

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY THE OMBUDSMAN INSTITUTION



SPECIAL REPORT ON TURKEY'S FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ABRIDGED ENGLISH VERSION



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FOREWORD

The Ombudsman Institution of Turkey is a constitutional institution as specified in the Article 74 of the Constitution. According to the Article 5 of the Ombudsman Law No. 6328, the Institution shall be responsible for examining, investigating, and submitting recommendations to the Administration with regard to all sorts of acts and actions as well as attitudes and behaviors of the Administration upon complaint on the functioning of the Administration within the framework of an understanding of human rights-based justice and in the aspect of legality and conformity with principles of fairness.

Functioning since 2013 as an inspection mechanism which is affiliated with the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the Institution acts with a sense of responsibility and fairness towards people, serves as a free lawyer for citizens, and guides administration through its special reports.

Adopting the principle "Let the mankind live so that the State lives" as well as the motto "*The most blessed of mankind is the one who is the most beneficial to mankind*", the Ombudsman Institution aims to contribute to:

- increasing the service quality of the administration,
- internalising the principles of good administration,
- improving human rights standards,
- ensuring the rule of law,
- strengthening the culture of seeking legal remedies,
- forming a transparent, accountable and citizen-oriented administration.

In accordance with the sub-paragraph (d) of the Article 7 of the Law on the Ombudsman No. 6328 titled "Duties of the Chief Ombudsman and the Ombudsmen", the Institution prepares special reports on significant matters concerning a large segment of the society and provides suggestions to the administration through its examinations and researches included in these



special reports. For instance, "Special Report on Syrians in Turkey", "Special Report on Violation of Rights in Handover of Children and Alimony" are just a few examples of special reports published by the Institution. These reports are sent to the administrative departments including ministers and heads of relevant public institutions and agencies.

As is known, an infectious disease called "COVID-19" first broke out in Wuhan, China and has resulted in a pandemic. Turkey has closely followed up the course of the disease since the very beginning, kept in contact with the World Health Organization (WHO), made necessary preparations based on the advices of the World Health Organization, and has taken prompt measures to prevent the virus from entering and spreading in the country. However, the first case of this rapidly spreading coronavirus disease was reported on 11 March 2020 in Turkey and since then, Turkey has launched a mass mobilization to fight against the pandemic together with all its institutions as well as citizens under the leadership of President Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In this regard, in addition to the measures taken as of 10 January 2020, a series of new measures which are more comprehensive and elaborated have been taken as of 11 March 2020 to prevent the spread of the virus.

Humanity is facing an unprecedented global disaster. The disease and the death risk have created tremendous fear for all people around the world. Daily lives of people have been directly affected, even come to a halt. People who go to work everyday, young people who plan their future, and children have suddenly been extremely worried about their health. All the workplaces were closed, travels were stopped, and all collective activities were suspended. All of sudden, people found themselves stuck at home with their families, waiting anxiously. Though stumbled at the start of the coronavirus outbreak, humanity started to seek solutions. In the meantime, it is seen that all countries have produced similar solutions, and some countries have acted in solidarity and helped each other in this fight.

While fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic which has been threatening the entire humanity, as in all other countries across the world, Turkey has also taken strict and comprehensive measures in the field of health, in individual, religious and social life, and in public order and security services as well as in economic areas. Thanks to these strong measures, Turkey has had remarkable success in its fight against the virus compared to many other countries across the world. Indeed, Turkey has managed to avoid the virus for a long time and has gotten it under control much earlier than many countries.

The Report has been prepared as of 1 June 2020. From this date forward, the fight against the pandemic is still going on though some progress has been made and certain normalization steps have been taken.

During this process, the Ombudsman Institution has continued its works without any interruption, and kept on processing, examining and resolving amicably the incoming complaints of the citizens. During the pandemic, the Institution has received numerous applications particularly in the field of healthcare services, the rights of healthcare staff, transactions regarding the implementation of administrative measures, and consumer loans provided for citizens. It has been seen that most of these complaints have been resolved through new measures updated by the administration. However, during fight against the pandemic, it has been deemed important to reveal, register and to appreciate this successful fight across the country, involving particularly the President Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the ministries, members of the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board, public officials assigned in social support teams in the field as well as the citizens who have shown great understanding for the public officials so that they could easily do their job.

In this Report which has been prepared within a short time, the activities conducted, the measures taken and above all, the implementations performed in the field have been evaluated in terms of good administration principles, which have been globally adopted. When the ongoing fight against the pandemic is considered, it has been obvious that the principle "*Let the mankind live so that the State lives*" which is always used as a guidance in administration by Turkey is not just an expression as this principle is actually put into practice. It has been observed that Turkey's human-oriented fight and its inclusive approach which embraces all people around the world have created a tremendous impression and gained appreciation globally.

This Report aims at evaluating the process of fighting against the pandemic as a whole and accordingly, developing recommendations. The Report also aims at revealing remarkable public services provided, importance attached to human health and life in Turkey, level of cohesion between citizens and the State in times of great disasters and calamities, and the considerable sacrifices of all public officials, particularly the healthcare professionals involved in the fight against the pandemic. It is expected that the Report will contribute to us to become more prepared for the future crises.

I would like to sincerely thank all our healthcare professionals, public administrators and officials who have devoted themselves to fight against COVID-19 pandemic on behalf of the Turkish Nation.

I also would like to thank those who have provided their contributions and support to the preparation of this Report.

Şeref MALKOÇ Chief Ombudsman



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The World has met an unprecedented crisis on 12 December 2019. A novel coronavirus called "COVID-19" first appeared in Wuhan City of China, later spreading around the world in a short time. On 10 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared the disease as a pandemic.

Humanity is facing a serious crisis. All the plans, routine life styles, dreams and freedoms have been suspended for the sake of health. People had to have a break in their normal life for a while in the ways never imagined. At the beginning of the outbreak, unfortunately, some countries didn't take the pandemic seriously, so were late for taking measures to prevent the spread of the virus. When the virus spread across the countries with terrorizing results, the whole world had to take same measures to fight the pandemic, though it was late.

At the start of the outbreak, when strict measures were launched, it was seen in some countries that supermarkets and stores were looted, people got panicked and scared. There were some moments when countries stumbled in guiding their citizens and maintaining the order. Countries turned in upon themselves, striving to fight against the pandemic with their own means available.

As an institution for seeking legal remedies and protecting human rights, the Ombudsman Institution of Turkey has been closely following up the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in Turkey as well as across the world. In the meantime, it has continued to receive complaint applications during the pandemic, and carefully examined them to resolve the disputes, in this way contributing to the fight against the coronavirus in the country.

In this respect, the Institution prepared a "Special Report on Turkey's Fight against the Pandemic" highlighting the last six months of the fight against the pandemic. The Report includes some findings as well as recommendations of the Institution. With this Report, the Institution intended to reveal the successful practices and actions in Turkey's fight against the pandemic, and also to appreciate the outstanding effort of all units of the State ranging from the administrators to the health workers.

The Report in Turkish is originally 262 pages long and this is the abridged English version which consists of four chapters. The first chapter includes information about the establishment of a Scientific Board two months before the outbreak of the virus in Turkey, and the timely measures taken to fight the virus under the leadership of the Board. The services provided and the activities conducted in the field of healthcare are summarized in this Report starting from the date when the first case was confirmed in the country.

The second chapter highlights the administrative measures taken in order to ensure isolation, social distancing, hygiene etc. to curb the spread of the virus. Various measures taken across the country are summarized in this chapter including suspension of mass activities. The aims and features of these measures are explained. And at the end of the chapter, where the country stands now is evaluated based on the positive results of the administrative measures.

The third chapter is about the economic decisions and the measures taken in this regard. The economic measure packages are briefly explained which were announced for maintaining the supply chain and removing the financial troubles of citizens who were negatively affected by the pandemic due to loss of jobs, isolation rules, etc.

And the final chapter is an overview of examinations and findings relating to the 6-month of the fight against the pandemic. The fighting process, the measures and practices have been evaluated in terms of good administration principles such as proportionality, equity, lawfulness,



justice, equality, participation, courtesy, etc. The Report also includes some deficiencies observed in the fight against the coronavirus.

The Report is finalized with the recommendations of next steps to be taken by Turkey by drawing upon the experience gained so far.



BASIC CONCEPTS

Antiviral	Pharmacological agents used to cure an infection or disease caused by a virus. It is used in order to inhibit or destroy viral infection.
Epidemiology	A branch of science that studies the distribution and frequency of health and disease conditions in the society and the factors affecting them.
Case fatality rate	Proportion of deaths from a certain disease compared to the total number of people diagnosed with the disease. Usually expressed as a percentage. One of the main indicators which represent a measure of disease severity.
Influenza (flu)	A respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses.
Isolation	Physical measures taken to prevent microorganisms of infected people from being spread to other patients, to people who are not sick and to healthcare professionals.
Quarantine	Isolation of patients. The whole of physical measures and practices in order to keep an animal or person that might have a contagious or infectious disease apart from other people for a period of time equal to the longest incubation period of the disease concerned.
Confirmed case	A laboratory-confirmed, accurate case.
Morbidity	The number or rate of the diseased and diagnosed patients within a population at a particular time.
Pandemic	Worldwide spread of an infectious disease.



Epidemic	The rapid spread of an infectious disease to a large number of people in a given population within a short period of time.
Mobile hospital	A movable hospital designed to be used during natural disasters or emergency situations.
Strain	A genetic variant or subtype of a bacterium or virus.
Surveillance	A dynamic process in which data, for a specific cause, is collected, analyzed, interpreted and the results are reported to the concerned authorities.
Contacts	People in close contact with an infected or potentially infected person during a period when the disease is transmitted through animals or being around the infected persons.
Basic reproduction number	The average number of secondary infections produced by the first typical case of an infection in a population where everyone is susceptible to infection. It is a mathematical term, which indicates the transmission potential of a disease.
Collective living quarters	Boarding premises such as military units, boarding social service institutions, dormitories, temporary shelters, guesthouses, penitentiary institutions etc. where the risk of rapid spread of an infection is very high.
arding social service institutions	Home-like boarding social service units such as child homes, orphanages, kindergartens and day care centers, old people's homes, nursing and rehabilitation centers, child support centers, guest houses for women or men etc. according to the Law on Social Services No. 2828.

Boa



INTRODUCTION

Societies face serious and sometimes unprecedented crisis which may affect everyone or a certain segment of the society from time to time, such as food poisoning, air pollution, epidemics, earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters, war, terrorism etc.

Citizens expect from the modern States to be well-prepared in advance in the face of such crises which can be characterized as humanitarian crises, to respond quickly and appropriately when the crisis arises, to have the necessary infrastructure and experience to smoothly manage the crisis, and to take strong measures by also calculating the potential effects of the crisis before it is completely over. To what extent the State care about its citizens and people, the strength, functionality as well as the quality of the management system of the State come to the surface in times of such crises.

The novel coronavirus COVID-19, which first appeared in China as an infectious disease on 12 December 2019 spreading all around the world in a very short time, has turned into a global and humanitarian crisis causing devastating effects. In view of these devastating effects all around the world, stricter measures have been taken in public administration. In this regard,





certain measures such as flexible working hours or home-office and distant working for employees were needed to be taken. In fact, these measures have also implied that a new era may begin in provision of public services.

In its determined fight against the pandemic, Turkey has adopted a solid strategy, implemented it step by step, and managed the situation in a manner without causing any panic.

As a first step, Turkey has taken the pandemic very seriously, and completed the preliminary preparations. As a second step, it has initiated strict quarantine practices in order to prevent the virus from entering the country or at least to delay its spread across the country. By this means, it has impeded the entry of the virus into the country until 10 March 2020. As a third step, it has determined a road map with the purpose of curbing the spread of the virus, diagnosing and treating the infected people as well as managing the process smoothly and permanently. And as a fourth step, measures such as isolation, social-distancing, public order, security as well as economic measures have been taken.

The above-mentioned road map basically consists of four main topics. The President of Turkey H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan highlighted that the fight against the coronavirus pandemic was conducted through four pillars including healthcare services, social-distancing, ensuring public order, and maintaining the supply chain.

The first pillar of the fight is in the field of healthcare which includes many activities such as testing and diagnosing the infected persons as well as those who are suspected to be infected, treating the diagnosed patients, continuously meeting the healthcare needs, particularly the medical supplies and medicine, developing treatment protocols according to the emerging dynamic situations, guiding individuals to protect them against the pandemic, building new hospitals and producing new medical supplies, ensuring the healthcare professionals to stand ready in their fight against the virus morally and materially, developing new treatment methods as well as vaccines, sharing continuously the treatment methods with the world as well as the Turkish public. The healthcare pillar of the four-pillar strategy is the most significant pillar of the fight, and it is run together by the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board which consists of members carefully chosen by the Ministry of Health,



and relevant healthcare units, universities, pandemic hospitals assigned by the Ministry of Health as well as the healthcare professionals working at these institutions.

The second pillar of the fight against the novel coronavirus in Turkey comprises the measures which are taken to ensure physical distancing. These measures include a wide range of measures concerning all segments of the society such as social isolation and quarantine practices.

The third pillar of the fight consists of measures taken to ensure public order and to eliminate any security problems. The main institutions, *inter alia*, assigned for this task are Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services.

The most significant pillar which would affect the whole process in fighting against the pandemic is the fourth pillar, which is maintaining the supply chain without any interruption. This pillar consists of objectives to be fulfilled such as maintaining the mobility of agricultural products, continuing the domestic and foreign trade chain, keeping the economic troubles of individuals and the businesses at a tolerable level throughout the fight, etc. The institutions which are responsible for managing this pillar are Ministry of Treasury and Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Indeed, these pillars of the strategy formulated to fight against the pandemic are all inter-related, affecting directly all the institutions and persons in the country.

Since the first positive case in Turkey reported on 11 March 2020, Turkey has been showing maximum effort in its fight against the virus. The measures suggested by WHO has been launched well in advance in the country and necessary works have been carried out with an aim to handle this pandemic process with minimum damages. The taken measures and their results have been accurately and transparently shared with the public.

It is extremely important that the practices based on the above-mentioned four pillars in fighting against the pandemic must be reviewed in line with the main principles of good administration such as respect for human rights, lawfulness, equality and absence of discrimination, transparency, providing information and so on. This Report consists of four chapters. The first chapter focuses on the services provided and the activities conducted in the field of healthcare. The second chapter highlights the administrative measures taken in order to ensure isolation and to curb the spread of the virus. The third chapter is about the economic decisions and the measures taken in this regard. And finally, the fourth chapter is an overview of examinations and findings relating to these three areas. With this Report, a general evaluation has been made by taking into consideration the ongoing fight against the coronavirus not just in Turkey but also across the world and accordingly, some recommendations have been developed. The general evaluation of actions and procedures of the government and the administration, the decisions as well as the measures taken in this regard toward Turkey's fight against the pandemic has been made considering their compliance with the principles of good administration.

Also, analyzing the perspectives of the countries in fight against the pandemic which has hit the whole world, their ways of managing the process as well as their ability to manage the process, the success criteria of Turkey has been tried to be created. It has been considered that it is the duty of the Ombudsman Institution of Turkey, as an institution to seek legal remedies, to reveal that Turkey has adopted a humanitarian approach to the disease and attached great importance to human health in the meantime. In this regard, Turkey has been compared with various countries in terms of priorities in fight against the pandemic as well as attitudes towards humans and human health.

The Ombudsman Institution of Turkey being one of the key institutions to seek legal remedies has received many complaints about the shortcomings in delivery of public services due to the pandemic since the first positive case reported in the country. Some of these complaint applications have been related to "health" while some of them have been in the field of "public order" and "economic measures". These applications mostly focus on demands on improving the rights and working conditions of health professionals. In addition, majority of the applications have been about the problems faced in accessing masks, shortcomings at the hospitals in the delivery of routine heath care services apart from the coronavirus, the problems faced in access to the bank loans provided for citizens. After carefully examining these complaints, it has been observed that many of these problems have been solved with the updated measures.







ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF HEALTHCARE TO FIGHT AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CHAPTER

"No respected entity exists among people like State Let it not be a State in the world like health of one breath"

Suleiman the Magnificent

ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF HEALTHCARE TO FIGHT AGAINST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The novel coronavirus was firstly identified in China, then spreading around the world as a pandemic. After more than two months of the outbreak, Turkey has been affected by the virus, too. Thanks to the prompt measures, Turkey has met the virus at a later time compared to many other countries. The first confirmed case for COVID-19 in the country is traced back to 10 March 2020. It was also at this date when WHO announced the COVID-19 as a "pandemic". On 10 January 2020, just two months ago when the first case was reported in the country, the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board was set up within the Ministry of Health. Since the very first day of its establishment, the Board has been holding meetings regularly and developing recommendations to fight against the pandemic. The Pandemic Action Plan which was previously formulated was reviewed, and updated accordingly considering the novel COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, this Action Plan has been the first roadmap of the fight against the pandemic.

