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**Access to Data on
Children in Turkey:
An Evaluation Based
on the Urban95 Project
Experience**

TESEV Briefs aim to share with the public different opinions and recommendations on issues that are under TESEV's working areas.





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Nowadays, the need for the use of data in developing an accurate, effective and measurable urban policy is being voiced by many local administrations and civil society organizations, and as a matter of fact, some local administrations have already increased their efforts for data production and use. However, organizations face with certain problems in regard to accessing, obtaining and generating systematic data. The purpose of this report is to put forward these problems along with their reasons and to offer solutions by focusing specifically on data regarding early childhood period.

The urban data required for developing urban policy is produced by various institutions. The first among these data which we can collect under five general types is the public administration data produced by local administrations and state agencies. The second data type is official statistical data such as censuses or household/workplace surveys, collected through questionnaires conducted by the national statistical institute. The third type is operational data on services provided by local administrations or specific institutions such as the ones providing transportation services. The fourth one is scientific data on environmental conditions such as the weather, water level, pollution, noise. And the fifth type is data produced via combinations and analysis of these four data types, such as composite indicators or estimations.

Local administrations obtain (or are unable to obtain) some of the above-mentioned data types from outside their own institutions, while producing some of them within their own institutional bodies.

Although part of the statistical demographic, social and economic data they require in planning their urban services are produced by TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) or other government offices, the fact that the data at neighborhood or district level is limited is an impediment to carrying out detailed needs analyses. Besides that, local administrations have problems in establishing systematic and updated databases. Although local administrations do not have the tools and the capacity to produce the data that is supposed to be produced and shared by the official statistical institute or other institutions, they can increase their efforts to obtain and produce data in systematic and creative ways.

A Data-Driven Policy Tool Project conducted by Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) with the support of Bernard van Leer (BVL) Foundation and the collaboration of the Kadir Has University Istanbul Studies Center within the scope of Urban95 program may render local administrations some insights as to the processes of data acquisition and production. Focusing on early childhood data, we started this report by examining the relevant data produced by various institutions. Next, through discussions with representatives from local administrations during the trainings on the importance of data-driven policy, we evaluated the problems encountered by local administrations in accessing data within the scope of our project. And finally, we shared the story of obtaining the data used within the scope of the Urban95 Project and of making it ready for analysis. We hope that the experiences we gained throughout the

process will be useful for all institutions that give precedence to the issue of data.

1. Data on Children in Turkey

Official data on children in Turkey is produced by Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) and by the relevant ministries and municipalities providing services for children. With the Address Based Population Registration System, TÜİK collects data on gender, age, education level and place of birth, etc. every year. At the same time, through thematic surveys (e.g. Child Statistics, Income and Living Conditions Statistics, Life Satisfaction Statistics, etc.), the institute collects data on annual basis or for longer periods. TÜİK can also publish databases created by other government agencies.

The most fundamental central government agencies that create databases on the services they provide to children are the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. Urban data on children can be obtained from the provincial and district directorates of these ministries. Besides, the Ministry of National Education annually publishes statistical yearbooks both countrywide and for each province.

Other institutions that produce data on children and share them to a certain extent are local administrations. Both metropolitan and district municipalities share data about their services in their annual reports and websites. Besides, very few municipalities share their data on open data platforms. Apart from this, some municipalities conduct surveys

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in order to make needs analysis and to assess the city-dwellers' satisfaction with the services provided. Data obtained from these surveys may also be shared by some municipalities.

Although these data produced about children may allow to identify problems and develop policies to a certain extent, analyses and decisions made based on these analyses also prove to remain limited due to the limitation of the data. Since databases are generally created on the basis of 0-17 age range, most variables lack data on early childhood. Another problem concerns the scope of urban data. Again, on most variables the data required to develop a child policy are not available at neighborhood or district level. Little information is available on essential issues such as violence against children and access of disadvantaged groups to urban facilities. In addition to all these problems, access to data is quite difficult. Since databases are not always accessible on the websites of the relevant institutions, direct application is needed to these institutions. And access to the databases on the websites of the institutions is limited due to the fact that the websites are not user-friendly.

