

**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES IN SLOVAKIA,
TURKEY AND HUNGARY
WORKSHOP**

**ABSTRACT VOLUME
ENGLISH-LANGUAGE LECTURES**

EDITED BY:

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BUDAPEST, 2025.

The conference's main feature

Slovakia and Hungary, as members of the Visegrad Four (V4), share common historical roots and face similar socio-economic challenges. As Central European countries, they embarked on similar economic and social paths after the fall of communism, with their main priorities being the establishment of a market economy, accession to the European Union, and social inclusion. Nevertheless, there are contrasts between the two countries in terms of economic development and social opportunities.

Hungary's economy has shown stable growth in recent years, but it is heavily dependent on foreign capital and the presence of multinational companies. Employment has increased, but wages and living standards vary greatly from region to region. Budapest and some areas of western Hungary are highly developed, while the eastern parts of the country, such as northern Hungary, face significant economic and social disadvantages. Poverty, low levels of education, and the social exclusion of the Roma population continue to be serious problems. Slovakia's economy has developed similarly, but has been able to integrate into the European economy somewhat more quickly. The automotive industry and industrial investments play a significant role in the country's GDP. Unemployment in Slovakia has fallen in recent years and wages have gradually risen. However, there are still significant differences between the more developed western regions and the poorer eastern regions. Social opportunities are therefore not equal in Slovakia either, especially for minorities and the rural population. Both countries face the collective challenges of population decline, emigration, and an aging society. The emigration of young, skilled workers from both Hungary and Slovakia hinders economic development and the maintenance of social balance. The presentations at the planned symposium will attempt to present and evaluate the processes taking place in the countries along these two main lines, the connections between the past and the present, and the possibilities for the future.

A Turkish university has been invited to the event, where we will hear presentations from two experts on new types of initiatives in the 21st century. Their presentation will highlight the common intersections of society and the economy, as well as the changes that are of particular importance to the Turkish economy. In the case of social changes, the presentations will focus on conservative and supportive social analyses.

Prof. Dr. Hülya Aşkın Balcı (İstanbul University–Cerrahpaşa):
Economic Inequality and Linguistic Opportunity Equality in
Education: Regional Comparisons in Türkiye

This study examines the impact of economic inequalities on linguistic opportunity equality in education within the context of regional disparities in Türkiye. The role of language in education extends far beyond its communicative functions; it constitutes a fundamental component for the development of cognitive processes, literacy, academic achievement, and social mobility. The educational literature consistently highlights that students' academic performance is closely related to linguistic indicators such as mother-tongue proficiency, vocabulary range, literacy level, and critical language skills (Cummins, 2000). Therefore, linguistic capital stands out as one of the most critical components shaping educational opportunity.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital demonstrates that the linguistic resources individuals possess, depending on their social position, can produce advantages or disadvantages within educational processes (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1991). In Türkiye, socioeconomic inequalities directly influence the intergenerational transmission of linguistic capital; a strong correlation exists among income level, school infrastructure, teacher quality, and access to digital resources (İlgar, 2023). Students in economically advantaged regions are exposed to richer linguistic environments from early ages, whereas those in disadvantaged regions encounter limited and lower-quality linguistic input.

Data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) reveal substantial regional income disparities and show that these differences directly shape educational infrastructure (TÜİK, 2024). While western regions benefit from higher income levels, better-equipped school buildings, and more qualified teachers, disadvantaged regions face limitations in physical conditions, material access, and teacher stability (İlgar, 2023). According to findings by Suna and Özer (2021), Türkiye is among the countries where socioeconomic status has the strongest impact on student achievement. Consequently, pronounced disparities emerge in academic Turkish proficiency, text processing, reading comprehension, and vocabulary development among children in low-income regions.

Students living in linguistically diverse environments often face difficulties in adapting to the language of instruction. Sudden exposure to the instructional language in early schooling, particularly in disadvantaged regions, creates barriers in mastering abstract concepts, following academic discourse, and participating in classroom interaction. These challenges hinder students' academic potential and, when combined with economic disadvantages, give rise to layered and persistent inequalities (Uğur, 2023).

