



REPORT

# Early Childhood Education Campaign in Türkiye

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**PUBLISHER**

TRT WORLD RESEARCH CENTRE

March 2023

**TRT WORLD İSTANBUL**

AHMET ADNAN SAYGUN STREET NO:83 34347

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## Foreword

**E**arly childhood education (ECE) constitutes a global policy area due to the opportunities it offers and its contribution to equal opportunities. For many years, Türkiye has set goals to expand early childhood education and gradually increased enrollment at this level of education. All this effort was undertaken to achieve the goals set for "all children to receive at least one year of early childhood education before starting school".

Although the steps taken in our country regarding early childhood education have provided significant improvements at this level for many years, Türkiye was significantly below the OECD average in terms of schooling rates as of 2021. This highlights the significant strides that must be taken to ensure every child can access the benefits of early childhood education. To realize this goal, the Ministry of National Education has prioritized early childhood education as its primary policy area for 2022.

Our "Early Childhood Education Campaign" aims to guarantee that all of our students receive the benefits of this level of education. As part of the project, we have made significant physical infrastructure enhancements to expand early childhood education.

Thus, we tripled the overall capacity of early childhood education in Türkiye within just one year. In 2021, there were 2 thousand 782 kindergartens to which we added. A new capacity of 6 thousand 4 kindergartens during the same period. We prioritized early childhood education while implementing our "10,000 Schools for Primary

Education" and "Village Life Centers" projects. All these steps have provided the necessary infrastructure for the universalization of early childhood education.

We also took steps to ensure the participation of children from all socioeconomic status to ECE in Türkiye. For many years, children from families with higher socioeconomic status have had greater access to early childhood education. To address this disparity, we have established support mechanisms to expand early childhood education to all of our students, including those from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In a significant effort announced by our President, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the government has covered the education expenses of students receiving social assistance through an extensive support program.

Additionally, we have started providing free school meals to all of our early childhood students. To ensure that all students have access to this vital service, we have expanded our daily free meal production capacity from 1.8 million to over 5 million.

In conclusion, our campaign to expand early childhood education has addressed all aspects of education, and we are proud to report significant progress. In just one year, we have increased schooling rates from 65 percent to 99 percent for 5-year-olds, from 16 percent to 38 percent for 4-year-olds, and from 9 percent to 16 percent for 3-year-olds. In 2023, we want to maintain the growing momentum at the age of 5 at other ages as well. Our target for 2023 is to reach 70 percent of schooling at age 4 and 50 percent at age 3.

## Why Early Childhood Education?

Early childhood education (ECE) is an education level that has an increasingly prominent place on the policy agenda of many education systems. In many education systems, significant projects are carried out for the universalization of ECE and its dissemination to society.

The global effort to make early childhood education (ECE) accessible to all segments of society is driven by the multiple benefits that ECE provides at both the individual and societal level. This section takes a holistic approach to evaluate the contributions of ECE.



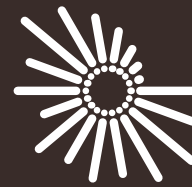
Readiness to School  
Life



Higher Cognitive &  
Social Skills



Raising Responsible  
& Conscious  
Citizens



Equality of  
Opportunities in  
Education

# Individual and Societal Impact of Early Childhood Education

ECE is carried out during the period when the child's mental and social development potential is at its highest.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Many years of research showed that the period between the age of birth and age 5 is the most fertile for cognitive and social development.<sup>3,4</sup> The effective use of the learning capacity of children in this period creates many benefits and opportunities in the long term.<sup>5</sup>

The significant potential that children have for learning and skill development during this period is an extremely valuable opportunity in terms of education. Increasing learning opportunities learning potential to the highest level can contribute to the development of children. This inference has been confirmed by many studies to date.<sup>6,7</sup>

Research has consistently shown that children who grow up in enriched learning environments during early childhood, which include access to learning materials and opportunities provided by their families, tend to develop stronger metacognitive skills.

The period under 5 years of age, during which early childhood education is typically provided, is a critical period for cognitive, social, and moral development in individuals. This underscores the importance of providing quality ECE during this period to lay a strong foundation for a child's future development and success. During this period, the individual learns skills, attitudes, and values that will contribute to his or her development for many years to come.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, besides skills, attitudes and values developed

in early childhood also have a significant impact on their future.<sup>9,10</sup> As a matter of fact, studies on the long-term effects of ECE reveal significant results in this regard. According to these studies, individuals who receive high-quality early childhood education demonstrate more frequent displays of adult skills, higher levels of social integration and participation, and less negative behavior, including a reduced likelihood of committing crimes.<sup>11,12</sup>

All these results support that those who receive ECE tend to have higher life satisfaction. The expansion of early childhood education provides these multiple benefits for all children.<sup>13</sup> These results indicate that significant improvements can be achieved in the cognitive skills of children whose learning appetite is met with the adequate opportunities.

The contributions of ECE include social and self-care skills beyond cognitive skills.<sup>14, 15</sup> Acquiring self-care skills in childhood enables children to take care of themselves at a younger age, thus being more self-confident, and enables them to need the support of their parents less.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to developing self-care skills, early childhood education provides children with the opportunity to socialize and learn how to be a member of a group at an earlier age.<sup>17</sup> Through interactions with their peers and caregivers, children develop social skills, including cooperation, empathy and acting together towards a common goal at an earlier age. The opportunities provided by early childhood education enable children to enter school more prepared and adapt to the school environment more quickly.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tierney, A. L., & Nelson, C. A., 3rd (2009). Brain development and the role of experience in the early years. *Zero to Three*, 30(2), 9-13.

<sup>2</sup> OECD. (2007). *Understanding the brain: The birth of a learning science*. OECD Publishing.

<sup>3</sup> CDC. (2022). Early brain development and health. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/early-braindevelopment.html>

<sup>4</sup> Haartsen, R., Jones, E. J. H., & Johnson, M. H. (2016). Human brain development over the early years. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences*, 10, 149-154.

<sup>5</sup> OECD (2020). *Early learning and child well-being: A study of five-year-olds in England, Estonia, and the United States*. OECD Publishing.

<sup>6</sup> NRC. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. National Research Council Publishing.

<sup>7</sup> Bakken, L., Brown, N., & Downing, B. (2017). Early childhood education: The long-term benefits. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 31(2), 255-269.

<sup>8</sup> Johansson, E., Emilson, A., & Puroila, A. M. (2018). *Values education in early childhood settings: Concepts, approaches and practices*. Springer Publishing.

<sup>9</sup> Powell, S. (2010). Hide and seek: Values in early childhood education and care. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58(2), 213-229.

