

Comparison of Social Protection Assistance in Turkey and Sample European Countries According To Their Functions within the Framework of Welfare Regimes

Prof. Dr. Abdurrahman BENLİ

Sakarya University, Faculty Member

Sakarya University, Faculty of Political Sciences S1 Block Floor:2, Department of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations 54050 Serdivan/Sakarya/TURKEY

Orcid: 0000-0002-0756-7339

E-mail: abenli@sakarya.edu.tr

Postgraduate Dilek PERİ (Corresponding Author)

Sakarya University, Postgraduate,

Sakarya University, Faculty of Political Sciences S1 Block Floor:2, Department of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations 54050 Serdivan/Sakarya/TURKEY

Orcid: 0000-0002-4158-2882

E-mail: dilekperi82@hotmail.com

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Abstract

The social assistance the state provides to the needy has been examined in the context of social democratic, liberal, conservative, and Southern European welfare regimes. While considering social assistance, family and children, and survivors' social assistance have been evaluated proportionally and in terms of purchasing power per person with Eurostat data. It is aimed to determine whether there are differences according to welfare regime or country in terms of proportion and purchasing power. It is aimed to make the data up-to-date and to contribute to the literature by making such a comparison. When the data is evaluated, differences have been observed in the context of welfare regimes. Countries in the Southern European welfare regime differ from other countries. Survivors' assistance is high, while

family and children's assistance is low. In countries with conservative welfare regimes, both types of aid are relatively high. In countries with liberal and social democratic welfare regimes, family and children's assistance is high; on the contrary, survivors' assistance is low.

Keywords: Social Assistance, Welfare Regime, European Sample Countries, Turkey

1. Introduction

Among the compulsory social assistance provided by the state, family and children's assistance and assistance were addressed in sample countries within the framework of welfare regimes. This study aims to understand whether we can categorize the countries we are considering by comparing them in terms of their welfare regimes. It is aimed to examine whether there is a visible difference in rates and amounts between family and child and survivors' social assistance among countries within the framework of their welfare regimes. An attempt was made to add depth to the literature study with Eurostat data. An attempt was made to determine whether there were differences in the data context. First, the general framework of social aid was drawn, and then welfare regimes were mentioned. Then, an attempt was made to provide the social assistance infrastructure according to welfare regimes. In the last section, Eurostat data were examined, and an attempt was made to analyze it.

2. General Framework and Scope of Social Protection Assistance

According to Dilik, social assistance is; firstly, social assistance provided by businesses and secondly, social assistance which is another complementary function of social security (Dilik, 1980: 55). It has a function of covering the deficiencies of social security and provides security to those who cannot benefit from social insurances (Hacımahmutoğlu, 2009: 23-25). In this study, social assistance distributed by the state to groups related to need as a complement to the second category of social security related to the social state or welfare state will be discussed.

Social assistance provided by the state is not voluntary but compulsory (Dilik, 1980: 56). Nevertheless, there is no universally defined equivalent for this social assistance provided compulsorily by the state. In other words, while it is transferred to an immigrant group in one country, it means social support for single parents or mothers in another country; in another country, it may mean transfer to education (Bahle et al., 2010: 461). When the stages of formation of social security in today's industrial states are considered, it is seen that social assistance is first established, and then social insurance institutions are established. When we look at today, we have returned to an understanding based on social insurance. In the financing of social insurances, each of these methods can be functionalized and made operational individually, but it is also meaningful that they are operated in an integrated manner. Essentially, all these methods provide service on a common ground. The aim is for the person receiving social assistance to be able to continue his/her life actively and independently as soon as possible. At this point, since people's needs are different, social assistance varies according to countries, groups, and recipients (Dilik, 1980: 68-70). Social assistance is a situation related to poverty and need. It is possible to define a person who does not have any assets and does not have any movable or immovable assets that can sustain

his/her life at a basic level as poor at the simplest level. Neediness may arise from the person's inability to earn income, work, or from multiple factors (Sözer, 1998: 97,89).

