

Women's Labour and Employment in Turkey, in the Snare of Flexibilization and Informalization:

An Analysis within the Frame of Policy Documents

September 2014

KEiG

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women's labor and employment initiative

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FLEXIBILIZATION AND INFORMALIZATION:
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WOMEN'S LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT IN TURKEY, IN THE SNARE OF FLEXIBILIZATION
AND INFORMALIZATION: AN ANALYSIS WITHIN THE FRAME OF POLICY DOCUMENTS

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Preface

Women's low employment rate has, especially in recent years, become an issue that is considered a problem, and made the subject of many projects and policies in Turkey. Yet, what all of these projects and policies have in common is that they see women as primarily responsible for the care of children and of sick/elderly individuals, and thus plan their participation within the labour force market in a manner that is based on not hampering the fulfillment of these duties. On the other hand, the precarization of the labour force market and concern with regards to the future under poor working conditions without job security have become the common denominators interconnecting the experiences of a majority of workers today. As the Women's Labour and Employment Initiative (KEİG) Platform, we have been working to make the voice of women with regards to women's labour and employment, and to labour force market heard, and we have been analyzing policies that are being formulated, and making proposals for true structural change since 2006. In this time period, we have seen that what is being done in the area of women's labour and employment is centred upon a family model that reinforces the traditional gendered structure where men are bread-winners and women are responsible for domestic affairs, rather than on strengthening gender equality. This discourse and these practices based on the family are becoming ever more palpable in all areas of our lives. What this report aims to do within this context is to analyze the documents that determine the short and mid-term goals and direction of various state institutions from a perspective based on gender equality, in order to demonstrate what kinds of changes and transformations shall take place in the field of women's labour and employment in years to come.

The report has been written by the Women's Labour and Employment Initiative (KEİG) Platform with 30 different women's organizations in 14 provinces. What the KEİG Platform does is not only develop policies in the area of women's labour and employment, but also advocate for these policies, together with its member organizations, at both the local and the national level.

KEİG Platform
September 2014

Women's Labour and Employment Initiative (KEİG) Platform

While women's labour and employment is one of the areas in which discrimination against women is most prevalent, it was not really on the agenda of Turkey or of women's organizations until recently. With the start of negotiations with the European Union, both the issue of gender equality, covered under the heading of Social Policies, and the issue of employment, defined under its own separate heading, came to be discussed at greater length in Turkey. In this process, an increase in the number of meetings and reports on this matter also took place. The policy proposals being brought up in these meetings and reports in order to increase the women's employment rate, however, still remained deeply inadequate. This is why we decided to write a press release titled the Joint Press Release of Women's Organizations in March 2006, after the Women's Employment Summit, and we opened this up to the signatures of women's organizations. Following this press release, on the 2nd of April, 2006, a group of women activists and academics working in the field of women's labour and employment came together, and held a meeting in which we discussed our priorities with regards to organizing and policies. The Women's Labour and Employment Initiative (KEİG) was founded as a result of this meeting. On the 24th of February, 2007, KEİG organized a Women's Labour and Employment Meeting attended by the relevant parties to the issue, and by women's organizations from all parts of the country. After this conference, KEİG became a platform with various women's organizations as its members.

Why KEİG Platform?

The KEİG Platform is a platform including 30 separate women's organizations from 14 different provinces, all working on different aspects of the issue of gender equality – such as labour, male violence against women, and the political participation of women. Essentially, what it does is to produce information and carry out activities in the field of women's labour and employment. Its main goal is to influence policy-making, and create new policies in this field, so that women may have a secure and permanent position within the work force, and find jobs with good working conditions that provide adequate income. While formulating these policies, it bases its perspective on rendering visible the unpaid labour expended by women within the household, and on transcending the gendered division of labour both within and outside the home.

KEİG Platform Members

Association for Solidarity with and Improvement of the Conditions of Housewives/ EVKAD (ADANA) * Working Group for Home-Based Women Workers * Women's Education and Employment Association/ KEİD * The Women Physicians and Women's Health Branch of the Turkish Doctor's Union (ANKARA) * Antalya Women's Counseling Center and Solidarity Association (ANTALYA) * Koza Women's Association (BURSA) * Çanakkale Women Entrepreneurs Production and Marketing Cooperative * Elder Association for the Utilization of Women's Handcrafts/ ELDER (ÇANAKKALE) * Association for the Support of Women Entrepreneurs/ GİKAD (DENİZLİ) * KAMER Foundation * Selis Women's Counseling Center * Association for Business Women in the East and Southeast/ DOĞÜNKAD (DİYARBAKIR) * Association for the Education and Support of Women Candidates/ KA.DER * Women Engineers Group * Women Unionists Group * Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) - New Ways * Women's Solidarity Foundation/ KADAV * Blue Pencil Social Cooperation and Solidarity Association * Women's Journal of the Petroleum Employees Union * Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey/ KAGİDER * İmece Domestic Workers Union * Center for Social Development and Gender Equality Policies/ SOGEP (İSTANBUL/ KOCAELİ) * Buca Evka 1 Women's Culture and Solidarity Home/ BEKEV * Çiğli Evka-2 Women's Culture Home/ ÇEKEV * İzmir Women's Solidarity Association (İZMİR) * Mersin Independent Women's Association (MERSİN) * Black Sea Region Women's Solidarity Association (TRABZON) Home of Life Women's Solidarity Association/ YAŞAM EVİ (URFA) * Van Women's Association/ VAKAD (VAN) * Feminist Researchers Studying on Women's Labour/ KEFA

WOMEN'S LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT IN TURKEY, IN THE SNARE OF FLEXIBILIZATION AND INFORMALIZATION: AN ANALYSIS WITHIN THE FRAME OF POLICY DOCUMENTS*

Introduction

Women's employment rates are very low in Turkey. Almost half of this employment takes place in informal areas such as unpaid domestic work in family, paid domestic work or home-based work. The fact that women's employment rates are low has been on the agenda of women's organizations and feminist researches for many long years, yet this issue has only come to the attention of the government with the start of the negotiation process for entry into the EU. The very first time the relationship between women's responsibilities in the area of child care and their entry into employment was mentioned was in the 7th Development Plan (1996-2000). Thus, the issue of low women's employment rates, and of increasing women's participation in the labour force has been on the agenda of successive governments and of the various social parties that shape the working life, for many years.

According to recent research and as demonstrated by the struggle waged by women's organizations, domestic responsibilities that seen as women's primary duties prevent women from entering all areas of life in Turkey, especially since it is a country where institutional services for the care of children and sick/elderly/disabled individuals are deeply limited. There has been no attempt whatsoever over the years in order to institutionalize these services. As a result, families are forced to purchase these services from the private sector, for a hefty sum. Those who are economically unable to do so are left with no other choice but to care for their children at home, which means that they either do not enter the labour market at all, or must either temporarily or per-

* This document was prepared by İdil Soyseçkin, by means of significant contributions and support of KEFA and KEİG members.

manently drop out. As a result, women are forced to take a break, or quit their jobs never to return again.

The Women's Labour and Employment Initiative (KEİG) Platform, has been determining problem areas regarding women's labour and employment, evaluating policies that are being put into practice, and putting forth various policy proposals since 2006. The aim of this text is to foresee what kind of transitions shall take place in terms of women's labour and employment in the coming years, to predict how the responsibility of care that prevents women from entering the various areas of life shall be shared amongst the state, family, and the market, and to once again give voice to women's demands relating to these policies.

In line with the aforementioned aim, we have closely examined the following documents: The 10th Development Plan, the Program for the Year 2014, the Mid-Range Program of the Ministry of Development, the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Finance, the 2014 Performance Program of the Ministry of Finance, the Action Plan for the Year 2014, the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and the 2014-2023 National Employment Strategy Document prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan prepared by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, the 2014 Social Security Performance Program and the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan of the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR), the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of National Education, and the National Action Plan Monitoring Report of the Directorate General on the Status of Women¹

Development plans are especially important because they are documents that both determine the steps public institutions and organizations will take, and create the framework of our lives. Thus, we have primarily focused on the 10th Development Plan, which spans the years 2014 to 2018, in each and every separate chapter.

