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## **THE QUALITY OF THE WORKING LIFE IN TURKEY IN THE MEMBERSHIP PROCESS TO EUROPEAN UNION**

### **Abstract:**

With the beginning of Turkey's accession negotiations with the European Union in 2005, a new period has begun for the partnership which was first established with European Community in the year 1963. Within this period, to question the quality of working life in Turkey in terms of the harmonization process with European Union constitutes one of the required fields. .

The European Union aims to provide and protect a humane quality of life and standard for everyone in an active, protective and healthy society. In this context, the quality of the working life especially in terms of the labor market is one of the key issues for European Union. However, nowadays there is an increasing asymmetry between the economic and social field. Therefore, the European Union's approach to quality of working life reflects the demand for a simultaneous increase in the employment and improvement in the quality of the work carried out.

During the accession process of European Union it is needed to make a comparative analysis in terms of some basic indicators that can be used to define and measure the quality of working life in Turkey. In this context, it is possible to make various evaluations about working life quality in terms of multidimensional context such as: access and participation in the labor market, the level, structure and nature of employment; wages; job security; health and safety; social protection; gender equality; work-life balance and social dialogue. The aim of this study is to investigate the quality of the working life in Turkey in the membership process to European Union.

### **Keywords:**

Labour market, Quality, Employment, Working Life, Turkey

**JEL Classification:** J01, J81, J21

## Introduction

The issue of quality of working life has a multidimensional and complex structure regarding the requirements of qualitative and quantitative assessment. It seems that the countries on global scale have different attitudes for improving employment and working conditions both economically and socially. The European Union's approach to quality of working life also has an important place among them.

The aim of the study is to investigate the situation of Turkey as a candidate member of EU and the selected EU countries in terms of working life quality. In this context, firstly a conceptual framework will be introduced and then some indicators on quality will be indicated. In the last chapter, the comparative data on the quality of the working life in Turkey and the selected EU countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK will be analyzed.

### 1. The Working Life Quality

Nowadays, the concept of working life quality is increasingly being used extensively on a global scale. When it is considered that employees spend an important part of their lives in the work the importance of the working life quality arises (Horst, Broday, Bondarick, Serpe, Pilatti, 2014, p. 88).

The rationale behind the need for quality in the working life can be mentioned as: to ensure the creation of positive attitudes of the employees and to improve their living standards; to ensure profit maximization and continuity in terms of the companies (Jayakumar and Kalaiselvi, 2012, p. 141).

The quality of working life is a complicated, relative and multidimensional concept. For this reason, it is possible to mention various definitions and elements related to the concept (Gayathiri and Ramakrishnan, 2013, p. 2).

The quality of working life can be defined as a concept allowing the employees to meet their requirements by developing control mechanisms on their own working conditions (Gayathiri and Ramakrishnan, 2013, p. 2). In this sense, the facts such as: job security, participation in decision-making, reward systems, training and career development opportunities are directly related to the quality of the working life (Nanjundeswaraswamy and D R, 2013, p. 431).

On the other hand, with relation to the quality of working life, the approaches of the unions have been associated with the sharing of the revenue more equally and to ensure more humane and healthy working conditions Adhikari and Gautam, 2001, p. 3). In this context, the subjects such as quality of the work, the welfare of employees, work environment and the nature of the relationship between the employees are important (Gayathiri and Ramakrishnan, 2013, p. 2). The quality in the working life is associated with working conditions including elements such as safe working environment, fair wages and employment opportunities and working hours (Nanjundeswaraswamy and D R, 2013, p. 435).

In the late 1960s, a process which began with responses to scientific management principles of business organization and resulted in the loss of economic and social consensus has prepared the birth of working life quality approach. The concept of the quality of working life has increasingly integrated with a broader systematic perspective which is not only limited to designing the work. Contrary to Taylorist applications with classical and new classical economic approaches in which the employees were considered as rational individuals and cost factors to be controlled for the business, employees have begun to be perceived as individuals with social needs and a social system within the business. In this approach, the widespread opinion is that the performance of the business will increase accordingly when the socio-

psychological well-being of workers is ensured in the use of control and monetary incentives (Erdut, 2006, p. 1-2). At that time, most of the studies about the quality of working life have focused on the psychological state of the individuals and their industrial environment perceptions (Nanjundeswaraswamy and D R, 2013, p. 431).

The concept of quality of working life has been widespread in the context Taylorist organization and working environment criticism developed in European and Nordic countries during the 1970s. During this period, it is only focused on a single dimension such as working conditions without referring to subjects such as employment conditions and work-life balance. The lack of increasing new risks such as most of the employees are male, part-time employment in the labor market and temporary work contracts have played an important role on this situation (Davoine, Erhel and Guergoat-Lariviere, 2008, p. 13).

