

**A Case Study for “Evaluation of Trainings under Active Labour  
Market Policies in Turkey for Women Empowerment”**

*Türkiye’de Aktif İşgücü Politikaları Kapsamında Verilen Eğitimlerin  
Kadınların Güçlenmesi Üzerindeki Etkisine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme*

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## A Case Study for "Evaluation of Trainings under Active Labour Market Policies in Turkey for Women Empowerment"

### *Türkiye’de Aktif İşgücü Politikaları Kapsamında Verilen Eğitimlerin Kadınların Güçlenmesi Üzerindeki Etkisine İlişkin Bir Değerlendirme*

Melahat Güray<sup>1</sup>

#### **Abstract**

This paper attempts to find out "To what extent, trainings, which are currently being implemented as a basic component of active labour market policies (ALMPs) in Turkey, can be a solution for economic and social empowerment of women?" This study, therefore, deals with the development, instruments and implementation of ALMPs, particularly training component in Turkey and perceptions of women participants themselves regarding the impact and meaning of trainings conducted as a component of ALMPs. To that aim, deep interviews were made with the women participated to trainings in addition to the literature review and content analysis on ALMP. The snapshot of the recent labour market policies in Turkey reveals that "ALMPs" including particular measures for women have become the standpoint of the employment policies at least at discourse level and therefore expectations from trainings under ALMPs are high for the sake of economic and social empowerment of people including women in Turkey. The findings of the research reveal that current training policies in ALMPs are not tailor-made policies and they are not sufficient to increase women employment and empowerment in Turkey. It has been concluded that other major complementary policies, such as decreasing undeclared work, increasing enrollment rate of girls, creating jobs for women, increasing awareness raising to break traditional patriarchal relations, providing child and old care services should be implemented to make trainings effective for increasing decent employment for women. However, these trainings mean "certificate and job", "self-confidence" and "socialization" for the women interviewed. Therefore, it cannot be denied that trainings in current framework are useful to increase self confidence and socialization of women although they cannot increase employment level of women at sufficient level.

**Keywords:** Active Labour Market Policies, training, women employment in Turkey, unemployment, flexibility, Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR)

#### **Özet**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye’de Aktif İşgücü Politikaları temel bileşenlerinden biri olan eğitimin kadınların ekonomik ve sosyal yönden güçlenmesine olan katkılarını incelemektir. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma özellikle eğitim başta olmak üzere Türkiye’de aktif işgücü politikaların gelişimi, araçları ve uygulanmasını ve eğitim faaliyetlerine katılan kadınların eğitimlerin etki ve anlamlarına ilişkin algılarını ele almaktadır. Bu amaçla, literatür taraması ve içerik analizinin yanısıra, eğitim faaliyetlerine katılan kadınlarla bu araştırma kapsamında derin görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Türkiye’de uygulanan istihdam politikaları, kadınlar için özel önlemler içeren aktif işgücü politikalarının, en azından söylem düzeyinde, istihdam politikalarının en etkili araçları olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu sebeple, kadınlar da dâhil Türkiye’de ekonomik ve sosyal kalkınma için aktif işgücü politikalarından beklenti oldukça yüksektir. Bu saha araştırmasının sonuçları, Türkiye’de aktif işgücü politikaları kapsamında verilen eğitimlerin işgücü piyasasının ve hedef grupların ihtiyaçlarına göre planlanmadığını ve kadınların istihdam oranlarını ve ekonomik ve sosyal güçlerini artırmada yetersiz kaldığını göstermektedir. Söz konusu eğitimlerin sonuç odaklı ve etkin olabilmesi için, tamamlayıcı temel politikaların, örneğin, okullaşma oranlarının artırılması, kayıt dışı istihdamın azaltılması, iş yaratılması, toplumdaki ataerkil ilişkilerin değişmesi için bilinç artırma faaliyetleri, çocuk ve yaşlı bakım hizmetlerinin artması gibi politikaların uygulanması gerekmektedir. Ancak, söz konusu eğitimler, mülakat yapılan kadınlar için, "sertifika ve iş", "kendine güven" ve "sosyalleşme"yi ifade etmektedir. Bu sebeple, mevcut sistemde uygulanan eğitimler, kadınların istihdam oranlarını beklenen düzeyde artırmamış olsa da, söz konusu eğitimlerin kadınların kendine güven ve sosyalleşmesi anlamında faydalı oldukları inkâr edilemez.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Aktif işgücü politikaları, eğitim, Türkiye’de kadın istihdamı, işsizlik, esneklik, Türkiye İş Kurumu (İŞKUR)

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## Introduction

This study attempts to find out “To what extent, trainings, which are currently being implemented as a basic component of active labour market policies (ALMPs) in Turkey, can be a solution for economic and social empowerment of women?” This study, therefore, deals with the development, instruments and implementation of ALMPs, particularly training component in Turkey and perceptions of women participants themselves regarding the impact and meaning of trainings conducted as a component of ALMPs.

The low labour force participation and high unemployment for women is one of the long-lasting and crucial problems in Turkey which needs urgent policies and intervention. The snapshot of the recent labour market policies in Turkey reveals that “ALMPs” including particular measures for women have become the standpoint of the employment policies at least at discourse level and therefore expectations from ALMPs are high for the sake of economic and social empowerment of people including women in Turkey.

