



NEWS & VIEWS

A perspective from CHP

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Policy Note by the CHP Scientific Platform

Prof. Dr. Fethi Aikel, Vice President of the CHP and MP from Istanbul

March 2021, Issue: 47

DEPRESSION IN THE SHADE OF COVID-19: ENDANGERED LIVES, CITIZENS LEFT TO POVERTY

UNDESIRE D WEALTH INDEX: Turkey ranked the 100th among 167 countries in the Wealth Index.

EBA FAILED THE CLASS: 6 million students couldn't use EBA efficiently due to lack of Internet access or a device.

LEAST SHARE TO HEALTH: Among the OECD countries, Turkey became the country with the least share to health compared to GDP which was 4,2%.

NO DATA TRANSPARENCY: Turkey ranks the 97th among 100 countries in the Covid-19 Data Transparency Index.

REGRESSION OF STABILITY: Turkey descended 73 ranks in 10 years and retreated to the 127th place in the ranking of macroeconomic stability.

INCREASE IN RESIGNATIONS: In total, 4,574 healthcare personnel resigned between March 10, 2020 and September 8, 2020.

INDEBTED HOSPITALS: The debts of public and university hospitals went up to 17 billion Turkish Liras.

CANCER IS NEGLECTED: Cancer scanning and cancer diagnosis decreased by 90% during the Covid-19 pandemic.

LOSS OF HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL: By March 2021, around 400 healthcare personnel lost their lives due to Covid-19.

POVERTY INTENSIFIED: The public has been impoverished 1,500 USD within a year, and the rate of poverty increased to 8,4%.

INCOME INEQUALITY: As to income inequality, Turkey is the 2nd country at the end among the OECD and G20 countries.

UNDESIRE D LIVING CONDITIONS: 32,1 million citizens live under the threat of poverty and social exclusion.

INSUFFICIENT PHYSICIAN NUMBERS: In Turkey, there are only 193 physicians per 100,000 people while this ratio is 348 for the OECD countries.

LACK OF BUDGET: In the 2021 budget, the Ministry of Health only received 5,7% which corresponds to 62,035,000,000 Turkish Lira.

INFECTED HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL: According to experts, 120,000 of 1,200,000 infected people by the end of December are healthcare personnel.

REGRESSED PURCHASING POWER: Regarding purchasing power parity, Turkey is behind the average of Europe by 41%.

TRADE WENT OUT OF BUSINESS: Around 16,000 companies and more than 24,000 natural persons went out of business, and around 100,000 traders closed down their enterprises.

INCREASING IMPOVERISHMENT: According to official 2019 data of Turkish Statistical Institute, the poverty rate which was 14% could increase up to 35% due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

FINES: Compared to the same period of a previous year, fines went up to 8,2 billion Turkish Lira with 46,4% increase during the first 11 months of 2020.

UNEMPLOYMENT GETS WORSE: Turkey became one of the 20 countries with the highest unemployment rates in the world.

HIGHEST UNEMPLOYMENT: Turkey experienced the highest number of unemployment of the history of the Republic with 12 million unemployed people.

UNEMPLOYMENT GREW: Unemployment reached to 11,768,000 people with 1,386,000 new unemployed compared to a previous year.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: The rate of broadly-defined youth employment increased from 32,9% to 43,5% between 2019 and 2020.

INCREASING HOPELESSNESS: During the last year, 1,5 million people lost their hopes to find a job.

INCREASE IN CONSUMER PRICES BY 14,6%

INCREASE IN FOOD PRICES BY 20,6%

AGRICULTURAL DEBTS: The debts of the agricultural industry increased by 20 billion Turkish Liras.

CREDIT DEBTS: The credit debts subject to legal proceedings surpassed 5 billion Turkish Liras.

INSUFFICIENT BAND TRAFFIC: Land broadband coverage is 19% in Turkey while the average of the OECD countries is 31%.

THE SLOWEST INTERNET: With 24 Mbps, Turkey uses the slowest Internet of Europe.

EBA IS INACCESSIBLE: More than 2,660,000 students had no access to EBA.

