation rate to 40.1%** and **reducing youth unemployment to 16.6% by 2028 (p.7)**. Measures such as **improving access to care services (p.42)**, **developing flexible work models (p.41)**, and **expanding vocational training programs (p.91)** to

encourage women's employment stand out. Furthermore, **skill development programs that will enable adaptation to green and digital transformation processes** are supported with the aim of preparing women and young people for the future labor market. **The National Employment Strategy** adopts a holistic approach that **strengthens the link between education and employment, develops social protection mechanisms, and promotes employment in rural areas**.

In this context, policy measures aimed at increasing the employability of women and youth are positioned as a key component of national strategies addressing the issue of NEET young women. Accordingly, the effectiveness of policies to strengthen women's and youth employment depends on understanding the fundamental dynamics that shape the NEET young women phenomenon.

These dynamics are addressed under various headings, such as resolving risks before they arise, access to quality education, economic structure, opportunities offered by the labor market, and social policies that support participation in social life.

### 1. Preventing Risks Before They Arise

The NEET phenomenon should be approached as an outcome; the factors leading to this outcome must be understood, and the importance of taking preventive action before its occurrence should be emphasized. The most critical findings highlighted across all studies on this issue are that **reintegrating NEET youth into society is both difficult and costly**. Moreover, exiting NEET status is especially challenging for

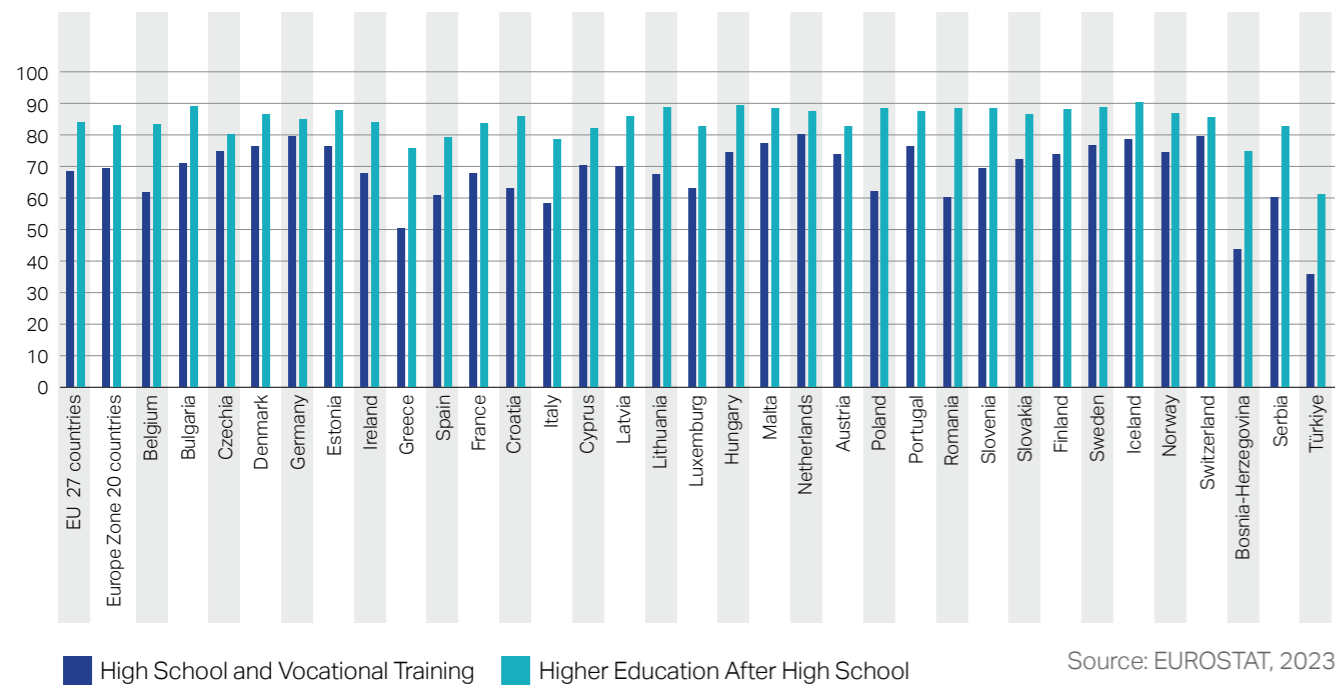
women. Thus, it should be kept in mind that it would be necessary and cost-effective to focus on the dimensions that affect becoming NEET young women in the context of preventive initiatives.