Despite high expectations from trainings in ALMPs, there does not exist any official monitoring mechanism and empirical research yet in Turkey to analyze the impact of ALMPs particularly trainings in the long term. At that point, the existing literature regarding impact of the active measures in countries other than Turkey and the main drive, formulation, scope, financing of the ALMPs particularly trainings in Turkey makes the research question of this paper interesting.

Following the introduction, methodology of this research is explained with main arguments in *Section 1*. In *Section 2*, a brief literature on development and impact of ALMPs with a particular focus on trainings and women is provided in order to evaluate these policies in Turkey within a general framework of economic and social policies. In *Section 3*, currently implemented trainings in ALMPs in Turkey are explained with a critical perspective while taking into account the current situation of women in labour market. In *Section 4*, the impact of trainings on women in short term during the training and perceptions of women participants of trainings regarding impact and meaning of trainings is analyzed. As a conclusion, a summary of the research is provided.

### 1. Methodology

In this research, as mentioned in the introduction section, the research question is “To what extent, trainings, which are currently being implemented as a basic component of active labour market policies (ALMPs) in Turkey, can be a solution for economic and social empowerment of women?”

As dependent variable, ALMPs refer to labour market policies aiming at increasing the likelihood of employment or improving income prospects for the unemployed or inactive people who find it difficult to enter the labour market in Turkey. ALMPs are trainings, job matching, job search assistance, entrepreneurship, public work (toplum yararına çalışma), career and guidance and internships. In this research, trainings provided through İŞKUR will be focused on as the main instruments of ALMPs in Turkey. When it comes to operationalization of the dependent variables, I will focus on change in employment status at macro level with the assumption that finding a decent work will result in empowerment of women and prospects and feelings of women participating to these trainings on finding a decent work and changes in their social life during the trainings.

In this research, different qualitative methods are used. First of all, *literature review* is made to understand the relationship between welfare and active policies as components of employment policies and their impacts in a general policy framework. Secondly, a *content analysis* is made on official reports, legislation, regulations on trainings, news in order to analyze the development, content and (attributed) role of activation policies by focusing on trainings to increase employment particularly for women. Thirdly, *deep interviews* are made with women participants of trainings, in order to get their prospects regarding their future and impact of trainings on their life even during trainings. The official statistics of İŞKUR and TURKSTAT are also used throughout the research. When it comes to *sampling*, the quota and simple random sampling is being used in this research. Deep interviews were applied to 20 women participants to trainings with two different questionnaire forms. One group of interviews was applied to 8 women participants in "Child Care" trainings throughout İŞKUR in Mamak Women Employment Association and the second group of interviews was applied to 12 women participants in "Executive secretary" trainings throughout İŞKUR in a private employment board<sup>2</sup>.

The main limitation in this research was the lack of any statistics regarding long term impacts of trainings in employment of participants due to the lack of any monitoring mechanism of ALMPs. Since it is not possible to make a long term evaluation given the lack of monitoring mechanism, the evaluation will be made for women who are still participating to these courses in order to get their opinion regarding the impact of the courses. Therefore, the focus is on "perceptions" of women participants who continue their trainings.

As regards impact of trainings in Turkey on economic and social empowerment of women, the main argument of this research could be summarized as followed. First of all, at macro level, when the reasons behind low employment and labour force participation rate of women in Turkey are considered, I argue that romanticizing trainings under ALMPs as a solution for increasing employment of women is not realistic. It is necessary to support ALMPs with other economic and social policies, such as, care services, education policies, job creation policies etc. to empower women in economic and social terms. However, when the trend of labour market policies is analysed, it seems that policies aiming at increasing *flexibility* and *activation* go hand in hand. Therefore, on one hand, ALMPs are being implemented to increase "employability" of women; on the other hand, increasing flexibility and lack of supporting policies leads to low security, income and employment prospects for women. Secondly, the implementation of trainings under ALMPs (i.e. the selection of candidates, daily allowances) may be examples of features of predatory state in Turkey rather than that of human capital development. Therefore, I would argue that current framework of trainings could not provide social and economic empowerment of women in Turkey even though they have the potential to create more hopeful and more employable women.

## 2. Literature Review

In this section, a brief literature review on ALMPs in general and trainings in particular is presented in order to evaluate the role of ALMPs in a general framework of

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<sup>2</sup> The child care training is provided for 2.5 months with the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education. There is also a child care facility in the Mamak Women Employment foundation where the women could bring their children and also make practical training. The Executive secretary training is also provided for 2.5 months with the curriculum of the Ministry of National Education.

welfare policies since the international experience may be helpful in explaining the case of Turkey.