NO INTERNET TO THE COUNTRY: 1,5 million students who live in the country have no Internet infrastructure in their regions.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INCREASED: In Istanbul, domestic violence increased by 38,2% during March 2020.

THE CITIZENS RUN INTO DEBT: By the end of 2020, around 78% of the population became indebted.

WHAT CHP WILL DO?

FAMILY SUPPORTS INSURANCE WILL ALWAYS BE WITH FAMILIES

The Republican People's Party (CHP) acknowledges that the citizens must be protected with their rights in accordance with the social state principle. "Family Supports Insurance", which is the first step to a strong social state approach intended for the Second Century of the Republic, will be implemented, and impoverished citizens will be provided with a minimum income level with the sustenance according to their household conditions. These supports which will be granted not as "a favour" but as "a citizenship right" will ensure the wealth and income of the people during crises. The Family Supports Insurance designed by CHP does not only target the economic wealth of the citizens but also aims to leverage all the individuals and resolve the inequality issue with a corporate structure and extra supports. Such social supports consider all family members and the special conditions experienced by each family. The supports will be provided by looking at each individual's and family's distance to the poverty threshold regardless whether they are covered by social security. Extra supports will be provided as education to children, social adaptation to adults, education and employment to the disabled and health and care services to the elderly. These supports will be employed as a means of sustainable development and social consolidation.

TRANSPARENCY IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT, RIGHT TO ACCURATE INFORMATION AND COORDINATION

Transparency and accurate information to public should be prioritized when undertaking management in crisis periods. CHP acknowledges that healthcare officials and specialists are the primary authorities to consult with where health is in question. In this sense, CHP will regularly communicate with specialists and healthcare representatives in cases of public health crises such as pandemics, and the measures will be taken according to the opinion and recommendations of these groups.

The citizens will be transparently and accurately informed about the occurrences. The digital technologies that facilitate public access to information will be rapidly popularized. In cases of crisis, local administrations will be rapidly contacted to ensure that their support maintain the basic needs of the citizens uninterrupted. Local administrations will undertake active role to inform the public without any misrepresentation. Furthermore, complete attendance will be ensured to international coordination and cooperation attempts, and international information exchange will not be interrupted in cases of global health crises such as pandemics.

WE WILL STAND WITH HEALTHCARE PERSONNEL AND WILL RECOGNIZE COVID-19 AS AN OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

The healthcare personnel shortage will be covered, and the personnel numbers will conform to the international standards. Healthcare personnel will be assigned to offices according to their training at each and every level. An equitable basic salary will be provided to all healthcare personnel. Regulations concerning increase according to service time in risky jobs will be enacted without delay. Benefits will be reflected to wages and pensions. A legal regulation will be enacted to prevent violence against health officials, and any and all the measures will be taken to ensure their security so that they can work in peace. The

security of devoted health personnel will be the utmost priority during times of crisis which put their lives at risk. In case they may get sick or pass away due to their working conditions, "occupational disease" procedures will automatically apply, and such personnel and their families will benefit from all the legal rights.

WE WILL ABSOLUTELY STRENGTHEN THE NATIONAL VACCINE, MEDICINE AND MEDICAL DEVICE SECTORS

The Covid-19 pandemic proved the significance of self-sufficiency in national vaccine, medicine and medical device sectors. CHP will strengthen these sectors, decrease the external dependence of Turkey and improve the competitive power of companies with R&D incentives and supports in healthcare. Collaboration among universities, the industry and the state will be reinforced, and qualified human resource will be increased in these sectors. Research resources will be improved and special incentives will be offered for medical and pharmaceutical, relevant engineering and other fundamental scientific departments.

ALL THE CITIZENS WILL BE PROVIDED WITH EQUAL ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES

The vaccination and medication needs of the citizens will be covered free-of-charge during epidemics and pandemics. In line with the equal citizenship principle, it will be ensured that everyone can equally access to vaccines and medication as public utilities. Public health will be secured by prioritizing risk groups. The scientific evaluations concerning vaccines, medications and treatments will be transparent and efficient and, therefore, accurate information will be conveyed to the public. The urban hospitals which remain shut down will be reopened, and the capacity and infrastructure of the health institutions will be improved. Fully-equipped health centres and branch hospitals will be built according to the population density and needs of every district. Healthcare service payments such as contribution and extra charge will be removed, and the citizens will be offered quality health services without any charge. The research infrastructures of medical faculties will be strengthened, and their resource, equipment and personnel needs will be satisfied.