<sup>10</sup> Murray, J. (2018). Value/s in early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 26(3), 215-219.

<sup>11</sup> Garcia, J. L., Heckman, J. J., & Ziff, A. L. (2019). Early childhood education and crime. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 40(1), 141-151.

<sup>12</sup> Hägglund, S., & Samuelsson, I. P. (2009). Early childhood education and learning for sustainable development and citizenship. *IJEC*, 41, 49.

<sup>13</sup> OECD. (2018). *Early learning matters*. OECD Publishing.

<sup>14</sup> Zhu, Z., Tanaka, E., Tomisaki, E., Watanabe, T., Sawada, Y., Li, X., Jiao, D., Ajmal, A., Matsumoto, M., Zhu, Y., & Anme, T. (2022). Do it yourself: The role of early self-care ability in social skills in Japanese preschool settings. *School Psychology International*, 43(1), 71-87.

<sup>15</sup> Sezici, E., & Akkaya, D. D. (2020). The effect of preschool children's motor skills on self-care skills. *Early Child Development and Care*, 190, 6, 963-970.

<sup>16</sup> Petrovic, Z., Clayton, O., Matthews, J. et al. (2019). Building the skills and confidence of early childhood educators to work with parents: study protocol for the Partnering with Parents cluster randomised controlled trial. *BMC Med Res Methodol* 19, 197.

<sup>17</sup> Correia-Zanini, M. R. G., Marturano, E. M., & Fontaine, A. M. G. V. (2018). Effects of early childhood education attendance on achievement, social skills, behaviour, and stress. *Estudos De Psicologia (Campinas)*, 35, 3.

<sup>18</sup> Horsford, S. D. (2012). Ready for school, ready for life: The increasing significance of early childhood education and school readiness in Nevada. *The Lincy Institute Policy Brief Education Series* (1), 1-7.

# Relationship between Early Childhood Education and Equality in Opportunities in Education

ECE serves to benefit all children by providing multiple benefits. This kind of education allows children to be more prepared for school life. It also allows them to acquire cognitive and social skills at a younger age, leading to greater life satisfaction in the long run.<sup>19,20</sup>

One of the main reasons why ECE is evaluated in terms of equal opportunity is related to the impact of investments in this field. Studies indicate that investments in ECE are the investments that have the most impact on educational outcomes.<sup>21</sup>

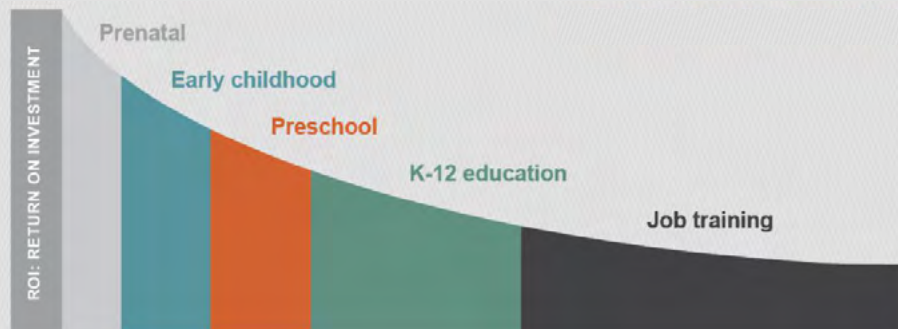
Due to the multiple benefits of ECE, it is estimated that the return on every \$1 invested in ECE is between \$6 and \$12.<sup>22,23</sup>

Estimation studies have also shown that the benefits of early childhood education are much more cost-effective and efficient than obtaining similar benefits at later education levels. In this context, investments in ECE are considered as the type of investment that countries will provide the highest return on and promote equality of opportunity.

Another significant reason why ECE is associated with equal opportunity in education is its potential to alleviate the out-of-school gaps between students<sup>24</sup>. It is well-known that there are substantial differences in life conditions, family characteristics, and home possessions among different socioeconomic groups. These differences often manifest in students' school life and learning process. In fact, research has confirmed that the most influential factor in students' educational outcomes is their socioeconomic status, which is an indicator of their family and home environment.<sup>25,26</sup>

These gaps may also reflect in their educational readiness, cognitive and social skills.<sup>27</sup> At this point, ECE ensures that all students are prepared for school life before these differences even widen. Therefore, ECE contributes to "starting from the same point" for all children in school.<sup>28</sup>

**Figure 1:  
Return on  
Investment  
by Education  
Levels**



<sup>19</sup> Carr, R. C. (2021). The benefits of early childhood education can persist in the long run. Duke: Sanford School of Public Policy & The Hunt Institute. [https://hunt-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HI-Duke-Brief-Carr\\_v2.pdf](https://hunt-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/HI-Duke-Brief-Carr_v2.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> OECD. (2018). Early learning matters. OECD Publishing.

<sup>21</sup> Heckman, J. J. (2008). Schools, skills and synapses. *Economic Inquiry*, 46(3), 289-324.

<sup>22</sup> Evans, P. (2017, 27 Ekim). Every \$1 spent on early childhood education pays back \$6 later, report finds. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/business/early-childhood-education-1.4374820>

<sup>23</sup> Heckman, J. J., Moon, S. H., Pinto, R., Savelyev, P. A., & Yavitz, A. (2010). The rate of return to the high/scope Perry Preschool Program. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(1-2), 114-128.

<sup>24</sup> Magnuson, K., & Duncan, G. J. (2016). Can early childhood interventions decrease inequality of economic opportunity?. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*: RSF, 2(2), 123-141.

<sup>25</sup> Suna, H. E., Tanberkan, H., Gür, B., Perc, M., & Özer, M. (2020). Socioeconomic status and school type as predictors of academic achievement. *Journal of Economy Culture and Society*, (61), 41-64.

<sup>26</sup> von Stumm, S., Smith-Woolley, E., Ayorech, Z., McMillan, A., Rimfeld, K., Dale, P. S., & Plomin, R. (2020). Predicting educational achievement from genomic measures and socioeconomic status. *Developmental Science*, 23(3), e12925.

<sup>27</sup> Suna, H.E., Özer, M., Şensoy, S., Gür, B.S., Gelbal, S., & Aşkar, P. (2021). Determinants of academic achievement in Turkey. *Journal of Economy, Culture and Society*, 64, 143-162.