There is a vast of literature focusing the on the *development of ALMPs*. It is generally argued that there is a shift towards new welfare policies which make focus on the employability and individual responsibilities since the late 1990s (See Anderson, 2002; Giugni, 2009; Taylor-Gooby, 1997; Jessop, 1993; Walters, 1997). The centre of the debate has focused on ALMPs which stake the welfare of individuals upon their ability to constantly work on themselves. In fact, supply driven policies aiming at empowering individuals through training and lifelong learning has new aspects of welfare states for a “Good Society” (Anderson, 2002: 5). In addition to the human capital approach, the development of active policies is also explained from a neo-liberal approach. In this respect, the emphasis of work is conceived as an indispensable precondition of citizenship (Andersen and Halvorsen, 2002: 107). In fact, being different from the first derive behind the active measures aimed at increasing labour mobility in Sweden in 1950s (Calmfors, 2001: 3), the emphasis behind the development of active measures shifted in the direction of decreasing dependency on welfare benefits given the “dependency culture” , “poverty trap” and “budget concerns” arguments while introducing “conditionality” which means the unemployed people have to participate in active labour market programmes otherwise they would not be able to benefit from welfare benefits (See Cockx, 2000; Giugni, 2009; Daguerre, 2007).

There are also arguments explaining the development of active policies by referring changes in the labour market as a result of globalization and technological change and the challenges for the low-skilled labour force (See Andersen and Jensen, 2002; Auer, Efendioğlu and Leschenke, 2008). In this respect, increasing activation policies is also a crucial component of *deregulation* policies of labour markets (ibid).

The evaluations on *different welfare states* also reveal different explanations regarding the development of the active measures. According to Daguerre’s analysis of three worlds of activation (2007: 4), there are three approaches of ALMPs in different welfare states: The Human Capital, the Work First and the Social Integration models. In social-democratic tradition, it is stated that Human Capital Approach explains the development of active labour market policies. The lack of relevant skills is seen as the major cause of unemployment and therefore it is aimed to provide unemployed people with better qualifications particularly via vocational training programmes particularly in Scandinavian Countries. In liberal tradition, like in United States and United Kingdom, there is a motivational deficiency argument- behavioural problem- arising from unemployment benefits which paves the way for ALMPs including trainings. In Continental Europe, social integration policies have some elements of ALMPs. In this approach, the structural barriers faced by individuals are also taken into consideration. Therefore, temporary subsidized jobs and vocational trainings are commonly used in these countries. After the empirical analysis he made in USA and Europe, it is concluded that the opposition between the Human Capital and Work First approaches is becoming more blurred and the path to activation is becoming similar (Daguerre, 2007: 154).

When it comes to *impact of trainings in ALMPs in general and in particular to women*, the empirical studies focus on labour force participation and unemployment figures at macro level. Many of the evaluation studies are inconclusive regarding the net impact of

employment creation of ALMPs. Substitution effect (replacement of non-subsidized participants with subsidized participants), deadweight losses (the same result would have happened without trainings) and creaming out effect (helping persons already better-off) are some effects decreasing success of trainings. There are limited macro-economic studies that estimated the impact of trainings on labour market participation, unemployment and particularly unemployment benefit system favourable. According to Scarpetta analysis (OECD, 1996) in which data from 17 OECD countries used in 1983-1993, for instance, it is found that trainings have a positive effect on "labour force participation rate". It is stated as a disadvantage that trainings may produce temporary rather than sustainable solutions and may not be sufficient to increase employment (Rosas and Rossignoti, 2000: 152). Using annual data from 19 OECD countries over the period 1985-1999, Boone and Van Ours (2004) also found that higher spending on labour market training reduces the impact of unemployment benefits in raising unemployment. Bassani and Duval (2006) studies found that spending on labour market training significantly lowers unemployment and high active labour market policies spending also reduces the increase in unemployment associated with generous unemployment benefits.

It is argued by some scholars that trainings in ALMPs are potentially very important to increase women employment (Bergemann and Berg, 2006: 2). Accordingly, it is argued that trainings in ALMPs could work for women better than men because they have a greater distance to the labour market and when and if the labour force participation rate is low for women, trainings could become more effective for women. Therefore, it is argued that skill-training programs have more positive effect for women.

On the other hand, the limited impact of active labour market measures have been revealed in some evaluations (See Calforms, Forslund and Hemström, 2001; Martin and Grubb, 2001). For instance, according to Martin and Grubb (2001), vocational training programmes as components of activation policies are effective for increasing employability of the old-women and their impact is very limited for the young ones. In another study (Koning, 2007: 15), it is stated that on the whole the results of ALMPs are unsatisfactory and there is a need for innovation. In the same study, as regards the impact of trainings, it is concluded that trainings might be effective for adult trainees but not for the young unemployed. Furthermore, according to Koning analysis, most studies find that the effects of trainings get smaller over time. Reasons of unemployment are also important in order to formulate effective ALMPs (Cockx, 2000: 458). In Cockx analysis, in a case study, it is shown that a vocational training programme may be useful in short term.

In a nutshell, the empirical literature has some inconclusive results as regards the effects of trainings in ALMPs for women. It is also clear that activation policies mean different aims for different welfare states and the only logic behind development of them is not only human capital concerns but also financial concerns regarding unemployment benefit systems.

### **3. A Critical Evaluation of Trainings in ALMPS in Turkey**

This section aims at summarizing deficiencies in implementation of trainings at both political and practical level in Turkey in order to evaluate their impact on women. To that aim, the most crucial points are explained with relevant statistics, official documents and news.