On the other hand, the quality of the working life in the 1980s is used as equivalent for the concepts "humanization of work", in Germany "improving working conditions" in France, "the protection of workers" in Eastern European countries. Regarding the differences in the use of the concept, it is remarkable that there are various views about the quality of the working life. However, it is seen that during the 1980s the concept of the quality of the working life has gained a technical content by moving away psychology and social psychology approaches (Nanjundeswaraswamy and D R, 2013, p. 432).

## 2. Indicators for Quality of Working Life

Table 1 shows the indicators about the quality of working life which are carried out by various researchers at different times.

**Table 1: Components of QWL in the view of Different Researchers**

Author	Component
Walton (1975) USA	1 Adequate And Fair Compensation, 2 Safe And Healthy Working Conditions, 3 Immediate Opportunity To Use And Develop Human Capacities, 4 Opportunity For Continued Growth And Security, 5 Social Integration In The Work Organization, 6 Constitutionalism In The Work Organization, 7 Work And Total Life Space And 8 Social Relevance Of Work Life.
Saklani (1979) India	1 Adequate and fair compensation 2 Fringe benefits and welfare measures 3 Job security 4 Physical work environment 5 Work load and job stress 6 Opportunity to use and develop human capacity 7 Opportunity for continued growth 8 Human relations and social aspect of work life 9 Participation in decision making 10 Reward and penalty system 11 Equity, justice and grievance handling 12 Work and total life space 13 Image of organization
Levine <i>et al.</i> (1984) Europe	1 Respect from supervisor and trust on employee's capability; 2 Change of work; 3 Challenge of the work; 4 Future development opportunity arising from the

	<p>current work;  5 Self esteem;  6 Scope of impacted work and life beyond work itself;  7 Contribution towards society from the work</p>
Mirvis and Lawler (1984) UK	<p>1 Safe work environment,  2 Equitable wages,  3 Equal employment opportunities and  4 Opportunities for advancement</p>
Baba and Jamal (1991) UK	<p>1 Job satisfaction,  2 Job involvement,  3 Work role ambiguity,  4 Work role conflict,  5 Work role overload,  6 Job stress,  7 Organizational commitment and  8 Turn-over intentions</p>
Lau and Bruce (1998) US	<p>Job security  2 Reward systems  3 Training  4 Career advancements opportunities  5 Participation in decision in decision making</p>
Thomas and Wah (2001) Singaporean	<p>1 Favorable work environment,  2 Personal growth and autonomy  3 Nature of job,  4 Stimulating opportunities and co-workers.</p>
Ellis and Pompli (2002) Canberra	<p>1 Poor working environments,  2 Resident aggression,  3 Workload, inability to deliver quality of care preferred,  4 Balance of work and family,  5 Shift work,  6 Lack of involvement in decision making,  7 Professional isolation,  8 Lack of recognition,  9 Poor relationships with supervisor/peers,  10 Role conflict,  11 Lack of opportunity to learn new skills.</p>
Che Rose (2006) Malaysia	<p>1 Career satisfaction  2 Career achievement  3 Career balance</p>
Saraji and Dargahi (2006) Tehran	<p>1 Fair Pay and Autonomy  2 Job security,  3 Reward systems,  4 Training and career advancements  5 Opportunities,  6 Participation in decision making  7 Interesting and satisfying work.  8 Trust in senior management.  9 Recognition of efforts  10 Health and safety standards at work.  11 Balance between the time spent at work and the time spent with family and friends  12 Amount of work to be done  13 Level of stress experienced at work  14 Occupational health and safety at work</p>
Rethinam and Maimunah (2008) Malaysia	<p>1 Health and well-being  2 Job security  3 Job satisfaction,  4 Competence development and  5 The balance between work non work life</p>
Hosseini (2010)	<p>1 Adequate And Fair Compensation,</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 Safe And Healthy Working Conditions,</li> <li>3 Immediate Opportunity To Use And Develop Human Capacities,</li> <li>4 Opportunity For Continued Growth And Security,</li> <li>5 Social Integration In The Work Organization,</li> <li>6 Constitutionalism In The Work Organization,</li> <li>7 Work And Total Life Space And</li> <li>8 Social Relevance Of Work Life.</li> </ul>
Muftah & Lafi (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Physical,</li> <li>2 Psychological</li> <li>3 Social factors</li> </ul>
Stephen (2012). India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Adequate and fair compensation</li> <li>4 Fringe benefits and welfare measures</li> <li>5 Job security</li> <li>6 Physical work environment</li> <li>7 Work load and job stress</li> <li>8 Opportunity to use and develop human capacity</li> <li>9 Opportunity for continued growth</li> <li>10 Human relations and social aspect of work life</li> <li>11 Participation in decision making</li> <li>12 Reward and penalty system</li> <li>13 Equity, justice and grievance handling</li> <li>14 Work and total life space</li> <li>15 Image of organization</li> </ul>