<sup>28</sup> UNICEF. (2019). A world ready to learn: Prioritizing quality early childhood education. UNICEF Publishing. <https://www.unicef.org/media/57926/file/A-world-ready-to-learn-advocacy-brief-2019.pdf>

# Early Childhood Education in Türkiye

## Early Childhood Education Campaign by Ministry of National Education

Increased capacity

Village Life Centers

Legislational improvements

Financial support

1 000 Schools in Primary Education

Container ve prefabricated classes

Mobile teacher classes

Free school meals

# Context and Barriers before the Early Childhood Education Campaign

In Türkiye, ECE has a long history, but its spread began specifically after the 2000s.<sup>29</sup> Since the 2000s, the frequency of including targets for ECE in top policy documents has increased.<sup>30</sup>

There are different reasons for the relatively late prevalence of ECE in Türkiye. The first reason is that self-care skills are primarily acquired by Turkish families and are part of cultural child-rearing practices. Therefore, for many years, families in Türkiye have tried to acquire the skills that are aimed to be acquired in ECE within the family.

The second reason is that female labor force participation rates have only started increasing after the 2000s.<sup>31</sup> The dissemination of ECE plays a very critical role in increasing female labor force participation. As a matter of fact, educational opportunities that have been expanded reduce the care responsibilities of families and provide an effective opportunity for females who want to work.<sup>32 33</sup> In this context, the increase in female labor force participation is an influential factor in the spread of ECE after the 2000s.

The third reason is the lack of capacity and the inclusion of ECE in compulsory education. In Türkiye, especially in the last 20 years, investments in education, which have shown a significant increase, are concentrated at compulsory education levels. Lastly, the lack of awareness in society and the cost of education contribute to the late spread of ECE.<sup>34 35</sup>

In this context, priority was given to primary and secondary education, and multidimensional support was provided to ensure universalization at these levels. However, early childhood education (ECE) had lower capacity compared to the age population due to the fact that it is not included in compulsory education. Turkish studies have shown that low physical infrastructure and high education costs have long limited the participation of ECE,<sup>36 37</sup> especially for disadvantaged families.<sup>38</sup>

For this reason, many national non-governmental organizations and international organizations call for raising awareness of ECE and providing multidimensional support.

As stated in the previous section, the expansion of ECE in Türkiye has not reached the desired level for various reasons. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) has made this level of education its top priority education policy with the "Early Childhood Education Campaign" launched in 2021.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, MoNE has given its highest priority to ECE in order to achieve the goal of "each student receiving at least one year of early childhood education", which has been among the most prominent goals in its top policy documents for many years.

In this context, many concrete steps have been taken to strengthen ECE and make it widespread throughout Türkiye. In this section, the steps taken in the last year and a half and the results of these steps will be mentioned.

<sup>29</sup> Özer, M., Gençoğlu, C., & Suna, H. E. (2021). The development of pre-school education in Turkey and its role in narrowing the educational inequality. *Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University Social Sciences Institution Journal*, 11(1), 356-370.

<sup>30</sup> Ayyıldız, E., & Bilici Albayrak, H. S. (2020). Türkiye'de zorunlu okul öncesi eğitim: Güçlükler ve fırsatlar (Politika Notu: 2020/15). *İLKE İlim Kültür Eğitim Vakfı*

<sup>31</sup> TÜİK, İşgücü istatistikleri

<sup>32</sup> UNESCO. (2002). Women, work, and early childhood: the nexus in developed and developing countries. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000137378>

<sup>33</sup> OECD. (2018). How does access to early childhood services affect the participation of women in the labour market?. *Education Indicators in Focus* #59. [https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/how-does-access-to-early-childhood-education-services-affect-the-participation-of-women-in-the-labour-market\\_232211ca-en](https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/how-does-access-to-early-childhood-education-services-affect-the-participation-of-women-in-the-labour-market_232211ca-en)

<sup>34</sup> Atunc, T. M., & Gustafsson-Wright, E. (2013, 25 Kasım). Early childhood development: the promise, the problem, and the path forward. *Brookings*. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/early-childhood-development-the-promise-the-problem-and-the-path-forward/>

<sup>35</sup> OECD. (2020). Early childhood education: Equity, quality and transitions: Report for the G20 Education Working Group. <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/early-childhood-education-equity-quality-transitions-G20.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> ERG & AÇEV. (2016). Her çocuğa eşit fırsat: Türkiye'de erken çocukluk eğitiminin durumu ve öneriler. [https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ERG\\_HERKES-%C4%B0C%C4%B0N-ESIT-FIRSAT-TURKIYEDE-ERKEN-COCUKLUK-EGITIMININ-DURUMU-VE-ONERILER.web\\_.pdf](https://www.egitimreformugirisimi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ERG_HERKES-%C4%B0C%C4%B0N-ESIT-FIRSAT-TURKIYEDE-ERKEN-COCUKLUK-EGITIMININ-DURUMU-VE-ONERILER.web_.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> SETA. (2019). İnsani sermayeye kritik yatırım: Erken çocukluk eğitimi. *SETA Analiz Sayı 287*. <https://seta.org/assets/uploads/2019/07/A288.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Beatson, R., Molloy, C., Fehlberg, Z. et al. (2022). Early childhood education participation: A mixed-methods study of parent and provider perceived barriers and facilitators. *J Child Fam Stud*, 31, 2929-2946.

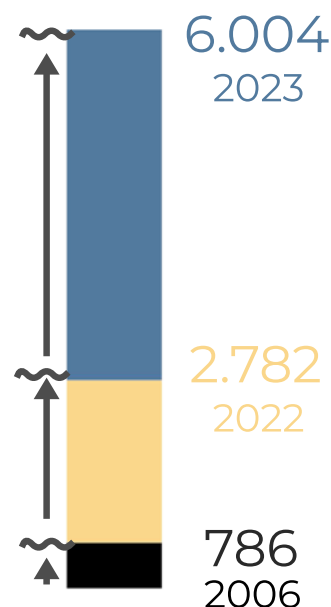
<sup>39</sup> Özer, M. (2022). The universalization of education in Türkiye and new orientations. *TRT Research Center*. <https://researchcentre.trtworld.com/featured/the-universalization-of-education-in-turkiye-and-new-orientations/>

## Great Increase in Capacity with Newly Established Early Childhood Education Institutions

The first step taken by MoNE within the scope of the campaign was to increase the physical capacity for ECE throughout Türkiye. As mentioned earlier, inadequate physical capacity has been one of the major hindrances to the widespread adoption of ECE in Türkiye..

Firstly, available areas for kindergartens and nursery classes were determined at provincial and institutional levels. Thanks to the steps taken in this section, the number of 2 thousand 782 kindergartens at the beginning of 2022 was increased to 6 thousand 4 in February 2023.

