

Talking Interoperability

A dialogue series for advancing interoperability in the social protection sector

Advancing the Integration of Social Assistance and Labour Market Programmes – Approaches from Türkiye

This brief summarises key learnings from the dialogue on advancing interoperability in Türkiye's social protection held on 3 June 2025.

*The keynote was delivered by **Ercan Dansuk**, Senior Specialist, Family and Social Services, General Directorate of Social Assistance, Ministry of Family and Social Services (MFSS) of Türkiye. The discussants were **Josefina Posadas**, World Bank, and **Luiza Cretescu**, Counsellor at the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, Romania. The session was moderated by **Anita Mittal**, Component Lead - DCI, GIZ.*

Please click [here](#) to access the recording and presentation slides.

Overview

Türkiye employs a **transition-oriented approach** to link social assistance and social insurance systems. Social insurance programmes, administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, cover approximately 89% of the population. The remaining 11%, comprising primarily poor and other vulnerable groups, are supported through social assistance and social service programmes overseen by the Ministry of Family and Social Services. To bridge these two pillars, push and pull factors are employed to facilitate the shift of social assistance beneficiaries into the contributory social insurance system.

A key enabler of this approach is the **Integrated Social Assistance System (ISAS)**, established in 2010. It serves as a central e-Government platform that digitises and streamlines all previously paper-based processes in social assistance management. This whole-of-government approach has significantly enhanced programme delivery, improved beneficiary profiling, and enabled dynamic data exchange, thereby facilitating both registration for assistance and linkage to labour market services. ISAS is a process management and information (informatics) system through which applications of people in need are received, household files are created, and personal data, socio-economic information, and wealth elements are queried from central databases. It retains reports of on-site social examinations regarding the households' socio-economic status, carries out the determination of neediness, issues bank instructions for aid payments, and conducts all automatic accounting actions for these payments electronically.

ISAS: Architecture and Functionality

ISAS operates across three main phases (Figure 1): assess, enrol, and provide/monitor. The **assessment phase** combines real-time administrative data from 29 public entities—covering registries such as civil registry, banking, assets, tax, employment, health, housing, and education—with in-person household visits conducted by (approximately 9,000) social assistance workers across above 1,003 nationwide local Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SASFs). This hybrid model ensures an accurate, up-to-date social registry that supports comprehensive socio-economic evaluations.

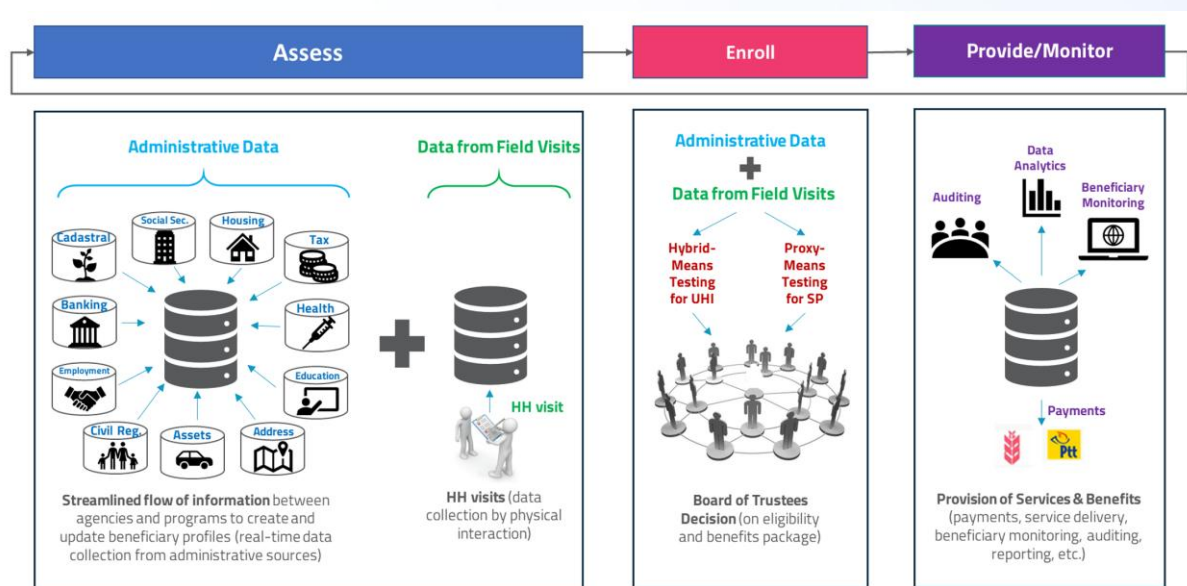


Figure 1: Three Main Phases of ISAS. Source: DCI Talking Interoperability #19 – Türkiye and South Africa

The enrolment phase is a dynamic and integrated gateway for multiple social protection (SP) programmes. It uses proxy-means testing for social assistance programmes and hybrid eligibility assessments for universal health insurance to generate lists of eligible beneficiaries—finalised by the Board of Trustees comprising local leaders and public officials. Türkiye implements the social assistance targeting strategy through a hybrid model that integrates different methods. During the application phase, socio-economic data retrieved directly from the databases of relevant institutions via the Integrated Social Assistance Information System (ISAS) are carefully evaluated along with the applicant's declarations. The declared information and the data obtained from institutions are systematically combined in a household-based file. In addition, staff from the Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation (SASF) conduct household visits to the applicants, and field observations are thoroughly recorded in ISAS. Based on all these comprehensive and multi-dimensional assessments, the Board of Trustees makes the final decision on whether the household is eligible for assistance or not.

