



Initial education policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic: Turkey

Strengthening adaptability and resilience in the context of COVID-19

Pre-existing resources may have facilitated areas of Turkey's early response to the pandemic. Policies implemented over recent years, such as the expansion of open education, the Movement to Enhance Opportunities and Improve Technology project (2010) and higher education's Digital Transformation Project (2017) may have helped develop some of the digital skills, tools and infrastructure required for mass online learning. As Turkey works to balance short-term responsiveness with longer-term strategic aims and resilience, the crisis has brought specific challenges. Strong targeted support for certain groups of students will be crucial to avoid reversing the progress in participation and attainment made over recent years. In particular, efforts targeted at disadvantaged students and refugees, who are less likely to have access to distance education, will be crucial. Building on Turkey's previous experiences, local programmes focusing on strengthening links between families and schools, and community outreach efforts could have the greatest impact.

This snapshot presents information originally published as part of the **Education Policy Outlook: Turkey (2020)**, available at: www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/country-profile-Turkey-2020.pdf



The Turkish education system's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic

On 13 March, Turkey [announced the closure](#) of all educational institutions from ECEC to tertiary level from 16 March. Initial responses in light of the work of the *Education Policy Outlook* in 2020 in the context of this pandemic are:

- 1. Ensuring continued access to learning and smooth educational pathways:** Following an initial week of full closure, Turkey launched a national programme of online education via the [EBA](#) platform. Initially holding 1 600 courses and over 20 000 interactive activities, the platform continued to develop throughout the period of closures, introducing the capacity for teachers to host live synchronous classes (with priority to those teaching national examination candidates), and machine learning-powered adaptive support tools. Online learning was supplemented by a programme of educational broadcasting across six national public television channels with content for children from ECEC to upper secondary level. At tertiary level, most universities transitioned to online teaching through their own digital infrastructure; the [YÖK courses platform](#), centralising content from three large universities, was made available to all students for free. Professional development for teachers continued with numerous courses via EBA and a YouTube channel; with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), Turkey developed 17 new online courses for teachers, aiming to reach around 125 000 teachers during the closures. Through the [My Preference](#) programme, university information days continued remotely. Information packs, promotional brochures and videos were prepared for students selecting upper secondary general and vocational courses. Turkey maintained tertiary and upper secondary selection examinations, but postponed them to late June and the scope of assessed material was narrowed. Examination preparation activities, including example questions and solutions, were offered via EBA and television. At tertiary level, institutions have autonomy to adapt the academic calendar; examinations were postponed to beyond the date of reopening (15 June 2020).
- 2. Strengthening the internal world of the student:** The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) published a [psychoeducational activities booklet](#) to support young children's emotional resilience, as well as guidebooks for students and their families. A telephone hotline staffed by 1 375 counsellors based in Guidance and Research Centres across the country was launched to offer advice and support to parents and their children.
- 3. Providing targeted support and interventions for vulnerable children and families:** To facilitate the period of online education, Turkish internet providers committed to supplying all students with between 5 and 8GB of free data during the period of school closures. MoNE launched a [mobile application](#) providing targeted content for students with special educational needs and their parents and teachers, complementing the content already published on the Education Information Network (EBA). Provincial call centres were established across the country to enable teachers to support and communicate with children with special educational needs and their families.
- 4. Harnessing wider support and engagement at local and central level:** Vocational education and training (VET) institutions across the country produced and distributed protective equipment and supplies to frontline workers during closure. To support this further, Turkey aimed to establish 20 research and development (R&D) centres in VET institutions across the country dedicated to increasing production of urgently needed materials
- 5. Collecting, disseminating and improving the use of information about students:** The EBA platform allows teachers, parents and students themselves to monitor student participation and track learning performance. MoNE has also been monitoring traffic to the EBA. [YÖK](#) (2020) administered a monitoring survey to higher education institutions to ascertain the scope and nature of distance learning and to inform future improvements.



Table 1

Selected indicators of system readiness (OECD)		Turkey	Average	Min	Max
<i>Students' readiness (according to students' self-reports in PISA 2018)</i>					
1	Index of self-efficacy	0.36	0.01	-0.61	0.36
2	Percentage of students in disadvantaged schools with access to a computer at home that they can use for school work	40.0%	81.5%	23.5%	96.5%
<i>Teachers' readiness (according to lower secondary teachers' self-reports in TALIS 2018)</i>					
3	Percentage of teachers with a high level of need for professional development related to ICT skills for teaching	7.5%	17.7%	5.3%	39.0%
4	Percentage of teachers agreeing that most teachers in the school provide practical support to each other when applying new ideas	79.4%	77.9%	64.7%	86.5%

Note: The information presented in this spotlight covers key measures announced or introduced **before 06 May 2020**.

For more information visit: <http://www.oecd.org/education/policy-outlook/>

Contacts:	Diana Toledo Figueroa (Project Leader): Diana.ToledoFigueroa@oecd.org Christa Rawkins (Policy Analyst): Christa.Rawkins@oecd.org
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