Number of  
Kindergartens



## Opening Village Life Centers and Early Childhood Education

Among the most significant priority by MoNE in 2022 is the reopening of idle village schools and their transformation into "Village Life Centers". In this context, school buildings that have not been used for years due to migration to cities in Türkiye are being renovated and their infrastructure is improved. These institutions, are being reopened as "Village Life Centers".

These centers are designed to serve different education stakeholders. These centers are not only schools providing education at different levels of education, but also lifelong learning education centers. The dissemination of these centers has enriched education opportunities, especially in low-population villages.

The dissemination of village life centers throughout Türkiye is important for capacity building in ECE. In regions with low populations, pre-school education is a priority in village life centers, so ECE has been widely spread. The MoNE implemented approximately 2,400 village life centers in just one year. The infrastructure of the remaining village schools continues to be improved. MoNE has started to provide ECE in these centers.



# Opening Primary Schools in Villages and Low Population Areas Regardless of the Number of Students

MoNE supports the steps taken by the government to further popularize ECE by preparing a physical infrastructure. The opening of village life centers has created an effective foundation for the dissemination of education in villages and low-population areas. In addition, legal arrangements should be made to expand ECE in both new and current schools in these regions.

MoNE took an important step in 2022 by removing the regulation that required a minimum number of students to start primary schools in villages and low-population settlements. Prior to the regulation contained in the "Regulation on Opening, Closing and Naming Institutions", a minimum of 10 students were required to open primary schools in these regions. Primary schools were opened

regardless of the number of students following enactment. The most critical regulation was critical for increasing capacity and meeting education demands in low-population regions.

Following the arrangement, kindergarten classes and kindergartens for ECE have been opened in primary schools and primary schools, regardless of the number of students in these areas. The opening of new primary schools as a result of the regulation paved the way for the appointment of teachers to these schools. Consequently, as of the beginning of February 2023, approximately 24 thousand children living in 3 thousand 53 villages and low-population areas attended ECE.



## The 10.000 Schools in Primary Education Project

As of 2021, MoNE has directed its school-based improvement approach to primary education. Within the scope of the project, 10,000 schools in need of support were determined according to various criteria such as infrastructure needs, location, student achievement, and absenteeism rates. Multiple forms of support were provided to these schools.

Within the scope of the project, minor and major repairs were carried out in schools. Libraries were established in schools that did not have a library, and the reading resources were improved.

The physical environment of classrooms and schools has been improved, and training has been given to all education stakeholders. Participation in these trainings has exceeded 2.6 million for students, 106 thousand for teachers, and 13 thousand for school administrators.

“The 10,000 Schools in Primary Education Project” made a significant contribution to the dissemination of ECE. Within the scope of the project, the capacity of close to 5,900 kindergarten classes were established. With the resources provided by the project, all of the necessary equipment for the classes was provided.

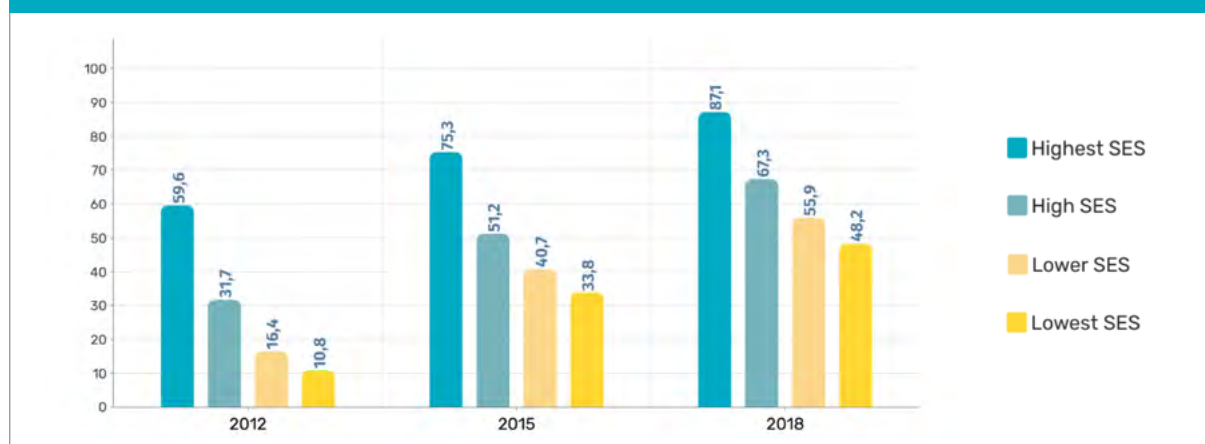
## Financial Support for Participation in Early Childhood Education

One of the global barriers to participation in ECE is the cost of education.<sup>40</sup> For socioeconomically disadvantaged families, the cost of education can create an additional barrier, which limits their children's participation in ECE.

Studies in Türkiye show a similar result: participation in ECE in Türkiye, as in many other countries, is directly

related to socioeconomic status. In other words, children from socioeconomically advantaged families participate in ECE at a higher rate. Using data from the PISA study, Figure 2 shows the relationship between ECE participation and socioeconomic status.<sup>41</sup>

**Figure 2: The Relationship Between Early Childhood Education Participation and Socioeconomic Status in Türkiye (PISA)**



<sup>40</sup> Save the Children (2019). Barriers to early learning among low income families in the UK. Research Briefing. <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/gb/reports/policy/barriers-to-early-learning-briefing.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> Suna, H. E., & Özer, M. (2022). The relationship of preschool attendance with academic achievement and socioeconomic status in Turkey. *Journal of Measurement and Evaluation in Education and Psychology*, 13(1), 54-68.

## Early Childhood Education Campaign

This gap in ECE attendance also creates an additional source of inequality. As a matter of fact, the children of socioeconomically advantageous families benefit more from the advantages of ECE – expressed in the previous sections. Although the contributions of ECE are more significant for children of disadvantaged families, the access of these children is more limited.<sup>42 43</sup>

Universalization of ECE is vital for multiple contribution of ECE to equal opportunities in education. Therefore, many countries, including the OECD and the European Union region, are undertaking large-scale projects in order to universalize early childhood education.<sup>44 45</sup>

These educations inform the public about the benefits of ECE, expand the number of free ECE centers, and provide financial support.

An effective program has been implemented to ensure that all children can benefit from ECE capacity, which has tripled in just one year in Türkiye.

In the "Supporting Children for Pre-School Education" program, announced by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the program seeks to support disadvantaged students who wish to participate in early childhood education. Within the scope of the project, an annual budget of 500 million ₺ has been allocated. With this budget, the education fees of students who benefit from social assistance are covered if they attend ECE. Approximately 1 million students are expected to benefit from the project.

With this project, MoNE, together with the Ministry of Family and Social Services, not only provides the necessary infrastructure for students' participation in ECE, but also leads the necessary financial support for the participation of all students.