One of the most significant determinants in the formation of risk appears to be the level and quality of education, which shapes the transition from school to work. A second key factor relates to employability and employment opportunities. Another crucial element influencing education and employment conditions is the effectiveness of social policies. In this context, the proposed solutions are presented under three main categories: education, employment, and social policies. Before presenting the policy proposals in the next section, this part outlines the key findings.

### 2. Access to Quality Education

Since the type of education received determines the nature, wages, and security of the jobs available in the labor market, education has become increasingly widespread and comprehensive, with time spent in education reaching historic highs. The mass expansion of education that began in the 1960s and the extension of compulsory schooling has led to a global increase in the proportion of higher education graduates, although this rate varies across countries. In Türkiye, among employed women aged 20-64, 36% are high school or vocational course graduates, while 61% of those in the same age group have completed higher education (EUROSTAT, 2023).

Graph 6. Employment Rates of Women Aged 20–64 in Europe by Education Level



With the global increase in participation in education, **the quality of public education** has also become a critical issue. Although Türkiye has seen a rise in enrollment rates and the length of time individuals remain in education, challenges persist in the transition from school to employment. Globally, key findings regarding the factors influencing NEET status in the field of education can be summarized as follows:

- Preventive measures to monitor and ensure the continued school attendance of girls considered at risk are not addressed in an **integrated manner involving schools, families, and public institutions**.
- **Skill mismatches** are among the primary challenges in the school-to-work transition.
- An increasing number of international and comparative studies indicate that when graduates' knowledge and skill sets are not carefully aligned with labor market demands, extended education (such as university) can lead to undesired social outcomes including **graduate unemployment, underemployment, and stagnation in social mobility**.
- In education systems dominated by general skills, vocational education is undervalued and less preferred by youth and their families, which in turn contributes to rising rates of **degree-holder unemployment**.

The literature on the topic suggests that vocational education systems ease the transition from school to work. On the other hand, in countries where education systems are less vocationally focused, general skills become more important during hiring processes, making a higher education diploma somewhat of a necessity.

- Vocational trainings and courses that encourage women to boost their digital and green transition skills are pretty limited.
- It is observed that awareness and interest among girls and young women in STEM fields are low.<sup>7</sup>
- It is noteworthy that many vocational trainings and courses tend to reinforce traditional social roles between women and men.
- Due to socioeconomic disparities across regions, limited employment opportunities and more pronounced traditional social roles between women and men contribute to higher rates of early marriage among women and a decrease in the duration of their education.

The 12th Development Plan emphasizes the need to strengthen vocational competencies and skill development opportunities in information technology fields such as coding and software to increase women's employment.

### 3. Economic Structure and Labor Market Issues

Inequalities faced by women in labor force participation and employment remain one of the fundamental challenges of the labor market in Türkiye.

#### Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Labor and Social Security National Employment Strategy (2025–2028)

By increasing women's participation and employment rates in the labor market, women and men equality in working life will be strengthened; connections between youth, including those in the NEET category, and the labor market will be reinforced to reduce unemployment rates; efforts will be made to increase the participation and employment rates of persons with disabilities and the elderly; additionally, considering labor market dynamics, the links of individuals involved in international labor migration to working life will be strengthened, and the registered employment of foreign workers will be supported.

<sup>7</sup> In 2023, the fields with the lowest proportion of women at the undergraduate level were Engineering Departments with 21.28% and Information Technologies with 24.52%. This data is obtained from the Women's Empowerment Strategy Document and Action Plan 2024-2028. ✨

Minimizing social disadvantages faced by women in employment can be achieved by addressing multiple factors together, such as legal regulations for equal pay for equal work, sex-neutralizing professions to strengthen women's presence in future jobs, ensuring work-life balance, and reducing unpaid care work supported by social policies (ILO, 2022).

