

The Measurement and Analysis of Social Capital in Turkey

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I. Introduction

The aim of this report is to present the main sources of social capital data in Turkey. The other purpose of our presentation involves demonstrating what more the government departments have still to do in terms of the measurement of social capital. This report breaks down into three sections. It will begin with a brief definition of social capital used by the State Institute of Statistics and government departments. It will then go on to introduce the national measurement activity. In this section, we will try to explain the commitment of the government departments to the measurement of social capital. Finally, in Part III, we will express our hopes for better measurement of social capital in the future.

II. Definition of Social Capital

We appreciate OECD's efforts to define the limits of social capital, which is a very "wide" word in social life that embraces everything from social relations at work to reliance on Governments' decisions. The term "social capital" is used by the Turkish government departments in the sense of the norms and understandings that facilitate cooperation among people. We would like to make it clear that this definition of social capital is in conformity with the OECD's definition. In this context, social capital is accepted as the values of the group rather than that of the individual. Apart from social networks and social supports, citizens trust in governments' policies is a major component of social capital.

The concept behind this perception of social capital in Turkey goes back to Kemal Ataturk's thoughts emphasising cooperation among people in forming a developed society.

III. Measurement of Social Capital

The two bodies, which take an engine function in the measurement and analysis of social capital, are as follows:

i) The Commission of Experts on Social Capital:

The State Planning Institution acts as The Secretariat of this Commission. The relevant experts of The Department of Labour and Social Security are amongst the members of the Commission.

ii) The State Institute of Statistics:

The State Institute of Statistics' "Household Labour Surveys" are measuring the distribution of professions, the reasons for unpaid work and not working, etc.

Several government departments have also been conducting surveys to measure and analyse the impact of limited aspects of social capital. For example, The Directorate General for the Status and Problems of Women is producing statistics, which give us an indication of the status of women in Turkey.

IV. Developing Aggregate Measures

Various aspects of social capital have been measured by government and voluntary organisations in Turkey for long time. In addition, the State Institute of Statistics has always valued the measurement of the wide range of social areas. Moreover, large Turkish companies have a high regard for social capital.

Our Government will try to do her best to inform the OECD of her practices in the measurement of social capital.

Social capital is a multidimensional concept. In order to measure it, we need a wide variety of indicators. However, we have to simplify this complex subject as well. For instance, trust has two sides; trust in others and secondly trust in institutions. We think that both sides can be measured by different sets of indicators.

We are considering putting personal questions in the first part of questionnaires such as age, years of education and income. By doing so, we are hoping to measure the level of social capital operating in certain categories. On the other hand, we will be glad to modify the questionnaires used in participating Countries to suit the Turkish populace. We would like to add some points to our questionnaires emphasizing the main tenets of relations between people. This includes helping the poor during the holy month Ramadan. Another significant characteristic of the social capital in our country is that the brotherly trust which exists between employees and employers. Thus, we wish to add some questions about this area. We are also thinking to adding questions about the most important factors for people in rural areas. The tradition of help and cooperation during harvest constitutes another good example. Finally, we attach great importance to the measurement of social capital at schools. This is because education provides the foundation in the formation of social capital.

V. Conclusions

We would like to ensure that the outcomes of the social capital surveys will be published in conformity with scientific and ethical rules.

At the Department of Labour and Social Security in Turkey, we provide links between all the government and nongovernmental institutions concerned with the formation and measurement of social capital. We now hope to create similar links between OECD countries' institutions and our own in Turkey.

We believe that the Social Capital Measurement Conference to be held in London in September 2002 will contribute greatly to the completion of many major surveys that have social capital facets in Turkey. We wish the Countries participating in the Conference all the very best in carrying out their surveys associated with this theme.

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