The first is 'universal' or conditional assistance, which is allocated to all citizens in a certain social category. This assistance is not related to income or employment status. The second is social insurance, where the assistance is related to (a) employment status and (b) contributions paid. The third includes income-based or income-related assistance, where eligibility depends on current or recent resources, but other categorical conditions may also apply. Our study focuses primarily on this third category of means-tested aid (Gough et al., 1997: 19). In other words, this assistance, which is not provided to a specific categorical group, is assistance provided to people in society who have income insecurity and are at risk of being excluded from society, and are provided without any financial contribution from these people. Public social assistance is financed through taxes and is provided to the needy without expecting anything in return. Social assistance is also called the "non-contributory regime", and in this respect, it is possible to say that it is more humane than social insurance (Kaya, 2009: 26-27).

The first steps of social security based on social insurance were taken with the organization of the working class against the strengthening of the bourgeoisie in the 19th and 19th centuries with industrialization. The state began to take responsibility for employee-employer relations

However, according to the understanding of social security in the period when classical liberal economic policies were implemented before the interventionist social state period (Sallan Gül, 2000: 54-55):

- Individuals being self-sufficient
- Emphasis is given to solidarity among family and close relatives
- Assistance provided is based on the principle of volunteering
- The laissez-faire approach is dominant
- Individuals who are poor without fault can be helped institutionally.

When the classical period passed to the interventionist state period, emphasis was given to social assistance; in industrialized European countries, this was ensured through local governments. In Islamic countries, it was aimed to be done through family solidarity and religious assistance (Sallan Gül, 2000: 54-55).

An examination will be made under the titles of Family and Children's, and survivors' social assistance.

3. Explanation of Social Protection Assistance with the Classification of Welfare Regimes

The concept of the social state, in Western countries, in the period after World War II, has been directed towards welfare with an interventionist attitude towards full employment, macroeconomic policy, demand management, and social assistance (Özdemir, 2004: 46).

When social security regimes and social assistance in Turkey are considered, factors such as family, professional organizations and foundations, and religious structure were effective in the Ottoman Empire Period (Sallan Gül, 2000: 59).

The welfare state is a state that does not protect individuals solely in terms of their freedom but provides them with the necessary opportunities to live humanely (Özdemir, 2004: 37). The concept of the social state is the policies developed by Western countries with the industrial revolution to solve the problems they encountered on a class basis. These problems are the totality of problems brought by the capitalist system and liberal economic policies. In this direction, the social state is essentially the state that necessitates intervention. The aim of the intervention is the peace and welfare of the society. Here, the concept of society cannot be considered equal to the concept of society, and the definition of the social assistance state is not completely correct. Social assistance is one of the tools used by the social state. The state actively makes comprehensive regulations and interventions to eliminate the inadequacies of the market economy. In addition, there are criteria that the social state must protect; life security, workforce, and full employment are the most important of these. Social assistance should be based on citizenship rights. The social state was adopted after the stages of social assistance services and social security services (Yanık & Kara, 2014: 11-12).

In the social state, the state is also in the position of redistributor of income through social assistance. In this way, it aims to prevent social unrest and ensure welfare (Özdemir, 2004: 38). However, even though there has been an increase in social protection assistance today, it is not yet possible to talk about comprehensive and integrated social protection for children. There are uncertainties. Only 23.9% of children between the ages of 0 and 18 benefit from cash assistance. This means that 1.8 billion children in this age range are deprived. Today, 333 million children still live below the extreme poverty line, 1.4 billion children below the higher international poverty line, and approximately 1 billion children live in multidimensional poverty (ILO, 2024: 81).

4. Data Analysis of Social Protection Assistance in Turkey and Characteristic Countries of Europe with the Classification of Welfare Regimes

The social democratic welfare regime is the Scandinavian model. Universal social solidarity is a prominent feature. It is a regime where employment is also important, along with social policies (Özdemir, 2004: 111). This regime is almost synonymous with the Scandinavian countries. In Denmark, Norway, and Sweden, the foundation stones were laid in the 1930s and 1940s with the advent of stable social democratic rule; in Finland, it was laid twenty years later. Nevertheless, the foundation stones and the mature form are not the same. There are reasons to reserve the social democratic label for the period from the mid-1960s onwards (Esping-Andersen, 1999: 78).