#### 4. Social Policies Related to Participation in Public Life

Globally, research on the increasing NEET population is on the rise; however, most of these studies fail to adequately address the challenges faced and experienced by women. Studies examining differences between women and men in NEET rates also need to delve more deeply into the structural barriers and societal norms that limit women's participation in the labor force. The risk of women becoming NEET is shaped not only by their level of education and economic status, but also by caregiving responsibilities, social norms, and inequalities in the labor market. Social norms that assign caregiving and domestic responsibilities to women remain among the most significant factors hindering their participation in the workforce.

Within the framework of the "Women's Empowerment Strategy Document and Action Plan (2024–2028)" implemented by the Ministry of Family and Social Services, important strategies and activities have been identified to increase women's participation in education, health, economy, leadership, and decision-making mechanisms.

It is extremely important for the public sector to develop preventive and regulatory social policies addressing the challenges women face in social life.

In this context, various services and mechanisms need to be developed to provide accessible, safe, and affordable care services. It should be emphasized that public investments in early childhood education and childcare, especially for NEET young women over the age of 25, play a significant role in increasing labor force participation and ensuring women and men equality in opportunities. Women in this age group face greater barriers to accessing employment and education opportunities due to responsibilities such as marriage and childcare. For all these reasons, **comprehensive policy reforms based on women and men equality are necessary to reduce women's risk of becoming NEET. These reforms should be supported by strategies such as secure employment with career planning through flexible working arrangements, enforcement of equality provisions, and increased public spending on early childcare.**

Another important issue is that **regional inequalities and demographic concentration increase the likelihood of young women becoming NEET.**

#### In Conclusion,

In order to ensure that NEET young women participate in education, the labor force, and all areas of social life throughout their lives, it is necessary for all relevant actors to take ownership of the issue, allocate the necessary financial resources, and develop a strong welfare regime. To achieve this, it is essential to move away from defining NEET young women as passive, unwilling to pursue education, unable to adapt to labor market conditions, or unwilling to engage in paid work. Instead, we must recognize that they possess the potential and capacity to realize their full potential and actively involve them in policy-making processes by incorporating their perspectives. Secondly, effective collaboration among stakeholders must be established, and all actors must be enabled to act collectively. It is believed that effective collaborations can address the NEET issue in a way that promotes women and men equality.

In this context, it would be beneficial to re-examine the problems and needs of NEET young women from a policy perspective and develop a comprehensive approach that is multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional. A public policy should be established that coordinates and develops responsibilities in the areas of education, welfare, employment, and skills, and ensures that these policies are equality-sensitive and inclusive, and public ownership should be developed. Public social expenditures should be designed as an effective redistribution tool that promotes the integration of young women into education and employment and prevents poverty, economic inequality, and social exclusion.



# 3 Policy Recommendations

The policy recommendations included in the White Paper developed as part of the “Young Women Building Their Future” Project were formulated based on the examination of international, national, and local practices, the evaluation of project outputs, the analysis of interviews conducted with project partners, local stakeholders, and target groups as part of fieldwork, and the compilation of the views and recommendations of relevant key stakeholders at a consultation workshop. In this regard, it was prepared through a participatory and multi-layered process. The policy recommendations, which aim to make the issues and needs of NEET young women visible and to ensure that policies are developed on this issue by bringing them onto the agendas of institutions at the national and local levels, are of an advisory nature.

Statistics and research in this field indicate that the issue of NEET women in Türkiye is closely linked to women and men equality. Accordingly, the policy recommendations in this section have been structured around the key pillars of education, employment, and social policy throughout the life course of NEET young women, from a women and men equality perspective. At the same time, recognizing that NEET young women are a heterogeneous group, the proposals were developed using a multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional approach.