The relevant legislation on the measures to be taken within the scope of the Pandemic Action Plan is as follows: the Constitution, the Law on Public Health No. 1593, Fundamental Law on Healthcare Services No. 3359, Presidential Decree on the Organization of the Presidential Office No. 1 published in the Official Gazette No.30474 dated 10.07.2018, Regulation on Surveillance and Control Principles for Infectious Diseases published in the Official Gazette dated 30.05.2007 No. 26537, Regulation on Environmental Health Procedures to be Applied at International Entry Points published in the Official Gazette dated 03.11.2013 No. 28810, Circular on the System of Notification of Infectious Diseases (dated 23.10.2015 and No: 2015/18), and Circular on the Guidance to Fight against Infectious Diseases (dated 11.09.2018 and No:).

Furthermore, the country experiences gained in treating the disease, particularly the experiences of China, have been urgently reviewed and treatment protocols have been formulated accordingly. While formulating these protocols, not only the country practices available but also the solid scientific advices, particularly of WHO, have been taken into consideration.

In the meantime, the Ombudsman Institution of Turkey has continued to receive and handle applications. During the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Institution has received applications filed about the shortcomings in the provision of public services or about requests in different subject areas. The Institution has been continuing its works non-stop and processing the incoming applications to resolve them. The Institution has also considered it necessary to draw attention to Turkey's huge efforts to curb the pandemic.

1. An Overview of the COVID-19 virus

The novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a virus identified on 13 January 2020 following the examinations conducted on a group of patients with respiratory symptoms (e.g.; fever, cough, shortness of breath) which were first reported in Wuhan City, China on 12 December 2019. The virus originally emerged at the people who had been at the sea food and animal market in this region. And then, transmitting from one person to another, the virus spread from Wuhan to other cities in Hubei and the rest of China and the world, resulting in a pandemic.¹ The first case of COVID-19 in Turkey was confirmed on 10 March 2020.

International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee convened on 30 January 2020 regarding the outbreak of novel coronavirus and acknowledged that the virus created public health emergencies of international

¹ https://covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/tr/ Access Date: 03/05/2020



concern. Following the recommendations of the Emergency Committee, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared that the outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Later, following consultations and cooperation with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), the WHO named the disease as "COVID-19" which stands for "Coronavirus Disease 2019". On 11 March 2020, the WHO announced that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic due to its alarming level of spread around the world.²

The common respiratory symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath. The more severe cases result in symptoms such as pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome, renal failure and even death. The virus is primarily spread via small droplets. It is also spread through touching a contaminated surface and then touching mouth, nose or eye mucosa. The incubation period for the virus is 2-14 days.³

According to the findings obtained about the COVID-19 so far, some people appear to be at higher risk of catching the disease and developing severe symptoms. People over 60 are more susceptible to the virus. Also, those who have serious chronic illnesses as well as the health professionals are among the risky groups. 80% of COVID-19 cases recover with mild symptoms while 20% of the infected cases are treated at the hospitals. Based on the COVID-19 Report of China, WHO reported the case fatality rate as 3,8%.⁴

2. Planning and Coordination

In the 20th century, three worldwide pandemics of influenza occurred. The most severe one among them was the 1918 influenza pandemic, also known as the Spanish flu. The number of deaths was estimated to be at least 20 million worldwide while about half million deaths occurring in the United States.



² https://www.seyahatsagligi.gov.tr/Site/koronavirus Access Date: 03/05/2020

³ COVID19 (SARSCoV2 Enfeksiyonu) Rehberi, Bilim Kurulu Çalışması, Sağlık Bakanlığı Halk Sağlığı Genel Müdürlüğü, https://covid19bilgi.saglik.gov.tr/depo/rehberler/COVID19_Rehberi. pdf, Access Date: 03/05/2020

⁴ https://www.seyahatsagligi.gov.tr/Site/koronavirus Access Date: 03/05/2020

	SPANISH FLU	ASIAN FLU	HONG KONG FLU	INFLUENZA A (H1N1)2009
Year	1918	1957-1958	1968-1969	2009-2010
Origin	Unknown	South China	South China	North America
Influenza A virus sub-type (animal genetic entry / recombination case)	H1N1 (unknown)	H2N2 (bird)	H3N2 (bird)	H1N1 (swine)
Basic Reproduction Number (R0)	1,2-3,0	1,5	1,3-1,6	1,1-1,8
Estimated Case Fatality Rate	2-3%	<%0,2	<%0,2	0,02%
Estimated worldwide mortality	20-50 million	14 million	14 million	100-400 thousand
Affected age groups	Young adults	All age groups	All age groups	Children and young adults

Table 1: The Characteristics of Four Pandemics Occurred in the 20th and 21	1 st Century ⁵
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2.1. Pandemic Action Plan

In Turkey, the preparatory and planning works for pandemic launched in 2004. The completed Pandemic Preparedness Plan was published in 2006 as a Prime Ministry Circular. According to this Plan, Provincial Pandemic Preparedness Plans were prepared and these Plans were evaluated during the Pandemic Plan Exercise participated by all provinces within same year.⁶ The Pandemic Influenza National Preparedness Plan of Turkey was updated on December 2019 by taking into consideration the regulations and advices of European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and WHO in the light of experiences gained from the Influenza A(H1N1) pdm09 pandemic which broke out in 2009.

The main goal of the Pandemic Influenza National Preparedness Plan is to provide information and framework for each individuals, institutions and agencies across the country in a manner to ensure that they are wellacquainted with the influenza pandemic, that they are well-prepared to fulfill

⁶ Pandemik İnfluenza Ulusal Hazırlık Planı, Aralık 2019, s.5



⁵ Pandemik İnfluenza Ulusal Hazırlık Planı, Aralık 2019, s.2.

their responsibilities and play their roles, and that they act in coordination in case of a pandemic. Accordingly, the objectives of the Plan are as follows:

- To provide technical details of preparedness and activities to fight against a pandemic;
- To determine necessary activities to be carried out and to prepare proper recommendations before any pandemic breaks out in order to increase effectiveness of works to be conducted in fighting against a pandemic;
- To ensure national coordination, and cooperation among public and private sectors, to identify their roles, responsibilities and the works to be done during a pandemic;
- To define the initiatives to be launched to effectively respond any influenza pandemic;
- To guide the institutions and agencies which provide healthcare services in preparing pandemic activity plans.⁷

2.2. Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board ⁸

Before the virus was declared as pandemic, the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board was set up on 10 January 2020 with the advent of the virus at other countries. The Board consists of 38 members who are medical academicians specialized in relevant fields such as infectious diseases, microbiology, internal diseases intensive care and chest diseases. Since its establishment, the Board has convened every day at the premises of the Ministry of Health and shared its recommendations with the public. Apart from issuing recommendations to be followed by the public in order to curb the spread of the virus, the Board also assumes the role of providing accurate information and raising awareness of the citizens through social media, TV and newspapers to prevent the elimination of any false and unscientific information in context of the disease's course in the country. Also, the Board

⁸ https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/bilimkuruluuyelerikimlerdirisimlerine2020bilimkuruluuyelerikimlerdenolusuyor6180779 Access Date: 02/05/2020



⁷ Pandemik İnfluenza Ulusal Hazırlık Planı, Aralık 2019, s. 45

has prepared the "*Guidelines for 2019nCoV Disease*" which has been published by the Ministry of Health.

Member	University/Bureau	Department/Position
Afşin Emre Kayıpmaz	Başkent University Faculty of Medicine	Emergency Medicine
Ateș Kara	Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine	Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Ahmet Demircan	Gazi University Faculty of Medicine	Emergency Medicine
Levent Akın	Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine	Epidemiology
Tevfik Özlü	Karadeniz Technical University Faculty of Medicine	Chest Diseases
Ayşegül Füsun Eyüboğlu	Başkent University Faculty of Medicine	Chest Diseases
Recep Öztürk	Istanbul Medipol University Faculty of Medicine	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Firdevs Aktaș	Gazi University Faculty of Medicine	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Serhat Ünal	Hacettepe University Faculty of Medicine	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Alpay Azap	Ankara University Faculty of Medicine	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Yeşim Taşova	Çukurova University Faculty of Medicine	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Hasan Tezer	Gazi University Faculty of Medicine	Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Şebnem Erdinç	University of Health Sciences, Ankara Training Research Hospital	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Aydın Yılmaz	University of Health Sciences, Ankara Atatürk Chest Diseases and Thoracic Surgery Training and Research Hospital	Chest Diseases
Rahmet Güner	Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Faculty of Medicine Ankara City Hospital	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Canan Ağalar	University of Health Sciences, Fatih Sultan Mehmet Training and Research Hospital	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology

 Table 2: List of the Members of the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board⁹

⁹ https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koronavir%C3%BCs_Bilim_Kurulu Access Date: 02/05/2020

Member	University/Bureau	Department/Position
Müşerref Şule Akçay	Başkent University Faculty of Medicine	Chest Diseases
Akın Kaya	Ankara University School of Medicine	Pediatric Infectious Diseases
İlhami Çelik	Kayseri City Training and Research Hospital	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Levent Yamanel	University of Health Sciences, Gülhane Training and Research Hospital	Intensive Care and Internal Diseases
Zeliha Tufan Koçak	Council of Higher Education Executive Board Member	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Serap Şimşek Yavuz	Istanbul Medical Faculty	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Mehmet Doğanay	Erciyes University Faculty of Medicine	Infectious Diseases and Clinical Microbiology
Figen Çizmeci Şenel	Turkey Health Care Quality and Accreditation Institute	President
Gülay Korukluoğlu	National Virology Laboratory	Head
Ayla Aydın	Ministry of Health Infectious Diseases Department	President
Ali Göktepe	Ministry of Health Early Warning and Response to Threats Department	President
Selçuk Kılıç	Biological Products Department	President
Cemil Güneș		Legal Adviser
Pınar Okyay	Menderes University Faculty of Medicine	Public Health
Selma Metintaș	Osmangazi University Faculty of Medicine	Public Health
Deniz Çalışkan	Ankara University School of Medicine	Public Health
Seçil Özkan	Gazi University Faculty of Medicine	Public Health
Ali Özer	İnönü University Faculty of Medicine	Public Health
Mustafa Öztürk	University of Health Sciences, Hamidiye Institute of Health Sciences ^[40]	Public Health
Ahmet Tevfik Sünter	Ondokuz Mayıs University Faculty of Medicine	Internal Medicine

3. Turkey's Healthcare Infrastructure and Manpower

According to the World Health Organization, healthcare system of a country should be designed in a way to ensure the delivery of high quality healthcare services for everybody. The service should be effective, affordable and socially accepted. In this regard, the most significant reform realized to improve the health system in the country has been the Health Transformation Program (HTP). The HTP which was prepared getting inspired by the recent healthcare reforms and the best global practices consists of eleven components with addition of new components in 2007 which are as follows:¹⁰

- 1) Restructuring of the Ministry of Health as a planner and supervisor,
- 2) Creating a universal healthcare insurance gathering everyone under single umbrella,
- 3) Creating a widespread, easily accessible and friendly health service system,
 - a. Strengthened primary healthcare services and family medicine,
 - b. Effective and staged referral chain,
 - c. Health facilities having administrative and financial autonomy,
- 4) Healthcare manpower equipped with knowledge and skills, and working with high motivation,
- 5) Education and science institutions to support the system,
- 6) Quality and accreditation for qualified and effective health services,
- 7) Institutional structuring in the rational management of medicine and supplies,
 - a. National medicine institution,
 - b. Medical device institution,

¹⁰ Progress Report on Healthcare Transformation Program in Turkey, August 2008, https://sbu. saglik.gov.tr/ Ekutuphane/kitaplar/turkiyeSDP.pdf, Access Date: 16/04/2020



- 8) Access to effective information at decision making process; health information system,
- 9) Health promotion for a better future and healthy life programs,
- 10) Multi-national health responsibility for mobilizing the parties and inter-sectoral collaboration,
- 11) Cross-border healthcare services which will increase the country's power in the international arena.

3.1. Some Demographic Indicators

According to the statistical information of the Turkish Statistical Institute, Turkey's population as of 31 December 2019 is 83.154.997. 41.721.136 (50,2%) of the population are male while 41.433.861 (49,8%) are female.¹¹ When Turkey's population pyramids of the years 2007 and 2019 are compared, it is seen that the old age population and the middle age population have increased depending on the decrease in fertility rate as well as the mortality rate.

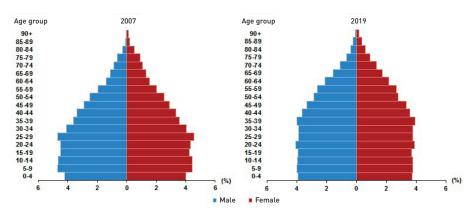


Figure 1: Population Pyramid

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute



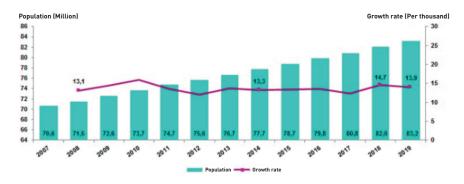
¹¹ http://www.tuik.gov.tr/HbGetirHTML.do?id=33705 Access Date: 27/04/2020

	Age group Total			Ratio in Total Population (%)			
Year	population —	0-14	15-64	65 +	0-14	15-64	65 +
2007	70 586 256	18 642 391	46 943 690	5 000 175	26,4	66,5	7,1
2008	71 517 100	18 788 587	47 835 090	4 893 423	26,3	66,9	6,8
2009	72 561 312	18 859 334	48 618 564	5 083 414	26,0	67,0	7,0
2010	73 722 988	18 878 582	49 516 670	5 327 736	25,6	67,2	7,2
2011	74 724 269	18 886 575	50 346 979	5 490 715	25,3	67,4	7,3
2012	75 627 384	18 857 179	51 088 202	5 682 003	24,9	67,6	7,5
2013	76 667 864	18 849 814	51 926 356	5 891 694	24,6	67,7	7,7
2014	77 695 904	18 862 430	52 640 512	6 192 962	24,3	67,8	8,0
2015	78 741 053	18 886 220	53 359 594	6 495 239	24,0	67,8	8,2
2016	79 814 871	18 925 782	54 237 586	6 651 503	23,7	68,0	8,3
2017	80 810 525	19 033 488	54 881 652	6 895 385	23,6	67,9	8,5
2018	82 003 882	19 184 329	55 633 349	7 186 204	23,4	67,8	8,8
2019	83 154 997	19 212 345	56 391 925	7 550 727	23,1	67,8	9,1

Figure 2: Population by Age Group and its Ratio in Total Population, 2007-2019

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute





Source: Turkish Statistical Institute

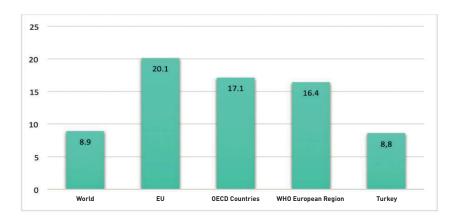
Figure 4: The Top 5 Cities with highest population rate

Provinces		Male	Female	Proportion in the total population (%)		
	Total			Total	Male	Female
İstanbul	15 519 267	7 790 256	7 729 011	18.66	18.67	18.65
Ankara	5 639 076	2 793 850	2 845 226	6,78	6.70	6.87
İzmir	4 367 251	2 174 319	2 192 932	5.25	5.21	5.29
Bursa	3 056 120	1 530 956	1 525 164	3.68	3.67	3.68
Antalya	2 511 700	1 265 171	1 246 529	3.02	3.03	3.01

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute



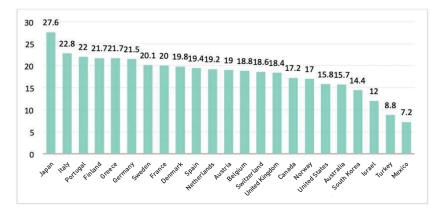
It is globally confirmed that the age group which is at highest risk for COVID-19 pandemic is 65 and over. In this regard, it will be useful to compare Turkey with the rest of the world. In 2018, the world average of the population aged 65 and over is 8,9%. This rate is 20,1% in the EU member countries while it is 17,1% in the OECD countries. As for Turkey, this rate has been estimated to be 8,8% in 2018, which is below the world average. In Turkey, the low ratio of the population aged 65 and above in the total population has been an advantage in country's fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.



Graph 1: International Comparison of Population Aged 65 and Over (%), 2018

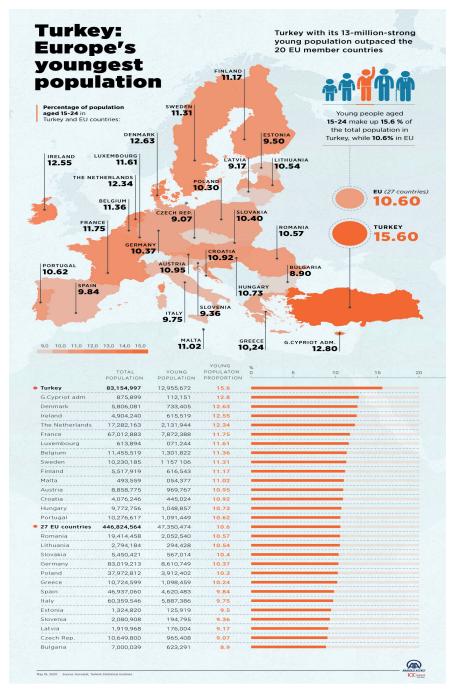
Source: Turkish Statistical Institute, OECD

Graph 2: Rate of Population Aged 65 and Over in Total Population across the OECD Countries (%), 2018



Source: Turkish Statistical Institute





Source: Anadolu Agency (AA)



3.2. Healthcare Institutions and Agencies

The healthcare services in Turkey have been provided by the health institutions affiliated to the Ministry of Health as well as by those affiliated to other institutions (public or private).