Apart from the variables directly related to the child, data that are available for indirectly indicating the neighborhoods with disadvantaged children are not collected by the above-mentioned institutions. In Turkey,

the data that are supposed to indicate the inequalities, especially income inequalities in different regions can be obtained at the provincial or at the district level at best. An exception is the educational status variable assessed with the "last graduated school," which TÜİK has collected via Address Based Population Registration System (ABPRS) at the neighborhood level.

If what types of data are collected on the child, by which institution they are produced and what geographical units and age ranges are represented are examined in more detail, the situation summarized above becomes concrete (see Table 1). Among the demographic data about children, gender and age variables are accessible on the website of TÜİK on district basis. Apart from these variables, data on in migration and out migration, annual child population growth rate, child dependency rate, the number of married children aged 16-17, the number of households with children, the number of single parent households with children, the number of children living in a single parent household, population of children born abroad and population of foreign-national children can only be accessed at a provincial level. Except for the gender, age and immigration-emigration variables, child age range was taken as 0-17 for each variable.

Gender and age variables can be accessed at the neighborhood level by application to the institution. Last graduated school variable can be obtained at the 4-year age range for children aged 6 and over. This data can also be obtained at the neighborhood level by application to the institution. Demographic and education data are annually collected and updated by TÜİK.

Resources on the data on children's care and nutrition are TÜİK Child Statistics, RFST (Research on Family Structure in Turkey) conducted by the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services in 2016, and TDHS (Turkey Demographic and Health Survey) conducted by the Hacettepe University, Population Studies Institute in 2018. In this category, among the data accessible via the website of TÜİK, data on kids' day care and the punishments given to child by parents at the household can be obtained at the level of NUTS-1 (Nomenclature of Units for Statistics 1), while data on the number of children cared for at home and of ones sent to day care center or nursery can be obtained without gender range at country level. It is necessary to apply to the relevant institutions for RFST and TDHS data, which cannot be accessed on the internet. The geographical units represented by these data are the five regions determined by NUTS-1 or Hacettepe University. In TDHS, data on

child malnutrition levels, infant and children's nutrition and children's learning materials, especially for early childhood, are accessible by gender range.

Data on pre-school education institutions are collected annually by the Ministry of National Education via official records. In addition, every year the Ministry shares data on gross and net pre-school enrollment rates, the number of kindergartens and nurseries affiliated or non-affiliated to the ministry (public and private), the number of students, teachers and classrooms on its website. Affiliation to the Ministry and kindergarten-nursery class range are not included together in the data collected on the basis of provinces. District-based data have been provided upon request from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate of National Education. Also, the data on official institutions' addresses and their number of students, teachers and classrooms have been obtained in the form of lists from the Istanbul Provincial Directorate for National Education, and the data obtained have been converted into a database on the basis of the neighborhood. The process and method of establishing the preschool education database within the scope of the Urban95 Project are discussed in more detail in section 3.2.

The institutions that collect health data related to children are TÜİK and the Ministry

of Health. Each year, TÜİK publishes data on the number of births, fertility, birth, infant and child deaths, etc. on its website at the provincial level. Apart from these variables, other important variables regarding health have mostly been published on the provincial level as a statistical yearbook by the Ministry of Health in 2018. These data can partly be

accessed on the website of TÜİK.

Although data on child poverty and child labour issues are often published annually or as up-to-date by TÜİK, data on poverty at 0-17 age range is obtained country-wide. While the employment data again represents Turkey at the general level, for some variables there are the 5-14, 6-14, 15-17 age ranges.