Within this framework, the recommendations are grouped under thematic axes, and the importance of specific interventions for NEET young women is emphasized under each axis. For each recommendation, the corresponding goals and areas of intervention are clearly outlined. Furthermore, the key stakeholders who could actively participate in the implementation of these policies are identified to ensure their effective execution.

## **3.1 Policy Recommendations to Support Young Women’s Access to Education**

Education plays a vital role in enhancing NEET women’s personal development, professional skills, and overall employability. The knowledge and competencies gained through quality education empower young women to feel more confident in public life and encourage their participation in economic activities. Expanding and diversifying educational opportunities helps reduce the risk of social exclusion and enables young women to realize their full potential. To build a strong bridge between education, employment, and social participation, it is essential to strengthen collaboration among local, national, and international stakeholders and to implement innovative models. Comprehensive educational programs targeting NEET young women not only facilitate their active engagement in society but also contribute significantly to achieving sustainable development goals.

## Policy Recommendation 1

### Increasing Participation and Retention Rates in Education

**Goal:** To extend the duration young women stay in education and prevent early school dropout.

#### Intervention Areas:

##### A. Development of a School-Based Social Service Model

- Protective mechanisms should be established against risks such as poverty, domestic violence, peer bullying, neglect, and abuse.
- A holistic approach involving the school, family, and community should be adopted.

##### B. Prevention of Early School Leaving

- Investment in public education should be increased; student-to-teacher ratios in classrooms should be reduced.
- Teachers' professional competencies should be enhanced, and incentivizing salary policies should be implemented.

##### C. Increasing Enrollment Rates

- Preschool education should be expanded and made compulsory.
- High-quality and accessible early childhood education programs should be widespread.

##### D. Flexible and Inclusive Curriculums

- Alternative curricula should be developed for youth at risk of exclusion from education.
- Specialized programs should be developed for unique circumstances, such as children of seasonal agricultural worker families.

##### E. Social Budget and Participation Mechanism

- Budget allocations should be made for activities aimed at promoting the social participation of NEET young women.
- Local initiatives such as the "Young Women's Card" should be developed.

#### Stakeholders:

This intervention area can be supported through strategic planning and implementations developed in collaboration primarily with the MoNE, MoFSS, local administrations, and relevant civil society organizations.

## Policy Recommendation 2

### Strengthening Mechanisms for Reintegration into Education

**Goal:** To reintegrate young women who have dropped out of school back into the education system.

#### Intervention Areas:

##### A. Reintegration Measures

- Early school leaving cases should be monitored, and the underlying causes should be analyzed.
- Teachers should be trained to prevent issues such as bullying and violence among peers.

##### B. Monitoring of Non-Formal Education

- Mobile teams should be established to track students who are chronically absent from school.
- Early warning systems should be activated during the transition to 9th grade.

##### C. Increasing Parental Involvement

- Career guidance and planning activities should be organized to inform and involve parents.

#### Stakeholders:

Strategic planning should be developed in cooperation with the MoNE as the lead institution, alongside the MoFSS, local governments, international organizations, and relevant CSOs.

### Policy Recommendation 3

#### Skills Development and Increasing the Employability of Young Women

**Goal:** To increase the labor market participation rate of young women.

##### Intervention Areas:

###### A. Regionally-Focused Skill Development Programs

- Vocational training programs tailored to the specific needs of each region should be designed.

###### B. Acquisition of New Skills

- Training programs should be organized to equip participants with skills related to digital and green transitions.

###### C. Entrepreneurship Support

- Young women's access to cooperatives and business start-up opportunities should be encouraged.

###### D. Vocational Guidance and Public Awareness

- Promotional campaigns should be organized to strengthen the perception of technical and vocational education.

**Stakeholders:** To increase young women's employability and encourage their participation in the labor market, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out through collaboration among İŞKUR, the private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations, and relevant civil society organizations.

### Policy Recommendation 4

#### Developing Economic Support Mechanisms and Reducing Regional Inequalities

**Goal:** To increase educational opportunities by supporting low-income families.

##### Intervention Areas:

###### A. Economic Support Programs

- Scholarships, childcare support, and work grants should be provided.

