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**PURSUING SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT GOALS**  
*THE PERFORMANCE OF TÜRKİYE IN THE  
CENTENNIAL OF THE REPUBLIC*

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## PREFACE

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As the centennial commemoration of the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye draws near, it is opportune to reflect upon the advancements achieved thus far and the challenges that persist in our endeavour to construct a sustainable and prosperous nation. This editorial book represents a collective effort to examine, assess, and comprehend Türkiye's advancements in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) during a significant juncture coinciding with the nation's centennial commemoration. It encompasses a wide range of disciplines, such as economics, sociology, history, education, international relations, political science, tourism, environment, and the natural sciences, among various others. In doing so, it adopts an interdisciplinary approach to address the complex societal aspects of sustainable development.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, endorsed by all United Nations (UN) member states in 2015, has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at its core. This agenda serves as a compelling appeal for both developed and developing nations to collaborate in a global partnership. The underlying concept posits that sustainable development necessitates the harmonious integration of economic, social, and environmental dimensions.

Türkiye, a nation characterised by a rich historical background and diverse cultural heritage, has diligently strived to achieve these worldwide objectives since the 1990s. Türkiye has demonstrated significant advancements in its efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), combat poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation, as well as foster economic growth and social inclusion. Considerable effort has been dedicated to formulating and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with a primary objective of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Substantially, most of these goals have been included in legislative and policy frameworks.

However, the 2023 Sustainable Development Report highlights that there is still room for improvement in implementation and projects. According to the report, Türkiye is positioned at 72<sup>nd</sup> place among 166 nations in the Sustainable Development Goals Index, with a corresponding score of 70.8. The report highlights that Türkiye faces significant challenges in 10 out of the 17 goals while encountering substantial barriers in 5. In this respect, this book is dedicated to exploring the various dimensions of Türkiye's achievements within the framework of the Sustainable Development Goals. It offers critical insights, data-driven analyses, and a nuanced understanding of Türkiye's performance, successes, and areas for improvement.

We hope this book will serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, scholars, practitioners, and the global community by providing thorough research, critical analysis, and intellectual contributions. The contributors of this book anticipate that the perspectives presented within its pages will stimulate well-informed discussions, encourage the formulation of policies grounded in empirical evidence, and foster collaborative efforts to achieve a more sustainable future for Türkiye and the international community.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the authors and referees who have generously shared their expertise and dedicated efforts toward developing this essential scholarly work. Their collective efforts have enriched the discourse on sustainable develop-

## **PREFACE**

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ment and positioned Türkiye on the global stage as a nation committed to realising a better, more equitable, and sustainable world for all. Furthermore, we would like to express our special gratitude to Prof. Anil Markandya for authoring our introductory chapter. Finally, we would like to thank Istanbul University Press for their contribution in releasing this book.

### **Editors**

**Billur Engin Bahn**  
**H. Dilara Mumcu Akan**  
**Ferda Karagöz Özenç**  
**Özcan Garan**



## INTRODUCTION

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The Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs are key drivers of an international effort to achieve sustainable development across several dimensions. The 17 goals and associated indicators allow countries to track progress, evaluate actions taken, and propose policies to improve performance.

This volume is a welcome discussion of trends of all SDGs in Türkiye over recent years. As a country that has made great progress in some areas of development but less so in others, a serious evaluation of its performance is a great contribution to the debate on directions of policy for sustainable development in the country.

Doubtless, a key goal in Türkiye as it is elsewhere is to eliminate poverty. The volume rightly gives central consideration to success this goal. While much progress has been made in eliminating extreme poverty in the country, recent events have resulted in some setbacks. As the book notes, poverty reduction also has strong spillover effects on other SDGs.

The next goal is to reduce hunger and increase food security. A chapter is devoted to policies to address these issues, especially in light of the recent COVID-19 epidemic, which is affecting supply chains and causing a food crisis.

The third goal is to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. While Türkiye has a relatively good record on life expectancy, there is room to increase the use of preventive health services. A chapter looks at ways of doing so through ‘nudge’ policies and their possible effectiveness.

The fourth goal is related to inclusive and equitable education. Two chapters are devoted to this, including one focussing on the effects of compulsory schooling reform on women’s empowerment (which has had relatively little benefit with regard to empowerment-related outcomes. Clearly, more needs to be done in this regard with regard to reducing the large disparities in performance between schools in different regions and across different kinds of schools.

The related goal of gender equality (goal 5) has three chapters devoted to it. The first notes that while schooling rates of girls have improved, forced marriages have decreased, and the number of women in leadership positions has increased, gender equality has not been achieved in Türkiye. In this, the country is not alone: the same applies across the whole world. A second chapter identifies successful strategies, policies, and initiatives to promote gender equality and enhance women’s representation. Finally, a third focuses on the role of working standards in improving the lives of disabled women in the workplace.

Progress toward the goal of clean water and sanitation (goal 6) is investigated over the period 2000-2020 for Türkiye relative to other OECD countries, and an analysis was carried out looking at links between this goal and the goals of poverty reduction, health, education and gender equality.

Goal 7 relates to access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. The volume examines the development of affordable and clean energy with a specific focus on proposals for increasing energy efficiency. Another chapter looks at the potential for geothermal and hydro power in contributing to this goal in Türkiye.