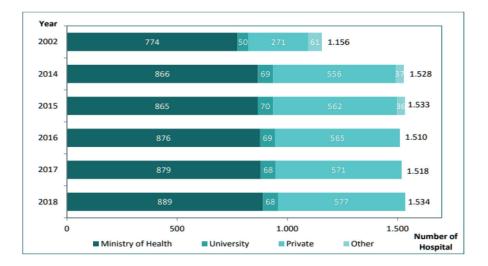
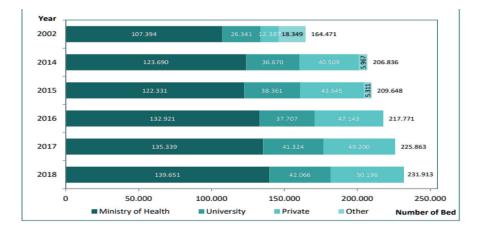


Figure 5: Number of Hospitals by Years and Sectors

Source: Health Statistics Yearbook 2018 of the Ministry of Health

Figure 6: Number of Hospital Beds by Years and Sectors



Source: Health Statistics Yearbook 2018 of the Ministry of Health

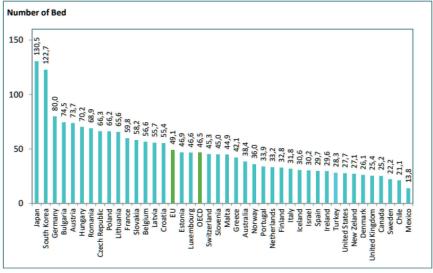


Figure 7: International Comparison of Number of Hospital Beds per 10.000 Population

Source: General Directorate of Health Services, EUROSTAT Database, OECD Health Data 2019 Note: Turkey's data belongs to the year 2018. Countries' data belong to the year of 2017 or nearest.

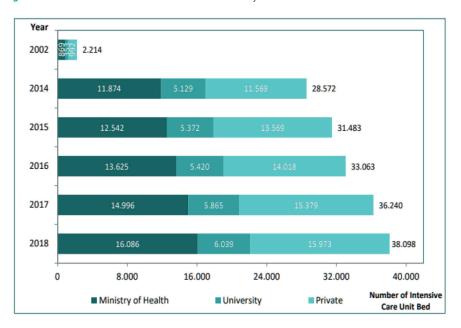


Figure 8: Total Number of Intensive Care Unit Beds by Years and Sectors

Source: Health Statistics Yearbook 2018 of the Ministry of Health



	Ministry o	of Health	Unive	rsity	Priva	ate	Tot	al
	Number	%	Number		Number	%	Number	
Adult	11.171	69,4	4.049	67,0	8.851	55,4	24.071	63,2
Child	941	5,8	542	9,0	142	0,9	1.625	4,3
Neonatal	3.974	24,7	1.448	24,0	6.980	43,7	12.402	32,6
Total	16.086	100	6.039	100	15.973	100	38.098	100

Figure 9: Number and Distribution (%) of Intensive Care Unit Beds by Types and Sectors

Source: Health Statistics Yearbook 2018 of the Ministry of Health

3.2.1. City Hospitals

The most significant component of the Health Transformation Program (HTP) towards citizens is creating and improving a widespread, easily accessible and friendly health service system. To this end, city hospitals have been built and put into service. Built through Public-Private Partnership model, the City Hospitals have been providing services since the early 2017. Currently, there are 11 City Hospitals.¹²

Picture 1: Aerial View of Ankara City Hospital



Source: Ministry of Health General Directorate of Health Investments

¹² https://sygm.saglik.gov.tr/TR,33960/sehirhastaneleri.html Access Date: 20/04/2020



The high-qualified features and manpower of the City Hospitals have contributed highly to the improvement of delivery of healthcare services. Particularly with the recently emerging COVID-19 pandemic, City Hospitals have also taken great attentional globally. City Hospitals have had positive impact on patient safety thanks to easily accessible services as well as the increased quality in spaces. The newly-built City Hospitals having large space of service, high number of hospital beds for patients as well as intensive care unit patients, cutting edge technology smart buildings and equipment, and patient rooms which are suitable for personal isolation and when necessary, may be turned into intensive care unit, have positively affected the fighting process against the pandemic in the country.

3.3. Healthcare Manpower

Turkey has successfully expanded the number of health professionals over the years. It has sufficient number of health professionals who are well-trained and highly experienced. Currently, the total number of healthcare professionals of the country is 1,061,635. 165,363 of them are physicians while 204,969 of them are nurses. And the rest are other healthcare staff and support personnel.¹³ Also, it is planned to recruit additional 32.000 healthcare professionals as soon as possible in order to prevent any potential shortcomings in combating the virus.¹⁴

Compared to the OECD data, it is estimated that the number of population per one physician is 498,2 in Turkey while the average number in the OECD countries is 341,3. In addition, the number of population per one nurse is 431,2 in Turkey while the average is 102 in the OECD countries.

¹⁴ Press Statement by the Minister of Health on 24/03/2020 https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,64648/ bakankocakoronaviruseiliskintedbirlerivesondurumudegerlendirdi.html Access Date: 20/04/2020



¹³ Press Statement by the Minister of Health on 10/04/2020. https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65032/ bakankocakoronaviruseiliskinsondurumudegerlendirdi.html Access Date: 20/04/2020

	2002	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Specialist Physicians	45.457	75.251	77.622	78.620	80.951	82.894
General Practitioners	30.900	39.045	41.794	43.058	44.649	44.053
Medical Residents	15.592	21.320	21.843	23.149	24.397	26.181
Total Physicians	91.949	135.616	141.259	144.827	149.997	153.128
Total Dentists	16.371	22.996	24.834	26.674	27.889	30.615
Pharmacists	22.289	27.199	27.530	27.864	28.512	32.032
Nurses	72.393	142.432	152.803	152.952	166.142	190.499
Midwives	41.479	52.838	53.086	52.456	53.741	56.351
Other Health Personnel	50.106	138.878	145.943	144.609	155.417	177.409
Other Personnel and Procurement of Services	83.964	303.110	311.337	321.952	339.241	376.367
Total Personnel	378.551	823.069	856.792	871.334	920.939	1.016.401

Figure 10: Number of Healthcare Professionals by Years

Source: General Directorate of Health Services

Note: 1.932 physicians in the subspecialty program are included to the number of "Medical Resident". 2.056 dental residents are included to the number of "Total Dentist". 1.727 pharmacists including graduated intern pharmacist and second pharmacists were added to the number of "Pharmacists".

3.4. Medical Equipment

In providing health care services, medical devices and supplies are as much important as the facilities and the staff. Medical devices play a huge role in diagnosing and treating many diseases. For instance, the suspected cases for COVID-19 are quickly detected through pulmonary CT scan in addition to test kits, thereby allowing the disease to be treated at an earlier stage.

	2002	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
MRI	58	757	794	836	884	915
ст	323	1.071	1.119	1.152	1.186	1.211
Ultrasound	1.005	5.286	5.518	5.470	5.635	5.846
Doppler Ultrasound	681	3.151	4.015	4.679	4.892	5.557
ЕСНО	259	1.793	1.897	2.121	2.269	2.520
Mammography	647*	903	896	931	947	966

Figure 11: Number of Equipment of Hospitals by Years

Source: General Directorate of Health Services

* The number of mammography devices belongs to the year 2008.

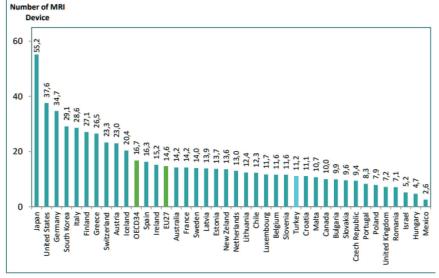


Figure 12: International Comparison of Number of MRI Devices per 1.000.000 Population

Source: General Directorate of Health Services, EUROSTAT Database, OECD Health Data 2019 Note: Turkey's data belongs to the year 2018. Countries' data belong to the year of 2017 or nearest.

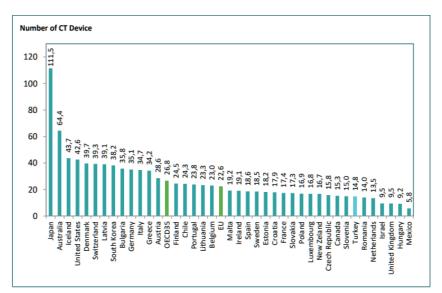


Figure 13: International Comparison of Number of CT Devices per 1.000.000 Population

Source: General Directorate of Health Services, EUROSTAT Database, OECD Health Data 2019 Note: Turkey's data belongs to the year 2018. Countries' data belong to the year of 2017 or nearest.



4. Measures Taken Before the Virus's Entry into Turkey

The novel Coronavirus spreading from China to the whole world has been closely followed up and taken very seriously in Turkey since the beginning. Although the World Health Organization stated that it was still early to declare that the outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, Turkey had completed all the preparations, particularly for the airports. The Scientific Board of the Ministry of Health had convened to make a risk assessment on 22 January 2020. And in the light of the recommendations of the Board, various measures had been taken to prevent the virus's entry into the country.

First of all, for all inbound flights, particularly from China, infectious diseases control measures were promptly implemented. Furthermore, healthcare professionals were assigned round-the-clock to stand ready at ports and airports, thermal cameras were installed to scan the passengers at the arrival, and the quarantine rooms as well as negative pressure stretchers were put into service to be utilized when necessary. The A400M type cargo plane belonging to the Turkish Armed Forces were turned into ambulance plane and carried 42 persons including 32 Turkish citizens, 6 Azerbaijani citizens, 3 Georgian citizens and one Albanian citizen from Wuhan to Turkey on 02 February 2020. All people aboard including 62 persons with the technical staff and the health care professionals were transferred by 17 ambulances to Dr. Zekai Tahir Burak Hospital and put into quarantine for 14 days. After the quarantine period, those people were tested negative. With this example, Turkey has been the first country to have brought its citizens to Turkey by an ambulance plane accompanied by a scientific team and healthcare professionals and to have arranged a quarantine hospital.

WHO declared that the outbreak constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 04 February 2020. Right after that, on 05 February 2020, all the flights with China were stopped. As of 07 February 2020, in line with the Recommendation of the Scientific Board, the international inbound passengers were scanned by thermal cameras at the entire international airports in the country. The domestic testing kits which yield rapid result for coronavirus disease were introduced to the public and have been used since 17 February 2020. On 19 February 2020, two members of the Scientific Board for coronavirus went to Geneva to attend the Global Research and Innovation Forum created by WHO to mobilize international action in response to the new coronavirus. The Pandemic Action Plan which was already prepared before the outbreak of the pandemic has been frequently updated in line with the recommendations of the Scientific Board. The necessary stock of serum, antiviral drugs and masks were checked and planned to be re-produced when necessary. Also, the healthcare facilities to be utilized for quarantine have been determined.

The most effective drug utilized in the treatment of the disease has been identified, stocked up and prepared to be used to fight the virus. Thanks to this preliminary works, the patients in Turkey have not faced any problems in their treatment in terms of availability of the drug.

When the first case for COVID-19 was detected in neighboring Iran, the measures were further expanded following the recommendations of the Scientific Board. In the meantime, Turkey expressed its solidarity with the people of Iran and stood ready to help them. All the passengers coming from Iran as of 20 February 2020 were subject to health controls, and those with the symptoms of the disease were not allowed to enter the county. As of 23 February 2020, the Turkish-Iranian border was closed temporarily. And the entire international flights were suspended unilaterally and temporarily. In addition, field hospitals were established at the land border with Iran, and a strong healthcare team including emergency doctors as well as specialized doctors in infectious diseases were assigned and ambulances were put into service at these field hospitals.

In the meantime, Turkey continued to send aid to the countries affected by the pandemic. For example, it sent aid to China by a large cargo plane. Also, testing kits for Coronavirus were sent to Iran.

As of 02 March 2020, the novel coronavirus was detected in 68 countries including Azerbaijan, Armenia and Czech Republic and the total number of positive cases reached 89,211. The number of reported deaths around the world was 3040 while the number of recovered cases reached 45,000. As the virus spread the countries surrounding Turkey, it was advised for those who have been abroad in the last 14 days, especially those who came from Iran, Iraq, China, South Korea, and Italy, to keep themselves away from crowded places and to stay home for 14 days as of their arrival.



As part of the fighting process with the novel Coronavirus, strict measures were also taken at 426 old people's homes which provide services for 27,300 persons. Although positive cases were reported at some of these institutions, the spread of the virus was prevented.

To raise awareness of the citizens, the Ministry of Health prepared COVID-19 Posters and Leaflets.





5. Measures Taken After the First Confirmed Case in the Country

WHO declared the novel coronavirus disease as pandemic on 11 March 2020. On this date, the Minister of Health Dr. Fahrettin KOCA confirmed the first positive case for COVID-19 in Turkey on 10 March 2020. In addition to quarantine measures; social isolation, administrative measures as well as economic measures were launched, thereby turning the fight against the pandemic into three-step fight. The first step was to prevent the entry of positive cases into the country by way of quarantine measures, the second step was to prevent the spread of the pandemic across the country by way of individual and social isolation measures, and the third step was to successfully manage the treatment process of the infected people.

5.1. Actions to Get the Pandemic Under Control

As of 14 March 2020, five people who contacted the first case were tested positive, and they were isolated. The planes, trains, buses, subways and other public transportation vehicles were completely disinfected. The measures to be taken in case one of the passengers is tested positive for COVID-19 during and after the flight have been determined in addition to the measures to be taken for the airport staff and passport control officials.

Symptom monitoring and 14-day isolation were performed for those that came from Umrah. When the number of infected people who came from Umrah increased, more than 5 thousand people were isolated in the evacuated student dormitories after their return from Mecca. As the flights to and from almost all European countries were suspended, the Turkish citizens in these countries were brought back to Turkey, and isolated at the above-mentioned student dormitories for 14 days.

Testing kits with rapid results were imported from China. These kits were tested before usage and it was found out that the rate of inaccuracy was high so these kits were not used and orders were cancelled.¹⁵ The number of test

¹⁵ http://www.haber7.com/guncel/haber/2956946cindenbuyukumutlarlagetirilenkoronavirustestkitlerihayalkirikligiyaratti/?detay=1 Access Date: 03/05/2020



centers was rapidly increased (the target number was 89 at that time), and on 16 April 2020, the daily test capacity increased to around 34.000¹⁶. Thus, ensuring more people to be tested facilitated early diagnosis of the disease, resulting in getting the spread of the pandemic under control.

Considering the psychological and sociological aspect of the pandemic, a Board of Social Sciences was also established. Furthermore, the isolated patients at home have been monitored through an application system developed. As for funeral and burial services, the necessary measures have been taken and the workers in this field have been trained in order to continue these services in line with standard procedures.

Since the beginning of the pandemic in the country, the filiation method has been widely used in fighting against the pandemic. Filiation is a process of screening/tracking the chain of contact in the infectious diseases, reaching people possibly infected by the disease. Through such comprehensive tracking strategy, 97,5 % of the contacts have been successfully detected.

The highest rate of case within a week has been seen in the 11th week in the US, in the 9th week in Spain, in the 8th week in Italy, in the 10th week in Germany and France, and in the 7th week in China. As for Turkey, the highest rate of case within a week has been seen in the 4th week. So, in the 4th week in Turkey, the rate of increase of positive cases has decreased thanks to the filiation method.

In cooperation with the private sector, Turkey has guided certain sectors which provide services which may be characterized as not vital to produce critical medical supplies such as masks, overalls, glasses, and face shields etc. Turkey's stock planning strategy has not only met its domestic needs but also made it possible to send fundamental medical supplies to other countries in need.

As of 06 May 2020, Turkey has entered 2^{nd} phase in fight against the coronavirus and the new phase called "controlled social life" has started. The

¹⁶ As of 20/05/2020, number of daily tests was 20.838 while the total number of tests was 1.696.355. https:// covid19.saglik.gov.tr/ Access Date: 20/05/2020





rules to be obeyed have been announced day by day in every field. Accordingly, the number of cases has decreased below one thousand as of 20 May 2020.

5.2. Actions for Treatment Process

When the pandemic broke out, the treatment of the patients who are not in urgent medical condition has been postponed. In this way, the occupancy rate at hospitals has been decreased from 70% to 30%. Even when the rate of cases for coronavirus was highest in Turkey, there weren't any challenges faced in terms of critically important areas such number of beds, intensive care units, ventilators, medication, and medical supplies. In fact, beginning from the day when the number of patients needing intensive care for coronavirus has decreased, Turkey announced that it can accept patients from abroad if requested.

The drug which has been reported to have positive impact on the treatment of the COVID-19 patients in China has been supplied to administer it for the treatment of the intensive care patients.