The digital divide has also become a new variable affecting linguistic opportunity equality. In regions with limited access to the internet and digital devices, students have reduced exposure to online literacy practices, digital texts, and foreign language input. The OECD PISA 2022 results indicate that disparities in digital accessibility directly influence students' literacy performance (OECD, 2023). Limited access to digital content restricts students' interaction with contemporary Turkish usage, online texts, and multimodal learning environments.

Early childhood education is another crucial determinant of linguistic development. Research shows that rich linguistic stimuli provided during the preschool period significantly shape reading comprehension skills, cognitive flexibility, and academic achievement in later years (Ata, 2017). Regional disparities in access to early childhood education lead to linguistically unequal starting points in primary school. While participation in early childhood education is higher in regions with strong socioeconomic indicators, limited access in low-income regions creates early and lasting linguistic gaps.

This study reveals the presence of a multidimensional "linguistic inequality cycle" formed by the intersection of economic level, cultural capital, digital access, and linguistic diversity. This cycle reproduces itself through the mechanism of socioeconomic status → linguistic development → academic achievement → socioeconomic status in the next generation (Suna & zer, 2021). Therefore, ensuring linguistic opportunity equality in education is not only a requirement for the education system but also a key component of social justice and regional development.

Ultimately, achieving genuine educational equality in Trkiye requires policies that are sensitive to cultural and linguistic diversity in addition to economic development. Strengthening early childhood language support programs, improving teacher retention in disadvantaged regions, developing programs that facilitate the transition to academic Turkish, reducing the digital divide, and restructuring regional education investments are recommended. Enhancing linguistic opportunity equality holds strategic importance for both academic success and social mobility.

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Keywords: Economic inequality, linguistic opportunity equality, linguistic capital, regional disparities, education policy, socioeconomic status, academic Turkish, digital divide.

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tuğçe Uzun Kocamış (Istanbul
University- Cerrahpaşa): The Role of Public Finance
in Türkiye's Economic and Social Transformation**

Public finance stands out as a key policy area in Turkey's economic and social transformation, both in guiding long-term development and maintaining macroeconomic stability. The fiscal discipline, structural reforms, and debt management implemented after the 2001 crisis made public finance a key component of growth. During this period, the structure of public expenditures, R&D support, human capital investments, and the modernization of tax policy shaped the framework for economic and social development.

However, studies demonstrating that public spending supports growth in the short term indicate that this long-term impact depends on the nature of spending and fiscal sustainability. The fiscal capacity of local governments, which varies regionally, varies significantly, reinforcing the decisive role of public finance in regional development. While the high share of indirect taxes, which constitute a high share of tax revenues, has been the subject of criticism, the increase in tax collection capacity, digital tax practices, progress in combating informality, and R&D incentives support the sustainability of public revenues. The contribution of public finance to social transformation is particularly evident through the expansion of expenditures in education, healthcare, and social protection. Investments in education and strengthening digital infrastructure support human capital, while the health transformation program has increased social welfare through inclusive service delivery. Digital public finance and e-government applications have strengthened institutional capacity by ensuring transparency, efficiency, and accountability in financial management.

In line with Türkiye's 2053 net-zero target, green budgeting, renewable energy incentives, carbon regulations, and the financing of sustainable investments represent a new phase in the transformation of public finance. The fiscal dimension of the green transformation necessitates that public finance develop a perspective aligned with environmental sustainability goals.

However, the sustainability of economic and social transformation faces several structural challenges. High inflation, regional inequalities, and migration trends are

key risks limiting the impact of public policies. The increasing trend of international migration, particularly among the young population, risks weakening long-term growth potential, innovation capacity, and the human capital necessary for the digital-green transformation.

This study will highlight the strategic role of public finance in Türkiye's economic and social transformation process, focusing on the impacts of tax policy modernization, digitalization, regional development, and green transformation. Accordingly, future public finance requires a holistic strategy that prioritizes fairer and more direct taxation, expands AI-enabled digital audit mechanisms, develops performance-based regional incentive models, accelerates green budgeting processes, and focuses on inclusive policies to retain a young population. Such an approach will contribute to Türkiye's long-term economic and social transformation being both sustainable and inclusive.

Keywords: Public Finance; Economic Transformation; Tax Policy