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Inclusive growth is a key goal (SDG8). It has been evaluated for Türkiye for two periods (2002-2011 and 2011-2019). The authors find that while the growth structure of the country had more inclusive features in 2002-2011, and it dramatically declined after 2011. This is an important finding that should spark debate on actions needed to reverse that decline.

Growth is also affected by efficient investment in the right kind of infrastructure. One chapter looks at the ways in which such projects are selected and evaluated in Türkiye. It concludes that present methods of appraisal do not give enough importance to sustainability concerns, and others are high-cost and involve conflicts with other SDGs.

Goal 9 relates to building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and fostering innovation. A chapter in the book finds that despite a substantial increase from 2000 to 2021, Türkiye still lags behind the majority of selected countries in terms of the proportion of gross domestic R&D expenditure in GDP and the number of researchers per one million inhabitants, both of which are crucial indicators for monitoring progress towards this goal. This should start an active debate on how the gap can be closed.

Goal 10 seeks to reduce inequality within and between countries. A chapter devoted to this goal focuses on the role of government policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, in the pursuit of achieving greater equality. As the development goals cannot be met unless the required improvements in certain indicators, such as education, health, and material standard of living, are achieved, the analysis of functional public expenditures provides insights into evaluating current problems and developing relevant policy proposals. Another chapter on this goal asks what can be done to reduce inequality in Türkiye. A key factor behind the increase in inequality is the rise in capital income relative to wage income. On this basis, the chapter identifies the potential for reversing income inequalities in Türkiye. It formulates several policy reforms and institutional arrangements to reduce inequalities and flags policy areas that might conflict with tackling widening economic inequality targets.

Goal 11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The volume contains a case study that evaluates the university-industry-government-civil society cooperation for the realisation of this development goal in the context of the Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF19) organised by the Marmara Municipalities Union in 2019.

Goal 12 aims to ensure sustainable production and consumption patterns. Tourism and hotels have an important role in this regard, so one of the chapters looks at green practices by hotels and their responsible consumption. As a result, four main components of hotels' green practices and their responsible consumption are revealed: recycling, energy-saving, training, and encouragement and preferring sustainable products.

Goal 13 is to combat climate change and its impacts. This chapter emphasises integrating climate change measures into national policies and strategies. It notes that despite some efforts in regulations and action plans, the country's greenhouse gas emissions have more than doubled since 1990, driven by rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, and population growth. Implementing market-based instruments in Türkiye is evaluated as a means of addressing the increase in emissions. These instruments can provide the right incentives in a cost-effi-

## INTRODUCTION

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cient way. The key priority areas for the country's environmental policy and market-based instruments are the electricity, industry, and transport sectors. Mitigating emissions requires increasing renewable energy in the electricity sector, improving industrial efficiency, and promoting sustainable transportation practices. Finance for such investments, however, is a challenge, and innovative ways of raising it will be paramount. Here there is a role for both global support as well as green bonds, which, as one chapter shows, when issued under the right terms, can make an important contribution.

Goal 14 is to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development. As a chapter devoted to this topic notes, marine tourism, fisheries and aquaculture, and maritime transport sectors are the leading areas of the Blue Economy in Türkiye. While significant economic benefits are realized by these sectors, the country's blue economy strategy also faces challenges in protecting the marine environment and ensuring sustainability. These include marine pollution, overfishing, technological gaps, and diplomatic and legal barriers. Given the targets and indicators of SDG 14, Türkiye needs to strengthen its policies and efforts, particularly in protecting marine and ocean resources, promoting sustainable fisheries, conserving marine biodiversity, and investing in marine technologies.

Goal 15 seeks to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. A chapter in the book looks at this problem from the perspective of the political Economy of the Conservation of Biodiversity and Biodiversity-based Trade. It notes that international trade is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss since colonialism. By using the UNCTAD and CITES databases on bio-trade, the study shows that biodiversity-based production and trade contribute significantly to the Turkish economy. Although some progress has been made in the sustainable utilization of biodiversity, however, Türkiye lags far behind in comparison to its peers. The efforts to mitigate biodiversity loss are relatively limited and the environmental performance indicators of the country are below the world average.

Another chapter addressing this goal focuses on sustainable land and forest management. Due to the increasing population, urbanization, and industrialization, forest areas are under pressure. In spite of this, the total forest area of Türkiye has increased from 20.7 million hectares to 23.1 million hectares in the last two decades, mainly thanks to the reforestation of abandoned arable lands and afforestation activities. Moreover, erosion control and pasture improvement activities have enabled the country to achieve success in combating desertification and land degradation. Notwithstanding this considerable progress, there are still significant challenges in achieving some of the targets and indicators outlined in SDG-15. These challenges require management of land and forest resources with a holistic approach, enhancement of collaboration among relevant institutions, provision of financial support, and establishment of a monitoring and evaluation system.

Goal 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. A chapter looks at the role of Türkiye as an actor in sustaining international peace,

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with reference to the Ukraine war. This study sheds light on the current debate on the international conflict from a different perspective and evaluates and analyses Türkiye's Sustainable Development performance in terms of contributions to international peace.

Overall, there is a great deal of material here that should provide a strong basis for a policy dialogue on how actions by governments, the private sector and civil society can promote the SDGs in Türkiye, recognizing the strong links that exist between the different goals and how policies designed to impact on goal can have both synergistic and negative impacts on others.

**Professor Anil Markandya**  
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