	Data Type	The institution producing the data	Age Range	Gender Range	Geographical unit (Access by application to the institution)	Geographical unit (access from the institution's website)	Currency status
DEMOGRAPHY	Sex	TÜİK	all ages		neighborhood	district	annual
	Age	TÜİK	all ages	+	neighborhood	district (4 age ranges)	annual
	Last graduated school	TÜİK	age 6 and over	+	neighborhood	district (4 age ranges)	annual
	In migration	TÜİK	0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19	+		district	annual
	Out migration	TÜİK	0-4, 5-9, 10-14, 15-19	+	?	district	annual
	Annual child population growth	TÜİK	0-17	+	?	district	annual
	Child dependency rate	TÜİK	0-14	-	?	district	annual
	Marriage rate	TÜİK	16-17	+	?	district	annual
	Number of children given to guardianship	TÜİK	0-17	-	?	Turkey	annual
	Number of households with children	TÜİK	0-17	-	?	district	annual
	Number of single parent households with children	TÜİK	0-17	-	?	district	annual
	Number of children living in a single parent household	TÜİK	0-17	+	?	district	annual
	Population of children born abroad	TÜİK	0-17	+	?	district	annual
	Population of foreign national children	TÜİK	0-17	+	?	district	annual
CHILDCARE & NUTRITION	Day care of kids in the household	TÜİK, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	-	-	Three Big Cities (the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services)	Level 1	2016

CHILDCARE & NUTRITION	Number of children cared for at home	TÜİK	?	-	-	Turkey	2017
	Number of children attending daycare centers / nursery	TÜİK	-	-	-	Turkey	2017
	Kindergarten attendance	the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	-	-	Level 1, Three Big Cities	-	2016
	Problems Between Parents and Children	the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	-	-	Level 1, Three Big Cities	-	2016
	Punishments given to the child by parents	TÜİK	-	-	-	Level 1	2016
	Reason for Punishing the Child	the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	-	-	Level 1, Three Big Cities	-	2016
	People taken support in case of problems with the child	the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services	-	-	Level 1, Three Big Cities	-	2016
	Child malnutrition levels (stunting, thinness, underweight, overweight)	Hacettepe Uni., TDHS	0-5	+	Level 1	-	2018
	Breast milk intake among infants	Hacettepe Uni., TDHS	0-23 ay	+	Level 1	-	2018
	Micronutrient intake among infants	Hacettepe Uni., TDHS	0-23 ay	+	Level 1	-	2018
	Supporting learning in early childhood	Hacettepe Uni., TDHS	2-4	+	5 regions	-	2018
	Learning materials in early childhood	Hacettepe Uni., TDHS	2-5	+	5 regions	-	2018
	Inadequate care in early childhood	Hacettepe Uni., TDHS	2-5	+	5 regions	-	2018
	Early childhood development index	Hacettepe Uni., TDHS	3-4	+	5 regions	-	2018
EDUCATION	Preschool gross and net enrollment rate (%)	The Ministry of National Education	3-5, 4-5, 5	+	district	province	annual
	Number of kindergartens affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education (public and private)	The Ministry of National Education		-		province (Range of kindergartens-preschools affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education is not available together)	annual

EDUCATION	Number of students in kindergartens-nursery schools affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education (public and private)	The Ministry of National Education		+		province (Range of kindergartens-preschools affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education is not available together)	annual
	Number of teachers in kindergartens-nursery schools affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education (public and private)	The Ministry of National Education		+		province (Range of kindergartens-preschools affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education is not available together)	annual
	Number of classrooms in kindergartens-nursery schools affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education (public and private)	The Ministry of National Education		-		province (Range of kindergartens-preschools affiliated and nonaffiliated to the Ministry of National Education is not available together)	annual
HEALTH	Total fertility rate (Number of children)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	annual
	Number of Births	TÜİK	-	+	?	province	annual
	Birth rate in health institutions (%)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	2018
	Number of births by child mothers	TÜİK	-	+	?	province	annual
	Maternal mortality rate (per 100.000 live births)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	2018
	Ratio of cesarean deliveries to total delivery rate (%)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	2018
	Ratio of adolescent deliveries to total delivery rate (%)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	annual
Vaccination rates according to types (%)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	2018	