## Container and Prefabricated Nursery Classes

MoNE has developed flexible models to use the physical facilities of schools in the most efficient way in order to expand ECE. Naturally, in order to universalize ECE in Türkiye, which has a target of approximately 1.2 million children for each age group, physical facilities must be employed in the most efficient way. Within the framework, prefabricated and container kindergartens are used by schools that do not have the available space to build a brand-new kindergarten.

Kindergartens in the form of containers and prefabricated structures are established in gardens or other available areas of schools. UNICEF-supported kindergartens are equipped with all necessary materials and provide ECE in schools that are not suitable for the construction of new classrooms.

In 2022, MoNE completed the construction of 300 containers with two classrooms and 150 prefabricated classrooms with two classrooms. With these kindergartens, an educational capacity has been created for more than 15 thousand students.



<sup>42</sup> Leseman, P. (2002). Early childhood education and care for children from low-income or minority backgrounds. <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/1960663.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Guerin, B. (2014). Breaking the cycle of disadvantage early childhood interventions and progression to higher education in Europe. [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR500/RR553/RAND\\_RR553.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR500/RR553/RAND_RR553.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Neuman, M. J. (2005). Governance of early childhood education and care: Recent developments in OECD countries. *Early Years: An International Journal of Research and Development*, 25(2), 129-141.

<sup>45</sup> Carpenter, B., Schloesser, J., & Egerton, J. (2009). European developments in early childhood intervention. Eurlyaid Publication. [https://www.eurlyaid.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2016/05/eaec\\_development\\_eng.pdf](https://www.eurlyaid.eu/wpcontent/uploads/2016/05/eaec_development_eng.pdf)

## Mobile Teacher Class and Transport Center Kindergarten

Another flexible model introduced by MoNE to expand ECE is for regions that are difficult to access. The model used for the participation of students living in these low-population and hard-to-reach areas in ECE is to provide education directly to the students in their region.

To increase access to education for students in remote regions, a mobile teacher model is utilized. Kindergarten students from nearby villages with low populations can attend kindergarten at a designated village. These models are designed to provide education to students in their own regions.

In the model, an educational design is implemented in which students aged 3, 4 and 5 can receive education together. Mobile training sets are also delivered to students to be used in these models.



## Free School Lunch for All Early Childhood Education Students

Another recent step taken by MoNE to expand ECE is to provide free school meals to students. Access to healthy food, which is among the basic needs of children, is of vital importance in terms of cognitive and social development, and as it is known, regular and healthy nutrition of students in schools, especially in early childhood, is extremely important for their development.

By the end of 2022, MoNE provided free school meals to approximately 1.8 million students per day. With the decision taken in 2023, it was decided to increase the capacity of free school meals throughout Türkiye to over 5 million per day.

Capacity building is particularly critical for ECE. As part of this improvement, free meals are provided to all students receiving ECE as of February 6, 2023. This step taken by MoNE is significant in terms of disseminating ECE, especially for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

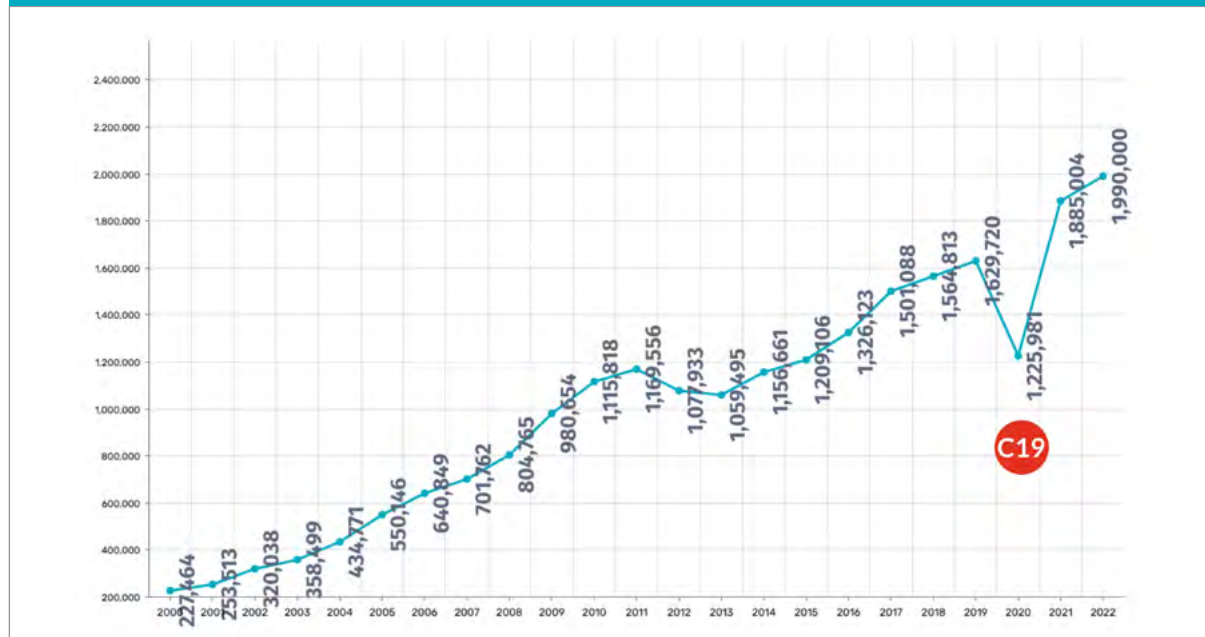


# Number of Students & Teachers

The Early Childhood Education Campaign has resulted in a significant increase in the number of students attending ECE. The number of students had initially dropped to 1.2

million due to the impact of the Covid-19 epidemic, but it has since risen to almost 2 million, as illustrated in Figure 3.

