

Enabling Social Innovation in Türkiye



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Country Snapshot

Social innovation: "the processes and outcomes of developing novel approaches to address societal challenges facing people and planet." ¹

This snapshot represents a descriptive, non-exhaustive overview of key highlights from Türkiye's social innovation ecosystem.

✓ Direct focus on social innovation 🔗 Connected but indirect focus on social innovation ✗ No focus on social innovation

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Official Definition of Social Innovation 🔗



- While Türkiye has no official legal definition of social innovation, the concept is used operationally in government and civil society contexts, primarily referring to novel approaches to social problems that involve cross-sector collaboration and systemic change, drawing on OECD and EU frameworks. ²

Government Body for Social Innovation ✓



- Rather than a dedicated body for social innovation, related responsibilities fall primarily under the Ministry of Industry and Technology (innovation policy, TÜBİTAK) and the Ministry of Family and Social Services (social policy). KOSGEB (Small and Medium Enterprises Development and Support Administration, est. 1990) supports entrepreneurship and innovation with some social dimensions. ³

Government Strategy for Social Innovation ✓



- No standalone social innovation strategy exists, but the **12th National Development Plan (2024–2028)** includes social entrepreneurship and innovation as drivers of inclusive growth and mentions the importance of supporting social enterprises and cooperative models. ⁴

Policies, Laws & Regulations ✓ 🔗



- No legislation specifically addresses social innovation; however, broader frameworks provide an enabling environment:
- **Law No. 4691 on Technology Development Zones (2001, amended 2016):** Provides tax incentives for R&D and innovation activities in technoparks. ⁵
- **Law No. 5378 on Persons with Disabilities (2005):** Requires quotas for disabled workers and incentivises social employment, enabling social enterprise activity. ⁶
- **Corporate Sustainability Reporting (2023):** Türkiye's Capital Markets Board (SPK) introduced ESG disclosure requirements for listed companies, thereby indirectly channelling private-sector resources toward social impact. ⁷

Official Statistics 🔗



- No official statistics are collected specifically on social innovation. TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) collects data on the cooperative economy and civil society associations — including over 115,000 associations and 50,000 foundations — but does not disaggregate these data by social enterprise or social innovation. ⁸



Government Programs ✓ 🔗

- **KOSGEB R&D, Innovation and Industrial Application Support Programme:** Provides grants and loans to SMEs for innovation; some social enterprises benefit as eligible applicants. ²
- **TÜBİTAK 1512 Entrepreneurship Programme (BİGG):** Supports early-stage technology entrepreneurs with grants up to 750,000 TRY, accessible by social innovators. ¹⁰
- **12th Development Plan – Social Entrepreneurship Pillar (2024–2028):** Commits to supporting social entrepreneurship through enabling regulations, financing mechanisms, and ecosystem development. ⁴

ECOSYSTEM



Stakeholders ✓ 🔗

- **Koç University Social Impact Forum (KUSIF, est. 2012):** A leading research and practice centre on social innovation, impact measurement, and social entrepreneurship; hosts the Turkish Social Impact Group. ¹¹
- **İmece Social Innovation Platform:** A civil society organisation running the İmece Summit (annual cross-sector event) and incubation programmes for social entrepreneurs. ¹²
- **Ashoka Türkiye (est. 2000):** Global network's local branch, supporting social entrepreneurs through fellowships and ecosystem building. ¹³
- **Impact Hub Istanbul:** Part of the global Impact Hub network; provides co-working, accelerator programmes, and cross-sector collaboration for impact-driven changemakers. ¹⁴
- **Türkiye Social Entrepreneurship Network (TSEN, est. 2018):** A multi-stakeholder platform led by Vehbi Koç Foundation with KUSIF, Ashoka Türkiye, and Impact Hub Istanbul to grow the social entrepreneurship ecosystem. ¹⁵
- Other prominent actors include Mikado Sustainable Development Consulting (T00fcrkiye2019s first B Corp), the Vehbi Koç Foundation, and 0130stanbul Bilgi University2019s Social Entrepreneurship programme.