**Source:** Nanjundeswaraswamy and D R, 2013, p. 431.

As it can be seen in table 1, it is possible to deal with various indicators related to quality of the working life. In this study, the quality of working life which is a multidimensional structure will be explained in terms of employment forms and levels, wages and other working conditions, social protection, work-life balance and social dialog.

## 2.1. Employment Levels and Patterns

The most important variables related to working life are employment level and the employment types. Employment as a source of income empowers the individual by determining the purchasing power and also it is seen as a cornerstone of social inclusion and cohesion. Moreover, it is considered as an essential factor to determine the place, status, recognition and self-confidence of individual in the society. Therefore, to meet human needs depends largely on working. The opposite case, unemployment situation is often the source of poverty and social exclusion and means failure to satisfy many human needs (Sapançalı, 2009, p. 179).

On the other hand, the employment type of the employees is also important in terms of the quality of the working life. The non-standard employment such as, fixed-term work, temporary work, part-time work and self-employment is seen as one of the significant problems in terms of quality of working life as long as it is not preferred voluntarily by the employees (Leschke, Watt, 2008, p. 10). Indeed, non-standard forms of employment are largely comprises insecurity. It is known that those who are employed in non-standard forms generally fall outside the scope of employment legislation which provides social protection and more importantly they do not have a job security. In addition, non-standard employment offers lower revenue compared to the full-time employment. With non-standard forms of employment, employers can usually get rid of liabilities related to social security. Because, in order to benefit from social security to work a certain time period, in other words, the regularity of the work is usually the main condition. However, non-standard forms of employment may not provide the conditions for enjoyment of social security (Sapançalı, 2005, p. 79).

## **2.2. Wages and Other Working Conditions**

Wage is one of the important indicators in terms of the working life quality. As well as having the function of determining the current income level of the employees the wage is an important measure in terms of participation in social life. Indeed, wage has importance on determining the income of the employees and accordingly the purchasing power. It also has longer-term influences in that social security benefits and pensions are usually at least to some extent based on former wage (Leschke, Watt, 2008, p. 6).

In this context, the level of wage is seen as an important element to regulate the employment and living conditions of workers. In terms of quality in working life, low wages level is known to have adverse effects on economic and social life and living standards of workers. Therefore, the relationship between low wages and poverty often becomes a vicious circle (Grimshaw, 2011, p. 41).

Other conditions related to the quality of working life except wage can be discussed as working time and occupational health and safety.

Firstly, working time is the time zone in which productive activities are carried out during a certain reference period. In this sense, working time includes the time period during which the production of goods and services and organization of other activities are carried out (ILO, 2008, p. 15).

Working time is one of the main factors that determine the nature of the employment relationship. Since the beginning of the industrialization to determine and regulate the working time is the basis for both innovations in the production process and the measures related to employment and collective bargaining (O'reilly, Cebrian, Lallement, 2000, p. 25). The concept of working time has an important role as it is the main topic of the relation between employee, employer and the government. Moreover, the working time which plays a role on the implementation of various policies, is important and meaningful in terms of creation and distribution of income (Golden, Figart, 2000, p. 6).

Secondly, occupational health and safety is another important factor within the scope of the quality of working life. The prevention of occupational accidents and occupational diseases, avoiding exposure to high temperature or extreme cold, elimination of external factors such as dust, noise and to ensure protection for these and taking precautions for the health and security of the employees are among the most important indicators in terms of quality in the working life (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2010, p. 5).

In this context, unsafe working environments where situations such as: disease, occupational disease, infection and injury are frequently experienced increases the health and security concerns for the employees and require improvement in terms of quality. From this point of view, it can be seen that especially temporary or contract work employees are deprived of adequate health and security services and they lack of the control mechanisms on work time (Johri, 2005, p. 18).

## **2.3. Social Protection**

Social protection is a basic human right (ILO, 2014, p. xxv), as well as being an important indicator of the quality of working life (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2010, p. 7).