### 3.1. Partnership between Flexibility and Activation Policies:

In this section, the main drive and actors behind the development of ALMPs in Turkey is shortly explained. As the literature review in Section 2 reveals, trainings in ALMPs have different meanings for different welfare states (Human Capital or Work First). Therefore, it is crucial to put the main drive behind the selection of these policies under question in order to understand their potential as a way to increase women empowerment. Regarding the policy making process, given the very strict eligibility rules of unemployment insurance policies in Turkey, the coverage rate of the unemployment insurance which was around 28 percent of the registered unemployed to İŞKUR and 9.4 percent of all unemployed is very low (ETF, 2010: 63). Unlike many European Countries, there is no unemployment benefit system, but instead there exists only unemployment insurance system which provides an amount of income for those who lost their jobs. Therefore, it is clear that there is not a “conditionality” concern behind designing trainings as active measures to decrease unemployment benefit dependency in Turkey. On the other hand, given the education level of people in the labour market is low; the “human capital” approach may be much more suitable for explaining the case of Turkey. However, it could be argued that the story behind the development of ALMPs is much more related with structural adjustment policies.

The history of ALMPs goes back 1980s in Turkey although their scope and content was very limited. 24 January 1980 decisions gave the way to increase trainings in ALMPs particularly to train people in line with the needs of internationalization of the labour markets as a result of globalization (Dertli, 2007: 120) and to mitigate the negative consequences of privatization through providing trainings to the workers laid-off (Auer and Popova, 2003: 3). With the support of the World Bank and European Union, the scope and content of ALMPs provided by İŞKUR have been enlarged particularly since 1990s. It could be argued that Turkey learned activation policies from World Bank and the EU.

When the recent employment packages and strategies are analyzed, it is clearly seen that trainings in ALMPs are seen as the major component to increase employment including women. All the statements of the government representatives focus on trainings as if the only challenge for increasing women employment is “lack of skills” and “lack of flexibility”.

When the labour market policies are analyzed, it is seen that flexibility and activation policies go hand in hand in Turkey. On one hand, flexible work types and employment subsidies to decrease burden on employers have been introduced; on the other hand, the budget and scope of trainings and other components of ALMPs has been increased (Table-1). This table strengthens the argument that ALMPs even designed particularly for women are mainly used to mitigate labour market flexibility in Turkey and highly supported by international organizations. However, there is no clearly expressed policy on other policies, such as, child care, combat against discrimination at work, job creation for women etc. in promoting women employment.



**Table 1: Summary of Labour Market Policies**

YEAR	POLICY	POLICY ORIENTATION
1993	Education and Employment Project implemented by the <b>World Bank</b>	<b>Activation</b> of people by vocational trainings
2002	<b>Privatization</b> Social Support Project supported by the <b>World Bank</b>	<b>Activation</b> of people who were laid-off in the wake of privatization
2003	Flexible form of work, namely, part-time, fixed term has been introduced in the <i>Labour Law</i>	Flexibility
2003	Active Labour Market Strategy Project (İŞKUR) supported by the <b>EU</b>	Activation
2006	Active Employment Measures and Support to Turkish Employment Organization at Local Level (İŞKUR) supported by the <b>EU</b>	Activation of <b>women</b> and young people
2008	%5 premium reduction on employers contribution to social insurance	Flexibility/Decreasing employers cost
2008	Reduction on contribution of employers on social insurance premiums of <b>women</b> and young people	Flexibility/Decreasing employers cost
2009	Active Labour Market Policy with <b>Gender Equality</b> Perspective supported by <b>ILO</b>	Activation of <b>women</b>
2010	Promoting Youth Employment Project supported by the <b>EU</b>	Activation of young people
2010	Promoting <b>Women</b> Employment Project supported by the <b>EU</b>	Activation of <b>women</b>
2011	Draft in Torba Kanun: Flexible form of works (work at home and telework) introduced	Flexibility
2011	Torba Kanun: Financial allocation for trainings increased	Activation

Prepared by the author herself

### 3.2. Lack of institutional capacity of ALMPs and low coverage:

İŞKUR is the main responsible body for implementing ALMPs. Since the re-organization of the institution in 2003, İŞKUR has attained a more active role in promoting employment but still remains an ineffective institution in the labour market. Its institutional capacity is not enough to provide effective services. In fact, as of 2009, the total staff of İŞKUR was 2.312. When compared with the number of unemployed people (3.471.000 people in 2009), it is seen that one staff of İŞKUR should serve for 1.501 unemployed people, which is not feasible.

The total number of registered unemployed with İŞKUR in 2009 was 1 689 349 (Table-2). According to TUIK statistics the total number of unemployed is around 3.5 million (Table-3) and therefore İŞKUR could access only half of the unemployed people. In fact, only 47.6 percent of unemployed men and 51.3 percent of unemployed women are registered to İŞKUR. The ratio of women in total unemployed registered to İŞKUR is only 30 percent. When the educational level of women registered to İŞKUR is evaluated (Table-5), we see that the education level of registered people is very low. When it comes to job placement rate (Table-4), it is seen that the ratio is so low that it is 7.4 percent for men, 5.85 percent for women. Furthermore, the statistics reveal that the highest placement rate is seen for the women with primary level of education (Table-6).