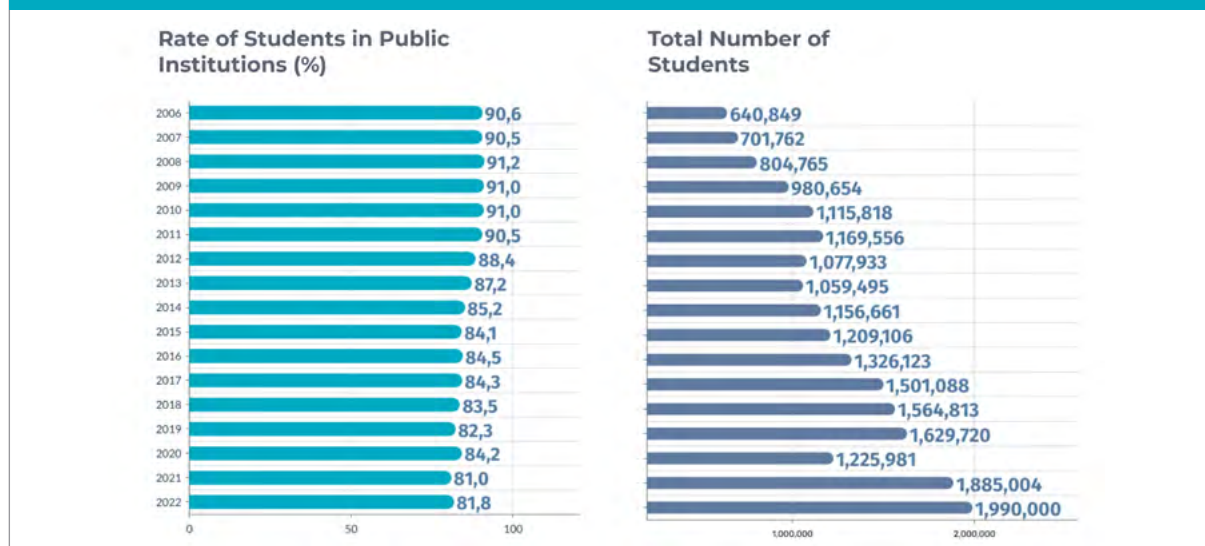
**Figure 3: Number of Students in Early Childhood Education by Years**



The main provider of ECE is public institutions in Türkiye. Since 2006, a significant majority (81%-91%) of students receive ECE in public institutions.

In 2022, almost 82% of students receive ECE in public institutions despite a great increase student population as seen in Figure 4.

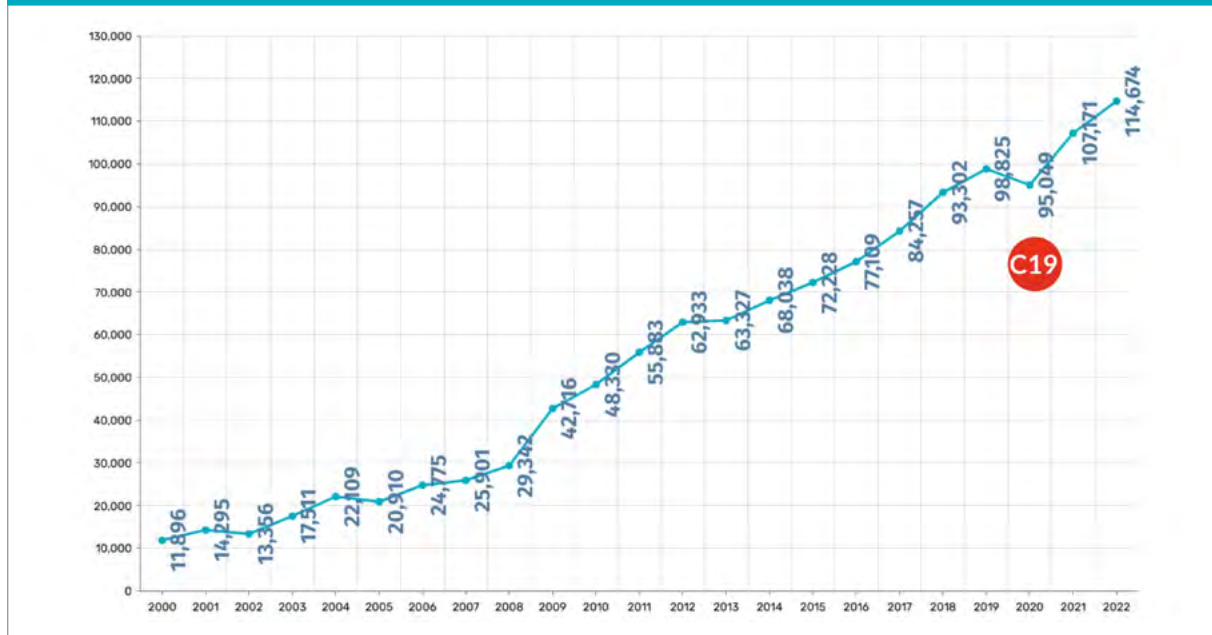
**Figure 4: Share of Students in Public Institutions**



During the campaign, a significant increase was achieved in the number of teachers in order to increase the quality of ECE. As of 2018, the number of teachers at the level of 93 thousand has increased to over 114 thousand as in Figure 5.

In 2022, out of the 15,000 teacher appointments made, 7,503 were dedicated solely to ECE, demonstrating MoNE's strong commitment to enhancing the quality of ECE services.

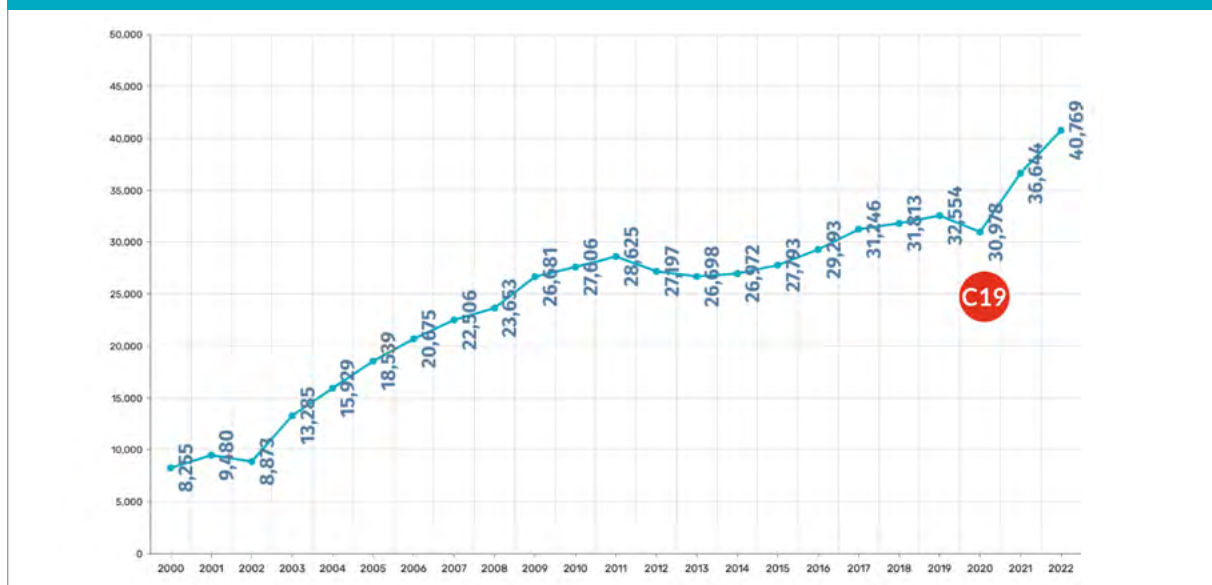
**Figure 5: Number of Teachers in Early Childhood Education by Years**



During the Early Childhood Education Campaign, the number of educational institutions increased greatly in order to popularize ECE.