International Labour Organization defines the social protection as the public measures created to protect all members of society from economic and social problems such as the reduction or loss of income which may be caused by risks such as sickness,

maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age and death (Bonilla Garcia and Gruat, 2003, p. 13). In other words, social protection is a whole system protecting the individuals against risks which reduces the income and increase the costs and whose responsibility cannot be burdened on the individual (Karadeniz, 2012, p. 26).

Social protection includes ensuring the social security acts such as health, education, equity in access to employment, job and income security, protection against discrimination, sickness, disability, maternity and unemployment which enclose the risks. It also contains protection against occupational accidents and occupational diseases. In this case the social protection is concerned with the protection of "holistic life" where the essence is solidarity (Erdut, 2004, p. 32).

Social protection prevents the failure of individuals in reaching the basic services which are basis to a protect human dignity due to lack of income stems from risks and it also prevents conclusions reached in poverty (Kapar, 2006, p. 105).

#### **2.4. Work-life Balance**

Work-life balance is one of the main indicators working life quality both for employers and the employees. It is often difficult to separate work life and private life each other. Today, for the employees it is important to establish a harmonious balance between career, family life and other activities (Prajapat and Sharma, 2014, p. 94).

Work-life balance means for the employees to carry out activities related to the business life, private life and the responsibilities of family life together in a harmonious way. An inconsistency between an individual's work and family responsibilities preventing to perform job requirements as expected due to the family responsibilities, and preventing to perform family requirements as expected due to the job requirements leads to a conflict. A humanitarian balance to be established between work and family responsibilities is important both in terms of quality of life and quality of the employment. The work-life balance is expected to provide significant gains for the business by reducing inefficiency and absenteeism in the work while increasing the contribution of individuals to social welfare and peace by improving working life quality and mental health (Sapançalı, Yaşam 2009, p. 187).

#### **2.5. Social Dialogue**

Described as social partners the workers' having rights to organize, strike and collective bargain is important in terms of the quality of working life. Indeed, to have this kind of freedom in working life, in other words, the fact that employees are able to enter a dialogue and harmony process with the employers and the government is seen as important in terms of the working life quality. Because, social dialogue aims to produce solutions on the subjects of common interests related to economic and social policies through collaboration and interaction between employee, employer and government (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, 2010, p. 7).

### **3. Comparative Analysis of the Quality of Working Life and in Selected European Union Countries and in Turkey**

Within the scope of this study the data measuring the quality of the working life such as: employment rates of the various European Union countries and Turkey, unemployment and long-term unemployment rates, atypical employment rates, minimum wage levels, annual working time, the number of fatal and non-fatal accidents at work, social protection expenditures, work-life balance index results,

union density rates, and the rates of workers in the scope of collective bargain are given in the following tables.

### 3.1. Employment Levels and Patterns

Table 2 shows the employment rates of the working age population in selected European Union countries between the years 2004-2014. Accordingly, in these years the rates varies between 48.8 % and 77.4% in EU countries. In the year 2014 while the rate is 64.9% for the EU28; it is 73.8% in Germany with the highest rate and it is 49.4 % in Greece which has the lowest rate. In those years employment rates vary between 41.3% and 49.5% in Turkey. When 2014 data is analyzed employment rate is found as 49.5%. According to the data in the table it is observed that the employment rates in Turkey between the years 2004-2014 have increased and as of year 2014 it is almost close to the EU countries such as, Italy (55.7%) and Spain (56.0%). However, it is notable that there are still significant differences between Turkey and these countries.

**Table 2: Employment Rates (15 to 64 years) in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (2004-2014) (%)**

Countries/Years	2004	2006	2009	2012	2013	2014
EU28	62.9	64.3	64.4	64.1	64.1	64.9
Belgium	60.3	61.0	61.6	61.8	61.8	61.9
Denmark	75.7	77.4	75.3	72.6	72.5	72.8
Germany	65.0	67.2	70.3	73.0	73.5	73.8
Greece	59.1	60.6	60.8	50.8	48.8	49.4
Spain	61.3	65.0	60.0	55.8	54.8	56.0
France	63.7	63.6	64.0	63.9	64.1	64.3
Italy	57.7	58.3	57.4	56.6	55.5	55.7
Netherlands	73.1	74.3	77.0	77.4	73.6	73.1
Portugal	67.6	67.6	66.1	61.4	60.6	62.6
United Kingdom	71.7	71.6	69.9	69.9	70.5	71.9
Turkey	41.3	44.6	44.3	48.9	49.5	49.5

