



ESJ Social Sciences

## Stabilization of the Turkish Economy in the Early 2000s and the Urgent Action Plan

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[Doi:10.19044/esj.2023.v19n10p64](https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2023.v19n10p64)

Submitted: 02 February 2023

Accepted: 25 April 2023

Published: 30 April 2023

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*Cite As:*

Turkmen S. (2023). *Stabilization of the Turkish Economy in the Early 2000s and the Urgent Action Plan*. European Scientific Journal, ESJ, 19 (10), 64.

<https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2023.v19n10p64>

### Abstract

This article discusses the stabilisation of the Turkish economy in the early 2000s, with a focus on the Urgent Action Plan (AEP) implemented by the Justice and Development Party (AKP). The AEP aimed to bring about real structural changes in Turkish economic governance, accelerate privatization, provide capital to certain productive sectors, and increase financial discipline, resulting in the radical decline of public debt. The article explores the success of the AEP and the impact of the AKP's economic policies on the country's growth, as well as the role of globalization and the European Union in the transformation of the Turkish economy. Finally, the article discusses the political communication surrounding the AEP and the international recognition of Turkey's economic performance during this period.

**Keywords:** Turkey, economy, stabilization, economic transition, fiscal policie

### The 2001 Turkish economic crisis and the Strong Economy Transition Program

The post-2002 economic recovery and crisis management efforts of the AKP cannot be completely separated from the last similar program of the previous period, the Strong Economy Transition Program (GEGP). Among other things, it was the economic program that radically transformed the Turkish banking sector and whose impact on finances and the fight against inflation was still felt in 2006. The GEGP provided, for example, that Turkish

banks could decide for themselves on the exchange rates they used, and the central control that regulated interbank transactions was abolished. These reforms laid the foundations for a disciplined fiscal policy, which proved to be a very good basis for the AKP in power. This explains why, after 2002, the Turkish government did not intervene radically in the operation of the banks, liberalized and depoliticized the roles of the central bank, and struggled with inflation with all its might. (Inan, 2006:23)

Also with the achievements of the Strong Economy Transition Program, it can be explained that after 2002, the Turkish public finance deficit has been declining steadily. The AKP did not bring anything new in this area either, but only adhered to the neoliberal economic trajectory defined by Kemal Dervis and his team in 2001. While the budget deficit was 15.3% in 2001, AKP governments reduced it to 2.5% by 2005 by continuing the line started by their predecessors. (Inan, 2006:24)

However, Kemal Dervis's Strong Economy Transition Program was far from being able to provide an answer to all the problems of the Turkish economy. The year 2001 was catastrophic in all respects, with macroeconomic indicators showing a huge decline. Overall, the downturn in the Turkish economy reached 5.7%. In 2002, the opposite trend was observed and the Turkish economy started to grow again, with Turkey closing the year with an impressive development of 6.2%. Obviously, this included some of the GEGP's measures, but also the new economic policy of the newly emerging AKP. Of course, it is also true that the real economic turn of the Conservatives will take place in 2003, as only then will the government's economic stimulus package, called the Urgent Action Plan (AEP), be announced. (Karagol, 2013:26)

### **Economic philosophy the clientele building efforts of the AKP**

Dealing with the economic crisis has posed a difficult ideological challenge to the Justice and Development Party. Since the 1950s, conservative and moderate Islamist political parties have traditionally professed liberal economic philosophical principles in Turkey, and the AKP has insisted on this in economic matters. They advocated privatization, private initiatives and the involvement of foreign working capital in the recovery of the Turkish economy. At the same time, they could not forget that the economic crisis was accompanied by a social crisis, the lives of citizens were becoming increasingly difficult, so austerity was sought to be avoided where possible. They have had to face the fact that, since the late 1980s, Turkey has become increasingly exposed to the world market, and since 1989, the Turkish economy has been essentially kept alive by loans from the IMF and the World Bank. That is why the AKP has voted in favor of a liberal economic policy that breaks with the international financial institutions and their commands,

and can only imagine the development of the economy from foreign sources. (Akçay, 2018:3)

The Turkish government decided in 2002 to do everything in its power to repay its loans to the IMF, and then not to take on more debt from the international organization, but to finance its debt from the market, and from the proceeds of economic growth. In practice, this meant that the \$ 23.5 billion debt outstanding in 2002 was planned to be paid back by the Turkish government over 11 years. This plan was finally realized by 2013, as imagined. In addition, Turkey did not take out a stand-by loan from the IMF after the AKP came to power. The 19th Turkish-IMF stand-by arrangement expired in 2008 and Turkey has fulfilled its obligations under it, despite the outbreak of the global economic crisis that year. Repaying IMF loans proved to be a good decision, as the repayment largely fell between 2002 and 2007, when international markets were plentiful of money, and so Turkey was not forced to make such loans after 2008, when they became more expensive after the crisis. (Karagöl, 2013:67)

The AKP's new kind of liberal economic policy has not only been foreign losers like the IMF and the World Bank, but has also weakened the position of many domestic players. From the 1920s onwards, a civic and entrepreneurial layer loyal to Atatürk was formed and strengthened, ensuring the survival of Kemalist principles in the field of economy and the financial background of the political Left, especially the Republican People's Party (CHP). The AKP wanted to involve new entrepreneurs in revitalizing the economy. Since the mid-1980s, the right-wing, conservative and religious bourgeoisie, which has been growing stronger since Turgut Özal but has been deprived of state orders so far, has sought to put the old economic elite in the background. A good example of this is the support for the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (MUSIAD), which was already discussed in the previous chapter. In essence, a new national bourgeoisie has been built, which since the early 2000s can build besides on achievements in market conditions, but also enjoy state subsidies and business in return for supporting the state's charitable efforts in the context of a deep economic and social crisis. In other words, in a kind of symbiosis, the conservative business circle represented by MUSIAD the AKP government mutually reinforce each other. (Akçay, 2018:5)