HEALTH	5 in 1 combination vaccine (DaBT+IPA+Hib) third dose vaccination rate (%)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	2018
	Distribution of babies' breastfeeding times by gender (%)	TÜİK	-	+	?	province	2019
	Selected health problems in children (%)	TÜİK	0-6, 7-14	+	?	province	2019
	Infant mortality rate (per thousand)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	annual
	Neonatal (newborn) death rate (per thousand)	TÜİK	-	+	?	province	annual
	Postneonatal death rate (per thousand)	TÜİK	-	+	?	province	annual
	Mortality rate under the age of five (per thousand)	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	annual
	Children affected by traffic accident	TÜİK	0-9, 10-14, 15-17	+	?	province	2017
	Child suicide rate (per 100.000)	TÜİK	?	+	?	province	annual
	Number of deaths by cause	TÜİK	0-17	+	?	province	2018
	Disability in children	TÜİK	2-6, 7-14	+	?	province	2019
	Number of Intensive Care Beds per 1.000 Neonatal (newborn) Live Births, All Sectors	The Ministry of Health	-	-	?	province	2018
	Crude birth rate (per 1.000)	The Ministry of Health		-	?	province	2018

HEALTH	Antenatal Care Coverage (At Least One Visit)	The Ministry of Health	-	-	?	Level-1	2018
	Pregnancy Full Follow-up Rate	The Ministry of Health	-	-	?	Level-1	2018
	Baby Full Follow-up Rate	The Ministry of Health	0-1	-	?	Level-1	2018
	Child Full Follow-up Rate	The Ministry of Health	0-6	-	?	Level-1	2018
POVERTY	Proportion of households with children having separate rooms (%)	TÜİK	0- 17	-	-	İstanbul, Ankara, İzmir	2016
	Proportion of children living in households that can afford adequate house heating (%)	TÜİK	0- 17	-	-	Turkey	annual
	Proportion of children living in severe material deprivation (%)	TÜİK	0- 17	-	-	Turkey	annual
	Number and proportion of poor children (%)	TÜİK	0- 17	-	-	Turkey	annual
	Proportion of children who can buy new clothes for the old ones (%)	TÜİK	0- 17	-	-	Turkey	annual
CHILD EMPLOYMENT	Child employment rate (%)	TÜİK	5-14, 6-14, 15-17	+	-	Turkey	2019
	Sector distribution of working children (%)	TÜİK	5-14, 6-14, 15-17	+	-	Turkey	2019
	Ratio of child population living in unemployed households to total child population (%)	TÜİK	0- 17	+	-	Turkey	annual
	Number of children living in households where the member responsible for the household is unemployed (Thousand)	TÜİK	0- 17	+	-	Turkey	annual

CHILD EMPLOYMENT	Proportion of child population aged 15-17 who are neither in education nor in employment (%)	TÜİK	0- 17	+	-	Turkey	annual
SECURITY	Children who came or were brought to the security unit, according to reason of arrival	TÜİK	-11, 12-14, 15-17	+	?	Turkey	2017
	Children who came or were brought to the security unit due to delinquency	TÜİK	-11, 12-14, 15-17	-	?	Turkey	2017
	Convicts put in the penal execution institution according to criminal age group	TÜİK	12-14, 15-17	+	?	Turkey	2017
	Convicts put in the penal execution institution according to the entry age group	TÜİK	12-14, 15-17	+	?	Turkey	2017
	Convicts released from the penal institution	TÜİK	12-14, 15-17	+	?	Turkey	2017
CULTURE & SPORTS	Number of child users of public libraries	TÜİK	?	+	?	province	annual
	Number of registered child members in public libraries	TÜİK	?	+	?	province	annual
	Number of children's plays performances in theater halls	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	annual
	Number of spectators who watched children's plays in theater halls	TÜİK	-	-	?	province	annual
	Average activity time per person by activity type (hours)	TÜİK	10+, 10-17	+	-	Turkey	2015
	Proportion of children participating in social activities (%)	TÜİK	10+, 10-17	-	-	Turkey	2015
	Proportion of children participating in sports activities (%)	TÜİK	10+, 10-17	-	-	Turkey	2015

INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY	Information technology statistics (12 variables)	TÜİK	6-10, 11-15	+	-	Turkey	2013
	Proportion of children with technological devices	TÜİK	10-17	-	-	Turkey	2015

Table 1. Types, institution, age breakdowns and scale of data on children

2. Data-Related Problems of Local Administrations

The importance of data-based decision making was emphasized in every activity carried out within the scope of the Urban95: Data-Driven Policy Tool Project, and it was also expressed by all the cooperating institutions. The aim of the training series, which started in December 2020, was to discuss with the representatives of local administrations the importance of data-based decision making and to introduce the website and admin panel produced within the scope of the project to the participants. In the first part of the training which consists of two sessions, the issue of data-driven policy was discussed with exposition of good examples from around the world, and participants from local administrations conveyed their own experiences in this particular. And in the second part of the training, the website harita.kent95.org and the admin panel (panel.kent95.org) which has been designed to provide data entry to the website were explained. In these trainings, discussions made on data access with representatives from different units and positions of the participating municipalities not only covered the issue we discussed in the previous section, but also revealed the problems faced by the municipalities within their own bodies. Evaluating the outputs we obtained from these discussions, we discussed the problems of local administrations regarding data access and production.

The topics discussed during the Urban95 trainings can be evaluated in terms of the

data collected (or that could not be collected) from outside and within the municipalities' own institutional bodies. Apart from the ones arising from their own institutional bodies, the most frequently mentioned data-related problem of municipalities, arising from TÜİK and the directorates of relevant ministries is that the data are kept at a limited level, i.e. comprehensive data are not shared, as discussed in the first part of this article. The fact that the opportunity of obtaining data from central government units varies among the institutions requesting the data was repeatedly stated by representatives from different municipalities. There are also cases where it is not possible to harmonize the data with each other, since many different actors are authorized on provinces and districts, including local administrations, provincial and district governorships and the provincial and district directorates of ministries.

The various problems arising from the in-house functioning expressed by the representatives of local administrations during the discussions were evaluated in more detail. First of all, the inability to keep the data in a systematical and up-to-date way proves to be one of the main problems. The fact that the data are collected every five years at the preparation stage of strategic plans may reduce the accuracy of the decisions made in the following years. One of the reasons why data cannot be collected systematically is the lack of communication and coordination among different units (directorates and departments) of the municipalities. There are also cases that different units, uninformed by each other,



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collect the same type of data under a different structure. The absence of a common data repository is one of the reasons for the data-related communication gap. Another reason why systematic databases cannot be created is the personnel’s lack of sufficient knowledge about data and data legislation. Besides, that the automation systems are not flexible and do not allow the collection of the requested data or any changes in the data acquisition standard is a hindrance to updating the data. The use of different automation systems by different units of the municipalities also hinders data sharing between those units. And when the automation system is changed, old data cannot always be transferred to the new system.

The data that local administrations can collect via the services they provide, the applications they receive and the field studies they carry out are limited to the number of people they come into contact with. Due to the limitation of information coming from the official statistics institute and other institutions on the general population at the neighborhood or district level, the need in local units cannot be accurately determined. For this reason, only the needs of people who are contacted can be known and not all dwellers can be accessed. As a result, the policies developed can only meet the needs of the accessible urban dwellers. The following statement of a representative from Şişli Municipality summarizes how important

the use of data is in developing policy for local administrations: *“You cannot govern what you cannot assess ... The law tells us to open centers but does not tell where to open them. It is necessary to collect data for this, and we do not know where to begin. When there is lack of data, centers are opened at places where users do not exist or cannot get access, and that being the case, the centers prove to be unsustainable .”*