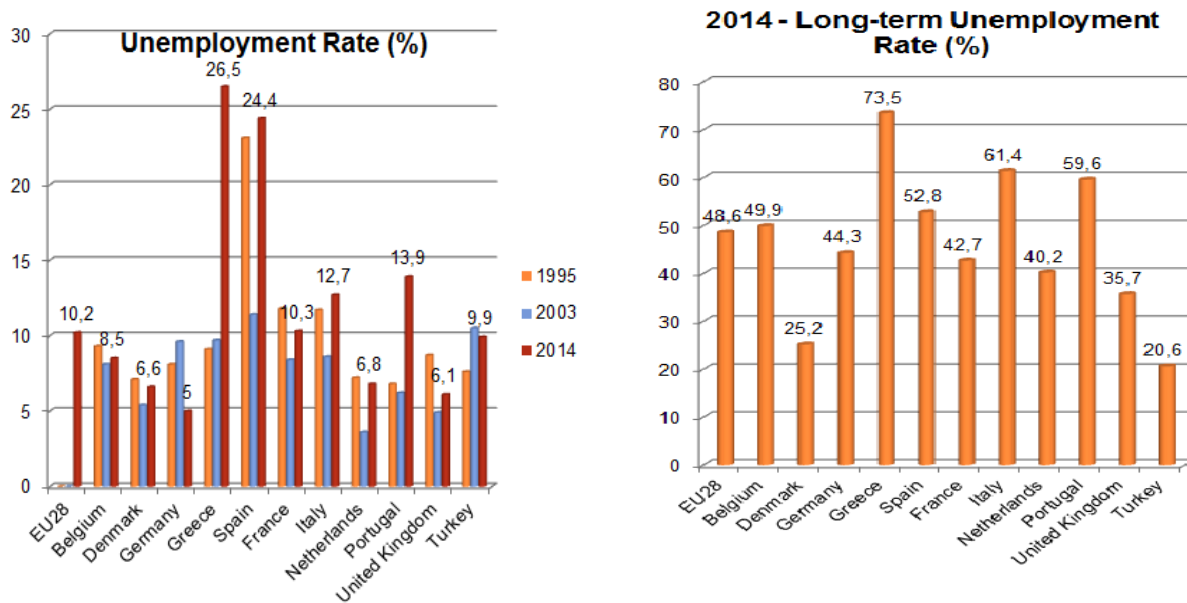
**Source:** EUROSTAT; <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>; TUIK; Hanehalkı İşgücü Anketi Sonuçları.

On the other hand, today the continuation of problems regarding economic conditions and the labor market in many countries has led to an unexpected increase in the unemployment rate and time (ILO, 2015, p. 36). Graph 1 shows the changes that occur in the unemployment and long-term unemployment rates in Turkey and selected EU countries between the years 1995-2014. Accordingly, it is noted that as of those years unemployment rates are gradually increasing and constitute one of the major problem areas. The unemployment rate for the EU28 was 10.2% while it was 9.9% for Turkey by 2014. When evaluated in terms of the selected European Union countries, as of the year 2014 highest unemployment rate is in Greece with 26.5%; while the lowest rate is in Germany with 5%. Spain (24.4%), France (10.3%), Italy (12.7%) and Portugal (13.9%), are remarkable with high unemployment rates.

However the data of 2014 suggests that the unemployment has increasingly gained a long-term nature on global scale. As of the year 2014 long-term unemployment rate is 48.6% for EU28 and 20.6% in Turkey. The countries with the highest long-term unemployment rates are respectively, Greece (73.5 percent), Italy (61.4 percent) and Portugal (59.6 percent) (ILO, 2015, p. 36).



**Graph 1: Unemployment and Long-Term Unemployment Rates in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (1995-2014)**



**Source:** OECD, <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rate.htm>, <https://data.oecd.org/unemp/long-term-unemployment-rate.htm#indicator-chart>; **WORLDBANK**, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.TOTL.ZS/countries?page=3>

Depending on the changing nature of the labor market, an increase in the diversity of contracts types and employment conditions is concerned. Indeed it is seen that the number of part-time workers temporary workers and self-employed ones in the labor market is increasing (Statistics New Zealand, 2014, p. 6). In this context, today instead of the standard employment relationship, temporary forms of employment are widespread in which generally low wages, poor working conditions and less social protection is dominated (United Nations, 2003, p. 15).

Table 3 shows the rates of atypical employment between the years 1988-2014. When analyzing the table, it is seen that since the 1980s there is an increased proportion of part-time and temporary workers in total employment in both Turkey and selected European countries.