The **monitoring function** of ISAS combines automated auditing, data analytics, and beneficiary monitoring to support transparency and efficiency. The system flags issues automatically, which are reviewed and audited by an independent board. ISAS also offers powerful data analytics, using information from over 66 million individuals (Turkish citizens and refugees having a national ID number) and Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping to support programme planning and policy design. Beneficiary monitoring helps identify registration issues and ensures continuous oversight of service delivery and payments.

Linking Social Assistance and Employment: Legal and Institutional Coordination

Since 2016, Türkiye has introduced policy reforms aimed at the (approximately 18% of) social assistance beneficiaries who are capable of working, to support their transition from social assistance to employment and contributory social insurance. Various practices have been implemented to increase the employability of social assistance beneficiaries and strengthen the social assistance-employment link.

Within this framework, employable social assistance beneficiaries are reported to the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR) through the ISAS, and various pull factors are offered. In case the social assistance recipient attends a job interview and secures employment, job referral assistance is provided to cover expenses such as travel expenses, medical report, and photographs. Furthermore, individuals placed in a job through referrals are offered a one-time start-up support equivalent to one-third of the gross minimum wage. Additionally, employers' insurance premiums for people who are employed while receiving regular social assistance are covered for the first six months by Ministry of Family and Social Services (MoFSS). Lastly, Conditional Cash Transfer for Education and Health Assistances continue for one year as an employment incentive when any household member is employed within the scope of Social Security.

Conversely, push factors are employed to ensure compliance with labour market programmes. In this regard, the regular cash social assistance of individuals who refuse vocational training, active labour force programmes, or a job offered by İŞKUR for the third time without a justifiable reason shall be discontinued for one year after the situation is reported to the integrated system through the İŞKUR system.

ISAS ensures the integration of social assistance recipients into contributory social insurance by identifying eligible beneficiaries, automating referrals to the İŞKUR, monitoring participation and

compliance, and flagging non-compliance for sanctions. It also supports the administration of employment incentives and post-placement monitoring. ISAS monitors beneficiaries for 180 days following referral or placement. Those who secure employment receive a one-time assistance payment within 60 days and may continue to receive conditional cash transfers for up to 12 months.

Operational Challenges and Policy Gaps

Despite strong institutional and digital infrastructure, several challenges remain. These include:

- **Low job placement rates:** While 13.81% of working-age beneficiaries transition into employment, outcomes remain suboptimal relative to programme investments. Some beneficiaries refuse job referrals or accept jobs but leave soon after starting.
- **Gaps in Labour Market Integration for Vulnerable Women:** Integrating women—particularly housewives with low or no qualifications—into the formal labour market remains a significant challenge, highlighting persistent gaps in gender-responsive outreach and services, including inadequate childcare support, limited flexible or part-time job options.
- **Institutional and Operational Weaknesses in Support Centres:** Employment and skill support centres, such as Family Support Centres (ADEM) and Social Solidarity Centres (SODAM), lack systematic employment referral mechanisms and linkages with İŞKUR's active labour market programmes, creating fragmentation in service delivery.

Emerging Policy Shift: Household-Based Livelihood Support

In 2024, Türkiye introduced a household-based approach through İŞKUR's Household Support System to complement existing individual profiling. This initiative targets households without any working or retired members and lacking access to regular social assistance, delivering tailored public employment services, such as job and vocational counselling, directly to their homes.

To identify and prioritise eligible households, İŞKUR draws on data-sharing arrangements with key public entities, including the Social Security Institution, the Ministry of Family and Social Services, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Households are excluded from the target group if they have recently engaged with İŞKUR services, receive regular social assistance above a defined threshold, or include working or retired members. This reflects a strategic shift from reactive employment assistance towards preventive and sustainable livelihood approaches embedded within broader social protection systems.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Türkiye's experience demonstrates how digital governance, institutional coordination, and integrated service delivery can enable a strategic transition from social assistance to sustainable livelihoods and inclusion in contributory social insurance programmes. At the core of this transition is ISAS, which not only digitises and streamlines social assistance processes but also operationalises a whole-of-government approach to connect poor and vulnerable households with employment and skills development pathways. It does so by embedding automated referrals, real-time data exchange, and post-placement monitoring within a single digital platform.

Prepared by Amirhosein Rahbari based on the presentation by Ercan Dansuk, with contributions from Josefina Posadas, Luiza Cretescu, and Anita Mittal.