The number of educational institutions that fell to 30 thousand in the Covid-19 period, which was 31 thousand in 2018, increased to over 36 thousand as seen in Figure 6.

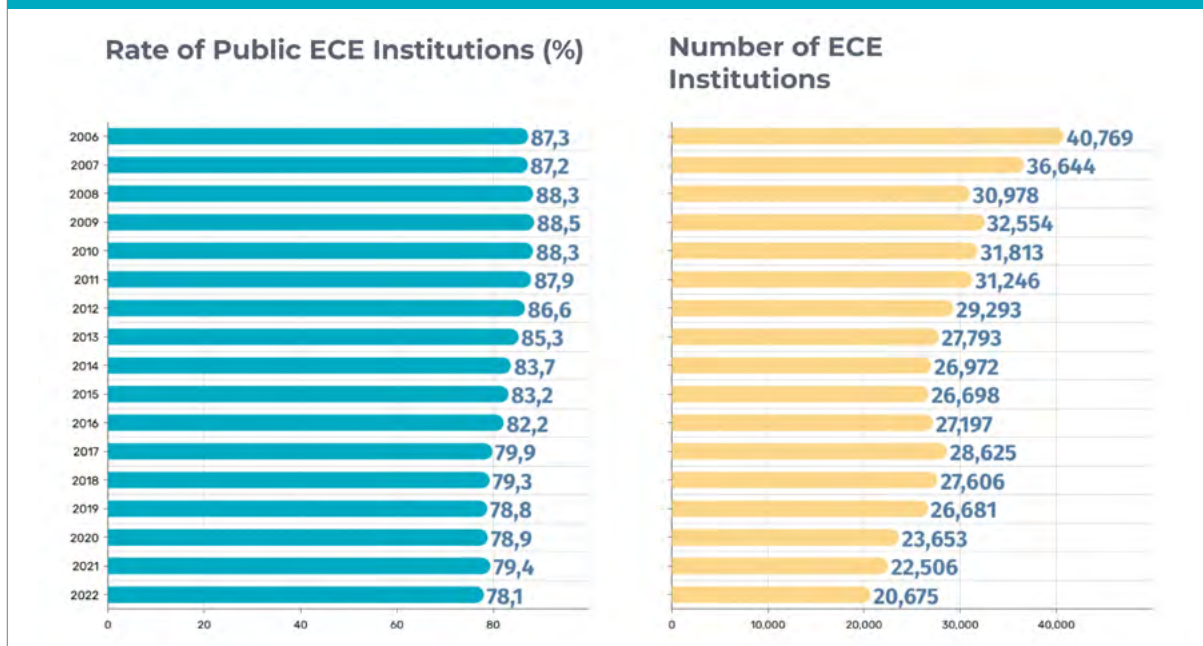
**Figure 6: Number of Early Childhood Education Institutions by Years**



As previously noted, MoNE plays a major role in providing ECE in Türkiye. Although there has been a significant increase in the number of ECE institutions (nearly 100% since 2006), public institutions still make up almost 78% of

all institutions at this level. As a result, the expansion of ECE has been mainly driven by public investments, as shown in Figure 7.

**Figure 7: Share of Public Institutions by Years**

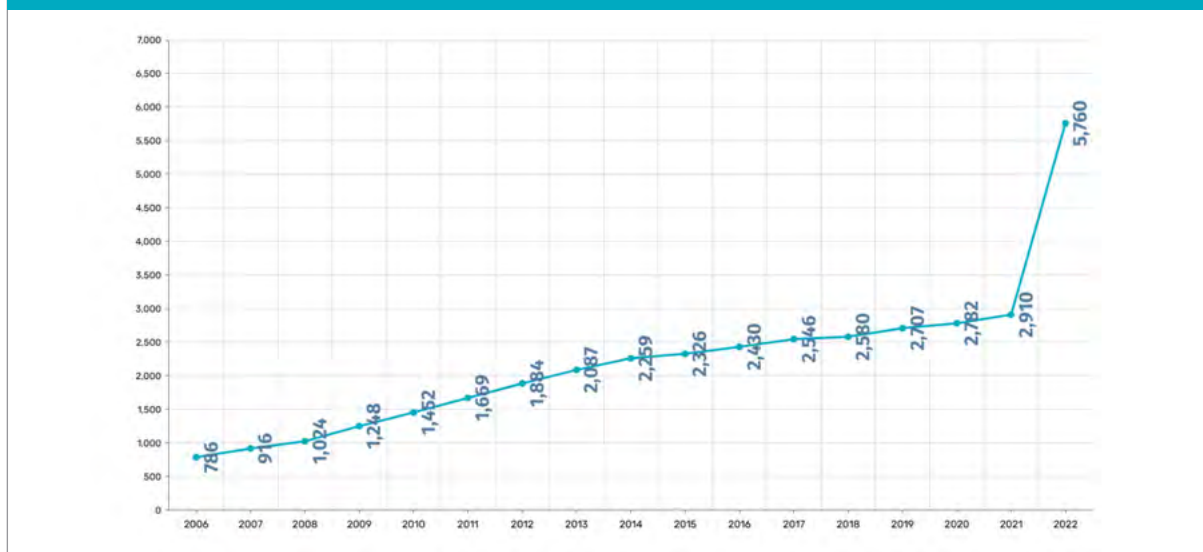


During the Early Childhood Education Campaign, the number of educational institutions increased greatly in order to popularize ECE.

Independent kindergartens opened in this context are

an obvious indicator of this. MoNE has achieved an unprecedented increase by investing heavily in the construction of independent kindergartens. The number, which was 2,900 in 2021, nearly doubled in just one year and reached 5,800 as seen in Figure 8.

**Figure 8: Number of Independent Kindergartens by Years**



For this campaign, the age of 5 has been prioritized in order to prepare children for school.