**Table 3: The Rates of the ones who were Employed Atypically to the Total Employment in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (1988-2014)**

Countries	Incidence of Part-time Employment (%)		Incidence of Temporary Employment (%)		Self-employment Rate (%)	
	1988	2014	1988	2014	1988	2014
<b>Belgium</b>	12.7	18.1	5.4	8.7	18.1	15.1
<b>Denmark</b>	19.0	19.7	11.5	8.5	10.9	9.0
<b>Germany</b>	11.4	22.3	11.4	13.0	-	11.2
<b>Greece</b>	7.0	11.2	17.6	11.7	49.5	-
<b>Spain</b>	5.0	14.7	22.4	24.0	28.5	17.9
<b>France</b>	12.6	14.2	7.8	15.8	14.1	-

<b>Italy</b>	8.6	18.8	5.8	13.6	29.4	25.0
<b>Netherlands</b>	26.9	38.5	8.7	21.7	12.0	16.1
<b>Portugal</b>	7.8	11.0	18.3	21.5	-	21.7
<b>United Kingdom</b>	20.5	24.1	6.0	6.4	14.6	14.4
<b>Turkey</b>	8.2	10.6	18.0	13.0	59.6	35.9

**Source:** OECD, <http://stats.oecd.org/>; OECD, <https://data.oecd.org/emp/self-employment-rate.htm>

### 3.2. Wages and Other Working Conditions

As of the year 2015 the national minimum wage is implemented in selected EU countries which are Belgium, Greece, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Portugal, UK and Germany. In Denmark and Italy are not included in the table as the minimum wage is set by collective bargaining.

In table 4 according to EUROSTAT data, the minimum wage is shown in the selected EU countries and in Turkey which is a candidate EU member. Accordingly, as of January 2015 it is seen that within the selected EU countries the highest monthly gross minimum wage is in Belgium with 1,501 euros, while the lowest monthly gross minimum wage is applied in Portugal with 589.17 euros. In Turkey where almost half of the total employees have to work for the minimum wage, the monthly gross minimum wage amount is 424.26 euro. When compared to the selected EU countries Turkey, which has made significant progress towards full membership to EU, the amount of the minimum wage has increased considerably within the years yet, it is noteworthy that the differences between the fees still continue.

**Table 4: Monthly National Minimum Wages in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (EUR/month) (2004-2015) (gross)**

<b>Countries/Years</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>January 2015</b>
<b>Belgium</b>	1.186.31	1.234.00	1.387.50	1.443.54	1.501.82	1.501.82	1.501.82
<b>Denmark</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Germany</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.473.00
<b>Greece</b>	630.77	709.71	817.83	876.62	683.76	683.76	683.76
<b>Spain</b>	537.25	631.05	728.00	748.30	752.85	752.85	756.70
<b>France</b>	1.215.11	1.217.88	1.321.02	1.398.37	1.430.22	1.445.38	1457.52
<b>Italy</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Netherlands</b>	1.264.80	1.272.60	1.381.20	1.446.60	1.469.40	1.485.60	1.501.80
<b>Portugal</b>	425.95	449.98	525.00	565.83	565.83	565.83	589.17
<b>United Kingdom</b>	1.054.20	1.212.61	995.28	1.201.96	1.249.85	1.251.05	1.378.87
<b>Turkey</b>	238.77	333.46	309.94	362.84	415.52	361.76	424.26

**Source:** EUROSTAT, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/labour-market/earnings/main-tables>

Other conditions about the quality of working life except wage can be discussed as working time, occupational health and safety.

Firstly, table 5 shows the changes in the working time in the positive or negative way in EU countries selected according to OECD data and in Turkey between the years 1980-2014. It is notable that when compared in terms of working time there are great differences between selected EU countries each other and Turkey. Accordingly, annual working time in the EU varies between 1362 hours and 2060 hours in 2013, while it was annually 1832 hours in Turkey.

**Table 5: Average Annual Hours Actually Worked per Worker in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (1980-2014)**

Countries/Years	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2013	2014
Belgium	1707	1705	1663	1585	1594	1565	1560	1576	-
Denmark	1592	1538	1457	1440	1490	1474	1436	1438	1436
Germany	-	-	-	1528	1452	1411	1390	1362	1371
Greece	-	2131	2084	2111	2108	2136	2019	2060	2042
Spain	1936	1793	1763	1755	1753	1726	1710	1699	1689
France	1823	1670	1665	1605	1535	1507	1494	1474	1473
Italy	-	-	-	1856	1851	1812	1777	1732	1734
Netherlands	1553	1499	1451	1479	1462	1434	1421	1421	1425
Portugal	2005	1947	1959	1893	1917	1895	1890	1852	1857
United Kingdom	1767	1760	1765	1731	1700	1673	1652	1669	1677
Turkey	1957	1898	1866	1876	1937	1936	1877	1832	-

Source: OECD, <http://stats.oecd.org/#>

Secondly, to establish a healthy and safe working environment is important for the quality of working life. From this point of view, work accidents and occupational diseases is seen as one of the most significant problems of working life.