In Turkey, the failure to create a data culture and to internalize the importance of data-based decision making commonize the problems arising from the institutions affiliated to municipalities and to the central government. Problems such as lack of standards determined for the collected data; inability to collect data in line with a specific purpose, which makes the categorization of data difficult; lack of personnel with sufficient knowledge and skills about data; lack of data literacy and quantitative data’s being given precedence over qualitative data in data collection process are among important topics that arise from the discussions. Apart from these, one of the frequently emphasized problems is that due to the misunderstanding of both central government and local administration personnel concerning the very law, there are certain reservations even when sharing data that is not within the scope of the PDPL (Personal Data Protection Law).¹

3. Producing Spatial Data: Examples within the Context of the Urban95 Project

3.1. Proxy Variables

Failure of other public institutions, the official statistical institute being in the first place, to produce or share data to display economic and social inequalities at neighborhood level may encourage finding other means for displaying inequalities. An example of attempts to use a proxy variable due to data constraint is the average real estate values of the streets of neighborhoods, produced by the Kadir Has University Istanbul Studies Center team within the scope of the Urban95 Project. This variable has been calculated on the basis of the 2018-year real estate value per square meter of the streets accessed via the e-municipality tabs on the websites of all district municipalities of Istanbul, Izmir and Gaziantep provinces. After the average real estate values for each neighborhood is calculated, neighborhoods are grouped according to these values being weighted with their population. Apart from the neighborhood maps, the street maps prepared as a pilot scheme for four different district municipalities enable the differentiation at this level to be tracked.²

It took quite some time to produce this database which allows to display the inequalities among neighborhoods in a

successful and creative way. The number of district municipalities not publishing these data which district municipalities are officially obliged to publish on their websites is not few. In such cases, data requests from municipalities prolonged the process considerably. And since the street real estate value data shared by some district municipalities on their websites was not in a processable format, it again took time to make the data available for analysis.

3.2. Data Collection: The Process of Creating a Database of Preschool Education Institutions within the scope of the Urban95 Project

The Urban95 website aims to visualize all the services offered to children and parents in the city on the neighborhood-scale underlay maps that are prepared with regard to the current market value, number of children and educational status. These services can be viewed point by point on the website under the titles of education, health and other aids, and the capacity and distribution of the services can be read thanks to the urban dashboard option. Service data were collected from district and metropolitan municipalities, the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services and the Ministry of Health under the responsibility of TESEV.



Among the currently available data, only those received from the Ministry of Education has the desired elaborateness for the urban dashboard.

The urban dashboard feature was added to the website in 2021. Urban dashboards are user-interactive data reading and visualization tools that provide information about the structure, performance and trends of cities.³ This feature added to the Urban95 website revealed the necessity of elaborating the available data as well as keeping them up-to-date. Within the dashboard features getting access to information about the number of classrooms, the number of students and teachers of institutions providing pre-school education and adding this information to the map in separate segments will develop the data-based policy tool, thereby helping the decision makers. Thanks to this feature, which pre-school education institutions in Istanbul can serve more students and where the number of students per class is higher has been visualized in different scales. However, among the currently available data, only those received from the Ministry of Education has the desired elaborateness for the urban dashboard. This situation has required the production of elaborate data needed by private institutions.

Among 1784 private institutions, the name and address information of which were accessed through online publications of the Ministry of National Education, 1219 institutions were contacted via telephone and e-mail until they

were closed due to the pandemic in December 2020. 450 of them answered all the questions asked, while 31 of them stated that their institutions were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. 215 of them could not be reached by telephone and a secondary communication channel was tried to be opened via the e-mail addresses found on the Internet. Contact information of 185 of them could not be reached at all. 95 of them stated that they did not want to share their information, and 390 of them wanted to be contacted via e-mail instead of telephone interviews. The number of institution members who did not want to provide information during interviews or who stated that they do not trust telephone interviews and wanted to be contacted via e-mail instead was quite high. At this point, focusing on the responses of those institutions that did not want to give information will give clues about both the difficulty of collecting data and the lack of data culture in preschool institutions.