###### B. Local Support Programs

- Projects aimed at reducing regional disparities should be developed.

###### C. Employment Opportunities in Rural Areas

- The participation of young women in the labor market through agricultural projects should be encouraged.

**Stakeholders:** To ensure the reintegration of young women into education and employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out through collaboration among MoLSS, MoAF, İŞKUR, private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations, and relevant civil society organizations.

### 3.2 Policy Recommendations to Support Young Women's Access to and Retention in Employment

Increasing the employment participation of NEET women is a critical necessity for economic growth and social development. To ensure the integration of young women into the labor market, it is essential to implement inclusive policies such as education, skills development, mentoring, and counseling services. Employer incentives, flexible work models, and the expansion of women-friendly work environments will facilitate NEET women's access to sustainable employment opportunities. Additionally, developing support mechanisms for women who shoulder caregiving responsibilities will help maintain work-life balance and enhance their long-term participation in the workforce. Integrating NEET women into employment not only strengthens their individual economic independence but also drives a broader transformation that promotes social equality and inclusion.

## Policy Recommendation 1

### Supporting Young Women's Access to Employment Opportunities and Retention in the Workforce

**Goal:** To increase young women's employability, facilitate their school-to-work transition, and create sustainable employment opportunities.

#### Intervention Area 1: Measures to Improve the Employability of Different Groups of NEET Young Women

##### A. Development of Individualized Support and Action Plans

- Individual action plans should be developed based on the qualifications, competencies, and needs analysis of young women in NEET status.
- These action plans should ensure appropriate training, counseling, guidance, and employment matching.

##### B. Counseling Services Supported by Artificial Intelligence and Technological Solutions

- AI, machine learning, and profiling techniques should be used in job and career counseling processes to ensure accurate employment matching.
- A defined set of criteria should be established for identifying educational needs using technological solutions.

**Stakeholders:** To ensure the integration of young women into employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out through the collaboration of the MoLSS, TOBB, İŞKUR, the private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations, and relevant CSOs.

#### Intervention Area 2: Household-Based Monitoring and Local-Level Institutional Capacity Building

##### A. Access Efforts

- İŞKUR should adopt a household-based monitoring model to reach women living in rural and hard-to-access areas.
- Employment models and opportunities that support women's employment in rural areas should be developed.
- In cooperation with the MoFSS, field studies should be conducted to ensure at least one household member is employed.

##### B. Local-Level Capacity Building

- The institutional capacity of İŞKUR should be strengthened.
- Cooperation with technoparks, Organized Industrial Zones (OIZs), and industrial regions should be fostered to develop solutions tailored to local needs.

**Stakeholders:** In order to ensure the integration of young women into employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out in cooperation with MoLSS, MoAF, İŞKUR, development agencies, private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations and relevant civil society organizations.

#### Intervention Area 3: Bridging Education and Labor Market

##### A. Skills Matching and Employer Capacity Strengthening

- Capacity building efforts should be undertaken to help businesses identify which skills they need.
- Models of cooperation between the education system and the labor market should be developed.

##### B. Conducting Empowerment Studies

- Trainings on CV preparation, interview techniques and self-expression skills should be provided and mentoring programs should be implemented.
- Programs to support well-being such as psychological resilience and self-compassion should be developed.

**Stakeholders:** In order to ensure the integration of young women into employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out in cooperation with MoLSS, MoAF, İŞKUR, development agencies, private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations and relevant civil society organizations.

#### Intervention Area 4: Promoting Women's Employment

##### A. Economic Instruments and Legal Arrangements to Promote Women's Employment

- Financial incentives, funds and support programs to increase women's employment should be developed.
- Women-friendly employment policies should be expanded.

##### B. Increasing the Role of Local Governments and Umbrella Organizations

- Municipalities should develop policies to support women's employment.
- Guidance and incentive mechanisms should be established through the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), the Confederation of Turkish Tradesmen and Craftsmen (TESK) and trade unions.

**Stakeholders:** In order to ensure the integration of young women into employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out in cooperation with MoLSS, MoAF, İŞKUR, development agencies, private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations and relevant civil society organizations.