ALL THE SEGMENTS OF THE SOCIETY AND OCCUPATIONS WILL BE SUPPORTED

A Traders' Ministry will be established to solve the issues experienced by traders. The rental withholding incurred by traders will be removed, and their records will be acquitted. The loans used by traders during crises will be divided into instalments without interest. The social security premiums paid by traders will be covered by the Treasury during shutdown due to the pandemic. Public institutions will not require rent from traders during shutdown, and rent support will be provided for traders suffering loss. Workers will be registered and covered with insurance in sectors where informal business is widespread such as pedlars and street musicians. The bank loans of tourism, entertainment, accommodation and transportation sectors deeply-aggrieved by the pandemic will be restructured, the "Tourism Promotion Fund" and "Accommodation Tax" will be removed. Necessary measures will be taken to revive the tertiary sector, and supports and incentives will be offered to ensure that traders don't face another difficulty in case of crisis. Under these conditions, any and all the sectors suffering loss of work and income will be supported, and no citizen will be left to his or her own resources. The coverage of the Unemployment Insurance will be expanded, the

unemployment benefit will be raised to the minimum wage level and the period thereto will be extended. The Unemployment Insurance Fund will only be used for the intended purposes. No tax will be collected from minimum wage.

TURKEY WILL BE SELF-SUFFICIENT IN AGRICULTURE AND THE ECOSYSTEM WILL BE PROTECTED FOR THE FUTURE GENERATIONS

CHP knows that there is no obstacle to the self-sufficiency of Turkey in agriculture which has always been a strategic sector with the fertile lands and centenary experiences. With the power of CHP, Turkey will be a self-sufficient country in agriculture and will not be an importer but an exporter of agricultural products. The agricultural policy will be structured according to ecological sensitivity and sustainability, and the right to unpolluted nature will be protected for the next generations. The taxes for various agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds and pesticides will be decreased which will allow low costs. All the withholdings on supports to farmers will be removed. Investment will be made to low carbon industries and green technologies in order to ensure a sustainable development model and create new employment opportunities. Priority will be given to renewable energy sources and to production and investments based on energy saving. Agriculture will be supported to ensure food safety and make technological infrastructure investments in this regard. Regulations will be made to protect the citizens who have trouble to access to safe food.

WE WILL CREATE A FREE, QUALITY AND MODERN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The curriculum will be readjusted according to requirements of the 21st century ad digital and interactive education models. Teachers and teacher candidates will be provided pedagogical support to ensure the most efficient remote education. The classroom needs will be satisfied urgently with the necessary sources allocated to the Ministry of National Education. The class sizes and the student-teacher ratio in physical education environments will be levelled to the average of the EU countries. In this regard, teacher assignments will be made at once as necessary for the education of the children. Multigrade class teaching will be terminated. All the measures will be perpetuated to ensure secure and efficient education. The expenditures for each student will be increased at all the educational levels. The investment share of the Ministry of National Education will be increased. The Internet infrastructure, computer equipment and remote education infrastructure of the schools will be renewed and upgraded. Tablets and computers will be distributed to students and teachers free-of-charge, and no one will be deprived of their right to education. Furthermore, the Internet access of all the students going to a public school will be covered by the universal service fund with the initiatives taken by the Ministry of National Education. Substitute and contract teacher applications will be removed, and all the teachers will be employed on a permanent basis. Teachers will be granted the right to additional index 3600 and an extra salary on November 24, the Teachers' Day. The training indemnities, additional course payments and preparation allowances will be improved.