**Table 2: The Number of Registered to İŞKUR, Gender, Age**

15-19		20-24		25-64		65+		TOTAL		TOTAL
Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
42.274	29.639	210.543	128.481	933.292	344.985	110	25	1.186.219	503.130	1.689.349

Source: 2009 Annual Statistics, İŞKUR

**Table 3: Unemployment Rate, Gender**

	Men	Women	Total
Number of unemployed people	2.491.000	979.000	3.471.000
Registration Rate to İŞKUR (%)	47,6	51,3	48,6
Unemployment Rate (%)	13.9	14.3	14

Source: Prepared by TURKSTAT and İŞKUR statistics, 2009

**Table 4: Job Placement, Gender, Age**

15-19		20-24		25-64		65+		TOTAL		TOTAL
Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
1.951	1.180	15.791	7.430	70.448	20.829	95	14	88.285	29.453	118.278

Source: Prepared İŞKUR statistics, 2009

**Table 5: The Number of Registered to İŞKUR, Education Level (M=Male, W=Women)**

Illiterate		Literate (Not attended to primary)		Primary		Secondary		University		Masters Degree		Doctorate		TOTAL	
M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
16.2	15.7	19.6	12.4	601.2	168.4	398.2	193.1	148.0	110.5	2.61	2.56	14	82	1.186.2	503.1
32	84	66	57	92	91	10	74	54	76	6	6	9		19	30

Source: 2009 Annual Statistics, İŞKUR

**Table 6: Job Placement, Gender, Age (M=Male, W=Women)**

Illiterate		Literate (Not attended to primary)		Primary		Secondary		University		Masters Degree		Doctorate		TOTAL	
M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
530	201	2.120	807	52.353	15.250	27.503	9.425	6.264	3.731	51	37	4	2	88.825	29.453

Source: 2009 Annual Statistics, İŞKUR

These figures reveal that almost half of the women are unaware of the services of İŞKUR and therefore it seems difficult that trainings provided through İŞKUR will be

effective in economic and social empowerment of women given the scope of the target group and ineffectiveness of trainings.

### **3.3. Ineffective trainings as components of ALMPs:**

When it comes to the bulk of the ALMPs, we see that there is a wide range of policy instruments implemented by İŞKUR, namely, trainings, job brokerage, internship, entrepreneurship, career guidance and job counseling, public works (TYÇP-Toplum Yararına çalışma programları) and entrepreneurship trainings. İŞKUR provides these services both through national budget by sub-contracting and EU Projects. Trainings are the most common measure to increase employability of unemployed people. There are different forms of trainings offered by İŞKUR, namely, vocational training for the unemployed, training and rehabilitation programs for individuals with disabilities and ex-convict. In 2009, İŞKUR trained 166.713 unemployed people, out of which almost half were women (Table-7). This figure reveals that the scope of trainings is low when compared with high level of unemployment of women. Furthermore, even though there is no breakage for employment rate of women, it is clear that employment rate of who completed courses is very low (Table-7). In addition to the low scope of trainings, there are additional challenges in training programs which are summarized below:

**Table 7: Figures on trainings and women**

2007	The Number of Trainings	Number of Participants			Number of those employed	Employment rate of who completed courses
		Men	Women	Total		
TRAININGS	1.347	25.254	8.343	33.597	9.428	0,35
With Employment guarantee	196	6.839	2.488	9.327	4.093	0,50
Without employment guarantee	1.151	18.415	5.855	24.270	5.335	0,29

2008	The Number of Trainings	Number of Participants			Number of those employed	Employment rate of who completed courses
		Men	Women	Total		
TRAININGS	1.773	19.894	10.782	30.676	8.695	0,34
With Employment guarantee	323	4.981	2.950	7.931	1.928	0,28
Without employment guarantee	1.450	14.913	7.832	22.745	6.767	0,36

2009	The Number of Trainings	Number of Participants			Number of those employed	Employment rate of who completed courses
		Men	Women	Total		
TRAININGS	7.897	85.756	80.957	<b>166.713</b>	25.533	0,21
With Employment guarantee	942	10.783	10.825	21.608	5.474	0,42
Without employment guarantee	6.955	74.973	70.132	145.105	20.059	0,19

**Source:** İŞKUR statistics

### 3.3.1. Financing of trainings:

There has been allocated a great amount of budget to activation policies, which have been conducted mainly by Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR). In fact, in 2008, EUR 16,525,368 was spent on training courses, while more than EUR 224 million was allocated for this in 2009 (Eurofound, 2011). The great increase in the budget of activation policies happened since a great amount of budget has been transferred from Unemployment Insurance Fund.

First of all, it seems a great challenge to use the high amount of money effectively when the absorption capacity has been taken into account. The second crucial point is related with the source of the budget. It is one of the criticized issues that the increase in financing of ALMPs is because of the transfer of the Unemployment Insurance Fund, which is composed of contributions of not only state but also employees and employers. Given the very strict eligibility rules of unemployment insurance policies in Turkey, the coverage rate of the

unemployment insurance which was around 28 percent of the registered unemployed to İŞKUR and 9.4 percent of all unemployed is very low (Eurofound, 2011). It is criticized that the Insurance Fund, which has to be used to support people who lost their jobs in certain conditions in terms of income, is being used for different aims (DİSK 2010; TÜRK-İŞ, 2010).