## Intervention Area 5: Ensuring the Sustainability of Women's Employment

### A. Providing Corporate Services

- Ongoing follow-up, coaching and psycho-social support services should be provided to facilitate the retention of newly employed women.

### B. Designing Workplace Adaptation Programs

- Workplace adaptation programs should be extended to groups requiring special policies.

**Stakeholders:** In order to ensure the integration of young women into employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out in cooperation with MoLSS, MoAF, İŞKUR, development agencies, private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations and relevant civil society organizations.

## Intervention Area 6: Creating Women-Friendly Work Environments and Employment Models.

### A. Women-Friendly Work Environments and Certification Systems

- Awareness-raising activities should be carried out to promote women-friendly workplace policies and environments.
- A certification system for Women-Friendly OIZs should be developed.

### B. Creating Women-Friendly Employment Models

- Leave policies that promote women and men equality and support work-life balance should be developed and implemented.
- With the primary goal of achieving decent and sustainable employment, flexible working models should be expanded under the umbrella of social security to ease women's entry into the workforce.
- Institutional care services (for children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, etc.) should be developed.

**Stakeholders:** In order to ensure the integration of young women into employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out in cooperation with the MoLSS, TOBB, İŞKUR, OIZs, development agencies, private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local administrations, national and international organizations, and relevant NGOs.

## Intervention Area 7: Transformation of Employment Mindsets and Awareness-Raising Activities

### A. Institutional Arrangements Focused on Women and Men Equality in Opportunities

- Special action plans should be developed for NEET young women.
- Temporary special measures should be implemented to ensure women and men equality in career choices for women.

**Stakeholders:** In order to ensure the integration of young women into employment processes, comprehensive and sustainable strategic planning should be carried out through the collaboration of the MoLSS, TOBB, İŞKUR, development agencies, the private sector, chambers of commerce and industry, local governments, national and international organizations, and relevant civil society organizations.

## Policy Recommendation 2

### Creating Demand in the Labor Market and Increasing the Employability of Young Women

**Goal:** To enhance young women's participation in the labor market by strengthening their employability and ensuring their access to sustainable job opportunities.

## Intervention Area 1: Demand-Based Measures to Enhance the Employability of Young Women

### A. Supporting Employers and Encouraging Them to Hire Young Women

- Demand for young women in the labor market should be encouraged by offering wage and training subsidies or tax and national insurance reductions/credits.
- Models that consider regional and sectoral differences should be developed to implement active labor market policies.
- Research should be conducted to demonstrate the rationality of employing women in the business world.
- Policies should take into account rural/urban and between women and men.

**B. Considering the disaggregation between women and men in all policies and practices and developing comprehensive reforms based on equal opportunities for women and men that take into account the life stages of young women.**

### C. Initiatives for Setting Wages in Line with Decent Work Conditions

- Since low wage policies prevent young women from covering the costs of leaving home, a policy should be developed that enables women with caregiving responsibilities to purchase or delegate these services.

### D. Supporting Women's Entrepreneurship

- Women's entrepreneurship, including social entrepreneurship, should be supported across all fields.
- Financial and educational support should be provided to women who want to start their own businesses.
- Experience and knowledge sharing between experienced entrepreneurs and NEET young women should be facilitated through mentorship programs and consulting services.

**Stakeholders:** For creating employment opportunities, collaboration among the MoFSS, İŞKUR, TOBB, TESK, local governments, private sector representatives, women's cooperatives, NGOs, universities, and vocational schools is crucial.

### 3.3 Social Policy Recommendations to Encourage Young Women's Participation in Social Life

To enhance the social and economic participation of NEET women, social policies must be developed through an inclusive and equality-focused lens. Integrated policies that address education, employment, and social support mechanisms as a whole play a critical role in reducing the structural barriers faced by NEET women. Targeted programs aimed at improving women's vocational skills, support mechanisms that promote the sharing of caregiving responsibilities, and awareness campaigns that strengthen women and men equality will increase the sustainable labor force participation of this group. Furthermore, strengthening social security systems will facilitate women's access to secure employment, while policies that encourage volunteerism and participation in civil society will help them strengthen their social ties. In this regard, strong cooperation should be established between local governments, public institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations to support the social and economic integration of NEET women.