For the COVID-19 cases with positive clinical symptoms and for the cases having acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) with acute bilateral infiltration detected by tomography, immune (convalescent) plasma treatment is also administered. The immune plasmas are collected by the Turkish Red Crescent from the donors recovered from the COVID-19. The collecting and administrating procedure for immune plasma is implemented according to the Guide on Supply and Clinical Use of COVID-19 Immune (Convalescent) Plasma prepared by the Ministry of Health.

Turkey has been among the countries where the novel coronavirus has entered at the latest. However, it has been among the countries which have reached the peak level earliest and started the decrease of the rates. Also, it has been among the countries in Europe where the case fatality rate has been lowest. The Ministry of Health supports all units including the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK), the universities etc. in their efforts to produce a vaccine. In this regard, 24 universities, 8 public R&D units, 8 private sectors and hundreds of researchers in coordination with TUBITAK have been conducting their projects under the COVID-19



Platform to produce vaccine and drug to cure the COVID-19 including 7 vaccine development projects and 7 chemical and biotechnology drug development projects.

Another remarkable development in the fighting process against the coronavirus has been the domestic production of ventilators. The domestic ventilators have been made by four Turkish companies. The Turkish engineers managed to set up mass production of the first indigenous intensive care ventilator in just 14 days. As Turkey does not need them right now, the first domestically produced ventilators have been sent to the countries in need of them. In fighting against the pandemic, Turkey has used every means available in solidarity and cooperation with all segments of the society in terms of production of masks, overalls and ventilators.

The effective treatment process in Turkey has resulted in low rate of deaths for COVID-19 cases. As of 20 May 2020, the death rate in the US has been 6%, 11,6 % in Spain, 14,2 % in Italy, 4,5 in Germany, 14,3 % in the UK, 15,5 in France, 5,5 % in China, 16,3 % in Belgium while this rate has been 2,7% in Turkey.

5.3. Access to Other Healthcare Services

During the pandemic, only the patients having appointments in advance have been admitted to the hospitals, and those who don't have appointments have been checked whether their medical condition is severe and accordingly has been admitted. The priority has been given to the suspected COVID-19 patients.

Some procedures in health have been facilitated. For instance, the patients who have to use some medications and medical supplies regularly do not have to go to a hospital to renew the prescription of their medications and medical supplies, instead they can easily obtain from pharmacies by showing their previous prescription.

Throughout the pandemic, it has been ensured that all physicians, other healthcare professionals and other relevant staff regardless of their branches



and units remain ready to support the treatment units for COVID-19 patients when necessary.

5.4. Decisions on Working Conditions and Healthcare Professionals

During the pandemic, it has been clearly seen that the workload on the healthcare professionals as well as their risk exposure have increased. Therefore, it has been decided to recruit additional 32,000 healthcare staff in a short time with an aim to increase the manpower capacity in the field of health. In this regard, to protect the healthcare professionals against any risks, 24 million surgical masks, more than 3 million N95 masks, more than 1 million protective overalls and glasses have been distributed to the hospitals at first stage. These medical supplies have been continuously distributed in order to prevent any insufficiency problem at hospitals. The sufficiency and accessibility of protective medical supplies have been a challenge for many countries across the world. In Turkey, in addition to sufficient provision of protective medical supplies, some other measures have also been taken to provide transportation and accommodation of healthcare professionals. In this regard, free transportation to and from the hospital, and accommodation of healthcare professionals near the hospitals have been provided so that they can be isolated. Also, a mobile application has been developed by the Ministry of Health to psychologically support the healthcare staff. In order to support them financially, additional payments have been increased for a period of 3 months. And, the legislative proposal on prevention of violence against the healthcare staff was approved by the Parliament and become a law on 16 April 2020.

5.5. Public Information

During the times of pandemic, inaccurate information and unreal statistics may further panic the society. In order to prevent it, the Ministry of Health has been announcing the daily figures such as total number of cases, tests, deaths, patients in intensive care unit, patients on ventilators, and the recoveries.

To this end, the Ministry of Health has started to daily give latest information and figures regarding the coronavirus through the following website: <u>https://covid19.saglik.gov.tr/</u>



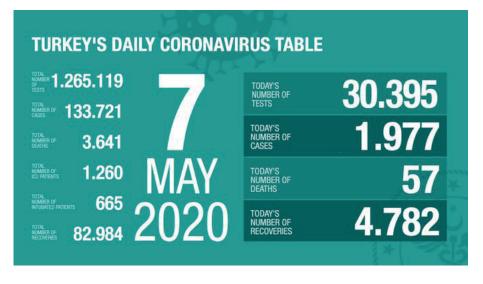


Image 1: Display of webpage for current situation for COVID-19 in Turkey

Beside the above-mentioned daily information, the Minister of Health also holds press conferences following the meetings of the Scientific Board and answers all the questions clearly and transparently.

Moreover, the members of the Scientific Board and the specialized doctors have also assumed the role to inform the public about the disease and its risks through media.

As part of public information activities, there is a Coronavirus Hotline in Turkey, which is Call 184. The citizens with certain symptoms such as high fever, sweating, cough, shortness of breath can call this line and be guided by the physicians.

Also, a mobile application called "Life Fits Home" has been put into service to encourage isolation and to prevent the spread of the virus. It includes a selfassessment tool for Covid-19 and shows risk maps of cities.

5.6. Other Measures in the field of Health

Various supportive healthcare services have been provided for citizens such as free treatment, free mask distribution, construction of new hospitals and speeding up their completion process, supply of medication and treatment for





the citizens who are under lockdown, bringing back the Turkish citizens living abroad for their treatment, and so on.

5.6.1. Free Mask Distribution

The health authorities state that use of mask in addition to social distancing is necessary to prevent the spread of the virus. At first, the sales of masks have been banned with an aim to prevent the high price sales of the masks. Therefore, free masks have been distributed to the citizens. While the free distribution of masks have been continuing, the ban on their sale has been lifted but a fixed reasonable price has been set.

5.6.2. Free Treatment of Coronavirus Disease

As part of the fight against the COVID-19 disease in Turkey, regardless of availability of any social insurance, the medical needs of every citizens are met free of charge including the provision of personal protective equipment, test kits, medication and all other relevant supplies in order to treat the disease.

5.6.3. Domestically Produced Hand Sanitizers

Keeping hands clean is vital in the fight against coronavirus which easily spreads through contact. Rapid spread of the pandemic all around the world has caused a serious shortcoming in accessing the hygiene products worldwide. Being aware of the importance of keeping hands clean in preventing the spread of the virus, Turkey has introduced its domestically produced hand sanitizer "BOREL" which is made out of boron element. With ingredients such as boron, ethyl alcohol, glycerin, aloe vera, tea tree oil and lavender, BOREL keeps hands moisturized while avoiding any dermatological problems. The antibacterial element in boron fights against germs and bacteria while also helping any wounds heal faster.

5.6.4. Meeting the Needs of People under Lockdown (Vefa Social Support Groups)

A series of preventive measures have been taken to isolate people in fighting against the COVID-19, which include imposing lockdown for the elderly (aged 65) and people with a chronic illness. With an aim to meet the needs of these people under lockdown, Vefa Social Support Groups consisting



of public officials such as policeman, gendarmerie officers, warden, and staff of the Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency etc. have been created. Citizens can communicate their needs by calling 112, 155, 156 and other relevant lines.

5.6.5. Bringing Back the Turkish Citizens Living Abroad

As part of COVID-19 measures, the Turkish citizens living abroad have been brought back to Turkey upon their request. Turkish citizens who didn't have chance to be treated properly in the country where they live were brought back to their home by private jets, when necessary. They have been treated properly in Turkey instead of abandoning them to their fate.

In addition to protecting the health of its own citizens, Turkey has also been trying to meet the requests for aid coming from other countries which need medical supplies. So far, 104 countries have called for aid. As of 22 April 2020, Turkey has sent medical supplies to 53 countries such as Germany, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, the UK, Iran, China, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Palestine, Spain, Italy, Somali, Serbia, Tunisia. With a widespread media coverage pointing out Turkey as a "key actor in global fighting against the COVID-19", this effort of Turkey to send medical supplies to the countries in need has drawn attention globally and been greatly appreciated.

5.6.6. Construction of New Pandemic Hospitals

In order to prepare both sides of Istanbul against any disasters such as pandemic, earthquake, etc., the construction works have been started to build pandemic hospitals at the site of Sancaktepe and the Atatürk Airport. With the introduction of Sancaktepe Hospital, it will provide healthcare services in full capacity when needed in any emergencies. It has a total bed capacity of 1,008 of which 432 are intensive care units (ICU). The other hospital to be constructed at the site of Atatürk Airport has 1008 rooms designed to be converted into intensive care units, if need arises.¹⁷

¹⁷ https://www.saglik.gov.tr/TR,65086/istanbuluherikiyakasiylaafetlerehazirhalegetirecegiz.html Access Date: 28/04/2020





Picture 2: Aerial View of the Construction of Atatürk Airport Pandemic Hospital



Source: Anadolu Agency (AA)

6. Complaints filed to the Ombudsman Institution regarding the COVID-19 Pandemic

The Ombudsman Institution of Turkey has continued to electronically receive (through e-application, e-Government portal) complaint applications during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this regard, the Institution has received some complaints mostly in the following subjects: disruptions in public service or demands on different issues during the process of combating the pandemic such as demanding necessary measures to be taken in the prisons not to let the virus spread, expanding the scope of the execution law, private dormitory fees, flexible working hours, helping stray animals, postponing payments such as invoices and credit debts, consumer loans to be provided to the citizens, the request of giving more masks by the institution at the place of duty.

In addition, complaint applications have been received by the Institution regarding the difficulties in accessing to health services as well. These applications include complaints or demands regarding the measures to be taken for health workers who have been combating against the pandemic, improving the rights of health workers or mask requests. The examinations regarding these applications have been carefully conducted by the Institution.



The applications filed to the Institution in the field of health after the COVID-19 pandemic broke out is shown in the following table.

 Table 3: Complaint Applications filed to the Ombudsman Institution related to the COVID-19

 Pandemic

No	Date of Complaint	Complaint Number	Complained Administration	Area of Complaint	Explanation of the Complaint subject
1	24 March 2020	2020/5542	Ministry of Health	Health	The applicant who is a physician requested that necessary measures should be taken for the health workers in combating against the pandemic.
2	25 March 2020	2020/5572	Ministry of Health	Health	The applicant working at an airport complained about the behavior and attitude of a doctor who treated him when he went to the Istinye Public Hospital as a suspected case for COVID-19.
3	31 March 2020	2020/5831	Ministry of Health	Health	The applicant requested that the working conditions of the health workers working during the pandemic should be improved.
4	01 April 2020	2020/5871	Ministry of Health	Health	The applicant requested that the rights of the health workers should be improved and necessary protective measures to be taken.





No	Date of Complaint	Complaint Number	Complained Administration	Area of Complaint	Explanation of the Complaint subject
5	02 April 2020	2020/5923	Ministry of Health	Health	The applicants requested that the rights of the health workers who are actively working in combating against the COVID-19 pandemic should be improved, that they should be supported in this process such as by providing free transportation to and from the hospitals, that necessary measures should be taken to protect the health of workers of banks, bakeries, markets, and pharmacies who have to work during the pandemic.
6	08 April 2020	2020/6198	Ministry of Health	Health	The applicant requested that the health workers should equally share the burden in fighting against the coronavirus.
7	10 April 2020	2020/6331	Ministry of Health	Health	The applicant stated that he couldn't access to mask he requested, and as the sale of mask was banned, he was aggrieved and, therefore asked for a solution.
8	26 April 2020		Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency	Consumer Loan	The applicant stated that he applied for the consumer loan offered by the bank at low interest rate with an amount up to 10,000 Turkish Liras. However, the bank didn't provide any feedbacks. So, the applicant asked for a quick reply.



No	Date of Complaint	Complaint Number	Complained Administration	Area of Complaint	Explanation of the Complaint subject
9	26 April 2020		Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency	Consumer Loan	The applicant stated that he applied for a consumer loan at an amount of 10,000 Turkish Liras, but the bank approved to give only 3000 Turkish Liras, and therefore asked for receiving the whole amount.
10	28 April 2020		Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency	Consumer Loan	The applicant stated that he applied for the consumer loan at an amount of 10000 Turkish Liras but he was rejected by the bank due to customer's payment difficulty and low credit rating, so asked for the payment of the loan.

Note: The Institution received over 55,000 complaint applications similar to the ones available in the items 8, 9 and 10 of the table above.

7. The Situation of Countries in terms of Healthcare Services in Fighting Against the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has been still affecting the whole world. Even though the rate of spread of the virus has slowed down in certain countries, the World Health Organization states that it is still too early to accept that the threat is completely over.



Image 2: Global COVID-19 Death Toll



Source: Digital Transformation Office of the Presidency Office of Turkey

When viewed by country, it seems that the epicenter of the pandemic has become the US where the number of affected people is the highest in the world followed by Russia, Brazil, France, the UK and Spain.

Figure 14: World COVID-19 Statistics (as of 20 May 2020)

Country	Confirmed	Deaths	Recovered	Outcome	Active	Fatality	Recovery	Articles	Population
United States	1,576,950	93,858	364,263	458,121	1,118,829	5.95 %	23.10 %	2.812	331.0 M
Russia	308,705	2,972	85,392	88,364	220,341	0.96 %	27.66 %	<u>41</u>	145.9 M
c Spain	278,803	27,778	196,958	224,736	54,067	9.96 %	70.64 %	265	46.8 M
Brazil	275,382	18,130	106,794	124,924	150,458	6.58 %	38.78 %	<u>196</u>	212.6 M
Wnited Kingdom	248,818	35,341	1,101	36,442	212,376	14.20 %	0.44 %	<u>1,224</u>	67.9 M
Italy	226,699	32,169	129,401	161,570	65,129	14.19 %	57.08 %	<u>1,179</u>	60.5 M
France	180,809	28,022	62,563	90,585	90,224	15.50 %	34.60 %	<u>447</u>	65.3 M
Germany	178,170	8,213	156,900	165,113	13,057	4.61 %	88.06 %	<u>412</u>	83.8 M
C• Turkey	152,587	4,222	113,987	118,209	34,378	2.77 %	74.70 %	<u>116</u>	84.3 M
• Iran	126,949	7,183	98,808	105,991	20,958	5.66 %	77.83 %	<u>283</u>	84.0 M

Source: https://maps.isc.gov.ir/covid19/#/world (Access Date: 20/05/2020



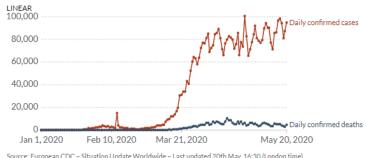
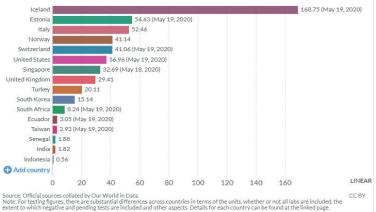


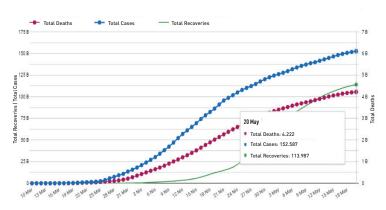
Figure 15: Daily Confirmed Cases and Deaths Worldwide

Source: European CDC – Situation Update Worldwide – Last updated 20th May, 16:30 (London time) OurWorldInData.org/coronavirus • CC BY

Figure 16: Testing figures for COVID-19 by countries (per 1000 persons/as of 20/05/2020)



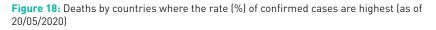


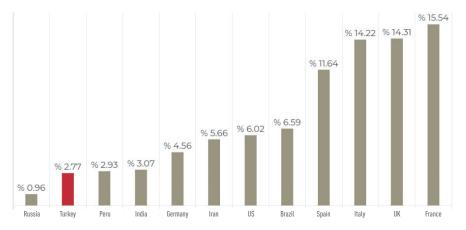


Source: https://COVID19.tubitak.gov.tr/ Access Date: 20/05/2020



Compared to the countries where the rate of confirmed cases is highest, the number of deaths is lower in Turkey.





Source: Digital Transformation Office of the Presidency Office of Turkey

Figure 19: Comparison of Dates of First Confirmed Cases, Recoveries and Deaths for COVID-19 by Country

Search Country	Diagnosed	Recovered	Died
Turkey	11/03/2020	25/03/2020	16/03/2020
US	02/03/2020	02/03/2020	02/03/2020
Spain	31/01/2020	15/02/2020	03/03/2020
Italy	01/02/2020	22/02/2020	21/02/2020
France	29/02/2020	29/02/2020	29/02/2020
UK	04/03/2020	10/03/2020	05/03/2020
Germany	28/01/2020	13/02/2020	09/03/2020
Russia	01/02/2020	12/02/2020	19/03/2020
Iran	19/02/2020	26/02/2020	19/02/2020
China	10/01/2020	10/01/2020	10/01/2020
Brazil	26/02/2020	16/03/2020	17/03/2020

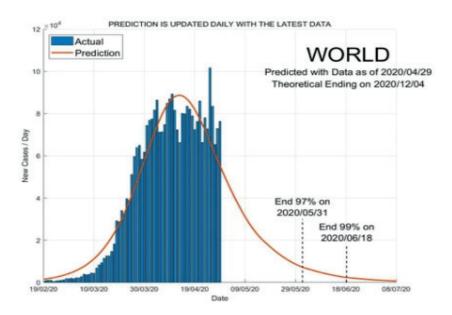
Source: Digital Transformation Office of the Presidency Office of Turkey



8. Predictions about the Life Cycle of the COVID-19 Pandemic

When will the COVID-19 pandemic end? This is a burning question still awaiting an answer due to the extreme uncertainty of the pandemic. However, based on some progress made by the countries against the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be possible to make some predictions. For example, in a research conducted by Singapore University of Technology & Design (SUTD), the estimated end dates of the pandemic have been determined for the countries.¹⁸ According to this research, the world is predicted to end 97% of COVID-19 on 31 May while it is 100% around 4 December.