The Program for the Year 2014, on the other hand, discusses the policies that shall be put into practice and the precautions that shall be taken in line with the Development Plan. It is important because it lists the institutions that shall either be responsible for, or may be collaborated with in terms of these policies and precautions.

1 The Reports are listed, with the necessary links, at the end of this document.

The Ministries of Development and Finance are key institutions in the achievement of the goals defined in the Program for the Year 2014. This is why we have included the Mid-Range Program of the Ministry of Development, as well as the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Finance, and the 2014 Performance Program of the Ministry of Finance in our evaluation.

The Action Plan for the Year 2014, the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan and the 2014-2023 National Employment Strategy, all of which have been prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, are other documents that have been taken into consideration due to the fact that they demonstrate what kind of transformations the labour force market shall undergo within the framework of the 10th Development Plan.

We are also aware of the importance of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan prepared by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, since this is the institution responsible for social aids, as well as for institutional care services. This strategic plan allows us to see how and under what conditions the state lightens or increases the burden of care placed upon women within the family.

While the 2014 Social Security Performance Program demonstrates the steps to be taken in terms of social security, the 2013-2017 Strategic Plan of the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) pays particularly attention to the policies that shall be put into effect in relation to the employment of women. Thus, these documents are also given detailed consideration in this text.

The 2010-2014 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of National Education is useful in order to gather information about regulations regarding pre-school education.

The National Action Plan Monitoring Report of the Directorate General on the Status of Women, on the other hand, allows us to observe to what extent and within what framework various institutions have been carrying out the responsibilities they have been given within the scope of the Gender Equality Action Plan.

Alongside all of these aforementioned documents, as well as the problem areas regarding the labour force

market in Turkey, women's labour and employment, and along with issues that have a definitive effect on one's working life, such as informal employment, early childhood care and education services, the care of elderly and disabled individuals, social services and aids, this report also aims to look into another important problem: namely, the issue of seasonal agricultural workers. Our goal is both to expose their current conditions, and to lay out the new directions this issue shall take in the coming years.

The Labour Force Market

According to the 2013 Household Labour Force data collected by the Turkish Statistical Institute (Turk-Stat), the total rate of participation into the labour force for those aged 15 or above is 50%. Yet this rate is distributed as 71.5% for men and 29.7% for women. The total employment rate is 44.9%; but while the employment rate for men is 65.2%, it is only 27.1% for women. The non-agricultural unemployment rate of women (17.4%) is also significantly higher than that of men (10.1%).

When we compare the situation in Turkey to the average of all countries that are members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), it becomes even more strikingly evident how low its rate of the entry of women into employment really is². In the year 2013, the employment of women was set at 57.5% according to the OECD average. In the 10th Development Plan, the aim is declared to be to raise the rate of women's employment to 38% by 2023. While this aim falls short even of the 2013 average of OECD countries, it cannot yet begin to approach the goal set in the European Employment Strategy³ to level the employment of men and women at 75% by the year 2020 in all European Union (EU) countries.

Informal employment is prevalent in Turkey. The data from January 2014 provided by TurkStat puts the percentage of informal labour within total employment as 33%. While 27.5% of male employment is in the informal sector, informal labour makes up 48% of women's employment. The greatest amount of unrecorded, informal labour is seen to be expended in the area of unpaid family work. The rate of women working as unpaid family workers is 28% of the total amount of women's employment, while unpaid family work makes up only 4% of all male employment. 93.9% of all women working as unpaid family workers are

² http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/employment/oecd-employment-outlook-2014_empl_outlook-2014-en

³ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/europe-2020-in-a-nutshell/targets/index_en.htm

working in informal labor market. A great majority of women are working in an unrecorded, in the agricultural sector. The amount of women working as informal outside the agricultural sector is also, however, high enough to be reckoned with (25.5%).

The most fundamental problem facing the labour force market in Turkey is informal labour. Along with this, there is also the existence of a system with long working hours, poor work environments and working conditions, and a general deficiency in providing for the health and safety of workers. A limited amount of workers are able to enjoy assurances such as retirement, job security, and severance pay. A great majority of those who are able to take advantage of these services are men. Thus, it is important to pay close attention to the mentality with which policies shall be formulated in the coming days in order to solve the issue of a low women's employment rate – an issue which has, as of late, been on the agenda of various governments in Turkey.

Due to the gains of the struggle waged by women's organizations, to the general framework of steps that must be taken as part of the EU Harmonization process, and, perhaps most fundamentally, as a development strategy (KEİG, 2013), the state has, in these past years, started defining the necessity to increase the employment of women as a problem area. Here, it becomes necessary to draw attention to the fact that these efforts to increase the employment of women are not because it is seen as a women's issue, but because it is considered an important development strategy. The development strategy of the country sees the labour force of women as a resource that is yet to be fully tapped into and used up; and this is why it sets increasing their employment as a goal. On the other hand, we have observed that policies to be put into effect in order to increase the employment of women are also being discussed on the basis of a flexibilization of the labour force market.

Flexibilization of the Labour Force Market

The National Employment Strategy Document emphasizes the importance of the flexibilization of the labour force market for sustainability in development. This strategy, which is based on a growth that shall create employment opportunities, does not discuss the quality of the jobs that shall be created. It is clearly

stated that “job security”, which is a term that signifies the protection of one’s job, and the security one has in terms of remaining in that job, is now less important than what is called “employment security”, which signifies the general continuation of employment – albeit with certain interruptions – and a preservation of the working condition in a manner that is not bound to a single employer. This means that what is to be protected is employment and not the job itself. Within this framework – and in line with the 10th Development Plan⁴ – the 87th article of this document explains how generalizing temporary employment by way of private employment agencies shall especially increase the employability of women, young people, and individuals who have been unemployed for a long period. For one, this demonstrates that the continuity of jobs in the labour market at large is being brought to an end, and that a system in which workers are denied rights such as job security, retirement and severance pay is being made into the norm. But alongside this, it also renders clear that practices to raise employment rates amongst groups that are defined as requiring special policies (youth, women, the disabled) are being considered only in terms of ensuring a quantitative increase, and not at all on the basis of creating “decent” job opportunities.

The 2013-2017 Strategic Plan of the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) also considers the flexibilization of the labour force market and the increase of the activities of private employment agencies under the umbrella of new opportunities for its own functioning. The fact that flexible labour has not been spread wide enough is listed alongside other points such as unemployment and the prevalence of underemployment⁵ among what are seen as threats. Yet it is well known that underemployment is higher amongst

4 In the 322nd Article, listed under the heading called ‘Employment Policies’ within the 10th Development Plan, it is stated that the legal basis to allow for rental labour is to be prepared.

5 Underemployment means that a population being employed is working under its productive capacity. It is divided into two separate

categories: time-related underemployment and insufficient employment. According to the definitions provided by TurkStat, time-related underemployment refers to people who have been employed during the week that is being referenced, but have worked under 40 hours total in their main job and in any additional jobs, even though they have voiced the desire to work more and are capable of doing so if it is made possible. Insufficient employment refers to people who are outside the scope of time-related underemployment, who have been employed during the week that is being referenced, but who have looked for a different job in the past 4 weeks either in addition to their current job or in order to replace it, and can start working in this new job within 2 weeks if they are able to find it. http://www.tuik.gov.tr/MicroVeri/Hia_2011/turkce/metaveri/tanim/index.html

parttime workers⁶. And this is more ubiquitous amongst women than it is amongst men⁷. Thus, considering underemployment as a problem alongside flexible labour is a great contradiction indeed. One of the biggest problems in this document itself is the fact that its aims and strategies have been formulated by way of a completely degendered analysis.

Flexibilization is defined in Article 4.3 of the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security as a kind of secure flexibility, a flexicurity that “shall not lead to a loss of rights and precarious labour.” However, when we take into consideration that working hours have surpassed 50 hours a week, that even the rights of full time employees are being limited, and that retirement is being made ever harder to achieve, it is difficult to imagine how flexible labour shall be implemented without a loss of rights. This issue is not detailed in any one of the documents we have examined. The fact that the rights of employees shall be protected is merely glossed over with some vague generalizations, and there is no discussion of any concrete strategy proposals whatsoever. In this format, it is impossible to position flexicurity within a realistic political vision.