In this context, in table 6 which is prepared according to data of EUROSTAT and (SGK) Social Security Institution the work accidents with injury and death in Turkey and selected EU countries between the years 2008-2013 is given. When the table is analyzed it is seen that in comparison with selected EU countries the number of the fatal work accidents is higher in Turkey and continued to increase in Turkey while it decreased in other countries within those years.

**Table 6: Number of Fatal and Non-Fatal Accidents at Work in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (Persons) (2008-2013)**

Countries/Years	2008		2010		2012		2013	
	Fatal	Non-Fatal	Fatal	Non-Fatal	Fatal	Non-Fatal	Fatal	Non-Fatal
EU28	-	-	4.460	3.768.169	3.918	3.165.400	-	-
Belgium	96	76.514	74	67.263	49	58.418	66	56.405
Denmark	47	71.288	41	62.523	47	57.761	39	55.931
Germany	616	943.999	567	930.447	516	854.665	444	852.061
Greece	59	24.216	32	15.461	26	11.083	22	9.676
Spain	529	689.131	338	493.789	299	355.811	270	370.176
France	289	637.357	537	592.992	576	587.090	714	598.492
Italy	780	503.431	718	437.821	604	359.363	517	329.404
Netherlands	106	184.121	79	183.005	35	165.433	42	152.214
Portugal	221	147.349	204	130.271	169	113.179	-	-
United Kingdom	157	255.468	172	252.597	161	227.676	271	243.798
Turkey	866	72.963	1.444	62.903	744	74.871	1.360	191.389

Source: EUROSTAT, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hsw\\_n2\\_02&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hsw_n2_02&lang=en)  
[http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hsw\\_n2\\_01&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=hsw_n2_01&lang=en), SGK İstatistik Yıllığı

### 3.3. Sosyal Koruma

Social protection as one of the indicators of working life quality includes health care expenditure, expenditure on the unemployed and aged people, the expenditures in the case of sickness, maternity, work accidents, invalidity and expenditures on children in general. In this context, in table 7 the ratio of public social protection expenditure in GDP of Turkey and selected EU countries between the years 1980-2014 is given. According to the data, it is seen that public social protection expenditure is 12.5% of

GDP in Turkey by the year 2013. The same ratio is 32% for France and 22.5 for the UK. Accordingly, it is seen that despite the increase in these years, Turkey's social protection expenditures seems to be lower than selected EU countries.

**Table 7: Public Social Expenditure as a percent of GDP in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (1980-2014)**

Countries/Years	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2013	2014
Belgium	23.5	26.0	24.9	25.6	24.5	25.6	28.8	30.9	30.6
Denmark	24.4	22.9	25.0	28.7	25.9	27.2	29.8	30.2	30.1
Germany	21.8	22.2	21.4	25.9	26.2	26.9	26.8	25.6	25.8
Greece	10.3	16.1	16.5	17.4	19.2	21.0	24.2	24.3	24.0
Spain	15.4	17.6	19.7	21.3	20.0	20.9	26.7	27.3	26.8
France	20.6	25.8	24.9	29.0	28.3	29.5	31.6	32.0	31.8
Italy	18.0	20.8	21.4	21.7	23.2	24.8	27.7	28.7	28.6
Netherlands	24.8	25.3	25.6	23.8	19.7	21.7	23.6	24.6	24.7
Portugal	9.6	10.0	12.4	16.2	18.6	22.8	25.2	25.8	25.2
United Kingdom	16.3	19.2	16.3	19.2	18.3	20.1	22.8	22.5	21.7
Turkey	3.1	3.0	5.5	5.6	-	9.6	12.6	12.5	-

Source: OECD, <https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/social-spending.htm>

### 3.4. Work-Life Balance

In table 8 the results related to work-life balance is given which is a criterion of Better Life Index developed by OECD. The data has been created by considering the proportion of employees who work more than 50 hours in a week, and the time they can daily allocate to personal care and leisure activities in the selected countries.

Between the years 2013-2015 when work-life balance in selected EU countries and Turkey is compared, it is found that there are significant differences in the table. Accordingly, 12.7% of employees in the UK work 50 hours and more per week with the highest value among selected countries, while this value is 40.8% in Turkey. However in Denmark and Spain with the highest value among selected countries full-time employees can allocate themselves daily 16 hours including sleeping and eating whereas this ratio is 13.4 hours in Turkey. In this sense, it seems that there are significant deficiencies to establish work-life balance in Turkey when compared to countries whose work-life index is identified.