The Conservative-Corporatist welfare regime is also known by such names as the Continental European Model, the Bismarckian model, the social insurance model, and the German model. The basis of the system is based on the provision of work premiums. Nevertheless, in this regime, the contact with the market is limited compared to the liberal regime (Özdemir, 2004: 108-109). To label continental European welfare states as

conservative may seem condescending. But the idea is to point to the dominant political force behind their architecture. In most of continental Europe, liberalism played a truly marginal role, and after the Second World War, socialists often found themselves marginalized. Early social policy was often inspired by monarchical statism (especially in Germany, Austria, and France), traditional corporatism, or Catholic social teachings (Esping Andersen, 1999: 81).

In liberal welfare regimes, the individual citizen is a market actor. There is reluctance to exchange their market relations for social rights, but on the other hand, they are forced to seek their welfare in the market. The state is the court of last resort and only makes income transfers to the very worst off. For this transfer, it requires income testing (Özdemir, 2004: 106). The roots of liberal social policy can be traced back to 19th-century British political economy, to the concepts of 'less fit' and 'self-help'. He had an unrestricted belief in market sovereignty. In their contemporary forms, liberal welfare regimes reflect a political commitment to minimizing the state, individualizing risks, and encouraging market solutions. As such, they negatively impact citizens' rights. Liberal social policy prevails in countries where socialist or Christian democratic movements are weak or virtually non-existent (Esping Andersen, 1999: 74-75).

The main attempt to distinguish common social policy features in Southern Europe was made by Ferrera (Ferrera, 1996: 29-30). Ferrera describes the following:

- a. There is a dual income protection system in which very high benefits are provided to privileged groups with a strong attachment to the formal workforce, while the rest of the population receives zero or low, and discretionary benefits. It is also unequal, with pensions tending to be generous and other benefits for individuals and families of working age being weak.
- b. In contrast, health care systems are universal. Yet here and in other social services in kind, implementation falls far short of the promise: the private sector, markets, and privileges are integrated into public health services. Waste is widespread, and efficiency is low.
- c. The planning and delivery of certain public welfare services are characterised by privatization, clientelism, and even corruption. In contrast to the Weberian model of bureaucracy, political parties are dominant and exchange favours and benefits for political support.
- d. The combination of dynamic transfer expenditures and inefficient tax collection has created a 'state fiscal crisis' worthy of the term.

These features are systematically linked and, outside of political crises, self-reinforcing. Thus, clientelism hinders bureaucratic and rights-based reforms, high benefits reinforce a dual labour market, and both drain public finances, making it difficult to develop a safety net and adequate services for all. At the same time, the social pressures generated by these problems have been sufficiently absorbed by the family, society, and informal economy, undermining reform campaigns (Gough, 1996: 2).

According to the ILO, in the ten elements specified in terms of minimum norms of social

security, Turkey remains weak in terms of social security and social assistance in care/family insurance and benefits. Therefore, it has some gaps (Altıntaş, 2014:47).

In this study, the European Integrated Social Protection Statistics System, abbreviated as ESSPROS, was used to draw a common framework that allows international comparison of administrative national data on social protection while obtaining data from the European Statistical Office Eurostat's web database, ec.europa.eu. It provides a consistent comparison between the social assistance provided to other households in the Eurostat database in European countries and their financing. The ESSPROS data collection system consists of a core system and specific modules. Eurostat and TUIK are similar in the statistics in the social protection database. Due to the lack of a social dimension in the administrative expenditure part of social protection expenditure, administrative expenditures could not be included in expenditures in either. Therefore, the comparison in the ESSPROS data collection system is between equivalents (ec.europa.eu, 2024). In other databases, such as Oecdstat, administrative expenditures are included in total social protection expenditures.