The flexibilization of the labour force market is also taken into consideration in terms of the relationship between market rigidity and severance pay, as can be seen in the 10th Development Plan, as well as in both the National Employment Strategy Document and the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security in line with the Development Plan. We are told that severance pay in Turkey is higher than it is in many countries, and that there shall thus be a transition into a system that is inclusive of all workers, and that protects all acquired rights, but that is also mindful of the competitive capacity of the employer. However, when we look at the indicator that should actually be considered in relation to severance pay, namely the labour force market, we see that it displays none of the alleged rigidity it is

6 According to the 2013 Labour Force Market Research, underemployment is an issue for 10 million part time workers in 28 EU countries. This makes up 23% of all part time workers. This means that these people are looking for longer working hours. The data from Spain and Greece, with whom we are considered to be within the same welfare regime, is striking indeed. While underemployment makes up 72% of part time labour in Greece, this rate is 57.4% in Spain. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_PUBLIC/3-10042014-BP/EN/3-10042014-BP-EN.PDF

7 2010 Eurostat data shows that 68.4% of all underemployment amongst part time workers is with regards to women. On the other hand, this data lays bare another reality as well. The percentage of men working in part time jobs is lower than that of women. 75% of all part time workers within the European Union are women. http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KS-SF-11-056/EN/KS-SF-11-056-EN.PDF

associated with⁸. This, then, becomes the legal basis leading to a foundation for the implementation of temporary/on-hire labour practices by way of private employment agencies. In a labour market where the employment of women is low, one of every two working women are in the informal sector, and informality is prevalent within overall employment as well, severance pay is a right that a limited number of workers are able to access. A great majority of those who are able to take advantage of this right are men. Thus, even though its results for women within employment shall be quite limited, focusing on this attempt to render severance pay completely non-functional (although it may not be being removed altogether) is still quite important in terms of its place in the general destructuralization and precarization processes becoming manifest in the labour force market today.

Informal Employment

The high rate of informality in women's employment is also mentioned in the National Employment Strategy, and the claim here is that this rate shall be lowered to 30% by 2023. Some regulations have also been made in order to elucidate how an increase in women's employment shall be ensured. The implementation of "necessary legal regulations for flexible forms of labour such as work sharing, working with flexible hours, working from home or from a distance" has been considered as a precautionary measure with regards to home-based work. In order to put these precautions into practice, the fact that these forms of flexible work shall be included within labour and social security legislation has also been set forth in the Plan. There is yet another measure that is in a similar vein, but this one also encompasses domestic labour, and it states "Precautions shall be taken in order to ameliorate the working conditions of women working in domestic services or as home-based, and these women shall be encouraged to enter formal, registered employment." In relation to the implementation of this measure we may find the following explanation: "Incentives shall be provided with regards to the optional insurance premiums paid by women working in domestic services or as home-based. The necessary changes shall be made to national legislation, taking

⁸ The relationship between severance pay and rigidity is established in the "Employment Protection Legislation Index" of the OECD. According to this index, the flexibility of the labour force market is determined based on two main indicators. The first of these is the individual or collective dismissal of employees, while the second is temporary work or temporally limited contract-based jobs. According to the first parameter, which can also actually be taken into consideration in terms of job security, the data from 2013 clearly states that Turkey ranks 23rd amongst 43 countries. Turkey's ranking in terms of regulations regarding temporary labour, on the other hand, is 34. How unnecessary it is to place such emphasis on severance pay becomes evident even when what is being considered is the index of the OECD, which unflinchingly sees economic development as the number one goal. This situation clearly demonstrates that the course is set to favour capital, and not labour.

ILO agreements into account, in order to ensure that these women can take advantage of retirement benefits, as well as other social rights." Examining these aforementioned regulations demonstrates that those working in domestic services or as home-based are also being encouraged to get optional insurance packages, and that the general understanding is not at all one that sees them as dependant labour. With various regulations and legislative changes being planned here, women who are still being employed informally shall be registered, and a quantitative increase shall take place in the formal employment rate of women.

This situation brings to mind the quick rise in the employment of women in cities in the years 2010-2013. At this moment in time, the number of women employed in cities rose from 3,575 thousand to 4,511 thousand, with an increase of 936 thousand. 85% of this increase took place in the service sector⁹. In 2007, with the Law No. 2022, a Home Care Services program was started by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. With this program, the state began giving people taking care of disabled relatives at home monthly salaries set at the net minimum wage. This program reached 427,434 people as of 2013. This group providing care services is mainly made up of women, and has been considered under the heading, "Human Health and Social Service Activities" by TurkStat since the year 2011. While 295 thousand people were employed under this heading in 2010, by 2013 this figure had risen to 453 thousand people. This marks a 158 thousand person increase, at a rate of 53.6%. While this number and rate are not to be underestimated by any means, it also demonstrates that all those who receive the monthly salaries are not included in the statistics. At the same time, we may also assume that some people who work in this sector but are not among those receiving the monthly salaries for care have been included in these statistics. Thus, the proportion of those working in human health and social service activities in the 936 thousand person increase in the employment of women in urban areas that took place between 2010 and 2013 is 16.9%. Another area where employment takes place is "Administrative Support and Service Activities." Since 2012, TurkStat has considered the cleaning workers ac for their own account under this heading. While 158 thousand people were employed within this category in 2010, the number had risen to 307 thousand people by 2013. It may be said that the main driving force behind the increase in this activity area is domestic workers employed in daily basis. This marks a 149 thousand person increase, at a rate of 94.3%. Thus, the proportion of those working in the scope of these activities within the general 936 thousand person increase that took place in

⁹ Three separate subactivity areas call for attention in the service sector: Human health and social service activities saw an increase of 158 thousand people, administrative support and service activities an increase of 149 thousand people, and retail trade an increase of 119 thousand people. Thus, these three areas account for more than half (53.4%) of the total increase in the service sector.

2010-2013 is 15.9%. And 34.2% of those working in this activity area are employed informally.

Upon looking at the 2014 Action Plan of the Ministry of Labour and Social Security within the framework of the 10th Development Plan, we see that increasing women's participation in the labour force and in employment is set as a goal. It is stated that the percentage of women amongst those placed into jobs in the private sector shall be raised to 35% until the end of 2017. Although there is no information whatsoever as to how this goal was determined in the first place, a closer look into the strategies aiming to implement this goal show that general informing and consciousness-raising activities shall be carried out¹⁰.

In the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan of the same ministry, the formation of a National Women's Employment Coordinating and Monitoring Board for Increasing Employment and Ensuring Equality of Opportunity with reference to the 2010/14 Mandate of the Prime Ministry was mentioned. These boards have been active since 2010. However, the report titled "Research on the Situation of Women within Employment in the wake of the Mandate" published by the KEIG Platform in 2012, expresses that it is difficult to access any information about board meetings and participants, that the process is not transparent, and that because the activities of the board have not yet been institutionalized properly, they are still being carried out in a manner that is dependent on personal initiative. Thus, the efficiency envisaged by the Mandate is not really being brought to life. On the other hand, although it is possible to interpret the continuation of the giving of an award to increase awareness and sensitivity with regards to gender equality, as has been done since 2012, as a positive step, it is also evident that what we need are more deeply structural changes and regulations.

Amongst the most fundamental causes for the lack of women's participation in the labour force market in Turkey lies not only the fact that women are seen as primarily responsible for the care of children and

¹⁰ Strategy 1.3.1: Activities shall be carried out in order to mobilize national non-governmental organizations working on the issue as well as their local branches, to push for decisions that shall encourage women's employment.

Strategy 1.3.2: In visits to workplaces in the private sector, detailed information shall be given to employers with regards to the most current regulations encouraging women's employment.

Strategy 1.3.3: Activities aiming to raise employers' consciousness regarding gender equality shall be increased.

Strategy 1.3.4: The proportion of women registered within the Institution shall be increased by way of a referral network system that shall be developed amongst various institutions.

sick/elderly/disabled individuals within the family, but also that support systems regarding care work and institutional care services are deeply inadequate. The question is, how, then, shall this scene change in the coming days?