Figure 20: Estimated COVID-19 Life Cycle Worldwide



Source: Singapore University of Technology& Design (SUTD)

¹⁸ Singapore University of Technology& Design (SUTD), https://ddi.sutd.edu.sg/publications Access Date: 01/05/2020





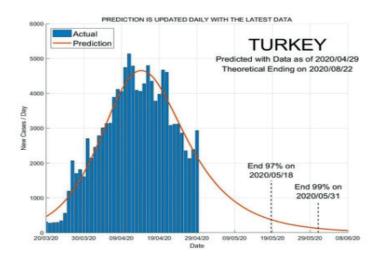
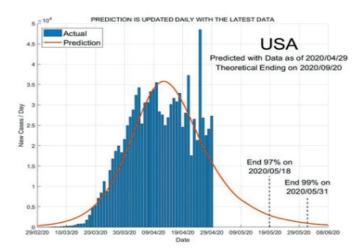


Figure 21: Estimated COVID-19 Life Cycle in Turkey

Source: Singapore University of Technology& Design (SUTD)

Turkey is predicted to end 97% of COVID-19 around 18 May, and 100% of it around 22 August. The **US** is predicted to end 97% of COVID-19 around 18 May, and 100% of it around 20 September.

Figure 22: Estimated COVID-19 Life Cycle in the US



Source: Singapore University of Technology& Design (SUTD)



Italy is predicted to end 97,4% of COVID-19 around 10 May, and 100% around September.

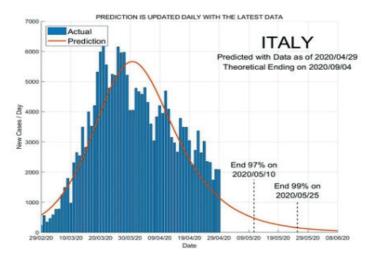
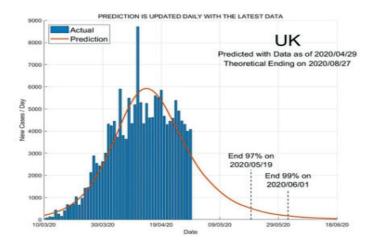


Figure 23: Estimated COVID-19 Life Cycle in Italy

Source: Singapore University of Technology& Design (SUTD)

The UK is predicted to end 97% of COVID-19 around 19 May, and 100% around 27 August.

Figure 24: Estimated COVID-19 Life Cycle in the UK



Source: Singapore University of Technology& Design (SUTD)

9. An Evaluation of the Fight against the Pandemic

The humanity has been fighting against an extremely dangerous common enemy, which is the COVID-19 pandemic. This common health challenge has been driving the societies to despair regardless of their countries and nations. The countries have focused, and put all their efforts on fighting against the coronavirus which has serious effects on human life. The whole world has witnessed that underestimation of the virus and even a slightest relief during this fight can have irreversible serious results.

The course of this pandemic which first appeared in China and its effect on the countries have been closely followed up by Turkey, as well. Months before the first confirmed case in Turkey, a series of measures were taken to prevent the entry of the virus into the country in line with the recommendations of the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board. These measures have resulted in late arrival of the virus into the country. During this process, the Pandemic Action Plan which was previously prepared has been used as the key guide to identify the measures to be taken. Furthermore, the Coronavirus Scientific Advisory Board which was set up on 09 January 2020 prepared the "Guidelines for 2019nCoV Disease" which has been regularly updated based on new information and developments. Also, a Board of Social Sciences consisting of specialized experts in the fields of psychology, sociology, religion psychology, religion sociology, statistics etc. was established to prepare a roadmap regarding the psychological and sociological aspects of the pandemic. In its huge efforts to fight against the pandemic, Turkey has set an example to the world with its achievements in the health sector as well as in its delivery of healthcare services. It has been understood that Turkey has a strong and well-established healthcare system which values human life.







ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PANDEMIC



"There is hope after despair and many suns after darkness"

12/03

Rumi

ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PANDEMIC

In times of global crises such as diseases or natural disasters which hit the whole world and threaten the humanity, the countries have to consider the situation with a global perspective instead of a national perspective. They have to take measures and perform activities in coordination with the rest of the world. In the face of a global disaster, countries should put an end different approaches and implementations within the country. For instance, in fighting against a global pandemic, all the measures depending on the nature of the pandemic should be taken by all relevant public departments and segments of the society rather than putting all the burden on the shoulder of the health sector alone. Lastly, in combating a global and multi-dimensional crises, all the state units as well as the society should do their share.

1. Administrative Preparedness Measures

In the preparation stage to fight against the pandemic, Turkey took administrative measures mainly in three areas. Firstly, before the entry of the virus into the country, measures were taken at the airports to check the inbound international passengers, especially the passengers coming from the countries where the coronavirus cases were confirmed. Secondly, disinfection and cleaning procedures launched at all public areas, particularly at schools and public institutions. Thirdly, raising awareness activities were introduced before the entry of the virus into the country in order to familiarize the whole society with the pandemic and to prepare them to act in line with the measures to be taken. With the slogan "The coronavirus is not stronger than the measures we will take", individual protection table was prepared to raise the awareness of the citizens against the pandemic and to prevent them from being infected. At the preparation stage, the disease was perceived as a global pandemic, and a human-oriented and non-discriminatory fighting approach was embraced.

As part of measures, the mid-term break of all schools was scheduled to an earlier time, suspending primary, secondary and high schools for a week as of March 16, and as of 23 March, distance education via internet and TV started. Furthermore, as of 16 March 2020, the education at the universities was suspended for three weeks at the first stage. All sports events were held without any spectators until the end of April. The public officials were allowed to go abroad only by permission. It was recommended that unless necessary, citizens should not go abroad and those who have recently returned abroad should isolate themselves for 14 days at home.

At the hospitals, visitor restriction was imposed. The public officials with any chronic illness were allowed to easily take a leave of absence. Such measures which were taken at the first stage continued throughout the fighting process.

Regarding the Penitentiary Institutions, protective measures were taken on 13-16-27-30 March 2020 step by step based on the new developments. For instance, prison visits were suspended, transfers between prisons were suspended except for security or sickness reasons, those who showed COVID-19 symptoms would not be put into prison before a health check and treatment, and if there is a positive case, the proper measures would be implemented. Upon the recommendation of the Scientific Board, only the hearings where the defendants are remanded in custody and "urgent hearings" would be held and non-urgent hearings would be suspended until 30 April 2020 throughout the country.

To minimize the risk of COVID-19 transmission; all the events such as ceremonies, organizations, weddings, funerals, conferences, meetings, mass prayers at mosques were suspended. Besides, the shopping malls, restaurants, cafes, hairdressers, etc. were closed. And at a later stage, lockdowns were



imposed at official public holidays considering the supply chain of economy and the basic needs.

2. Measures for Social Isolation

Beginning from the day when the first positive case was confirmed in the county, Turkey launched social isolation practices as a first step in a coordinated way. Social isolation is a state of being partially or completely away from the society in order to prevent the spread of infectious diseases which may be transmitted from air or from person to person. In this way, social mobility is restricted as much as possible.

Upon the recommendation of the Scientific Board and under the leadership of the Presidency, various measures were taken and implemented by public institutions such as the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Directorate of Religious Affairs, Board of Higher Education, etc.

On 16 March 2020, the Ministry of Education and the Board of Higher Education announced that face-to-face classes at schools and universities were suspended, thereby isolating the students at the universities as well as the dormitories and minimizing the spread of the virus. On the same day, the Ministry of Interior issued a detailed circular which includes rules to be applied for social isolation at the restaurants where people gather. Later, the places such as coffee houses, hairdressers, game halls, internet cafes, etc., where there is a high risk of infection were closed, and the funeral and burial procedures were determined in line with the new rules.

With the Presidential Circular No: 2020/3, the scientific, cultural, art and similar events were postponed until the end of April. The public institutions started to work remotely, and flexible working arrangement and home office was allowed. The Presidency of Religious Affairs announced that the mass prayers at the mosques were banned and they were only allowed in small groups in line with social distancing rule. In addition, the sports events were completely postponed.



These rules were also applied by the private sector. For example, the shopping malls decided to suspend all their activities until the end of the pandemic. The rules were clearly elaborated to be complied by the public transports, taxis, banks, the district bazaars, municipalities, supermarkets and similar places where face to face services are provided for citizens.

3. Quarantine Measures

The quarantine measures are the next step of social isolation to be implemented in order to have more effective results. Many quarantine measures were taken in the country to curb the spread of the virus. Mainly, all air, sea and land passengers coming from the infected countries were quarantined for 14 days. After a while, the international flights were suspended, and the all the entry and exit points were shut down. The Turkish citizens abroad who return to the country are still put into a 14-day quarantine without any exceptions. The student dormitories were used to accommodate these people while they are under quarantine. Suspending the education and closing the schools at the right time facilitated the quarantine procedures. This has proved that the coordination among public institutions is of utmost importance in such situations to be able to successfully manage the crisis.

Also, the health care workers were kept isolated at the hotels, student dormitories and guest houses to prevent their contact with their family.

With a view to getting quick and effective results from the social isolation practices in fighting against the pandemic, two types of lockdown were imposed. The first one is partial lockdown. In order to stop the spread of diseases in public, a restriction has been implemented in the form of a curfew to those who are over the age of 65, those with chronic disease, and those under the age of 20 for a long time.

The second type of curfew has been imposed on weekends in a way to continue the chain supply without suspending economic activities. These restrictions were imposed every weekend and on official holidays as of 10 April 2020. Through these measures, around 63 million people were isolated at certain times of the week.



4. Financial Supports and Aids

With an aim to minimize economic, social and psychological problems which arise due to isolation rules, financial supports and economic measures packages were announced for citizens. The most significant one among such measures is the economic support campaigns for the people who temporarily lost their jobs or whose income decreased due to social isolation measures. A national solidarity campaign with the slogan "*We are self-sufficient, Turkey*" launched to help the citizens in need under the leadership the President. Many citizens as well as the public officials and the businesspersons provided huge support to this campaign.

In order to help businesses during the coronavirus pandemic, tax measures were introduced. These measures allowed businesses in the most affected industries to postpone certain tax and social security payments without penalty or late payment interest.

With the support budgets created, Turkey provided a financial support with an amount of 1000 Turkish Liras for around 5 million people at three stages. Those who lost their jobs also were granted 1.177 Turkish Liras monthly. In addition to these financial supports, the public banks also offered consumer loans at very low interest rates.

In addition, with an aim to meet the needs of the people under lockdown including the seniors, teenagers and children, Vefa Social Support Groups were created.

5. Measures on Public Order and Security

With its police and gendarmerie officers, the Ministry of Interior has assumed the role to implement and supervise the measures taken with the decision of the President by considering the recommendations of the Scientific Board. The law enforcement and gendarmerie officers have been patrolling the streets and imposing fines to those who do not obey the rules.

6. Public Information and Communication Measures

Since the very beginning of the pandemic, Turkey has been successfully managing the crisis by continuously informing the citizens. The Scientific Board held meetings at least twice a week and provided its recommendations to the government. These recommendations have been evaluated in terms of administrative aspects and turned into Presidential decision at the Cabinet meetings. The decisions taken were communicated to the relevant Ministries and institutions, particularly to the Ministry of Health.

In order to provide information regarding the positive cases, treatment procedures etc., the Ministry of Health has regularly shared the latest situation about the pandemic. The Minister of Health, himself, held press conferences at least twice or three times a week to warn the citizens against the pandemic and to stress the importance of obeying the rules. He also transparently answered the questions of the press members during these meetings.

The President himself contacted the infected patients who were under treatment through internet. The Turkish citizens who live abroad and couldn't be given sufficient treatment though their condition was serious were brought back to Turkey by private jet, and treated properly.

7. Moral Support Activities

In the fight against the pandemic, it is of utmost importance for the administration to gain trust of citizens in terms of decisions and measures taken so that the crisis is successfully managed and the negative effects of the pandemic are easily eliminated.

In this regard, the domestic production of medical supplies such as ventilators, masks, overalls, etc., as well as completion of the construction of new hospitals have implied that there won't be any deficiencies in meeting the needs of medical supplies and the healthcare system will effectively function, which has been a relief for citizens.

In addition, uninterrupted public services provided by all Ministries and the institutions throughout the pandemic have boosted the morale of the citizens and increased their confidence in the administration.



8. Administrative Measures Taken by Public Institutions

All institutions and private enterprises have conducted work on issues such as individual isolation, social isolation, self-quarantine, aid and support activities, order and security-related measures, adaptation to the measures, informing their staff in terms of the measures they have taken and staying in touch with them.

8.1. Administrative Measures Taken by the Presidency

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has personally managed the process of combating the outbreak. All the measures taken by the Presidency through circulars or decrees have been mandatory instructions for ministries, institutions, and local governments to implement, and these measures were considered as guidance for private persons and enterprises.

As a reference for public institutions and organizations to take action, the circular regarding the public officials' travelling abroad, which was issued by the Presidency and concerns a broad segment of the society, the circular about all types of scientific, cultural, artistic and similar meetings and activities, the annulment of all organizations requiring social isolation and rules about the form of implementation, the circular concerning employees working in public institutions and organizations, curfew restrictions, travel restrictions between provinces, getting permission from the governor for transportation, the complete termination of international flights are some of the measures that have been taken.

8.2. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Interior

The Ministry of Interior has been the most important administrative structure which carries out tasks such as implementing and elaborating the administrative measures, supervising the implementations, and implementing sanctions when necessary. Therefore, the Ministry has immediately converted the administrative measures, which were proposed by the Scientific Advisory Board and were converted into a decision by the Presidency, into a circular and tried to implement the measures uncompromisingly by creating its legal legislation. Some of the measures are as follows:

- 1- The principles of protection against the infection and control recommended to be implemented in order to reduce the risk of infection in restaurants and training the restaurant staff
- 2- Circular concerning commercial taxis
- 3- City Entry/Exit measures and issues related to age restriction
- 4- Circular concerning supermarkets
- 5- Curfews and Measures regarding the Enterprises, Businesses and Institutions that will remain open.

8.3. Measures Taken by the Ministry of National Education

Ministry of National Education has a target group of 30 million people consisting of children, youth, and adults. Almost all educational activities of this mass of people are carried out collectively in violation of the social isolation rules. Therefore, the Ministry that has been most affected by the social isolation measures has been the Ministry of National Education. Some of the measures taken are as follows:

- 1- All schools are cleaned and disinfected,
- 2- Cancellation of risky activities in public and private schools and institutions,
- 3- Closing all schools across the country for 2 weeks as an initial measure,
- 4- A 3-week break in education in all higher education institutions across the country with the decision taken by the Council of Higher Education (CoHE),
- 5- Starting the implementation of the distance education system EBA,
- 6- Closing private kindergartens and private kids' clubs,
- 7- Cancelling exams or organizing exams with digital facilities such as video conferencing, provided that the exams are "recorded".



8.4. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Justice

Some of the measures to be taken in Penal Institutions of the Ministry of Justice are as follows:

- 1- Examination of the people in terms of infectious diseases, not admitting those with symptoms to the Penal Institutions, providing medical examination and treatment,
- 2- Conducting the hearings in all criminal and civil courts through SEBGIS (Sound and Video Information System) if possible and postponing the hearing dates to a later date,
- 3- Postponing the visits,
- 4- All staff members, who handle people coming to the institution from outside, use personal protective equipment and materials,
- 5- Taking everyone's temperature including the staff each time they enter the building and using thermal cameras where needed,
- 6- Intensification of hygiene rules.

It is seen that the measures taken by the Ministry of Justice are detailed arrangements that include self-quarantine, social isolation, security, and information elements. In addition to the measures of the Ministry of Justice, apart from the enforcement measures, the Board of Judges and Prosecutors have taken social isolation measures during the proceedings as well.

8.5. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure

There are two important points regarding the measures taken by the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure. The first one is the measures taken to provide social isolation in transportation services such as public transport and travel while the second one is the support it provides in communication and telecommunication services, which inform the society and facilitate keeping in touch with the society during the fight against the pandemic.

8.6. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Family and Social Services

The Ministry of Family and Social Services has also conducted many different measures and practices within the scope of administrative measures. The Ministry has conducted important work such as identifying the citizens who were challenged financially due to the pandemic, delivering assistance to them, helping the elderly and the disabled, follow-up on the nursing homes and child services.