### **3.3.2. Decentralization of the management of trainings:**

According to the Labour Market Training Regulation put into force in 2008, the Provincial Employment and Vocational Training Boards are responsible for making training plans in each province within the frame of budget allocated to them by the central administration. In addition to the planning, the Provincial Directorate of İŞKUR has the competency to select the candidates for trainings. However, there are not strictly defined criteria for the selection of candidates. Given each and every participant is paid 15 TL as daily allowance, the selection process becomes much more important.

According to the recent changes in the regulation in 2010, a provision was introduced making employment compulsory for the service providers with enterprises to at least 50 percent of employees.

In this framework, decentralization, 15 TL as daily allowances, lack of certain criteria in selecting participants and lack of effective sanctions may provide opportunities for administrators at the local level to use these trainings as sources of clientalism and corruption as features of predatory state rather than increasing the skill level of women in line with their needs.

### **3.3.3. Lack of monitoring system:**

There is no monitoring mechanism to follow up the participants to trainings in the labour market in the long run. Therefore, it is not possible to evaluate the real impacts of trainings on people in the long term.

In a nutshell, the current framework of trainings has many challenges to have positive impacts on women particularly in terms of employment. As regards the coverage and effectiveness of these policies, even though the active policies with its all concepts are very common at the discourse level and the training component seems to be the core of the employment strategy, it is clear that the coverage and effective implementation of these policies is limited and only a certain group of people can benefit from these services. Therefore, even with the assumption that trainings are very effective to combat unemployment at theoretical level, it is difficult to argue that they will be effective in increasing employment for women in current framework.

## **4. Impacts of Trainings on Women at Macro and Micro Level**

In this section, the role of trainings in increasing women employment as a policy option at macro level in Turkey is analysed by literature review, social partners' declarations, and relevant statistics, and participants' opinions. As mentioned before, given there is no monitoring mechanism, it is not possible to give exact figures regarding employment situation of women in the long term. At micro level, the feelings and opinions of women participants of trainings are summarized as finding of interviews.

#### 4.1. Trainings as a strategy to promote women employment at macro level?

As regards women, trainings in ALMPs are seen as the second effective strategy after flexibility policies at the discourse level. In fact, it is seen that flexibility-flexicurity, activation, the mismatch between the labour demand and supply and the high employment costs on employers are the core of the arguments of the recommendations to decrease unemployment in general as well as for women (See Pirlir, 2009; Süral, 2009; TİSK, 2009; Pirlir, 2006; Çelik, 2010).

On the other hand, there exists counter arguments stating that flexibility and increasing responsibility of the individuals will result in fragmentation of the labour market and cheap labour instead of increasing employment of women (See TÜRK İŞ, 2010; DİSK, 2010). As regards the negative *impacts of the neoliberalism* on the labour market in Turkey, it has been stated that temporary employment and undeclared work has increased, unionization has declined, flexibility has increased, employment prospects have been deteriorated and inequality in overall income distribution has increased which also affect women in the labour market (See: Çam, 2002; Özdemir, 2006; Bağımsız Sosyal Bilimciler, 2008).

When it comes to *role of trainings in ALMPs* in increasing employment of women, given the low level of education of the labour force in Turkey, there is common understanding that some components of the active measures, namely, vocational trainings, are crucial in combating unemployment on the condition that they are provided in good quality. Such kind of arguments is based on the opinion for necessity of developing human resources according the needs of the labour market and economy. According to the World Bank report (2009), urbanization and decline in agricultural employment are two main factors contributed to decline in share of women seeking for jobs in the labour market because they do not have enough skills. Therefore, vocational trainings are seen as crucial to qualify women for good jobs in the labour market.

However, in an economic research, it is stated that individual features (gender, age, education, marital status etc.) and labour market characteristics have impacts on the transitions in the labour market, namely from unemployment to employment statues and therefore policies should be made according to these features (Taşçı, 2005). Therefore, there should be differentiation in policies and supportive policies to the training activities in promoting employment of women. In fact, according to a World Bank report (2009), investment policies in education in Turkey should be supported with cheap child care services and job creation policies to improve situation of women in the labour market. In another study, it is stated that trainings under the active measures will not be effective for women unless we increase their educational attainment (Ercan, 2007: 58). Therefore, given the lack of other policies, it seems that trainings will not result in expected consequences.

In addition to the lack of other policies which would provide synergy with trainings, there exist other criticism particularly regarding the formulation, financing and coverage of these training (See DİSK, 2010; Çelebi, 2010). It is also criticized that İŞKUR does not apply gender-sensitivite active labour programmes (Dayıoğlu and Ercan, 2010: 31) and the coverage of these policies is low (Sapançalı, 2007: 27; Yeldan, 2010: 25).

In fact, the statistics of İŞKUR do not illustrate positive signals for women. Unfortunately, there is no gender breakage in İŞKUR's data, which has been published

officially, regarding employment rate of women participants. However, the average ratio is also very low (0.21 percent in 2009) that it is difficult to argue that these policies are effective for women even in the short term at macro level.