In the kindergartens and kindergartens opened in this context, the records of 5-year-old students were closely

monitored by the central organization and provincial-district organizations. Those students who fall within this age group were reached and given access to education. As a result of the steps taken, schooling rates reached 99% from 65% in one year, as seen in Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Schooling Rates by Years (5 Years)**

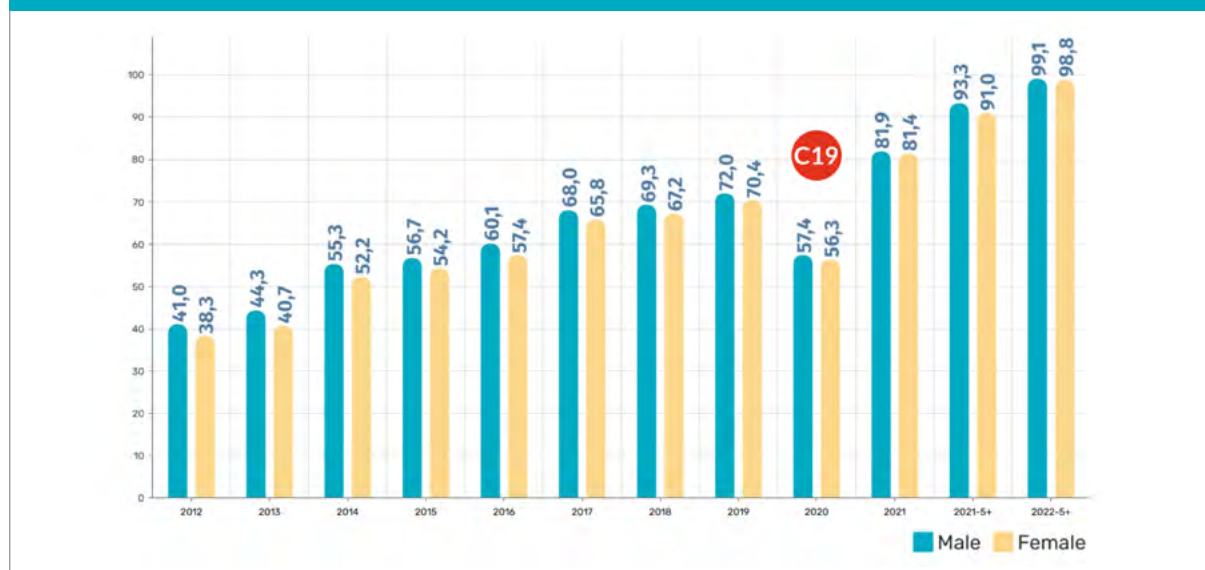


During the Early Childhood Education Campaign, significant importance was attached to gender balance in the dissemination of early childhood education.

To ensure gender equality in education, monitoring studies

were conducted at the provincial, district, and institutional levels. As seen in Figure 10, the schooling rate for both genders has reached nearly 99%, indicating a significant decrease in the gender gap in access to education.

**Figure 10: Schooling Rates by Years and Gender (5 Years)**



Despite the fact that 5-year olds were prioritized in early childhood schooling, MoNE achieved a significant rise in 3- and 4 year olds, too. The schooling rates for 4-5 year olds increased almost 12% and 7% for 3-5 year old, compared

to 2021. It is important to emphasize the improvement in one year. Additionally, the rates in 2022 is almost twofold compared to 2012 as seen in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Schooling Rates by Years (3-5 and 4-5 Ages)**



During the Early Childhood Education Campaign, special attention was given to provinces with low schooling rates in the dissemination of early childhood education.

As seen in Figure 12, schooling rates have increased to 84% and above in six provinces where enrollment rates were at their lowest level (between 23% and 41%) ten years ago.

**Figure 12: Change in Schooling in the Last 10 Years in Provinces with Low Schooling**



# Overview

As part of the "Early Childhood Education Campaign," which began in 2022 and has been ongoing for approximately one and a half years, Türkiye's long-term goal of "at least one year of qualified ECE for every child" has been achieved.

MoNE's comprehensive approach to the campaign was pivotal in achieving its ambitious goal. It began with significant investments in schooling, which are detailed in the report, resulting in the establishment of new kindergartens and a tripling of ECE capacity within a year. This approach, which considered all dimensions of the issue, was instrumental in the successful implementation of the campaign.<sup>46 47 48 49</sup>

In addition, with the aim of reaching every student, "Village Life Centers" were put into practice in villages and low-population areas. The establishment of approximately 2,400 village centers in a year has contributed greatly to increasing schooling in these regions. In addition, the "Mobile Teacher Class" and "Transport Center Kindergarten" practices were continued to ensure the participation of students in areas with difficult access to education.

To address the global challenge of limited access to ECE due to education costs, Türkiye initiated the "Supporting Children with Pre-School Education" project. This initiative covers the educational expenses of students who receive social assistance during their ECE and has an annual budget of 500 million ₺, recognizing that the cost of education is a major barrier to access.

The "free school lunch" program, which is also on the global education agenda and has become even more critical with the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, has been expanded to include all students in ECE. MoNE significantly increased the number of students receiving free school meals to over 5 million by providing nutritious meals to approximately 1.8 million students daily. This measure ensures that all students participating in ECE at school have access to healthy and balanced meals.

With this multidimensional support, schooling rates have shown a substantial increase throughout Türkiye. The schooling rate for 5-year-olds has reached 99 percent, and the gender gap has nearly disappeared.

Schooling rates were increased to 85% and above in provinces where there was low schooling ten years ago. The opportunities available for children with special educational needs who wish to receive ECE have also been improved. The number of special education kindergartens which started to be established in the last six years, reached 294 in 2022. These institutions are equipped with up-to-date special education materials. In this context, special education needs in newly established kindergartens and kindergartens were also taken into account.

MoNE's holistic approach to ECE, encompassing physical, economic, and social dimensions, has yielded significant results in a short period of time.<sup>50</sup> As of February 2023, the enrollment rate for 3-year-olds has increased from 9% to 16%, and for 4-year-olds, it has risen from 16% to 38%. MoNE's new goal is to replicate the success achieved in the 5-year-old age group to 3 and 4-year-old age groups. The objective is to reach 50% enrollment at age 3 and 70% enrollment at age 4, which is the OECD average.

<sup>46</sup> Özer, M. (2021). Eğitim politikalarında sistemik uyum. Maltepe University Publishing.

<sup>47</sup> Özer, M. (2021). Türkiye'de eğitimin evrenselleşmesi. Maltepe University Publishing.

<sup>48</sup> Özer, M. (2021). Türkiye'de eğitim üzerine söyleşiler. Kapatokya University Publishing.

<sup>49</sup> Özer, M. (2022). Türkiye'de eğitimi yeniden düşünmek. VakıfBank Culture Publishing.

<sup>50</sup> Özer, M. (2023). Türkiye'de eğitimin geleceği: Eşit, kapsayıcı ve kaliteli. VakıfBank Culture Publishing.

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