8.7. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Youth and Sports

There are three aspects that the Ministry of Youth and Sports have tackled to combat the pandemic and the administrative measures it has taken have provided considerable contributions to the social isolation and self-quarantine practices. The first one is about postponing the football competitions in Turkey by having meetings with Turkey Football Federation and making a joint decision. Secondly, all sports activities and competitions have been postponed. Thirdly, the university dormitories affiliated with the Credit and Hostels Institution have been evacuated and prepared for quarantine purposes to accommodate the citizens coming from abroad.

8.8. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism

The measures taken by the ministry are of great importance for the continuation of the economic life, as international quarantine practices are carried out during the fight against the pandemic and domestic tourism activities will be affected. For this reason, some of the measures related to tourism regions, hotels and restaurants have focused on the basic principles of infection prevention and control, which are recommended to be implemented in accommodation facilities.

8.9. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

Under Protection and Control Measures for Markets and Grocery Stores, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has taken precautions including protection and control measures in order to reduce the risk of infection in grocery stores drawing huge crowds.



8.10. Measures Taken by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The services provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs within the scope of the fight against COVID-19 reveal Turkey's perspective towards the disease and prove how much it values humanity as well as the health of humanity. It is seen that the services delivered under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are also closely linked with the Presidency, the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Health in certain aspects.

The services delivered under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be summarized as follows: Bringing home the citizens who live abroad and wish to come back to Turkey while abiding by the rules of selfquarantine, sending the foreigners living in Turkey back to their country, providing medical aid to countries in need of assistance and coordinating the meetings and activities that should be carried out jointly while combating the pandemic.

Some of the activities carried out under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are indicated below:

- When the outbreak started, 34 citizens consisting of Turkish, Azerbaijani, Georgian, and Albanian nationals were evacuated from Wuhan.
- Pilgrims returning from Umrah (10,330) went through health checks and were housed in student dormitories.
- As of March 25, the date of the flight ban, 401 students in 7 countries were brought back to Turkey through 2 different flights.
- More than 60 thousand Turkish citizens from 57 countries have been brought home in line with the quarantine requirements. 20 thousand foreign nationals have been allowed to exit the country.
- Turkish personnel abroad have been provided with the necessary protective materials.
- In total, over 100 countries have requested medical supplies from Turkey and medical supplies were sent to 57 different countries.



8.11. Measures Taken by the Presidency of Religious Affairs

The most important administrative measures taken by the Presidency of Religious Affairs can be categorized into three groups. The first one is the restrictions on collective worship. The second one is about funerals and burials while the third one is the activities to increase the resistance by socializing and raising awareness in the fight against the pandemic.

9. Country Practices in terms of Administrative Measures for Fighting against the Pandemic, and Comparison of Turkey

When comparing countries with each other in terms of their response to the pandemic, it should be taken into consideration that each country has a different health infrastructure, different social culture, different political system, and a different administrative structure.

In this respect, it may be more beneficial to compare the countries based on their preparation for the pandemic, perspective on the pandemic, strategies to combat the pandemic, health infrastructures, and the way the government manages them, rather than data and numbers. The factor that affects the fight most among all these variables is the perspective of the countries on the pandemic and the basic strategies they have implemented in response to it. Certain countries that misapplied these strategies were in a difficult position despite their infrastructure and preparations. However, certain countries, on the other hand, have not yet experienced the expected problems although their health infrastructure is insufficient. It will be more appropriate to examine some of the countries with higher population that stand out in terms of fighting against the disease and compare them with Turkey instead of analyzing all countries one by one.

9.1. Herd Immunity Approach

The herd immunity approach is based on the hope that the disease will mutate and lose its lethal effect because of the disease transmitting to 60% or more of the population. In the early days of the pandemic, the US and the



UK adopted this idea and did not choose to act. However, while the disease continued to spread rapidly, it led to the start of deaths on the one hand and made the health system inoperable due to high demand on the other hand. Even the patients, who would not face the risk of death if certain treatments could be applied under convenient conditions, were put in a risky position when the health system weakened due to the intensity.

Therefore, these countries had to bring back their social isolation measures by avoiding the results of this approach. Since it was too late when they decided to do this, these countries faced unsuccessful results because their response to the pandemic started after it had already spread rapidly.

Turkey, on the other hand, has never adopted the herd immunity approach, on the contrary, it tried to prevent the outbreak from entering the country by implementing strict quarantine practices even when the outbreak had not yet come to Turkey and when the outbreak came to the country, it put social isolation measures into practice step-by-step. For instance, it analyzed its intensive care units, identified the hospitals envisaged for the response and collected all the possibly useful drugs from pharmacies and stocked them before the virus had come to the country.

9.2. Examples from EU Countries

The European Union countries such as Italy, Spain, France and Belgium are considered as a group of countries that were late in taking the necessary precautions in the early days of the pandemic and started to implement measures only after the pandemic had already spread, with Germany being an exception.

9.3. Examples from Other Countries

Russia started fighting against the outbreak after mid-April and benefited from other countries' experiences and immediately implemented social isolation measures. Russia has so far adopted a mixed approach like Turkey and Germany.

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Iran, on the other hand, was one of the first countries to be hit hard by the disease with China. Although China has contained the outbreak, Iran has not been able to fully contain it yet. In Iran, there are still cases and deaths even though it is stable now. South Korea has been going through the same situation in a sense. South Korea had contained the disease with the correct precautions taken early, but as soon as it relaxed the social isolation measures, it has encountered a so-called second wave.

9.4. Examples from Turkey and Germany

It is possible to say that Germany's response to the outbreak, health infrastructure and health workforce are similar to those of Turkey. Turkey and Germany put effort into containing the outbreak and minimizing its effect while waiting for the development of a vaccine or treatment and for the population to achieve herd immunity without a crisis by saving time, so, they are also working on these issues.

10. Evaluation of the Administrative Measures Taken in Response to the Outbreak

Two of the four-stage strategy implemented by Turkey in response to the outbreak are within the scope of administrative measures. The administrative measures are social isolation and ensuring safety and order.

Examining these measures, we see that the measures were thoroughly prepared, and their exceptions were determined meticulously. It is also seen that every ministry and institution take administrative measures related to their own field, elaborate, and implement them. The implementation of administrative measures with different practices in each area has revealed a serious coordination obligation.

It has been observed that the services provided are fulfilled by minimizing the areas of conflict and contradiction within the division of labor and coordination. It has been seen that the measures, some of which have been



listed above, have been implemented meticulously within the framework of law and legislation, there has not been a significant problem about public order and safety, and necessary actions have been taken against those who have attempted to commit crimes by taking advantage of the administrative measures.





MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Positive

Blood test CORONAVIRUS COVID - 19



"Let the mankind live so that the State lives" Sheikh Edebali





MEASURES TAKEN AGAINST THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC

The measures taken by the countries in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, which first emerged in China and spread to nearly 185 countries, have affected the economic life as well as social relations and revealed its economic impacts in China first.

Although the impacts of the pandemic on the economy have not been determined clearly due to the slowdown in economic activities, border closures, and the uncertainties surrounding both the supply-side and demand-side economics, it has been observed that the stagnation caused by the measures taken to contain the spread of the virus caused a slowdown in national and global economic activities. For this reason, all countries have brought up important measures to survive this process with minimal damage.

The financial measures taken in the process of combating the pandemic can be categorized into two purposes. The first one is to support people, who lost their jobs and income, and companies during the outbreak. The second one is to maintain the functioning of the country's economy in general, which depends on the first goal, and to provide a continuous supply chain.

In this context, Turkey felt the need to take certain measures to mitigate the expected negative situations in economic and commercial activities due to COVID-19. The 200 billion Turkish lira (\$28.5 billion) Economic Stability Shield package was introduced to minimize the impacts of the pandemic. The purpose of these measures is to prevent bankruptcies and to try to ensure economic stability by preventing employment from being interrupted.

To prevent the emergence of economic depression in the country, certain measures have been taken to ensure the continuity of the companies that produce and provide employment.

Therefore, the measures taken for tradesmen and businesses in the country affect about 4 million natural and legal persons. Within the scope of the Economic Stability Shield, financial resources of 8 billion 390 million TRY were allocated for 448,148 tradesmen in this process while 107 billion 412 million TRY was allocated to 119,804 companies from the Credit Guarantee Fund.

In addition to this, certain measures have been taken to ensure the continuity of the activities of the enterprises as well as measures such as stopping their activities open to the public and recommendations to avoid attending such activities as much as possible, therefore, there are certain employees who face the risk of losing their jobs or were unemployed.

During this time, unemployment rates have risen across the world and it has been announced by the International Labor Organization that this rate will keep rising. Turkey, like all countries, has taken measures to support employees with the aim of preventing the unemployment rate from rising. Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) announced that the number of employed people was 27 million 266 thousand people as of January 2020.

1. Measures Taken for Tradesmen and Enterprises

As a result of enterprises' suspending their activities for a certain period and social isolation policies around the world and in Turkey to prevent the spread of COVID-19, economic relations have slowed down considerably. Ensuring that tradesmen and enterprises maintain their activities is crucial for the sustainability of production, economic growth, and protection of employment.

In this regard, some of the measures taken for tradesmen and enterprises are extending the time limit of declaration/notification/reporting conducted using fiscal policy tools, adopting rate cuts, allowing the taxpayers affected by



the COVID-19 measures to benefit from the force majeure provisions and postponing public receivables. This way, the loss of income, which could have been caused by the transfer of the existing resources of enterprises into the public, has been avoided.

2. Measures Taken through Regulations regarding Economic and Commercial Relations

In addition to the enterprises that were closed within the scope of the measures taken against COVID-19, there was a need to make arrangements for the enterprises that had a slowdown in their activities whose earnings decreased due to the lack of demand and supply. In this context, it has been decided that besides the measures taken to protect the operating assets and not to disturb the cash flows, economic support payments can be made to the enterprises. Moreover, several measures have been determined by the relevant institutions regarding the public procurement procedure and to protect investors and enterprises in the capital markets. Additionally, arrangements have been made for commercial activities to avoid interfering with them and especially to supply the necessary materials in the fight against the pandemic, this way, unfair practices have been prevented.

3. Measures Taken through Regulations regarding Central Bank and Banking Sector

Certain measures have been taken both through the policies implemented by the Central Bank and the regulations regarding the banking sector to ensure economic stability during and after the pandemic so that the cash flow of financial markets, banks and companies continues to operate uninterruptedly and soundly. In other words, one of the main objectives has been to meet the cash flow needs of the enterprises as much as possible.

The measures taken against the impacts of COVID-19 through the Central Bank, which is authorized to use monetary policy tools, aim to provide the liquidity required by the banking sector and the real sector under favorable conditions. In this context, necessary measures were taken for the financial markets and the real markets (indirectly) with the three decisions

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made by the Monetary Policy Committee as of late April. The Regulations regarding the Banking Sector aim to compensate the economic losses caused by the COVID-19 pandemic through certain incentives and legal measures provided in the banking sector. In other words, the regulations regarding the banking sector mainly aim to provide financial support to households and companies that are adversely affected by coronavirus-related measures. In this framework, besides the issues such as low interest loan opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises, postponing credit debt, supporting lowincome individuals with credit, financial markets have also taken measures to ensure stability.

4. Measures Taken in terms of Employment

Since social isolation is envisaged to be the only solution to contain the virus, it has been decided to review the working policies implemented in the business world. At this point, it was determined that workplaces and offices, where people work together in close contact, were favorable environments for the spread of the virus and that it was necessary to make arrangements for these areas first. Thus, the methods such as flexible work arrangement, short-time working, remote working and alternative working have been adopted as the main working methods across the world until the impact of the virus disappears or a treatment is developed.

In addition to this, certain measures have been taken to ensure the continuity of the activities of the enterprises as well as measures such as stopping their activities open to the public and recommendations to avoid attending such activities as much as possible, therefore, there are certain employees who face the risk of losing their jobs or were unemployed.

In a statement made by The International Labor Organization, it is mentioned that the impact of the pandemic on employment will be worse than the 2009 crisis, so the number of unemployed people, which was 22 million at that time, could exceed 25 million worldwide in the aftermath of the outbreak. As a result, Turkey, like all countries, has taken measures to support businesses with the aim of preventing the rise in unemployment as well as provide financial support to those who were unemployed due to the pandemic.



4.1. Measures Taken regarding Work Life in Public Sector

According to the data announced by the Strategy and Budget Directorate of the Presidency, there are 4,569,916 permanent and contract employees in Turkey. Therefore, it not only creates employment to carry out its activities; it also directs the private sector with the policies it applies to its employees.

In this context, Turkey has introduced new regulations for the working life of approximately 4 and a half million people by taking measures to ban public officials from travelling abroad and adopt flexible working arrangements in order to support the employees at this time. It has also taken the necessary measures in terms of introducing travel restrictions, restricting leaves and resignations as well as recruiting new personnel. By changing the working procedure, it has been ensured that the social distance and isolation rules are observed as much as possible. In addition, it has been decided that public officials, who were abroad, would be deemed to be on administrative leave for 14 days starting from the date of their arrival in Turkey, that pregnant women, women on maternity leave, disabled staff, 60-year-old and older employees and the disadvantaged groups determined by the Ministry of Health besides the executives would be deemed to be on administrative leave for 14 days as of March 16, 2020, that the female employees, who have to look after their children going to preschool and elementary school, would be allowed to be on leave and that those who cannot take annual leave would be entitled to be on compassionate leave.

Accordingly, it has been ruled that employees working at public institutions and organizations could benefit from flexible working methods such as alternative working and remote working provided that public services are not interrupted and there is a minimum number of personnel at the workplace. In this context, the employees, who worked by taking turns, were deemed to be on administrative leave when they were not physically present at the office.

4.2. Measures Taken regarding Work Life in Private Sector

The workforce has been negatively affected by the pandemic and measures taken against it in almost every sector all over the world. For this reason, just as in other countries, regulations have been made to help the employees and enterprises in Turkey. Turkey has taken measures to prevent unemployment and to protect employment through the support it has provided to all enterprises, especially those that have been most affected by the pandemic. Supporting employers and continuing business operations means providing employment in addition to the sustainability of production and added value in the economy, which is the first and foremost step in preventing unemployment.

Besides, there have been certain measures to protect the employees financially during this time such as prohibiting the termination of employment contracts, short-time working allowance and extending the compensatory working time. The short-time working allowance aims to protect employment, that is, to prevent employees from losing their jobs and to compensate for some of the loss of income during this period when the work stopped for compulsory causes mainly due to COVID-19.

The purpose of all these measures is to maintain financial stability by protecting employment. As a result of these regulations, 1 million 360 thousand employees have been paid short-time working allowance.

In order to protect employment and prevent unemployment that may occur during this time, it has been ruled that employment contracts cannot be terminated by the employers for 3 months, except for violations of ethics and goodwill rules with the Law No. 7244, which came into force on April 17, 2020. In addition, the terminations made during this time will be void and an administrative fine can be imposed on the employer.

An amendment was made in Article 43 of the Law No. 7226 dated March 26, 2020 regarding the compensatory working period in case of stopping work for compulsory causes, suspending work before or after the national holidays and other holidays, working hours significantly shorter than the usual hours or suspending work completely or allowing the employee to take time off upon their request. Accordingly, the compensatory working period was extended to four months, and the President has been granted the authority to extend this period twice.

Within the scope of the measures taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus, a regulation was made to pay wages in order to prevent people working in

enterprises that interrupt their activities from being put in a difficult position and to help them make a living.

In addition, it has been regulated by Article 16 of the Law No. 7226 dated March 26, 2020 that the application for the payment of the wages and documents related to the Occupational Competence Certificate to be received by employees being required to work in unsafe conditions would be extended until 31/12/201 in order to support employees and employers.

As a result of the measures listed above, mainly aimed at compensating employees' income losses, different types of assistance have been provided to people who lost their jobs, are in need of help, and have lost their income for this reason. According to the statement made by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan after Cabinet Meeting on May 18, 2020, 10 million people in Turkey were provided with financial support corresponding to 11.5 billion TRY. 5 billion of this support was distributed to the citizens, who are in need and demand support, in three stages - 1000 TRY for each. The remaining amount constitutes the sum of amounts determined as 1,177 TRY per person since people must accept a reduction in working time. Therefore, a total of 6.5 billion TRY was paid to 5 million citizens.

5. Evaluation of Financial Measures

Some of the measures about the economic life have stemmed from the fact that the future activities of tradesmen and enterprises are at risk and that the economy is slowing down in all countries where this disease has spread. In this context, an Economic Stability Shield package of 200 billion TRY was announced for all economic units, especially tradesmen and businesses whose operations were stopped.

Within the scope of the measures detailed above for both tradesmen and businesses and the working sector, value added tax and premium payments of more than 2 million taxpayers have been postponed for six months by extending declaration periods through financial regulations; approximately 2.5 million taxpayers' personal income tax and VAT return and payments for March 2020 were postponed for a month. In addition, the VAT rate for airline services has been temporarily reduced to 1% between April 1 and June 30,

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2020. In addition to these, municipalities fighting against the disease have been supported by making no deductions from the shares allocated to the municipalities from the general budget tax revenues in April, May, and June 2020.