## 2. Trainings as a strategy to promote women economic and social empowerment at micro level?

There is no doubt that the discourse regarding trainings in ALMPs is very promising for women. Even the names of the training projects financed by the EU to promote women employment are very promising and hopeful, such as, "Balıcı Bayanlar Mutlu Yarınlar (Honey makers women, Happy Future" Project in Malatya, "Kadınız, biz de Varız (We are women, we are there)" Project in Rize, "İşli Güçlü Kadınlar (Women with job)" Project in Tunceli, "Seralarda Güneş Kadınlar için Doğuyor" (The sun is rising for women in Greenhouses) Project in Amasya, " Van Kadınları Balık Köfte Yaparak İstihdama Katılıyor (Women make fishball and become employed)" in Van.

Despite the positive discourse regarding vocational courses for women, in a research which the formal vocational training and education system rather than those provided by İŞKUR are analysed, it is found that contrary to expectations of the new vocational education and training system, this system produces anxious individuals who are uncertain and have fear about their future (Özaltan, 2010).

At that point, it is useful to summarise the feelings of participants in "child care" training in Mamak and "Assistant manager" in Tekirdağ regarding the reasons behind unemployment of women and future plans and feelings of participants to these trainings.

As regards *responsibility in finding jobs and employability concern of women*, most of the women participants themselves believe that they have enough skills and experience to find a job but they could not find a job because there are not suitable jobs in line with their skills. Therefore, most of them believe that they are "employable" even before the course they participated.

A participant of "child care training", 20 years old, graduate of secondary education, focused on discrimination against women by stating that:

*"There is no job. No job. Actually, there are job opportunities but more for men. For instance, we cannot be taxi driver or carpenter as men become"*

Many participants believe that they could not find jobs because they do not have enough references, as some of them stated: *"There are jobs for us but we do not have any uncles – references (İş var dayı yok)"*. For instance a participant of "assistant manager" training, 35 years old, graduate of secondary education, shortly expressed her opinion in these words:

*"I worked as a cashier for one year and sale representative for eight years. I left the job since I wanted to have a job with social security. However, I cannot find job since I do not have any influential person and I am old person"*.

Another participant in child care training, 36 years old, graduate of secondary education, also focused on the same reasons by these words:

*"I worked in different kinds of works, such as, computer operator, accountant, delivery of food. I am in confident with myself. I do whatever task is assigned to me. I believe that there are jobs which are suitable to me. But, I do not have any influential person to*

*support me. Everybody is recruiting his/her known persons. The system is out of order. Furthermore, if you are above 30 years old, it is more difficult to find jobs. However, my brain is working, there is no problem, and there is no justice”*

However, few of them stated that the reason behind that they could not find jobs is lack of their skills and experiences. A participant in “assistant manager” training, 29 years old, graduate of secondary education, stated her lack of employability in these words:

*“I worked as a secretary in medical sector and became unemployed as a result of closure of enterprise. The main reasons behind that I cannot find jobs is insufficient education and lack of experience”*

As regards **perception of effectiveness of government** in implementing policies to promote employment for women, many of the participants criticize the government by stating that they are not doing their best. However, some of them stated that the government is not doing its best but at least they are providing such kind of trainings. These training policies are appreciated by the participants themselves.

A participant in child care training appreciated the government in that way:

*“The state did not support women before. It was very bad before selections. Since then, new employment opportunities are provided to women, for instance, these trainings are very useful”*

Another participant in executive secretary training, 20 years old, also appreciated these trainings as an important role of government in that way:

*“The state, at least, supports us with these trainings. Such kind of trainings did not exist before...”*

As regard **incentives for participating training courses**, only one of the women out of 20 participants stated that 15 TL was an incentive for participating to this course. The others stated that “certification and finding jobs” and “socialization” are the main incentives in participating to these courses and even they did not know they would be paid 15 TL. One of the participants in “child care” training, who is 39 years old, stated her incentives in participating to the training in these words:

*“I am a technical painter. I worked for 7-8 years. After getting married, my husband asked to choose to either him or work. I chose him, and, it was a false decision. The marriage ended everything; my social life has been ended. In order to socialize again, participating to this course is extremely important. I broke the shell, I went out of home. At the beginning, my husband did not support me. There happened unreasoned discussions, but I never gave up. After breaking my shell, it will continue in that way...”*

As regards **meaning and impact of vocational trainings on women**, almost all of them stated that it means first of all certificate and job; secondly, new friendship and socialisation and thirdly self-confidence. Therefore, almost all attribute “positive” meanings to the trainings.

A participant in child care training, 36 years old, graduate of primary education, expressed her opinions regarding the meaning of this training in these words:



*"I never worked in my life. I can imagine working now since my children have grown up. I am looking for a job for 2 years. I do not have any occupation. Therefore, this training is important to me since I can find a job in child care. I can care children at home too. Furthermore, I am informing my relatives about child care, illness, food, education etc. that I learn in this course. I started to implement the knowledge I gained there to my children. Our relationship has been changed indeed. We made very good friendship in this course, we are seeing each other outside."*

Another participant in child care training, 36 years old, graduate of vocational high school (trade), told the meaning of this training in this way:

*"I worked as an interviewer. I worked in Ziraat Bank with 4/c status. As AKP become government, they asked for certificate, I was laid off. This training means to me hope for finding a job with social security. I also learned a lot about child care that I will use when I find a job. Furthermore, I am applying what I learned to my nephew. Furthermore, I am becoming socialized. We are making kısır (Turkish local food) together and seeing each other outside the course"*