Early Child Care and Education Services and Child Care Responsibility

The provision of early child care and education services in an accessible manner is not only important in terms of gender equality, but also it lessens both inequality amongst children with regards to their levels of education, and the chance of the continuation of this inequality across generations; it encourages households where both parents work and contribute to the household economy, thus lessening poverty (İlkkaracan, 2010); it provides a basis for life long learning in children; and for the country at large, it works to increase fertility rates, and helps societies reach a higher level of social and economic development (OECD, 2012). We must, however, also emphasize that all of these positive developments are directly linked to the quality of the services provided. Not only shall low quality early childhood education and care services not create the expected positive outcomes, but there is also the risk that they may have negative effects.

In Turkey, these services are being carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MNE) and the General Directorate of Child Services (GDCS) is under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MFSP). In schools under the GDCS, a variety of services are provided to children aged 0-14, while preschool education institutions under the MNE serve children aged 3-5. In the 2010-2014 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of National Education, it is stated that preschool education affects all areas of life, and that its scope covers children aged 0-5. Directly following this statement, however, it says that "the first step in education is preschool education, and children aged 3-5 receive this education." Thus, not only does the Ministry contradict itself, but it also leaves the care of children aged 0-3 outside the scope of its activities. On the other hand, the fact that data regarding the school attendance of children aged 3-5 only became accessible in 2009 demonstrates that there is not nearly enough attention given to this issue.

In the Strategy Plan of the Ministry of National Education, the aim is set at raising the schooling rate in preschool education to 70% by the end of the plan period. According to the 2013-2014 statistics, however,

not only has the Ministry not even begun to approach this aim, but there is also an important decline in comparison to 2011-2012 and 2012-2013¹¹. The fact that the new 4+4+4 education system may have played a role in this decline has been mentioned in various reports about early childhood education¹².

Institutional services are only one dimension of the issue of early child care and education. Providing a variety of alternatives in this area is deeply important. One is to support parents who choose to care for their children at home by means of direct money transfers or tax reductions. It is also necessary that certain regulations be made in order to encourage an equal sharing of child care responsibility between mothers and fathers. In its current state, Turkey is one of the few countries where people are constantly encouraged to have children, while institutional services are inadequate and families are provided only very limited support (ERG and AÇEV, 2013)¹³

There is a prominent episode in the 10th Development Plan, that is interesting also because it does not exist in any of the previous plans. This episode is one of the clearest indicators as to how the real aim here is to generalize a family model based on traditional gender roles. In the section titled Program to Preserve the Dynamic Structure of the Family and Population the aim is set as strengthening the family, which is seen to be weakening due to migration, urbanization, individualism, deficiencies in family education, and new communication technologies. Reconciliation of work and family life is amongst the other goals of the program, and it is listed under the heading, Preserving the Dynamic Structure of the Population. Although the issue of spreading affordable and accessible kindergartens and preschool education opportunities is

11 While the gross schooling rate for children aged 3-5 was 30.93% in the 2012-2013 school year, it fell to 28.03% in 2013-2014. The same goes for schooling rates of children aged 4-5, and 5. A serious decline is evident especially in the schooling rate of 5-year-olds when compared to 2011-2012 (from 65.6% to 43.49%). http://sgb.meb.gov.tr/istatistik/meb_istatistikleri_orgun_egitim_2013_2014.pdf.

The number of children taking advantage of the private kindergartens and day care centers under the GDCS is 56,024. 1792 of these children access these services free of charge. http://www.cocukhizmetleri.gov.tr/upload/Node/10542/files/Aralik_Istatistikler.pdf

12 According to the report prepared by the Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV) and the Education Reform Initiative (ERG) in 2013, the schooling rate of 5-year-old children in primary schools as well as in preschool education was 74% in 2012-2013. However, only 41% of these were within preschool education. What this means is that 32% of these children could have been within the preschool education system if the old education system was still in effect, but with the new system they have started primary school.

13 In recent years, there has been an increase in the budget set aside for monetary support to those taking care of elderly/sick and disabled individuals at home. The number of those taking advantage of these services has also risen drastically. Detailed information on this issue shall be provided in the following sections. What we are discussing here is the responsibility of caring for children in general.

mentioned, there are no details as to how this goal shall actually be put into practice. Thus, it is impossible to reach any information on strategies that shall be developed¹⁴. On the other hand, the problems of single parent families are mentioned in general in the Development Plan, and the focus is placed on lowering divorce rates by way of family counseling and mediating services. Especially with the existence of a clause declaring that social and economic policies shall be designed in a mutually supportive and complementary manner in order to strengthen and protect the family, we are given the clear impression that the aim is not to develop support mechanisms that could enable women's participation in the various areas of life, but rather to fortify a family model where men work and women carry the weight of all the responsibilities within the domestic sphere.

There is a new section in the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security as well. This section, which does not exist in previous plans, is titled Woman and the Family, and its goal is stated as reinforcing the position of the family within society at large.

In the Development Plan, there is an article stating that preschool education services shall be spread in order to enable the access of those with limited means. How this article shall be applied in life, is made clear in the Program for the Year 2014. According to this, only children aged 36-60 months, and 60-72 month olds who have not been registered in primary schools, shall be brought into the preschool education system. Hence, the care of children below 60 months is disregarded. On the other hand, the Ministry of Finance – which has been appointed here as responsible for this issue – has not included a single plan or aim with regards to preschool education in either its Strategic Plan or its 2014 Performance Program. Moreover, in the Mid-Range Program of the Ministry of Development, pertaining to the years 2014-2016, the only way in which this issue is mentioned is a very vague expression speaking of implementing policies in order to reconcile work and family life.

Again, the issue of reconciliation of work and family life for women is discussed in the Development Plan within a framework that emphasizes protecting the young and dynamic nature of the population, and preventing the fast decline in fertility. Thus, even the starting point here is the presupposition that fulfilling all responsibilities with regards to the family is a woman's job. Within the same goal set out in the

14 As also stated in the criticism directed towards the Plan by oppositionary parties, the additional strategic document detailing what steps shall be taken in order to achieve the goals that are mentioned – which existed in the 9th Development Plan – is nonexistent here.

Plan, one may also read the following statement: “maternity leave and certain rights shall be instituted for employees, kindergartens shall be encouraged, and flexible work opportunities shall be provided.” In line with this goal, the Program for the Year 2014 states that “parental leaves for mothers and fathers, leaves to accompany a dependant to the hospital, and unpaid leaves shall be ameliorated in a manner that shall not lessen women’s employment.” This makes it clear that the ‘employees’ mentioned in the Development Plan are women only. Again in terms of the same goal, the Program for the Year 2014 states that legislative work with regards to developing flexible work opportunities in relation to pregnancy and birth shall be completed. What is meant by flexible work opportunities here is working away from the workplace, having piece jobs, or part-time work. Yet, when we consider how prevalent long work hours and low wages are in Turkey, this kind of flexibility, which usually signifies part-time work, remains an alternative available only to those in the high-income group. It is clear that, for a large portion of the population, not only does flexible work not allow enough time to care for children, but it is also inadequate in terms of providing minimal living conditions. Thus, flexible work, as it is discussed here in terms of reconciliation of work and family life, remains an alternative that may only be ‘chosen’ by high-income parents.

On the other hand, it is not possible to achieve gender equality in child care only by way of providing different work models. Unless paid parental leaves that cannot be transferred from one parent to the other are instituted, and unless mechanisms are developed in order to combat the widespread gendered perceptions within society, this responsibility shall largely remain a woman’s burden. Moreover, what the government sets as a goal for itself – as can be seen in the Development Plan – is not the achievement of gender equality, but rather the prevention of the fast decline in fertility.