With the regulations made regarding the economic and commercial life of tradesmen and enterprises, restrictions have been imposed for these enterprises to protect their cash flows, and all enforcement and bankruptcy proceedings were stopped. In addition, restrictions have been imposed on the products that the country needs in the fight against the pandemic, and customs tax reductions have been applied on the import of products to be used in the treatment of the virus. In addition, the Unfair Price Evaluation Board was established to prevent unfair earnings during this time.

As a result of the regulations made for the banking sector, policy changes have been made primarily to provide the liquidity needed by the banking sector and the real sector under suitable conditions through the Central Bank. Also, to provide financial support to enterprises, it was announced that state banks would provide credit support and financial support worth 8.4 billion TRY was made available to 450 thousand SMEs. Additionally, interest-free deferments have been made possible in the payment of the due credit debts of tradesmen and enterprises.

When the measures taken within the scope of employment were examined, flexible working methods have been adopted in line with the social distancing rules for the public sector. In addition, regulations have been made to support employees financially and socially, especially healthcare professionals.

Turkey has backed employers with minimum wage and provided cash aid to 7.8 million minimum wage workers. The conditions for benefiting from the short-time working allowance have been alleviated, it has been regulated that employment contracts could not be terminated for the next 3 months and employees, who are on unpaid leave, have been paid 39,24 TRY per day. With these regulations for private sector employees, it has been ensured that the people, who were unemployed due to the pandemic, are supported by the government and a rise in the unemployment rate is prevented.



In conclusion, the world is going through a difficult time both socially and economically. According to the latest figures announced by the Minister of Finance and Treasury on 20.05.2020, the total amount of the economic packages Turkey has introduced to avoid the disruption other services during the fight against the pandemic, to help citizens and enterprises experiencing loss of income to withstand these conditions is 252 billion TRY. It has been stated that this figure is about 350 billion TRY when combined with other economic policies. Turkey is a country with around 1 trillion budget and a population of over 83 million. Turkey has had to allocate one third of these budget facilities to combat the pandemic.

Keeping the economy and the market running, operating the supply chain, especially agriculture, trade and foreign trade without disruption is important enough to affect the entire fight against the pandemic. Therefore, it can be said that Turkey has been quite successful at trying to contain the outbreak, diagnose the disease and work on its treatment while preventing a potentially major financial crisis. It is undeniable that the fight against the pandemic will affect all countries around the world economically. In this respect, thanks to the measures taken at national level, Turkey is expected to survive this time with minimum damage on its economy when the outbreak is over and achieve its economic goals after the outbreak in an easier way.





GENERAL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



"The most blessed of mankind is the one who is the most beneficial to mankind." The Prophet Muhammad

GENERAL EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Turkey's fight against the coronavirus pandemic has been conducted based on the characteristics of the disease, the fact that it is a global pandemic, the way it spread around the country, the course of its spread, diagnosis and treatment processes, measures to contain the outbreak and the work conducted to eliminate the setbacks and negative situations caused by these measures. These activities and measures have been discussed in the report and certain determinations have been made.

It has been concluded that the outbreak management has been successful when it was analyzed in terms of its aspects listed above and compared to other countries' response to the pandemic.

It has been observed that the fight against the outbreak is based on four strategic pillars and each of them is implemented step by step in coordination. These four pillars are health studies, including the diagnosis and treatment of the disease, social distance measures to contain the outbreak, ensuring public safety and security in the fight against the pandemic and keeping the supply chain running during the outbreak.

This report prepared by our Institution has examined all activities, measures and services under the afore-mentioned measures and strategic steps. During this examination, it was observed that the data and the measures were constantly changing, since the outbreak has not yet ended, and the fight continues dynamically. It should be taken into consideration that the measures and the data presented in the report are the measures and the data concerning the period when the report was being prepared.

Moreover, the main purpose of this report is to evaluate the overall success achieved during the fight against the pandemic by referring to the data and studies. For this reason, the response process examined under three sections above is evaluated under three headings below. The first one is to identify and reveal the general qualities of the measures taken and efforts made in the fight against the pandemic. These qualities constitute the main grounds for the successful efforts. The second, on the other hand, is to evaluate the process of fighting against the pandemic in terms of good administration. As is known, the Ombudsman Institution examines and evaluates public services within the framework of the principles of lawfulness, equity, human rights, and good administration. Therefore, the response to the pandemic was evaluated from these perspectives. The third one is the recommendations submitted to the administration because of the results obtained through the report. These recommendations aim to fix certain problems and deficiencies, as well as include measures to be taken in advance against similar disasters and crises in the future.

1. General Characteristics of the Measures Taken and the Works Conducted in Response to the Outbreak

When we adopt a holistic approach towards the response to the COVID-19 outbreak, which has spread worldwide, we encounter certain general features of the work conducted and measures taken. These general features of the response process directly affect the achieved results and whether these results are suitable for the purposes. It is essential to briefly touch on the characteristics of the response to evaluate the point we have gotten to as a result of this response.

1.1. Management of the Response

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has fully managed the response to the outbreak himself. The fact that Turkey has transitioned to the Presidential System has provided two essential advantages in the fight against the pandemic.



First, there has been a single and powerful authority that manages the process, makes the final decisions and monitors the implementation instructions it has given. The Presidency has always coordinated the ministries in terms of the implementations with the support of not only the President himself, but also with the support of the Vice President and other units, and has been able to immediately handle and fix the shortcomings and deficiencies. Thanks to this, the main authority of decision-making in the response to the pandemic has been determined and uncertainties have been eliminated immediately.

The second advantage of having the Presidential System in the response process is that the ministers are externally appointed, fully administrative and implementation oriented, fully committed to the President and experts in their fields. The fact that the ministers are experts in their fields and do not tend to act with different political considerations has contributed to the rapid and effective execution of the process.

To summarize the management of the response, we can say that the President and the Presidency hold the highest power, the Scientific Board acts as a unit of evaluation and recommendations, the Ministry of Health chairs the Scientific Board and develops evaluations and recommendations, follows the treatment processes, medication and vaccination studies, and lastly, shares the developments and data on patients with the general public. Issues such as patient identification, treatment, collection and interpretation of posttreatment data, management of hospitals, follow-up of laboratory studies, the course of the disease at national and international level are carried out by the Ministry of Health.

Other ministries and institutions have been tasked with implementing the works commanded by the Presidency or proposed by the Scientific Board. The administrative measures covering the social distance and public order strategies have been implemented primarily by the Ministry of Interior and other relevant ministries and institutions. Operating the supply chain and the implementation of economic measures have been mainly coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and Treasury.

1.2. Management of the Response as a Team in Coordination

The most important element of success in fighting against a pandemic or natural disaster is the presence of a team working in coordination without conflicts and contradictions. Considering Turkey's response to the outbreak, it is seen that those who offer suggestions, make decisions, implement the decisions, participate in and support the work being conducted, and citizens who provide convenience by abiding by the decisions and practices are totally different from each other. The harmonious cooperation of these different structures and units is what ensures success.

Analyzing the process of combating the pandemic, we can summarize the team that participated in and supported the fight as follows:

- President and Presidency
- Scientific Board
- Ministry of Health
- Other Ministries and Institutions
- Non-Governmental Organizations and Enterprises
- People Living in the Country

This team, which is basically composed of 6 different units or groups, did not appear to have conflicts, problems of division of labor, or made contradictory statements or practices during the fight against the pandemic. Every member of the team has tried to fulfill their duty in good faith and in a manner that takes the extraordinary conditions into account. The fact that small contradictions, ill intentions, and uncoordinated actions can be detected easily immediately reveals that this team has been working based on a proper job division. As a matter of fact, since these approaches can be easily identified, it has been possible to eliminate them without affecting the morale of society.

1.3. The Fight under the Leadership of Science

The Scientific Board was established under the Ministry of Health and initiated its work two months before the first COVID-19 case was confirmed in Turkey.



Since the Scientific Board was established, its recommendations have been taken into consideration in all decisions and detailed practices in combating the pandemic. The execution of the response in the leadership of the Scientific Board has contributed to the public's taking the outbreak seriously and complying with the measures taken. The fact that the government has adopted the strategy of cooperating with the Scientific Board has made it easier to ensure public order, safety, and peace of the society.

1.4. Strong Health Infrastructure and Devoted Health Workers

Analyzing the process of combating the outbreak, it can be clearly seen that Turkey's strength is the fact that it has a strong health infrastructure. Health infrastructure consists of many layers. Some of these layers are the fact that the health sector is not directed by the market economy conditions, that the government considers providing health services to its citizens as its main duty, that healthcare personnel are well-equipped in terms of education and experience, that health facilities and material equipment meet the global standards in terms of number and quality of hospitals, and most importantly, the fact that health workers' professional ethics and their perspective on humanity and human health exceed the global standards.

Thanks to its strong health infrastructure and other strengths mentioned above, Turkey has been prepared to fight against the pandemic. For instance, the fact that an action plan, which was prepared before the virus had spread over the country, was put in place step by step has made a significant contribution. Again, it was thanks to the preparations in the health infrastructure and experiences that COVID-10 came late to Turkey and did not spread rapidly and uncontrollably immediately after the first case. In addition, the fact that health workers at all levels are passionate about their profession, well-trained and have sufficient experience about their profession, and act selflessly has played a major role in the success of the response.

1.5. Serious Execution of the Response

Examining the process of combating the pandemic, it is seen that the entire team participating in the response shows great sensitivity and works in a serious manner. For example, it has been observed that the President and



ministers pay great attention to the social isolation measures taken against the pandemic. The fact that the President, who has managed the process and the ministers, who have applied the measures, have not contracted COVID-19 is very valuable in terms of trust in the management of the outbreak. The serious manner exhibited by those managing the process has earned the trust and confidence of citizens and public officials. For instance, in countries such as the UK, officials, who were supposed to be managing the process, contracted the disease and this caused inconvenience and anxiety in society. Such inconvenience has never occurred in Turkey.

1.6. Well-Rounded and Detailed Response

When there is a crisis that involves all segments of society, such as pandemic or natural disaster, focusing only on eliminating the crisis can have different and unexpected social consequences. Therefore, it would be appropriate to act by prioritizing zero or minimum damage on the rights and interests of the society while at the same time trying to solve the crisis.

It has been observed that while combating the pandemic, Turkey has protected the country's economic balance, maintained the supply chain required for the nutritional needs, not stopped its importation or exportation system, attached importance to the continuation of production and employment activities, adopted a moderate approach on the citizens' right to education, right of property, freedom of religion and conscience, curfews and travels and it has not restricted freedom of information.

It has been determined that important issues such as economy, financing, agriculture, food, education, tourism, industry, public order, security and defense, seizing the opportunities of cooperation strategy in foreign politics, keeping public services running have not been neglected and services in these areas have been carried out simultaneously with the response.

When the measures are examined, it is observed that the measures were not exaggerated by using the pandemic as an excuse, and citizens have not complained about other issues to which they attach importance. For example, citizens, who did not comply with the social isolation restrictions or curfews, have been warned only and sanctions have been imposed in line with the law.



No citizen has complained that they had been subjected to ill-treatment due to non-compliance. During this period, such cases have never been observed.

To eliminate the economic setbacks faced by the citizens due to the response, campaigns and economic policies have been developed during the response to prevent the pandemic from causing irrecoverable damages to society. Again, during the response, to keep the mental health of the society intact, curfew restrictions and social isolation measures have been realized while making proportionate, reasonable, and detailed exceptions. For example, curfews were only declared on the weekends so that economic activities would not be disrupted. In addition, the fact that bakeries were open, and exceptions were made for agricultural workers, health workers and public officials reveals that the measures were elaborately prepared. This has minimized the side effects of the measures taken within the scope of the response.

It has been observed that the measures taken during the fight against the pandemic are carried out in line with the law in a proportionate, acceptable level and form. The management of the response has been beneficial because the government has made sure that the public order is not disturbed, and it has carried out all its functions without disruption.

1.7. Participatory Response to the Pandemic

While combating the pandemic, Turkey has attached great importance to citizens' faith, trust, and participation in the response.

It has always based the administrative measures on the recommendations of the Scientific Board and shown that everyone, including those who manage the process, must comply with the measures taken, and that there are essential exceptions in practice. Thanks to a transparent management process, sincere information exchange and important contribution of the media, citizens have been convinced that the fight against the pandemic can only be achieved through social isolation and self-quarantine measures.

People's faith in the response and trust in the team managing the response have made the whole society a part and supporter of the response. This way, it has been easier to notice the incorrect methods and wrong actions immediately.



The state and administration, members of the team managing the response, have provided every facility for the willing non-governmental organizations to participate in the response. The state has encouraged non-governmental organizations, big businesses, and businessmen to support the fight. For example, several different businesses and businessmen in the country joined forces to produce a respirator.

During this period, the State has not neglected civil support while working as a single mechanism for coordination. For instance, it has not allowed different administrative units to carry out separate campaigns or activities in the single-handedly managed response, however, it has encouraged nongovernmental organizations that were willing to carry out similar activities. This is one of the most remarkable achievements of the response management. Because the most important step in the fight against such pandemics is to make all segments of the society a harmonious part of the fight.

1.8. Global Response In Cooperation with Other Countries

At all stages of the response to the pandemic, Turkey has constantly been in contact with the countries and international organizations combating the pandemic, particularly the World Health Organization. Considering the size of its economy, Turkey has promised to provide a serious amount to the fund created to combat the pandemic and followed the vaccination studies conducted in various countries and science centers around the world. It has also been observed that Turkey has closely monitored all global developments regarding the diagnosis and treatment protocols, prepared reports and articles, kept up with the articles written by different people around the world and tried immediately to evaluate its management accordingly.

Turkey has spared no effort to deliver aid to countries that lost control in combating the pandemic and were unable to operate their supply chain, especially regarding health supplies. After getting aid requests from 115 nations, Turkey has sent aid to 57 countries. Countries such as the UK have been asked to pay for these materials; however, countries, which could not afford these materials, have been provided with this aid as a grant. Turkey has not stipulated any conditions other than humanitarian reasons while delivering



aid. For example, Turkey agreed to provide Israel with medical supplies to help it counter the spread of the coronavirus for humanitarian reasons on condition that Israel allows Turkey to deliver similar aid to Palestine.

Turkey has considered the pandemic as an opportunity to earn the friendship of countries and nations in the aftermath of the outbreak. Turkish government thinks that cooperation between countries and nations in such global crises can lead to lasting peace in the world and it is understood that Turkey attaches importance to the pandemic in terms of ensuring that peace.

Thus, it has been observed that Turkey has shown the world how much importance it attaches to human rights and peace while combating the pandemic.

2. General Evaluation of Response to the Pandemic

It is essential to evaluate the response to COVID-19 according to the outcome. The administrative measures are primarily aimed at the complete eradication of the outbreak. If the pandemic is eradicated without any failures, then it can be said that the response has been fully successful and efficient. According to the data provided while this report was being prepared, the response is progressing in a positive direction and if this continues, the outbreak will be contained. However, it will be possible to permanently contain COVID-19 infections only when a treatment or vaccination is developed.

Countries all around the world have reconsidered their purposes and functions. It has been proven that the arms race between countries and pursuing ideological goals is meaningless. It has become clear that the first and primary duties of States is to provide a healthy life, nutrition, quality housing, clean environment, a peaceful and educated society and ultimately a peaceful life to the citizens residing in their territory.

At this point, the mission of the Ombudsman Institution is to evaluate the response carried out by Turkey for the past 4 months in terms of the government's management of the process and approach towards delivering service to citizens during this period and to make recommendations accordingly. In this respect, it would be beneficial to evaluate the administrative measures and studies carried out in the process of combating the pandemic in terms of the principles of good administration.

Considering other countries' response to the outbreak, Turkey's response to COVID-19 should be considered successful. This success can be attributed to two main reasons, first, the structure of state administration and the strong traditions that exist in the concept of the state. The second one is being prepared for the pandemic and having experience in crisis management.

Throughout history, the Republic of Turkey has never considered humans and human health as something that is individual. It has not regarded the issue of health as part of economic policies, but as the primary duty of the state. The fact that it sees human health as its most important task, and it combines its strong government will with its rapid management ability has been the main reason why the response has been successful.

It is a reality that the Republic of Turkey has experienced many crises ever since it was founded. Wars, coups, coup attempts, constant earthquakes across the country, floods, avalanches, and pandemics... Turkey has gained experience in combating such crises and its institutional infrastructure is well-prepared in this sense. For example, the Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) has been organized and strengthened as an independent institution in recent years. The Red Crescent is constantly active and operating. As an administrative structure, there is a system of provincial representatives that can manage crises from the center. Each province and district can immediately implement the measures taken at the center under the chairmanship of Governors and District Governors. The administrative structure and wellprepared institutional structures are the reason for the coordinated and rapid implementation. Within this framework, we can evaluate the measures implemented in the response to the pandemic in terms of good administration under the following headings:

2.1. Preparedness

The fact that Turkey made preparations two months before the outbreak came to Turkey and its already-existing relevant institutions were put on full



alert should be considered a success because thanks to this, COVID-19 came to Turkey as late as possible. Having gained the time to prepare and complete the preparations has played a major role in the successful execution of the process.