Support Initiatives ✓ 🔗

- Non-financial support is led by incubators (İmece pre-incubation, KUSIF Social Impact Lab, İstasyon TED University), mentorship programmes (Ashoka Fellowship), research and capacity-building (KUSIF trainings on social impact measurement), and university-civil society partnerships. Support remains concentrated in Istanbul and Ankara, with limited reach in rural areas. ²



Collaboration ✓ 🔗

- Cross-sector collaboration is growing, primarily through the TSEN consortium and EU-funded programmes. The **British Council's State of Social Enterprise in Türkiye (2019)** facilitated dialogue between social enterprises and 12 government ministries. ¹⁶
- Key annual events include the **İmece Summit** (a cross-sector social innovation gathering in Istanbul) and the **Ashoka Türkiye Changemaker Summit**. The **Bilgi Young Social Entrepreneur Award** (İstanbul Bilgi University) recognises outstanding social entrepreneurs. ¹²

Financing Schemes

- No aggregate estimate of social innovation-specific financing is publicly available. Key channels include:
- **Public grants:** KOSGEB and TÜBİTAK grants (accessible to social innovators); EU-funded programmes via IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance). ²
- **Foundation/philanthropic funding:** Vehbi Koç Foundation, Sabancı Foundation, and others provide grants typically ranging from ₺50,000 to ₺500,000 for civil society and social enterprise projects.
- **Impact investment:** Nascent but growing; Mikado and KUSIF actively promote investment readiness. Social impact bonds and dedicated social innovation funds are largely absent. ¹¹
- Financing inclusivity is limited: women entrepreneurs, youth, and rural communities face systemic barriers to access, though KOSGEB provides enhanced grants (up to ₺150,000 additional) for women, young, and disabled entrepreneurs. ¹⁷

SOCIETY

Public Awareness of Social Innovation

- Public awareness of social innovation as a distinct concept remains limited, though growing in urban areas. Media coverage tends to focus on social entrepreneurship and tech startups with social purposes. The SIX Insight Report (2020) found that even practitioners often do not self-identify as social innovators. ²

Research

- Academic research on social innovation in Türkiye is modest but growing, with **KUSIF** (Koç University), **Sabancı University**, and **Boğaziçi University** leading the way. Research focuses primarily on social entrepreneurship, impact measurement, and social enterprise ecosystems. ¹¹
- Practitioner research includes the **British Council's State of Social Enterprise in Türkiye (2019)** — the most comprehensive ecosystem mapping to date — and ongoing KUSIF publications on social impact measurement standards. ¹⁶

Education & Human Capital

- No degree programmes exist specifically in social innovation, but related content is embedded in social entrepreneurship courses at **Koç University** (via KUSIF), **İstanbul Bilgi University**, and **TED University**. KOSGEB provides Applied Entrepreneurship Training (46+ hours) that is accessible to all adults, including social entrepreneurs. ¹⁸
- No reliable estimate is available of the proportion of graduates who annually gain credentials specifically related to social innovation.

Entrepreneurship



103rd / **167** countries



Business Environment

Türkiye ranks 103rd out of 167 countries in the EIU Democracy Index 2024 (overall score: 4.26), reflecting constraints on institutional trust and the political environment relevant to entrepreneurship.¹⁹

37th / **133** countries



Innovation Capacity

Türkiye ranks 37th/133 in the 2024 Global Innovation Index (score: 39.0/100), and is among the fastest 10-year climbers globally, excelling particularly in creative outputs (16th globally).²⁰



Social entrepreneurship prevalence

GEM data (2021/22, most recent for Türkiye) shows a TEA rate of ~15.7%, indicating a resilient entrepreneurial culture; however, Türkiye did not participate in the 2024 GEM cycle.²¹

Social & Environmental Consciousness



Solidarity

World Values Survey data indicate that solidarity tends to be strong at the family and community levels in Türkiye, with religious and cultural norms reinforcing local giving, but weaker at the broader civic level.²²



Political participation

EIU Democracy Index 2024 records a political participation sub-score of 6.11/10 for Türkiye, among the stronger dimensions despite overall democratic decline.¹⁹



1.77%

population

Volunteering

CAF World Giving Report 2025 data show that Türkiye donates an average of 1.77% of income — the highest among upper-middle-income countries — indicating a strong culture of generosity. However, formal volunteering rates are not reported separately.²³



143rd / **180** countries

Sustainability

Türkiye ranks 143rd/180 countries in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index (score: 37.2), and 119th on the Climate Change dimension (score: 37.0), reflecting significant sustainability challenges.²⁴