Alongside the general inadequacy of preschool education is the fact the hours of existing services are not compatible with work hours. This is another factor that causes a great majority of families to experience difficulties within the system. In the Program for the Year 2014, it is stated that “a program with study hours shall be implemented in order to get school hours to match up with work hours in the case of such a demand from parents, and in return for a suitable fee.” First and foremost comes the fact that this is yet another practice that low-income families cannot benefit from. On the other hand, there is the Ministry of National Education’s Regulations on Preschool and Primary Education Institutions that came into effect on the 26th of July, 2014. This Ministry is one of the institutions responsible for the application of the

precautionary measure mentioned above; and, according to this list of regulations it has published, a transition into a dual education system is on the horizon¹⁵. Although it is said that “if the number of children is inadequate for dual education, a normal education may also be given as long as it is in line with the school’s educational format,” the fact that this decision has been left to educational institutions themselves shall negatively affect not only mothers but also – in the case that the mothers have to work – all women within the family since child care is a task carried out mostly by women.

Another institution responsible for preschool education is the Ministry of Family and Social Policies. Despite the fact that in its Strategy Document, it is stated that women cannot enter into employment due to the responsibility of caring for children, it is also expressed that a financial support statute shall be prepared in order to render private kindergarten services more accessible. Similarly, it is also within the job description of this Ministry to prepare the necessary regulations in order to, first and foremost, encourage the raising of and supporting children within the family. Thus, we may reach the conclusion that institutionalizing early childhood care and education services is not on the agenda of the political powers governing the country.¹⁶

As is known, the Directorate General on the Status of Women prepares a National Action Plan on Gender Equality once every five years. Although the new plan is not yet prepared, we may still understand what the institutions given certain duties with regards to this issue in the previous plan have been doing from the 2011 Action Plan Monitoring Report.¹⁷ Article 1:9 of the Action Plan states that activities with regards to increasing the employment of women shall be given speed. This goal includes a strategy that calls for making the necessary legislative regulations regarding parental leaves in order to equally distribute the responsibility of caring

¹⁵ <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2014/07/20140726-4.htm>

¹⁶ In the year 2014, the Ministry of National Education has started paying incentives (or support) to children studying in private schools. Preschool education is also included in the scope of this activity. In 2014-2015 50,000 children shall be supported in 48-66 months. The amount of this support is 2500 TL yearly, and it shall be paid to the school to which the child is registered. http://www.meb.gov.tr/meb_iys_dosyalar/egitim_ogretim_destegi.pdf. The implementation of this incentive is a positive development, because it shall add to the number of children taking advantage of preschool education services. We must also point out, however, that the money given as support adds up to only half of the amount necessary for the fee. What is left of the fee must be paid by families, and this once again leaves out low-income families, further deepening the rift and inequality that already exists between these children.

¹⁷ The fact that the most up-to-date report on the issue is from 2011 itself demonstrates the level of the attention given to ensuring gender equality by the various institutions of the state. The National Action Plan contains very important strategies. But what the responsible institutions have put in action in line with these strategies makes one think that not only is the issue of gender equality not on their agenda, but they also actually do not quite know what this equality means.

for children between mothers and fathers. The institution put in charge of this is the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. As the goal itself renders explicit, the focus here is on parental leaves. However, what the Ministry references is the article pertaining to maternity leaves in the Labour Law dated 2003, the Bag Bill No. 6111, and the 24 month-long unpaid leave listed in the Civil Service Law No.657. For one, there is the issue of the disparity between the different laws. But even if we were to leave this aside, in Turkey, where single earner families are prevalent and most of wage earners are men, it is impossible to imagine that men shall take unpaid leaves instead of women. Hence, we see that no real steps are being taken in order to ensure an equal distribution of the responsibility of caring for children. It is also important to emphasize the fact that unpaid leaves create inequalities since only women from high-income groups can take advantage of them. Parental leaves must become paid in order to allow women from different income levels to benefit from them.

There is an emphasis on the National Family Plan of the Ministry of National Education in relation to the strategy of raising societal consciousness in order to loosen the hold of the traditional gendered structure. This education is given to families who have children aged 0-18, and it mostly pertains to child development. In a similar vein, there is mention of the Mother-Father Teaching Project, which aims to ensure sustainability in the education of children aged 0-18 by way of enlisting parental support. In a 6-month-long period in 2011 the number of women taking advantage of this service was only 23,112; and the number of men was 6,516. Thus, independent even of the content of the education provided, the fact that it has not become widespread enough causes us to question whether this strategy is actually fit for the aim it hopes to achieve. What the Directorate General on Lifelong Learning writes regarding their goal in terms of transforming mentalities is also important. It is especially important in that it demonstrates what is understood as gender equality. The Directorate mentions that income-generating trainings given in Public Education Centers provide women with a skill set that gives them the chance to work in the home while they are simultaneously carrying out domestic tasks, and thus contribute to the household economy. Thus, the understanding is that if women are to have jobs, this shall be in a manner that does not disrupt the work they do at home. The fact that home-based labour is to be informal is forgotten here. And an activity, whose work status is evidently dubious, is directly encouraged by the state.

The Care of Elderly and Disabled Individuals

When we look at private as well as state-run old people's homes, we see that the occupancy rate is well below the total capacity¹⁸. Both the general societal perception regarding the issue, and the fact that care by the family is actively being encouraged play an active role in people's preferences away from institutional care. Moreover, the lack of information with regards to existing services and the degree of complication in the application procedure must be mentioned as additional reasons in this situation.

In the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies it is stated that care services for the elderly at home shall be supported. These services include ameliorating living conditions and assisting in everyday activities, and they are provided for the elderly to be able to continue living at home. There is a total of 497 such centers that provide day care services and nursing at home, and these exist only in 5 provinces.¹⁹ The total amount of people taking advantage of these services is 1066. Furthermore, it is only possible for people to utilize these services if the elderly individual is not disabled in any way, and if the household itself is unable to meet the need on its own, or with the help of various supportive factors (such as neighbors, kin, etc.). Thus, the fact that many households are unable to access these services demonstrates that the Ministry remains inadequate in the area of carrying out the necessary social services and welfare activities in order to boost family welfare. Moreover, while family members are held primarily responsible for caring for the elderly, the support provided is not even nearly enough. Not only does this prevent women, the 'unpaid care workers' in the home, from entering into employment, but it also keeps them from participating in the various different areas of life.

The goal discussed in the Development Plan as diversifying services aiming to enable the care of elderly individuals in the home, and enhancing both the quantity and quality of institutional care services, is also present in the Program for the Year 2014. Although what the Program states regarding these services is that "their efficiency, extensiveness, the supervision of their activities, and the physical conditions of the institutions themselves shall be ameliorated," when we look at the goals of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies – which is the institution that has been put in charge of carrying out this work – what we see

¹⁸ The total capacity is 24,194, while the number of elderly individuals taking advantage of these services is 19,596.
<http://www.eyh.gov.tr/tr/8448/Turkiyede-Yasli-lara-Hizmet-Veren-Kuruluslar>

¹⁹ These provinces are Ankara, Çankaya, İzmir, Eskişehir and Kırıkkale.

is that, the Ministry speaks of aiming to completely shut down some of these institutions by 2016, or at least to not increase their number. The Ministry sees these institutional services as places that shall only be taken advantage of under conditions of dire necessity, and expresses that it plans to limit the service that is being provided.²⁰ This discrepancy points to a situation that has been criticized, and is being criticized by women's organizations over many years. While documents of this sort are being prepared and written, the opinions of non-governmental organizations on the issue are also considered – albeit partly. When it comes to applying what is written however, the necessary resources are not provided, and we find ourselves face to face with practices that are completely contradictory to what is in the plan or program.

Another one of the services provided by the MFSP is a monthly salary known as “pay for the disabled” provided within the scope of the Law No. 2022, by the Directorate General for Non-Contributory Payments under the Directorate of the Social Security Institution. Disabled individuals above 18 who live under conditions of economic deprivation are able to receive this monthly pay. Those who have disabled relatives below 18 are able to take advantage of this service under the condition that care is already being provided de facto, and that their monthly income is below the level of destitution determined by law.²¹ Moreover, the individual must be able to prove by way of a medical board report that they are disabled enough (50% or more) to not be able to live without needing support from somebody else. The pay for home care is the same as net minimum wage.²² The number of those receiving this salary for care at home is 352,859 as of the year 2011. While this is an important development indeed, it still excludes many people from its scope, due to the fact that what is taken into consideration is the total income of all individuals within a household – although this is clearly contradictory to the 7th Article added to the Law No. 2828 by way of the Law No. 5579²³ – and also to the condition of a minimum of 50% in terms of disability in order to be eligible for pay.