2.2. Transparency, Integrity, Disclosure

All the measures taken and implemented by Turkey in the response to the pandemic have been shared with the citizens in a transparent manner. All information that concerns the citizens has been shared with the citizens in a sincere manner regardless of their content. Each member of the team managing the response has shared all the data and decisions about the issues concerning their area of responsibility. This has made it easier to manage the crisis.

2.3. Lawfulness and Equity

During the response, Turkey has ensured that all measures and practices are implemented in line with law and legislation. For example, the recommendations made by the Scientific Board have been enacted by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey or officialized by the Presidency through circulars or published by ministries in the form of circulars. The measures about implementation and correction, which are not within the scope of a circular, have been instructed through official decisions and official letters. All the work conducted has been based on law and legislation.

The restrictions on individual freedoms have also been implemented in line with law and legislation, and it has been observed that non-compliance by using the crisis as an excuse has not been allowed. For example, those who attempted crimes such as insult, humiliation, theft, smuggling, and gambling by taking advantage of the measures have been sanctioned immediately. These uncompromising practices have led the society to be more convinced that the process is managed fairly.

Again, during the response, legal services have been carried out without interruption. Urgent procedures regarding security and public order were carried out rapidly. It has been observed that arbitrary practices damaging justice are not allowed in the practices of the response.

2.4. Equality and Non-Discrimination

The most important principles of good administration in such crises are the principles of justice, equality, and non-discrimination. Complying with these principles will provide a great contribution in overcoming the crisis with social consensus. It has been observed that during the response process, no one has been discriminated against in the country because of their gender, age, origin, or way of thinking. Turkey introduced stay-home orders for those over the age of 65 and those under 20 years old in accordance with the effect of the disease on certain ages and the nature of citizens' professions based on the recommendation of the Scientific Board.

There has been no favoritism while implementing the restrictions based on age as well as the exemptions from the restriction according to the nature of citizens' profession. For example, the follow-up and treatment procedures to be followed by a patient who should be quarantined have not been determined according to the status of the person. All citizens have been treated equally in terms of both complying with administrative measures and being subject to treatment protocols. No citizen has been exempted from the isolation practices because of their financial status.

It has been observed during the implementation of administrative measures that those who attempted to take advantage of the difficulty people are facing by highlighting their political views on the aid and support campaigns provided to the citizens were not allowed to do so, and that the service provider is the government itself - not discriminating against any person.

2.5. Proportionality

The principle of proportionality, which is one of the principles of good administration and stipulates that administrative procedures shall be carried out in a way that suits the intended results, is a mandatory principle in terms of administrative measures. Because of the administrative measures taken, the society temporarily waives a few rights and freedoms, including certain constitutional rights.

The good intention of citizens should not be abused, and those who abuse citizens' good intentions should be sanctioned strictly. As a matter of fact,



those who have humiliated our citizens over the age of 65, attempted to steal by taking advantage of social isolation measures, or those who violate the isolation measures arbitrarily while others obey the rules and stay home have faced certain sanctions.

On the other hand, it has been observed that the circular for the implementation of administrative measures has been prepared in a very detailed and precise manner, the measures that are thought to not generate any good results were renounced, the win-loss analysis has been conducted properly while implementing the measures, and public officials, whose responsibility is to implement the measures, have tried to implement these measures proportionately without going to extremes.

The execution of the measures in compliance with the principle of proportionality has made it easier for citizens to comply with the measures and made them more willing to comply. It has been determined that the citizens have adopted the administrative measures, regarded the measures as essential and appropriate and not complained.

2.6. Reasonable time-limit for making decisions and implementation

When there is a crisis such as a pandemic, the ability to make quick decisions and implement them immediately is very valuable. However, avoiding hasty actions that could cause damage to the citizens is a part of the principle as well. During the response process, no damages or negative consequences have been detected due to delayed measures in terms of administrative measures. For example, at the beginning of the outbreak, the province or provinces where the first case of COVID-19 was detected were not announced to the public because the government did not want citizens to flock into the provinces where no cases were detected. After it was determined that there were cases in all provinces, quarantine measures were introduced, and efforts have been made to "flatten the curve" (the virus' infection rate) across the country.

It can be said that Turkey has been good at time management, decisionmaking and implementation during its response to the pandemic. All implementations have been conducted taking into consideration the general quarantine period of 15 days and processed accordingly. The government has

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always paid great attention to the recommendations of the Scientific Board and put them into practice at the right time. Otherwise, there could be unpleasant consequences. For example, since the first curfew recommendation and its decision came somewhat late and due to the fact that this was the first time a decision like this was being implemented, people got worried and as a result of this, there was a bit of social mobility. It has been observed that with the lessons learned from this experience, citizens were informed about the restrictions in a detailed way at least three days in advance.

2.7. Participation

It has been observed that there is a close cooperation and mutual support between the government officials and public officials managing the process and the society. Citizens have adopted the administrative measures and it has been seen that they use the application and call centers quite often, and make sure they obey the rules determined by the administrators. For example, a citizen reached out to public officials and filed a report after seeing someone clearly violating the rules.

In addition, it is worth noting that citizens individually participated in support campaigns and non-governmental organizations formed social loyalty groups to support public officials.

2.8. Working in Coordination

During the response process, it has been observed that the Turkish government and Turkish people have joined forces and been working in support of each other. It should be noted that all units of the government managing the process maintained the process within the framework of the division of labor, without clashing with or contradicting each other. For example, while the Ministry of Health conducts the diagnosis and treatment processes, the administrative measures are predominantly monitored by the Ministry of Interior, the economic measures are observed by the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, and the Scientific Board makes recommendations while ultimately, the decisions are officially announced by the Presidency. All ministries and institutions are focused on services related to their fields, and there has been



no disruption in service delivery. This coordination has been the key to the success of the response.

2.9. Courtesy

Courtesy is a principle of good administration, which requires public officials to be sensitive and polite when delivering services to citizens, under any circumstances.

It has been observed that public officials behave in a kind and understanding manner towards citizens in terms of the administrative measures. It has also been observed that the police and gendarmerie personnel have been quite sensitive, patient and kind to citizens. While working as a social loyalty group, public officials have been very sincere and affectionate towards citizens. In fact, it is considered that citizens have developed a positive perception about the government because of the way it has managed this crisis.

2.10. No Disruption in Other Public Services

When the country and the whole world is dealing with such a widespread pandemic, there are two negative possibilities that may potentially arise.

The first one is the disruption of healthcare services that must function normally due to the heavy focus on fighting against this pandemic. Although these disruptions have occurred at times, there has not been a major problem like not having access to healthcare or treatment services in the country. During the process, other healthcare services have not been neglected, on the contrary, certain rules have been introduced for them. For example, mandatory surgeries were planned before they were performed. Emergency interventions for situations such as heart attack and surgery have not been neglected. Treatment and drug services for cancer patients have been carried out as planned. Citizens have been recommended to be not hasty about certain postponed examinations and treatments that are not compulsory or urgent only on the grounds of social isolation and infection risk. The work of the clinics that do not have an ER unit or can operate as an ER unit for urgent situations has been alleviated.

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The second possibility is that there may be disruptions in all other public services except for healthcare. In this case, the society can feel weak and mentally unstable, which will damage the response process. From this perspective, it has been observed that Turkey has resumed all the projects it launched in the past without interruption and President Recep Erdogan gave instructions to deliver public services in a faster, more sensitive way with higher quality in order to boost the morale of society and gain trust. The President has organized service ceremonies related to the projects on different dates and tried to give society the impression that Turkey has maintained its order without any disruption through the celebration of religious and national holidays to sustain society's moral values and by launching new projects with different methods that were planned in detail.

2.11. Demonstrating a People-Oriented Approach

Since the COVID-19 outbreak is a global pandemic and threatens all humans, it has been observed that Turkey has shown close attention to providing help to its own citizens as well as all humanity. For instance, immediately after containing the outbreak in the country and regulating its diagnosis and treatment procedures, Turkey has made sure to fulfill the demands for medical supplies from all over the world, especially neighboring countries. It has donated these supplies to poor countries such as Somalia.

In addition, all citizens abroad, who demanded treatment and were in a serious condition, have been brought home by air ambulances no matter which country they live in. Turkey has also stated that it is ready to treat the patients abroad if foreign countries demand so.

Another important example implying that Turkey has demonstrated a people-oriented approach in its response to the pandemic is the fact that the diagnosis and treatment procedures for all patients infected with COVID-19 are free of charge. It has been observed that in certain countries, there were people who died at home because of hesitating to go to the hospital since they could not afford it. In Turkey, on the other hand, health care has been considered as a primary duty of the government for citizens and health care services have been delivered to all citizens equally. The world has envied this



approach and then certain countries have decided to cover at least a certain amount of the treatment expenses by adopting Turkey's approach. One's right to live healthy in a country is one of humanity's oldest and well-established rights. Turkey has reminded the world of this right and shared a good practice example.

2.12. Gaining the Trust and Consent of Citizens

The implementation of all these principles of good administration has resulted in the relationship of consent and approval between the state and society in terms of the fight against the pandemic. It is considered that society believes in those who manage the response to the pandemic. Thanks to their trust in the state, citizens have consented to their rights and freedoms being suspended temporarily because of the administrative measures. It would not be possible to have this much coordination, harmony, and consent in a process where citizens are not provided with good administration in practice. Indeed, in certain countries, there have been serious reactions from citizens against the measures taken and certain countries have experienced chaos.

During its response to the pandemic, Turkey has not only maintained legal conformity and settled all its measures and practices on legal grounds, but it has also observed legitimacy in all aspects of the process. With its successful and reliable efforts during the pandemic, Turkey has succeeded in making the society participate in the fight wholeheartedly.

To conclude, starting from the preparation phase to this day, Turkey has demonstrated a successful management in terms of taking the necessary measures, implementing them, and achieving the expected results. It has also provided an accurate and exemplary experience for the management of largescale national crises.

3. Findings and Recommendations

Examining and comparing countries' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, we see that Turkey has a very strong system and one of the few countries that have managed the process successfully. However, the minor setbacks and problems and recommendations for the future have been

mentioned here in order to maintain this successful management in the postvirus era, to be well-prepared for such pandemics or global humanitarian crises that may occur in the future and to gain experience by learning the necessary lessons from this process.

Based on the complaints received by the Ombudsman Institution, the problems or deficiencies encountered during the response process can be listed in seven categories.

First, regarding the distribution of the masks, pharmacies put an exorbitant price on the mask, one mask was sold for 5 TRY. The state intervened in immediately and banned the sale of masks and adopted the method of distributing masks to citizens free of charge through pharmacies. Citizens made an application for masks via PTT (the National Post and Telegraph Directorate of Turkey) and e-Government and the masks were distributed with reference to the code that the applicants received. However, certain citizens did not receive the code timely or not received a code at all. Pharmacies had the impression that the mechanism for this distribution was improper, and that there should be more personnel assigned for this task, and that the duty of distribution was a burden on them. Since certain people experienced problems with the code and the number of masks supplied to pharmacies on a daily basis was insufficient and pharmacies were reluctant about this process, it was observed that citizens had a problem in finding a mask for a while. The government identified this situation and allowed pharmacies to sell masks; however, it decided to determine a reasonable price for it.

The proper method was found eventually but it took some time to figure out the problem. It has been observed that pharmacies and Turkish Pharmacists' Association were not able to operate in full compliance with the administration that manages the response.

The second problem is about the distance education system of the Ministry of National Education, which gave students the chance to attend online classes through EBA (Education Information Network). The students have attended these online classes with their own teachers and classmates at the time allocated to them. It was observed that certain students could not attend these classes because they could not connect to the live broadcast. Although the system has operated properly most of the time, it has been observed that some students experienced problems connecting to EBA at times.

The third problem is about the fact that certain large-scale municipalities, especially İstanbul, could not execute the decisions and practices of the administration in complete coordination. For example, it has been observed that while the number of bus rides on the same route was supposed to be increased in accordance with the public transportation standards determined in line with social distancing, the number of bus rides on these routes was insufficient and citizens could not practice social distancing and were late to work. It has also been determined that certain municipalities initiated independent aid campaigns within their own structure and violated the legislation of the Ministry of Interior by overlooking the obligation of coordinating with the administration. The efforts of certain municipalities to make the management process seem separately conducted by the administration have drawn attention. These coordination violations have caused hesitation and unrest in the society for a while.

Regarding the fourth setback, it has been observed that TBB (Turkish Medical Association) attempted to direct and inform the citizens via media by acting as an authority managing the process differently besides the Ministry of Health and the Scientific Board. The fact that TBB supported rumors on the uncertainty about the number of patients and deaths as well as treatment protocols at the beginning of the response to the pandemic caused anxiety in the society. It was observed that TBB did not support the Scientific Board or the Ministry of Health throughout the process.

The fifth problem is about the criminal acts such as putting an extortionate price on foodstuffs, treating elders in a demeaning manner, producing illegal masks and bodysuits, theft, illegal gambling, and drug trafficking by taking advantage of administrative measures. Despite the inspections, the price increase in foodstuffs have not been prevented.

The sixth problem can be described as a shortcoming rather than a problem. It was observed that non-governmental organizations did not conduct any technical work that could contribute to the cooperation and solidarity and they could not produce alternative solutions in this regard during this difficult process. For example, non-governmental organizations were expected to organize campaigns by setting up more concrete and practical aid systems and using the media; however, these activities were quite insufficient. It was observed that certain non-governmental organizations only settled for supporting the social loyalty groups of the government.

Regarding the seventh problem, it has been observed that certain banks have resisted the economic measures in different ways, and that they have been late in implementing the decisions the government has taken to grant loans to citizens. It has been seen that banks evaluated loan requests in accordance with the financial ability of citizens - whether they can pay it back or not - and they were also insufficient in terms of informing and getting back to citizens. As a matter of fact, the Ombudsman Institution has received many complaints in this regard and the Institution has forwarded these complaints to BDDK (Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency).

To evaluate the process in terms its global aspects by considering the problems listed here, it would be useful to provide some forward-looking suggestions.

The pandemic, which concerns all humanity, has reminded us of certain forgotten realities. For example, certain important service areas that directly affect the physical and mental health and survival of people are becoming a part of the conversation again. These are health services, nutrition and food services, justice, and security services. It was once again recalled that the government should not abandon these services and let them be controlled by market conditions, instead, it should carry them out by itself without any profit motive.

Secondly, this process has taught people the importance of living in peace, unity, solidarity, and how to put aside all disagreements in national and global crises, and that uniting around human values is highly important for success.

Thirdly, it has been understood that the presence of a national consciousness, which is capable of producing strong and quality services, is a must in order to combat such disasters that threaten humanity and that it is important for this national consciousness to take the combat to a global level when necessary.



Finally, taking into consideration that the world is getting smaller now and such disasters do not remain at the national level, it has become important to make all technological infrastructures, especially the media, ready for such crises.

The recommendations based on these findings are as follows:

- 1. The country's health infrastructure at the national level should always be strong and well-prepared for such new diseases or disasters. Health investments should be planned according to these preparations. It should not be forgotten that in such global crises, nations must produce their own solutions first. While the state continues to support private health institutions in order to make health services easy and accessible for citizens, it should be ensured that the health sector is not transformed into a structure that acts entirely for profit and is controlled by market conditions. The government should deliver easily accessible and highquality services to citizens while providing its primary services at the same time, which is the practice that is being implemented currently.
- 2. Accordingly, the work on local and national hardware and software projects should be accelerated in all areas, especially in health technologies. There should be a mobilization in technology production and software and content production. The initiated projects should be continued patiently without disruption until the result is achieved. A considerable amount of support resources should be allocated for these areas.
- 3. Both the physical and mental health of the world and humanity are and will be under threat with technological methods. Therefore, national production should be accelerated to protect the physical and mental health of Turkish citizens. Considerable resources should be allocated for national vaccination studies against this pandemic and others that may occur in the future. People should be monitored and managed with the help of a vaccine, a drug, or simple medical supplies.
- 4. As the government carries out main services such as defense, public order and justice, it should also maintain its authority to carry out and manage





basic services directly affecting human health such as healthcare, water, nutrition, environment and air pollution. It should not constantly renew its long-term plans and scenarios regarding these issues.

- 5. It may be beneficial to impose more severe penalties for crimes committed during these extraordinary times and restrictions because there are certain people who use the pandemic as an excuse and commit crimes by taking advantage of the restrictions in such humanitarian crises concerning the whole country. Because, actions and practices that express opportunism at times like this severely destroy the moral values of the society. Reducing the possibility of success of the response can lead to public order problems.
- 6. In addition to state aid and support, it is important for people to help each other without hesitation in combating the pandemic. It has been observed that non-governmental organizations, foundations and associations conducted aid campaigns during the fight against the pandemic, but they have not been as successful as the donation campaign launched by the government due to the insufficiency of methods and lack of trust.

Therefore, it will be beneficial for non-governmental organizations, foundations and associations that aim to receive donations and deliver them to people in need to take lessons from this process and urgently set up a technological system in which they get in contact with those who donate and send them the documents, information and images proving that their donation went to the right place.

Let us not forget that the future of humanity will survive with the technological innovations of well-intentioned people.





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