The countries whose data will be compared in terms of welfare regimes are Norway and Finland in the social democratic regime, Germany and Belgium in the conservative regime, the United Kingdom and Ireland in the liberal regime, and Italy, Greece, and Turkey in the Southern European regime.

Table 1. Functional Social Assistance According To Welfare Regimes In The Eu And Tr: Family And Children Assistance (Percentile)

YEARS COUNTRIES	2012	2015	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023
NORWAY	12,96	12,23	11,71	11,21	10,92	10,89	10,9 e
FINLAND	11,01	10,13	9,97	9,8	9,9	10,15	10,12 e
GERMANY	11,22	11,29	11,54	11,81	11,82	11,81 p	11,95 e
BELGIUM	7,55	7,34	7,47	7,34	7,36 p	7,44	7,47 e
U.KINGDOM	10,68	10,04	9,2 p	:	:	:	:
IRELAND	11,52	10,75	10,35	8,54	8,41	9,38	9,28 e
ITALY	4,06	3,88	4,03	3,83 p	4,12 p	5,36 p	5,54 e
GREECE	3,53	4,05	6,58 p	4,8 p	5,29 p	5,56 p	:
TURKEY	2,9 e	3,24	3,84	4,81	4,24	6,61	:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00106>

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p:Temporary e:Estimated b:Break in time series :: No value

Social Assistance By Functions - % of Total Social Assistance

Family And Children Assistance

When family and children assistance is considered proportionally, the countries in the

Southern European welfare regime, Italy, Greece, and Turkey, are at the lowest rates in total social benefits. Nevertheless, an increase is observed in the rates between 2012 and 2023. While a proportional decrease is observed in other countries except Germany, the rates are close to each other. The highest share of total social benefits is allocated to Norway, but there is still a decrease here.

Table 2. Functional Social Benefits According To Welfare Regimes In The Eu And Tr: Survivors' Assistance (Percentile)

YEARS COUNTRIES	2012	2015	2018	2020	2021	2022	2023
NORWAY	1,15	0,99	0,9	0,84	0,84	0,83	0,82 e
FINLAND	2,98	2,72	2,65	2,49	2,43	2,46	2,43 e
GERMANY	7	6,42	6,11	5,73	5,6	5,59 p	5,5 e
BELGIUM	7,06	6,56	6,3	5,52	5,45 p	5,52	5,44 e
U.KINGDOM	0,35	0,31	0,28 p	:	:	:	:
IRELAND	2,69	2,58	2,66	2,42	2,43	2,62	2,52 e
ITALY	10,04	9,68	9,36	8,49 p	8,43 p	8,45 p	8,38 e
GREECE	9,56	10,68	9,53 p	9,65 p	9,93 p	9,89 p	:
TURKEY	11,64 e	11,9	11,82	11,33	11,46	11,85	:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00106>

Update Date: 29.04.2025 Access Date: 30.04.2025

p:Temporary e:Estimated b:Break in time series :: No value

Social Assistance By Function - % of Total Social Assistance

Survivors' Assistance

When the share of survivors' assistance received from total social assistance is examined proportionally, this time the highest share is received in the countries with the Southern European welfare regime, Italy, Greece, and Turkey. This is followed by the countries with the conservative welfare regime, Belgium and Germany. In the countries with the liberal welfare regime, the United Kingdom and Ireland, and in the countries with the social democratic welfare regime, Norway and Finland, the survivors' assistance is kept at the lowest level. There is a proportional increase in the Southern European welfare regime between 2012 and 2023, and a decrease in all other countries.