20 The number of Elderly Care and Rehabilitation Centers is currently 15; yet the plan is to lower this to 7 by the year 2017. Moreover, there is no plan to increase the number of Elderly Service Centers – of which there are currently 5 – either.

21 Those whose income per individual comes in at below two thirds of the net monthly minimum wage when the total of all income coming into a house is divided by the number of people living in that house.

22 <http://www.eyh.gov.tr/tr/27127/Engelli-Bakim-Hizmetleri>

23 In the pertinent clause it is stated that, “care services are provided for disabled individuals in need of care in state-run or private care facilities, or in their own homes, under any name whatsoever, and in a manner that is predicated on a total of all kinds of income they receive, if the monthly income they receive, or that is their share based on the amount of individuals they are responsible for, is below two thirds of the net monthly minimum wage.” <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2007/02/20070210-1.htm>

On the other hand, until this practice was implemented, family members caring for disabled individuals at home, in low-income households, were expending labour without any kind of compensation; and they were unable to participate in any wage-earning activities outside the home due to their responsibilities in terms of care work within. Hence, this payment they are now being given means that their labour has become visible and it has some kind of compensation. However, due to the fact that these people being given salaries by the state are not under the umbrella of any kind of social security, it is almost as if they have been hired informally by the state itself. Alongside this is the fact that their ability to access alternative employment remains limited.

Moreover, we should not forget that purchasing care services through the market when it comes to middle-income households or providing monetary support for relatives and kin when it comes to low-income households comprise only one way in which the need for care is met within the society. What is fundamental here is the need for public and institutional care services, for which people are hired and registered as employees with clear job definitions, work statuses, and job security. This is one of the primary conditions that is necessary in order to become a social state.

A similar situation is prominent in the National Action Plan Monitoring Report of the Directorate General on the Status of Women. Within the framework of the general goal to increase women's employment, the Ministries of National Education, and of Labour and Social and Security, as well as the General Directorate of Child Services have been given the responsibility to “extend and render accessible care services for children, as well as for sick, elderly and disabled individuals.” The Ministry of National Education reports that along with the “Services for the Elderly and Sick” it has opened in schools under the General Directorate of Technical Education, it also organizes certain courses within regular educational institutions. In the response the Ministry gave to the Monitoring Report of the General Directorate of Woman Status, it stated “Trainings for those who care for children, or for sick, disabled or elderly individuals are underway by way of educational courses opened in Public Education Centers. Through these trainings, these care-takers are given an arena in which to practice their professions.” This means that instead of increasing the number of and spreading facilities that provide institutional services, vocational training courses are being organized in order to especially encourage care at home.

Social Security

In the 331st Article under the heading of Social Security in the 10th Development Plan, it is expressed that, “the parameters being used in the calculation of retirement pay shall be organized in a manner that will encourage people to remain part of the working life for a longer time period, in order to ameliorate the actuarial balance and the active-passive rate.” Similar goals are mentioned in the Social Security Performance Program, in tandem with the Development Plan. The current retirement age for those who started work with insurance after 2009 is 58 for women and 60 for men. 7200 days of premium payment is required for retirement. While these premium payments remain unchanged, the retirement age is being increased gradually, and shall be balanced at 65 for both men and women by the year 2048.²⁴ When we consider the existing long working hours, bad working conditions, low wages, and the prevalence of child labour in many sectors, it is not difficult to guess that this raising of the retirement age shall result in many employees not being able to fulfill the criteria necessary for retirement. These employees shall thus fall outside the labour force market. Moreover, there is also the fact that with the legalization of on-hire work and with how widespread informal employment currently is, any kind of continuity in jobs shall become even harder to achieve. This shall increase the number of workers – and especially of women – who are unable to take advantage of their right to retire. Increasing the retirement age without taking any measures whatsoever to decrease women's domestic responsibilities means leaving women under the weight of a double work load for longer years. It cannot be disregarded that this may result in them giving up, and leaving work before they are able to retire. On the other hand, with the SSGSS Law No. 5510, the gradual lowering of pension funds is also on the agenda. What is said in the Performance Program with regards to this issue is that complementary pension systems shall be developed in order to compensate for the loss of income that can take place after retirement. It is not at all difficult to guess that this system shall indeed be the personal retirement insurance system, which has become more and more widespread over recent years due to state support. Although this system has the word ‘retirement’ in its name, all it is is a tool to collect savings, and it can only ever provide additional income. This additional income can be accessed once one is above 56 and has been within the system for 10 years. What it is is basically the total of state contribution and the contribution deposited by people themselves as these have accrued value within certain funds. It can either be drawn all at once, or in a manner that is spread across a maximum of 10 years. If an individ-

24 www.sgk.gov.tr

ual wants to exit the system prior to fulfilling 10 years, not only are they unable to receive any of the state contribution, but they also suffer a deduction on their own money that they have accumulated.²⁵ Hence, the idea that this personal retirement system can retire people is completely out of question. What is happening here is, in a certain sense, that the state is expecting its citizens to make up for the loss of income on their own. Furthermore, the fact that the minimum monthly contribution payment is 100 TL means that this opportunity to collect savings is available only to those at a certain income level. This becomes quite clear when we consider that we live in a country where the net minimum wage in the second half of 2014 is 891.03 TL²⁶, and where many informal labourers receive wages that are below even this bare minimum.

There is a clause with regards to the field of health in the Performance Program stating that “a repayment system shall be created in light of medical and economic evaluations, and supplementary health insurance shall be encouraged for the provision of health services that are not covered by this repayment system.” This clause itself is the harbinger of a transition where the right to health is being relinquished to the private sector more and more as time passes. In this form, this is also compatible with the goal to lower the expenditures of the Social Security Institute.

Domestic Workers

Another portion of society left outside the protection of the social security umbrella is domestic workers. The Law No. 6552 has allowed those working in household services to be insured under certain conditions. This regulation, however, has not really resulted in complete insurance for domestic workers. In its current state, the law differentiates amongst workers in terms of whether they work more than 10 days or less, and this is open to exploitation in practice.²⁷ The fact that the most recent version of the law does not

25 After 01.01.2013, participants who have remained in the system;

a) For a minimum of 3 years shall be able to access the state contribution and 15% of the proceeds if they exist, b) For a minimum of 6 years shall be able to access the state contribution and 35% of the proceeds if they exist,

c) For a minimum of 10 years shall be able to access the state contribution and 60% of the proceeds if they exist. <http://www.haberturk.com/yazarlar/ali-tezel-1016/813494-bes-asla-emekli-etmez>

26 <http://www.csgb.gov.tr/csgbPortal/cgm.portal?page=asgari>

27 Those who employ workers for more than 10 days may make it seem as if they work for less time in order avoid responsibility and paying higher premiums; and it is impossible to properly monitor this situation.

even include the phrase “working continuously” shall result in the removal of even those who are currently insured from the scope of this system. Hence, a loss of rights is the issue in question here. While the phrase working continuously covers all kinds of part time work, a limit at a minimum of ten days a month eliminates the insurance currently covering part time workers who shall fall below this mark.

On the other hand, the expression stating that “those who employ some one for less than 10 days a month in household services shall not be considered employers,” disregards the fact that a great majority of domestic labourers work for less than 10 days. There is a coupon system that shall be set in place for those working for less than 10 days a month; and in this system the money that shall be deposited in the bank as occupational accident or disease premiums comes from a 2% cut to the wages of domestic workers. The fact that this shall lower wages, however, is being disregarded. Their illness and old age premiums, on the other hand, shall not even be deposited. This means that domestic workers cannot benefit from the right to retirement. There is no regulation whatsoever with regards to occupational accidents and diseases. Furthermore, the fact that those who employ workers for less than 10 days are not considered employers, is a sign that occupational accidents and diseases shall increasingly continue.