One of the most common reasons for not sharing information during telephone interviews was the organizations' concern for their own security. Among these school officials who could not be sure for what purpose the to-be-collected information would be used, the most common reason for denying information sharing was the fear of



Institutions providing pre-school education stated that they were already obliged to inform the relevant ministries of such topics as the number of teachers or children, etc. The fact that these data cannot have been accessed from the ministries by correspondence increased the suspicions of the officials of the institutions, who were not sure what the requested data would be used for.

being defrauded or the possibility that the caller was collecting information on behalf of a rival kindergarten. Thereupon, in order to eliminate the security concern of the other party in the telephone interviews, the TESEV employees making the calls started to provide more information about TESEV and the project, which eventually reduced the negative responses received. Another reason why the person or institution making the calls was not trusted was the assumption that the data tried to be collected were already in possession of the Ministry of National Education or the Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Services. Institutions providing pre-school education stated that they were already obliged to inform the relevant ministries of such topics as the number of teachers or children, etc. The fact that these data cannot have been accessed from the ministries by correspondence increased the suspicions of the officials of the institutions, who were not sure what the requested data would be used for. Another reason for the officials' denial of providing information was that they supposed that the collected data may have threatened the security of students. Moreover, this supposition spreaded through the communication networks among kindergartens and set a negative example for other officials who spoke to the institutions

that were unwilling to give information.

The fact that the information of the institution and the detailed data collected for the urban dashboard would be available on the website induced some institutions to provide information, while having prevented others from doing so. While those who thought that the website could be used for advertising purposes answered the questions, no information could be received from those who paid to a different website for advertisement, those who worried that money might have been demanded in the days to come and those that wanted to keep the families provided service within the limits of a certain region and of the target group pitched to by the kindergarten.

One of the most frequently asked questions during telephone interviews was for what purpose would TESEV use the very data. Although as an answer to the question, detailed information about the project was given over the telephone, this information was not deemed an adequate answer by the institution officials most of the time. While some institutions stated that publication of their data on the website could initiate processes that could lead to legal action, the central offices of the kindergartens affiliated to large educational institutions avoided

providing information for similar reasons. In passing, it is worth mentioning that some of the information providers showed little interest in the purposes of the project and the website. And among the officials who were interested, some sent their e-mail addresses to receive detailed information about the website and TESEV, while some others did not find this information necessary.

Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 pandemic also affected the data collection process. For one thing, it made it impossible to make face-to-face meetings with institutions. But the biggest impact of the pandemic has been on institutions providing pre-school education. While the income of these pre-school institutions which were opened and closed at uncertain intervals decreased significantly, some of them had to shut down, having been unable to find the financial support they had expected. During the pandemic period, the quotas of pre-school education institutions were juridically reduced.⁴ Besides, even when the necessary security measures were taken, parents hesitated to send their children to kindergartens due to fear of illness. As a consequence, the number of enrolled students decreased day by day. The information regarding the current number of students proved to be the point that was reacted most negatively during telephone interviews. The institution officials held that the publication of the declining number of students due to the pandemic would adversely affect parents who were considering enrollment. For this reason, they either abstained from giving a low number of enrolled students or tended to give higher numbers than the actual ones. Stating that the information was received during the

pandemic period would take place on the website as a note did not prove effective in some interviews though it alleviated the very concern a little bit.

One of the most important reasons for these varying responses to telephone calls is the lack of information about data and data-based decision making. Due to reasons such as the incapacity of public institutions in collecting data regularly or rendering them accessible and the lack of examples of data-oriented approach and data-based decision making, the institutions that provide pre-school education were unable to see the intended purpose of the requested information clearly. This made it all the more difficult to create data on pre-school education institutions, which already takes a long time to collect by telephone and by individual efforts, and to obtain a solid data set. The fact that the concept of data-driven policy has not been established in the public opinion also made it difficult to communicate on the telephone.