#### Policy Recommendation 1

Develop a National Policy Coordinating Responsibilities in the Areas of Education, Health, Welfare and Employment

**Goal:** To empower young women in the areas of education, health, welfare, employment, and skills development through an inclusive, comprehensive national policy that ensures women and men equality.

#### Intervention Area 1: Focusing on the Role of the Family in Equality-Sensitive Policies

##### A. Individual-Focused Initiatives

- Women's active participation in social life should be encouraged, especially in volunteering, politics, and civil society sectors.

##### B. Community-Focused Initiatives

- Awareness campaigns should be organized to promote the equal sharing of household responsibilities.

##### C. Family-Focused Initiatives

- Conditional cash support provided to families should be increased.
- Family awareness should be raised regarding the importance of girls developing independence and self-expression skills.

**Stakeholders:** These recommendations can be implemented through the collaboration of the GNAT, PBoS, MoNE, MoFSS, MoYS, local governments, the private sector and employers, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

#### Intervention Area 2: Developing Public Policies to Improve the Quality of Education

A. Preventive mechanisms that support NEET women's participation in the labor force should be established by increasing public education expenditures.

**Stakeholders:** These recommendations can be implemented through the collaboration of MoNE, PBoS, GNAT, MoFLSS, MoYS, local governments, private sector and employers, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

#### Intervention Area 3: Strengthening the Public Sector's Role in Job Creation

A. Encouraging public-private partnerships to improve demand and supply matching in the labor market.

- Incentive programs to support young women's employment should be developed.
- Active labor market policies targeting young women in rural areas should be expanded.
- Micro-finance and social entrepreneurship supports aimed at increasing rural women's income generation should be enhanced.

**Stakeholders:** These recommendations can be implemented through the cooperation of MoNE, PBoS, MOFLSS, TOBB, İŞKUR, local governments, private sector and employers, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

#### Intervention Area 4: Focusing on the Welfare-Distributing Role of the Public Sector

- A. Social security mechanisms should be developed to improve the quality of life of young women.
- B. Public investment in early childhood education and the care economy should be increased.
- C. Public care services should be diversified and expanded in a way that reduces women's caregiving burden and facilitates their participation in the labor force.

**Stakeholders:** These recommendations can be implemented through the collaboration of MoNE, PBoS, MoH, MoFLSS, MoYS, local governments, the private sector and employers, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

#### Intervention Area 5: Strengthening Public Supervisory Mechanisms

- A. Legal regulations aimed at reducing inequalities faced by women in the workplace should be strengthened.
- B. A women empowerment perspective should be integrated into efforts to combat undeclared work.

**Stakeholders:** These recommendations can be implemented through collaboration among MoNE, MFSS, MoH, MoLSS, MoYS, local governments, private sector and employers, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

**Intervention Area 6: Developing Equality-Sensitive Public Policies**

- A. Educational and media campaigns promoting women and men equality should be implemented.
- B. Public policies should be designed, implemented, and monitored with a central focus on women and men equality.

**Stakeholders:** These recommendations can be implemented through the collaboration of MoNE, PBoS, MoFSS, MoYS, local governments, the private sector and employers, international organizations, and civil society organizations.

**Intervention Area 7: Implementation of Special Monitoring Mechanisms for At-Risk Groups**

- A. Early warning systems that track school attendance, academic performance, and reasons for absenteeism should be strengthened.
- B. The number of social workers and guidance counselors should be increased to better support young women.

**Stakeholders:** These recommendations can be implemented through the collaboration of MoNE, PBoS, MoH, MoFSS, MoYS, local governments, the private sector and employers, international organizations, and civil society organizations.



WHITE PAPER

**Policy Recommendations  
for Young Women Not in Education,  
Employment, or Training  
(NEET) in Türkiye**