Home-Based Workers

In the report of the Directorate General on the Status of Women, there is a goal numbered 1.7., and here it is stated as, “Spreading information with regards to how women working in a home-based manner can take advantage of the social security system.” Although spreading information is also important, its potential to actually bring about any change is low due to the fact that it is a very weak tool for intervention overall. Furthermore, what is necessary here is not really spreading information with regards to how employees can utilize the social security system, but rather carrying out activities to render these employees more visible in general. In the current state, home-based workers are unable to enter into any social security system other than optional insurance. This is so because they are not considered as employees to begin with.

<http://imeceeviscilerisendikasi.org/2014/07/15/torba-yasa-tasarısında-ev-iscilerinin-sigortalanmasında-iliskin-duzenlemelere-dair-aciklamamizdir/>

Social Services and Aids

In the section titled Increasing Family Welfare and Solidarity Across Generations, within the 10th Development Plan, the issue of creating and gaining consumption habits, and of transforming social services and aid in a manner focusing on the family is discussed. Relating family welfare to the issue of consumption habits is not really a novel aim. In tandem with neoliberal policies that found a more open environment for their application under the AKP regime, the interest rate for consumer loans has already been lowered, resulting in an increase of car and home ownership amongst those at lower or mid-range income levels. This has meant that people have found themselves being encouraged to enter under the burden of a debt that is to last for many long years before it can be paid.

The fact that social services and aid activities are carried out in a manner that bases itself on the family is an extension of the mentality that refuses to see women as individuals, and considers them as only existing within the family. Especially upon contemplating the inadequacies in the institutionalization of care services for children and for elderly/disabled individuals, and the prevalence of a gendered division of labour, it becomes clear that any activities or aid work to be carried out in a manner that solely focuses on the family shall be unable to ensure a distribution of responsibilities in a way that does not prevent women from participating equally in life.

In the 2023 vision of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, there is expression speaking of “a prosperous society comprised of happy individuals and strong families.” The assertion made here in terms of the aim to “develop new social policies and models to meet the needs of this country” is that the most important issue within this framework is the protection and fortification of the integrity of the family. When we look at the aims in line with this main goal, strengthening the structure of the family takes the first place. Immediately following this is increasing the contributions of the private sector and of NGOs in social services. Then comes increasing the amount of social welfare on a familial and nation-wide basis; and finally we see the aim to ensure active aging. Speaking of contributions from the private sector and NGOs indicates that the state is planning to withdraw even further from the field of social service, rather than increase institutionalization in this area. On the other hand, while increasing the amount of social welfare is an important step indeed, we must also consider that this support is not something everyone in

need can access. Rather, it is only a limited portion of society that can take advantage of this aid based on certain criteria. Thus, increasing the amount shall continue having only a very limited effect in combatting poverty. If what is intended by active aging is meeting the daily needs of elderly individuals and providing opportunities for them to participate in certain activities by way of places such as Elderly Day Care Centers, this seems to be contradictory to the aim emphasized above focusing on limiting institutional services.

On the other hand, if “strengthening the link between social welfare and employment” means both employing people in jobs that they are capable of doing, and providing them with social welfare services based on their need, then this may be taken as a positive development. The Turkish Employment Agency, İŞKUR, also has a plan within this very framework. Here it says that “the job offers made by İŞKUR should be taken into consideration while determining who shall receive social welfare.” It is vital however, that this is not applied in a way that creates new problems, such as preventing people from working in jobs that they want, or cutting the welfare benefits of those who do not accept the jobs they are proposed by İŞKUR – or even denying them these benefits to begin with.

The Strategy Document of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies states that, “Activities shall be carried out in order to ensure social security and formal, registered employment status for foster families and for those receiving wages for care for their disabled relatives that they provide in the home.” This plan that speaks of social security and registered, formal employment is a very important step, and it is one that comes as an answer to the demands that have been voiced by women’s organizations for many years. It is, however, vital that the way in which this is to be brought to life is closely monitored.

As has been mentioned before, in the period within the scope of this Strategic plan, it is said that “while family-centred services and returns to the family from institutions shall be increased, residential care services shall be lessened,” and “institutional care shall be seen as a care model that will be implemented only at the very last step and when the need is dire.” It is important that we do not overlook the fact that here the state is very clearly and openly stating its intent to pull out of the field of social service. This situation is an indication that policies resulting from a family conception where women are seen as the sole bearers of the responsibility of caring for family members in need of care shall come to hold even more sway over all areas of our lives. On the other hand, this also means that in the case where there is no family member that

can undertake the duty to care for the person in need, this person shall be abandoned to some uncertain fate.

Seasonal Agricultural Workers

Seasonal workers are commonly employed in the sectors of construction, tourism and agriculture. Women’s seasonal labor is heavily present in agriculture. This is why we choose to focus on seasonal agricultural workers here.

What is meant by seasonal, migratory agricultural labour is different from working in a fixed location for a couple months; it is, rather, a situation where family members including the children leave their homes and work in a variety of different places as migrant workers throughout the long period in which agricultural work is carried out (this usually begins in March-April, and lasts until the end of November). Seasonal labourers working in this kind of migrant manner experience serious difficulties with regards to finding shelter, nourishment, clean drinking water, hygiene, etc. Due to the fact that they commonly stay in tents, they may find themselves struggling against excessive heat waves or frequent floods depending on what part of the country they are in at that moment. Women have the added responsibility of feeding the family, cleaning, etc. alongside agricultural work. As a result, they end up working very long hours in a day.

Along with these, there are serious problems with regards to issues such as finding shelter, transportation, health, education and security. Moreover, bad working conditions, very low wages, and a complete lack of any kind of measures to ensure workers’ health and safety are the fundamental issues facing seasonal agricultural workers. Agricultural enterprises and workplaces employing less than 50 workers are not considered within the scope of the Labour Law No. 4857. What this means is that these workers do not even have the most basic legal guarantees. Due to the fact that there is no specific law with regards to agriculture as a line of work, and that proper statistics have not been kept, it is difficult to access any clear data in this sector or find dependable information regarding the working conditions of agricultural workers. Almost all seasonal agricultural workers are dependant on middlemen who are given names such as ‘envoy’, ‘head-uncle’, etc. Although these middlemen are required to have certain documents allowing them to function as intermediaries, it is known that almost all of them work without these documents.

It is highly important that seasonal workers first and foremost be included under the scope of the social security system. In the Gender Equality Action Plan prepared by the Directorate General on the Status of Women, it is stated that a strategy and action plan has been produced as part of the Project to Ameliorate the Work and Social Living Conditions of Seasonal Migratory Agricultural Workers (MERTİP) run by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security – which is the institution listed as responsible for the inclusion of working women within the social security system. Here, it is said that projects attempting to make use of local resources, and organized in order to ameliorate the conditions of seasonal agricultural workers in terms of transportation, shelter, education, health, safety, social relationships, work, and social security are to be supported. On the other hand, it is evident that it is not really possible to ameliorate working conditions or respond to the need of seasonal agricultural workers by way of projects only. The MNE for instance, carried out a project that began in 2005 and lasted for two years with the support of the ILO. The project titled “For a Future as Snow White as Cotton,” aimed to bring child workers to the nearest schools by way of service buses, in order to prevent their school lives from being interrupted. In the end, however, this was unsuccessful. The fact that children cannot receive an education because they work is a direct result of poverty; and thus, it is impossible to eradicate child labour without providing forms of support that shall replace this income for families.²⁸ There are also no steps whatsoever taken in order to conceive of and implement educational mechanisms that shall help these children make up for what they have missed in the time period they were away from school, and catch up with their peers.

MERTİP was implemented within the framework of the Prime Ministry Mandate No 2010/ 6. Yet, it is not possible to access the results of the project from the related web page of the Ministry.²⁹ When we look at the Strategy and Action Plan to Ameliorate the Work and Social Living Conditions of Seasonal Migratory Agricultural Workers, we see that the same activities that are included under the Project itself are also stated here. It is, however, necessary, just as mentioned in the Gender Equality Action Plan, that seasonal agricultural workers be included under the umbrella of the social security system. For this to happen, it is clear that special legal regulations are required. According to the Labour Law, anyone who employs more than 51 workers within the agricultural sector is considered an employer. As a result, a great majority of seasonal workers are left outside the scope of this law. Moreover, the fact that what they do are usually non-

28 <http://www.bianet.org/cocuk/cocuk/97659-pamuk-kadar-beyaz-bir-gelecek-icin>

29 <http://www.metip.gov.tr/>

continuous jobs where they mostly work for a less-than-30-days makes it even more impossible for them to benefit from the Labour Law.³⁰ At this point, any protective measures with regards to workers' health or job safety are invalid when it comes to agricultural workers in workplaces employing less than 50 people.