**Table 8: OECD Work-Life Balance Index Results in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (2013-2015)**

Countries/Years	Employees Working Very Long Hours		Time Devoted to Leisure and Personal Care	
	2013	2015	2013	2015
Belgium	4.4	4.5	15.7	15.7
Denmark	1.9	2.0	16.0	16.0
Germany	5.4	5.2	15.3	15.3
Greece	5.2	6.1	14.6	14.9
Spain	6.3	5.8	15.8	16.0
France	8.9	8.1	15.3	15.3
Italy	4.0	3.6	14.8	14.9
Netherlands	0.6	0.4	15.6	15.4
Portugal	8.5	9.6	14.7	14.9
United Kingdom	12.0	12.7	14.8	14.8
Turkey	46.1	40.86	11.7	13.4

Source: OECD, <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=BLI#> ;  
<http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=BLI2013>

### 3.5. Social Dialogue

Another comparison made between selected EU countries and Turkey regarding the quality of the working life is the density rates of collective bargaining and union membership in terms of social dialogue.

In table 9, by the year 2012 union density rates of OECD data in the selected EU countries and Turkey is given. In addition to the differences between the member countries and Turkey, it is noticeable that member states have their own serious differences between in the context of union density. According to the 2012 data Denmark is the country with the highest level of union density with 67.2% and France with the lowest level with a rate of 7.7%. The union density rate is 4.5% in Turkey. In this sense, it is found that in Turkey fewer employees benefit from union rights compared with other countries.

**Table 9: Trade Union Density Rates in Selected EU Countries and Turkey (2012)**

Countries/Years	2012
Belgium	55.0
Denmark	67.2
Germany	17.9
Greece	21.3
Spain	17.5
France	7.7
Italy	36.3
Netherlands	17.7
Portugal	20.5
United Kingdom	25.8
Turkey	4.5

**Source:** OECD, [https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=UN\\_DEN#](https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=UN_DEN#)

Table 10 which is prepared according to the latest OECD data shows the collective bargaining coverage rate in the selected EU countries and Turkey. Accordingly, the country with the highest rate of employees within the scope of collective bargaining agreement is Belgium with 96%, and UK with the lowest rate 32.7%. The rate is 25% in Turkey. The results of the comparison in terms of the number of employees who work by collective bargaining show that there are significant shortcomings in establishing the harmony and cooperation mentality between the social partners.

**Table 10: Coverage Rates of Collective Bargaining Agreements in Selected EU Countries and Turkey**

Countries/Years	Last available*
Belgium	96.0
Denmark	80.0
Germany	62.0
Greece	65.0
Spain	84.4
France	90.0
Italy	80.0
Netherlands	82.3
Portugal	45.0
United Kingdom	32.7
Turkey	25.0

**Source:** OECD, *Economic Policy Reform 2013: Going for Growth, 2013*, [http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/economic-policy-reforms-2013\\_growth-2013-en](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/economics/economic-policy-reforms-2013_growth-2013-en)

\*The last available year is 2009 for Germany, Italy, Portugal and the United Kingdom; 2008 for Belgium, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Spain,; 2007 for Denmark; 2006 for Turkey; 2002 for Belgium, Denmark, France.

## Conclusion

In this study the working conditions of Turkey which has made significant progress towards EU membership and the selected EU countries are evaluated in comparison. The indicators used for measuring the quality of the working life are: employment levels and forms, wages, working time, occupational health and safety, social protection, social dialogue, and work-life balance. In terms of those indicators it is revealed that when compared to selected EU countries, Turkey as a candidate member of EU has a significant progress within the years. Thus, although there are some similarities between Turkey and these countries, it is noteworthy that there are significant differences. From this point of view, it seems that there are some deficiencies especially in the level of the minimum wage, work hours, the creation of a healthy and safe working environment, public social expenditure share in GDP and the protection of work-life balance issues in Turkey.

In this context, one of the issues to focus on is that Turkey as a full membership candidate of EU has to minimize the differences related to these indicators between the selected EU countries. In this sense, an increase in employment opportunities and the creation of new ones, reduction of unemployment rates, reduction of unregistered employment, elimination of precarious forms of employment, the minimizing of occupational accidents and occupational diseases, increasing the unionization rate, reduction of working hours without a change in wages, increasing the share of social protection expenditures and to establish work-life balance are the issues which need to be improved.

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