THE NATIONAL TECHNOLOGICAL INFRASTRUCTURE WILL BE IMPROVED AND EVERYONE WILL BE PROVIDED WITH FAST AND CHEAP INTERNET ACCESS

Investment in technology and industry will be increased, and the human resource will be consolidated. Attractive incentives will be offered to those who want to make investment in digital sectors. The digital infrastructure of Turkey will be reinforced according to the requirements of Industry 4.0. Investments will be made to fibre optic infrastructure in order to provide cheap Internet all around Turkey. As per the citizens' right to Internet, free broadband Internet access will be provided up to 2 GB every month. The Universal Service Fund will be used for the intended purposes. The VAT imposed on information and communication technologies and relevant services will be decreased. Special Communication Tax will be completely removed.

WHAT CHP HAS DONE?

- ❖ Mr. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the President of CHP, announced "The Covid-19 Struggle Program" in March 2020 which is the outbreak of the pandemic in Turkey.
- ❖ The Republican People's Party gave more than 10 bills of law to the Grand National Assembly through the group deputy chairmen and offered concrete solutions in order to alleviate the social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ❖ 11 metropolitan municipalities, 10 provincial municipalities, 177 district municipalities and 49 town municipalities of CHP created comprehensive solutions to relieve the grievance of the citizens.
- ❖ More than 75 million masks and sanitizers have been distributed free-of-charge.
- ❖ Cash and in kind support was provided to 1,587,000 and 8,228,000 citizens, respectively.
- ❖ 461,908 utility bills which correspond to 44 million Turkish Liras were paid with the "Paid for Me" applications.
- ❖ 1,173,000 subscribers couldn't pay their bills in 11 metropolitan municipalities but had uninterrupted water supply. The rents of 15,215 properties of the municipalities have been postponed during the process.
- ❖ Healthcare personnel have been provided with free transportation. Hospitals have been offered transfer services. Cash and in kind supports have been given to the farmers.

Covid-19 "Case" and "Patient" Numbers and Vaccine Debates in Turkey

Although the first case appeared in Turkey on March 11, 2020, an academic paper became of topic of discussion which was published on October 7 by Şuayip Birinci, the Deputy Health Minister. According to this paper which was revealed by Mr. Murat Emir, a CHP MP of Ankara, 24 patients diagnosed with Covid-19 were hospitalized in Mersin in February. The Minister of Health said "February was written accidentally instead of March."

The Ministry of Health announced the numbers in the coronavirus table as "case" until July 28 and made a change the next day. On July 29, the "case" column was renamed as "patient". The cause of this change was the real numbers of cases which were discovered and disclosed by Mr. Murat Emir, the foregoing MP of Ankara, on September 29. The document dated September 10 showed that the number of cases of the day was 29,377 across Turkey. However, the Ministry of Health announced the number of patients of the same day as 1,512. The Minister of Health asserted that a "patient and case" separation was made and that asymptomatic people were not included in the table. The Ministry included the numbers of cases as of November 26.

Mr. Emir also made a statement on December 8 and announced that a treatment algorithm which is not found in the world literature was applied to Covid patients in the Ankara City Hospital. According to this algorithm, the medications provided to patients included Hydroxychloroquine (chloroquine) and Colchicine of which efficiency and adverse effects were not proven.

Following the announcement that a vaccine agreement was concluded with China, Mr. Emir explained that the trade would employ an intermediary and that the company would be Keymen. Minister Fahrettin Koca made a statement on December 11 to Habertürk and said " There is no intermediary. We made the agreement with Sinovac." Nevertheless, the photos of vaccine parcels taken at the Chinese customs on December 30 read Keymen. The Minister claimed that the company was "not intermediary but distributor."

Mr. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the President of CHP, expressed in the Grand National Assembly Group meeting on February 23 that 1 million doses of vaccines imported from China had been provided free-of-charge. Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu asked whether an invoice was issued by Keymen to State Supply Office for these free-of-charge vaccines charging 12 dollars for each dose.

The Minister of Health replied the question two days later and claimed that the vaccines had been provided free-of-charge in order to ensure the cash flow of the company and the security. On the contrary, the company said that 12 million USD was paid to it for expenses as well as the security. Moreover, Mr. Emir held a press conference at the Grand National Assembly on February 26 and demonstrated the 12 million USD invoice issued for free-of-charge vaccines.

On March 2, the CHP Group tabled a motion for research to the Presidency of the Grand National Assembly so as to reveal the vaccine procedures and agreement details.