Although a certain amount of progress has been made in the areas of shelter, transportation, and education by way of projects in the periods in which they were being run, the fact that lasting solutions have not been produced remains. It is clear that this shall create problems – both in places outside the provinces chosen for the project, and in places where the project is in motion but shall end. While the data of the Ministry of Labour states the number of seasonal agricultural workers as 300 thousand, the guess here is that this number is around 1 million when informal labour and child labour are also brought into consideration (FES, 2012). A research project conducted in 2011 and 2013, which took under consideration the Effects of Agricultural Migration on Children Aged 6-14, demonstrated that children are made to work for 10 hours a day, that they have problems with regards to accessing shelter and clean drinking water, they cannot eat or benefit from health services in an adequate manner, they do not have job security, and they usually are unable to receive the pay they were promised.³¹ As a result, it is clear that developing solutions for certain issues in a limited field by way of projects does not create any change in the big picture, and these issues are continuous, as the above-mentioned research project demonstrates.

Conclusion

In 2013 the KEIG Platform published a report titled Problem Areas and Policy Proposals in the Field of Women's Labour and Employment in Turkey. In this report, what the KEIG Platform did was lay out a variety of problem areas such as how low the women's employment rate is, how prevalent informal labour is – especially in the agricultural sector, how women's domestic responsibilities constitute the main obstacle in front of their participation within the work force, how the existing conservative structure confines women to the home and defines them solely based on their household responsibilities, how the main mentality through which social policies are formulated is centred on the family above all else, how widespread patriarchal relations are, and how policies created in order to increase women's employment rates are all based

30 <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/120955-mevsimlik-isciler-icin-yasa-gerekli> <http://www.metip.gov.tr/>

31 <http://www.bianet.org/biamag/emek/149913-mevsimlik-tarim-iscisi-cocuklarin-durumu-kaygi-verici>

on flexibilizing the labour force market. In light of the documents analyzed above, we may say that the assessments made in the 2013 report still remain valid. It is evident that the women's employment rate shall continue increasing, but that this increase shall take place in areas of work that are considered precarious and unskilled – parallel to an increase in flexible employment. Efforts to formalize informal labour, on the other hand, shall create a category of 'flexibly secure' workers who are unable to fulfill the preconditions necessary in order to take advantage of the benefits provided by the social security system.

Social welfare policies aim to spread a conception of the family where women are defined solely through their responsibilities within the household, rather than to establish gender equality. It is clear that we shall experience the negative effects of this situation – especially on women – more and more in the coming days.

Institutional care services, which are already inadequate as they are, are being limited even further, and the only form of care that is being encouraged is care within the family. This means that especially women from lower income levels shall either not enter the labour force market at all, or shall work without having to leave their homes, in home-based jobs, for very low wages, with no security or future prospects whatsoever.

Therefore, as KEİG Platform, we would like to give place to our demands, which we mentioned different times before.

Our Demands

The Labour Force Market

- We demand that work hours be lowered while the full-time employment status of workers is preserved, and that working conditions be ameliorated,
- That formal employment, based on decent working conditions, legal care leaves, the right to a guaranteed job following leave periods, and access to social rights, become the norm; and that flexible and insecure forms of employment no longer be encouraged,
- That the increase in women's employment rates take place in decent jobs, and that legal regulations be made and implemented in order to ensure gender equality within the work life.
- And that policies for the reconciliation of family and work first and foremost be used as tools in order to achieve gender equality.

The Care of Children and of Elderly/Disabled Individuals

- We demand that early child care and education services that are compatible with the different living and working conditions of parents, diverse in terms of time period, place and the kind of service provided, free of charge as a social right, and provided in a manner where the care and education given is not affected by the difference in income levels and inequalities amongst families be rendered widespread; and that this include children aged 0-6,
- That study periods, which shall enable the development of children in primary school outside school hours, be designed in a manner that is accommodating of work hours in the labour market; and that these be rendered widespread,

- That paid maternal leaves be extended to 24 weeks,
- That 12 month-long paid parental leaves be provided, with at least two of these months being non-transferrable from the father to the mother (i.e. may only be used by fathers), that fathers be encouraged to use these leaves in the manner that is intended, and that this be monitored,
- That it be possible to use parental leaves flexibly until the child begins primary school,
- That the separation between workers and civil servants in terms of leaves be removed,
- That the ILO Convention No. 183 (the Maternity Protection Convention) be signed, and the necessary monitoring mechanism be set up,
- That the article found in the Regulations with Regards to the Working Conditions of Pregnant or Breastfeeding Women, Nursing Rooms and Child Care Facilities, which makes it mandatory for workplaces employing more than 150 female workers to operate kindergartens be changed so that workplaces employing more than 150 employees are required to have kindergartens,
- That – taking into consideration that the article mentioned above excludes parents in workplaces employing under 150 employees, that costs increase and decrease based on the number of children, and that there is a lack of sustainability – public kindergartens with adequate capacities be opened in all municipalities as the fundamental solution to this issue,
- That municipalities set concrete goals in their yearly plans and programs, and that they set aside the necessary resources for early child care and education services,
- That kindergartens to be opened in Industrial Zones be free of charge, and situated in locations far away from any kind of production that shall jeopardize children's health,

- That kindergartens in public institutions and organizations be able to spend money from the public budget, and that public kindergartens that have been closed be reopened,
- That children whose parents are not civil servants also be accepted into public kindergartens if there are vacancies,
- That institutional services for other dependant family members (such as the sick, disabled and elderly) be diversified in terms of location, time period, and the kind of service provided; and that these be rendered widespread.

Domestic Workers

- We demand that the ILO Convention No. 189 on “Decent Work for Domestic Workers” be ratified, that national law be made compatible with this convention, and that the legal regulations to be made also include immigrant women,
- That domestic workers also be given social security and the right to organize like other workers have, based on the ILO Convention No. 189,
- That the occupation be defined in a clear manner, and the various services be classified,
- That a law for workers health and safety that takes into consideration the special conditions of the house, which is the workplace of domestic workers,
- And that statistical data be provided by TurkStat in order to determine the number of domestic workers, work accidents, occupational diseases, etc.

Home-Based Workers

- We demand that the ILO No. 177 Home Work Convention be signed, and that the necessary regulations be implemented,
That legal measures be taken to enable home-based workers to be organized, become members of organizations they found, and join their activities,
- That special regulations be made so that the Ministry of Labour and Social Security can monitor the state of formal employment and existing working conditions, since the workplace is the home,
- That precautions for job health and safety be taken as home-based workers produce goods or services in the home,
- That an occupational definition be made for home-based workers, and that the necessary regulations be created so that they can apply to the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) .
- And that units providing support and counseling services be established for home-based workers, especially by local governments, in order to give support with regards to the care of children and elderly individuals, as well as to provide legal counseling.

Seasonal Agricultural Workers

- We demand that the necessary regulations be made to include seasonal agricultural workers within the scope of the social security system,
- That regular statistics be kept by TurkStat,
- That care centers be opened for small children close to the fields where the workers are labouring, and that compensatory educational centers be opened for school-age children, again close to the fields where the workers are labouring.

Social Services and Aids

- We demand that social services be provided in a need-basis, that includes the totality of the population within its scope,
- That the process by which social aids are gathered under a single roof and then distributed be carried out in a transparent manner,
- That high-quality and accessible institutional services be rendered widespread, and that alternative service models be developed based on the needs of individuals,
- And that single parent families be provided holistic and institutional support.

Social Security

- We demand that the obligation to pay premiums in order to take advantage of the right to health be removed,
- That private health insurance not replace the health services that must be provided by the state,
- That the rights of seniority and retirement be reformulated, taking the conditions of the labour market into consideration, and that these be included to cover all of the working population,
- And that those who are receiving home care salaries be included within the social security system.

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