4. Results and Recommendations for Data Access

Standards should be introduced to institutions so as to increase data diversity, legibility and availability.

In Turkey, data on children produced by the official statistics institute and other relevant official institutions is not sufficient enough for policy making in terms of both topic and scale. New standards can be introduced to the mentioned institutions in order for the

collection and classification of the data we examined by taking into account the topic, geographical unit, age and gender ranges (see **Table 1**) in a more detailed way by separating different age ranges and with high resolution in terms of geographical unit. With these standards which also make the determination of the format of the collected data possible, data diversity, readability and usability will surely increase. In addition, the data collected by these institutions should be shared regularly, especially with local administrations. In this way, it will be possible to prevent labor, time and financial losses that may arise due to the simultaneous work of different actors in provinces and districts on the same data, and data exchange will become widespread.

Local administrations can also increase their efforts to obtain and produce data in systematic and creative ways.

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Local administrations should establish data management units within their own bodies.

The necessity of ensuring data management within the body of local administrations is another important result that emerged from the Urban95 workshops. The obstacles preventing local administrations from establishing systematic and up-to-date databases can be summarized as follows: the lack of communication and coordination between municipal units, lack of a common data repository, the limited knowledge of the personnel on data and ineffective automation systems that do not allow flexibility. One solution to these problems, which can be developed within the body of local administrations is the creation of data-related units. Considering that these units should continuously make use of data during planning and monitoring processes, establishing them under the Strategy Development Directorates or Departments seems appropriate. And yet, not all municipalities have this directorate with their body. In this case, it may be appropriate that the very unit recommended to be established in the field of data is managed by the directorate responsible for preparing the strategic plan.

Local administrations can also strengthen communication within themselves by establishing open data platforms.

Another solution that will help strengthen communication and coordination among governmental units is the establishment of open data platforms by local administrations. Although the main purpose of open data platforms is to provide data sharing with urban citizens in accordance with the principles of transparency and accountability, it has turned out in the long run that they can also facilitate data sharing among disconnected units of local administrations.⁵ For this reason, it is possible for the directorates or units managing the data to strengthen the communication among their units by creating open data platforms. In this way, it is also possible to eliminate the problems arising from the incompatibility and inflexibility of automations. These units and platforms to be established will strengthen the communication of local administrations not only within their own bodies but also with other actors and citizens who utilize data, contributing to the spread of data culture in general. And this will in turn make data

collection easier. For instance, the question of what purpose data will be used for, which is the most frequent reason for negative responses encountered in the creation process of preschool education institutions database will automatically reduce. Thus, innovative data types will emerge and the services provided will be managed in line with these data.

Training of all institution employees on data is important for establishing a data culture.

In order for a data culture to be created in Turkey, all employees in institutions affiliated to municipalities and to the central government should be equipped with sufficient knowledge and data literacy should be increased in general. With this purpose in mind, educational support should be received from institutions that have competence in data. Institution employees who require to develop their capacities in data collection, cleansing, classification, building databases and converting data into information should also be informed about the scope of PDPL (Personal Data Protection Law).

NOTES

1. For example, the neighborhood-based social aid data requested from municipalities within the scope of the Urban95 project were not shared in the first place by the employees of some municipalities for it was perceived as a personal data request.
2. For detailed information on underlay maps, see Fidan G. & Erginli B.E. (2021), Data-Driven Decision Making and Policy Development, TESEV Publications.
3. For detailed information on urban dashboards, see Tülek, M. & Erginli, E. (2020) “New Tools to Support Urban Policies: Open data platforms and digital urban dashboards,” TESEV Publications.
4. The Ministry of National Education, Rules to be Observed in Private Preschool Education Institutions in Addition to the Measures Regarding the Use of Medical Masks and the Maintenance of Hygiene and Social Distance. Publication date: 29.05.2020.
5. Erginli, B.E. & Tülek, M. (2020), “New Tools to Support Urban Policies: Open data platforms and digital urban dashboards,” TESEV Publications.

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