Another participant in executive secretary training, 33 years old, graduate of secondary education also focused on the importance of certificate:

*"I worked in power station and secretary for 5 years. I left the job because of my marriage. This training means certification to me"*

A participant in child caring training, 39 years old, graduate of higher secondary education (yükseköğretim) expressed how the meaning of this training is great for her in these words:

*"We are encouraging each other in this course. It is even enough to be outside home. We are cooperating each other. It does not matter whether we are from rural, urban, and educated or not. To be honest, education does not change anything, we-as the women-have same kind of problems. We broke our limits with this training, I, personally, do not want to go back to this cage".*

When it comes to their opinions about the *future and career*, it is interesting to me that almost all of them – with only one exception- stated that they believe that they will be able to find a job at the end of this training and they were very hopeful. They believe that they will use the knowledge they get from trainings in their work life as well as their daily life particularly in the case of child care training. However, some of them stated that they are not planning to work in the same field that they took trainings, which is an interesting point.

A participant in executive secretary training, 32 years old, graduate of vocational high school (makine ressamlığı) stated her optimism regarding her future in these words:

*"I worked as a technical painter in the same company for 11 years. I left the work when I was pregnant. I want to work a lot. I believe a lot that I can find a job. Education is always useful. I want to work in the field that I got training and I believe that I will."*

Another participant in executive secretary training, 33 years old, graduate of vocational trade high school, expressed her belief that she will certainly find a job in that way:

*“I worked with contact based as civil servant in Tekirdağ Trakya Integration Enterprises in 2000-2003 for 3 years. I worked in human resources department, secretary and power station. Since my husband has also been working in the same company, I was laid off because of that situation with another accuse. I want to work a lot and I need it a lot. After I was laid off, I tried to go back but I could not because of status of my husband and political reasons. I could not find any job because of my age. Therefore this training is very important for me. The quality and quantity of this training is ok, but it is a bit late for me because of my age. But, I am not hopeless anyway. Thanks to this training, we will succeed in good jobs. I of course prefer to work in the field that I got training. I believe that there should be jobs which bring good standards of living”.*

A participant in child care training, 36 years old, graduate of secondary education, expressed her optimistic opinions though without certainty on her future with these words:

*“I worked in different kind of works for 12 years. I left the working life because of marriage and children. I want to work in a job with security anymore. I am hopeful after this training. Because, it is compulsory to find jobs for half of the participants. I can have a job with good salary. However, my aim is not child care; I can work in different works, in banks or dormitories.”*

A young participant in child care training, 20 years old, graduate of secondary education, clearly explained her career plans in this way:

*“I love the field of child care a lot, therefore I chose this field. I am very hopeful. I will continue with public training. I am planning to continue to university education in a similar department and work in similar job”.*

It was interesting that almost all of the participants believe that they are going to find a decent work and more socialized life thanks to this training even though they criticized the current situation and discrimination in labour market in different questions. They seem more employable, hopeful and free thanks to these trainings.

## **Conclusion**

This paper attempted finding out the answer of that question: To what extent, trainings, which are currently being implemented as a basic component of active labour market policies (ALMPs) in Turkey, can be a solution for economic and social empowerment of women? Literature review, content analysis and deep interviews with women participants in trainings were used in conducting the research.

The findings of the research support the main arguments. First of all, the policy framework of ALMPs in general, which have been developed as a response to neoliberal policies in Turkey instead of human capital approach, has resulted in many challenges in terms of effectiveness of trainings. Therefore, it is not surprising that planning, formulation and implementation of trainings have been so ineffective that trainings could not have been resulted in positive results for increasing women employment as an indicator of economic empowerment so far.

Secondly, it is clear that the active policies with its all concepts are very common at the discourse level including increasing of women employment. However, the details in

implementation of trainings, such as, daily allowance, selection process, and employment guarantee might provide administrators with the base of clientalist relations.

Despite the lack of long term statistics as regards the impact of trainings, spill-over affects have been focused on such as socialization instead of increasing employment for women. It is clear that there should be comprehensive policies including awareness raising, education policies, job creation policies and child care services to make training activities effective. Otherwise, trainings have the potential to be resulted in wasting time and money in terms of women economic empowerment. Furthermore, policies under employment policies focus on flexibility makes it much more difficult for the women to find decent work.

Despite these challenges, it is interesting that all the women trainees seem happy and hopeful and they appreciate the state for these trainings. Even though they criticize many policies and practices such as age discrimination, lack of jobs, segregation of jobs for women, reference system, lack of security, lack of child care services and flexibility, they still think that these trainings are very useful as these trainings mean "certificate and job", "self-confidence" and "socialization" for them.

By and large, this research reveals that current training policies in ALMPs are not tailor-made policies and they are not effective to increase women employment and empowerment in Turkey. Therefore, unless other policies are made, such as decreasing undeclared work, increasing enrollment rate of girls, increasing awareness to break the patriarchal relations, creating jobs, providing child and old care services and designing and formulation of trainings in a proper way taking into consideration of needs of target groups, there is a risk that such kind of policies may not be effective for increasing employment of women. However, it can not be denied that even trainings in current framework can increase self confidence and socialization of women although they cannot increase employment level of women at sufficient level.

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