Table 3. Functional Social Assistance According To Welfare Regimes In The Eu And Tr: Family And Children's Aid (Per Capita Purchasing Power)

YEARS COUNTRIES	2012	2015	2018	2020	2021	2022
NORWAY	1351,04	1352,21	1388,05	1391,33	1433,83	1483,28
FINLAND	947,22	959,58	984,35	1031,71	1063,56	1116,51
GERMANY	1012,04	1101,08	1253,21	1409,33	1455,21	1482,97 p

BELGIUM	646,67	685,84	701,31	788,16	787,35	816,54
U.KINGDOM	816,71	770,53	699,71 P	:	:	:
IRELAND	818,81	715,64	690,74	646,51	661,67	722,57
ITALY	290,79	285,69	317,3	346,21 p	381,68 p	520,45 p
GREECE	177,37	198,67	329,6 p	253,98 p	289,91 p	313,08 p
TURKEY	53,23	70,08	92,14	119,88	101,43	156,68

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00107>

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p:Temporary e:Estimated b:Break in time series :: No value

Social Assistance Per Population By Function

Family And Children Assistance

According to the per capita purchasing standard, the lowest aid in family and children assistance is provided in Southern European countries, Turkey, Greece, and Italy, respectively. Nevertheless, when the 2012-2023 period is considered, an increase is observed in the figures. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, which are in the liberal welfare regime, the assistance figures are close to each other. In Belgium, which is in the conservative welfare regime, the assistance figures are lower than the others. In Norway and Finland, which are in the social democratic welfare regime, and also in Germany, the assistance amounts are both high and have increased over the years.

Table 4. Functional Social Assistance According To Welfare Regimes In The Eu And Tr: Survivors' Assistance (Per Capita Purchasing Power)

YEARS COUNTRIES	2012	2015	2018	2020	2021	2022
NORWAY	119,49	109,01	106,7	104,26	109,94	112,7
FINLAND	256	257,33	262,06	261,76	260,71	270,1
GERMANY	631,83	626,44	663,62	684,03	689,43	702,19 p
BELGIUM	604,33	612,46	591,17	592,64	583,08	605,36
U.KINGDOM	27,14	23,63	21,64 p	:	:	:
IRELAND	191,16	171,64	177,5	183,4	190,85	199,42
ITALY	719,01	713,58	735,75	768,23 p	781,34 p	820,68 p
GREECE	480,77	524,26	477,87 p	510,21 p	543,92 p	557,13 p
TURKEY	213,27 e	257,59	283,48	282,44	273,98	280,53

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00107>

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p:Temporary e:Estimated b:Break in time series :: No value

Social Assistance Per Population By Function

Survivors' Assistance

When the survivors' assistance is evaluated by purchasing power according to sample countries, the highest aid is provided by Italy from the Southern European welfare regime. It is followed by Germany and Belgium from the conservative welfare regime. Then come Greece and Turkey from the Southern European welfare regime. Assistance is relatively low in Finland, Ireland, Norway and the United Kingdom. The amount of assistance has increased in all countries except the United Kingdom in the reference range years.

5. Conclusion and Evaluation

Social assistance is divided into two as: mandatory aid provided to employees and aid provided by the state to needy people without compensation. In this study, non-reciprocal social assistance provided to needy people is examined in the context of several sample countries. When selecting the countries in question, attention was paid to adding a Turkish example within the framework of welfare regimes in Europe. Because when the literature is examined, it is possible to talk about a social assistance mechanism based on the market in the liberal welfare regime, social insurance but supported by the state in the conservative welfare regime, widespread and comprehensive state protection in the social democratic welfare regime, and a social assistance mechanism where social relations and family are at the forefront in the Southern European welfare regime. Family and children's assistance is not provided sufficiently, while child poverty is still prevalent today. However, as is the case in welfare regimes, some countries give importance to family and child assistance, while others give importance to survivors' assistance. In the sample countries, family and child assistance is kept low in the Southern European welfare regimes, and emphasis is given to survivors' social assistance. Both assistance is high in the conservative welfare regime. In the liberal and social democratic welfare regimes, family and child assistance is high, and survivors' assistance is low. A general increase has been observed over the years. Regardless of the welfare regime in which the countries are located, bringing the social assistance provided both proportionally and in amount closer to an equivalent level could make citizenship-based rights more valid.

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