The AKP in the early 2000s tried to form a new generation of the so-called Anatolian bourgeoisie by putting a significant amount of capital into the hands of believing Muslim businessmen. This is well illustrated through the example of TOKI projects. TOKI is a housing development program of the Turkish state, in the framework of which cheap-rent apartments are built in the outskirts of large and medium-sized cities within a short period of time. The construction of blocks, which in many cases do not really fit into the

environment and are tasteless, is dominated by construction companies in the hands of this new Muslim Anatolian bourgeoisie. The TOKI program therefore has a dual purpose. On the one hand, the AKP thus capitalized its economic clientele, and on the other hand, through a social rental housing project, it sought to help the lower middle class masses left homeless due to the social crisis, and thereby sought to improve the country's infrastructure. Even during their political campaigns, the AKP's main argument in favor of them was how much was built in the country in such a short time. At the same time, a serious danger was coded into this economic policy. By allocating resources from the central budget to infrastructure development, the AKP did not get enough capital with the productive sectors, which did not develop as a result, leaving Turkish imports behind and forcing Turkey to import. (Bakan and Cimen, 2018:53)

Infrastructure development efforts are not only reflected in the mass construction of low-cost housing, but can also be seen in other segments of the economy. Transport infrastructure was also lagging far behind the European or world average. This was especially true for fixed-track traffic. In the early 2000s, there were hardly any railway lines in Turkey, and in the big cities there were one or two metro lines, but they were not organized into a system either. A milestone in this situation was the start of the construction of the Marmaray railway tunnel connecting Europe to Asia under the Bosphorus, which was later followed by the development of a number of metro lines, high-speed railways and airports. Significant progress was also made between 2002 and 2007 in the field of telecommunications. The success here was due to the cooperation of the Turkish state-owned Türk Telekom and Vodafone, the involvement of foreign working capital. (Turan, 2015:228)

In terms of business, the AKP sought to maintain the system that had characterized the Turkish economy in the decades before it came to power, i.e., that the political elite intertwined with entrepreneurs, with politics intervening in business affairs. At the same time, AKP governments have advocated the opposite in other segments of the economy. With regard to the national bank, for example, the AKP had a particularly liberal attitude in the initial period, with the aim of making the central bank as independent as possible from the government and the financial institution pursuing an independent fiscal policy, just as the European Union and international financial circles wanted, and which is one of the preconditions for European integration. (Akçay, 2018:6)

### **Liberal fiscal policies and labor reform**

The main goal of liberal fiscal policy was to curb extremely high inflation. After the AKP came to power, it intended to achieve this through a labor reform. Between 2002 and 2005, AKP governments felt that one of the

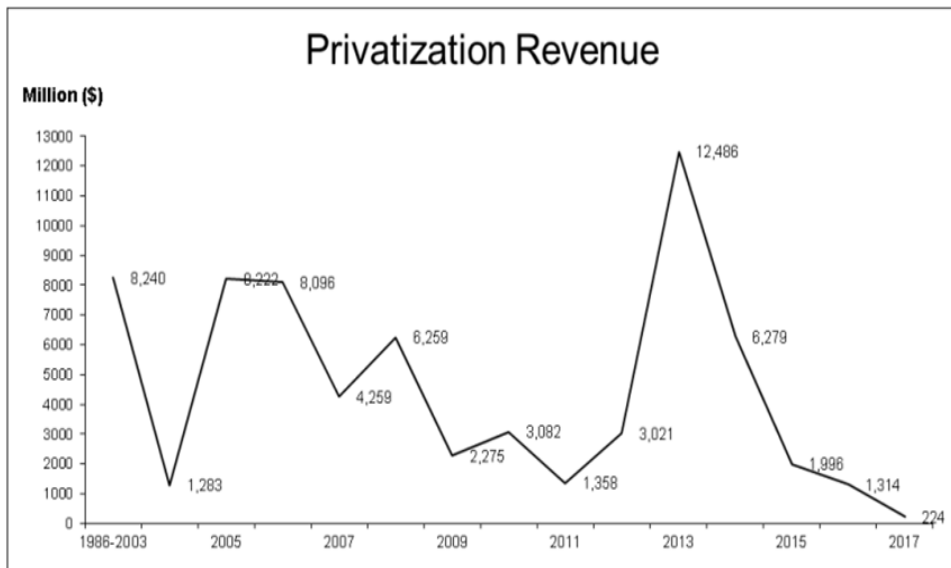
main reasons for the deterioration of the Turkish currency was that workers were earning too well compared to the way the Turkish economy was performing and that too many Turkish people were working full-time, further increasing economic burdens and reduces the incentive for businesses to invest. The New Labor Act No. 4857, passed in 2003, sought to change this situation by favoring employers over employees, which further heightened social tensions. This new legislation has made it possible for people to be employed part-time. At the same time, this law also adversely affected the trade union activity in the workplace, so they could not take effective action against further redundancies and new employment contracts. As a result, unemployment has risen, employment has fallen, and some of those who have kept their jobs have taken home less than before. In addition, the law reduced the burden on employers, increased their willingness to invest, increased productivity and slowly began to reduce inflation. This policy soon won the favor of Western financiers and investors disappointed by the AKP's credit policy. Although workers were dissatisfied, Turkey has become an attractive investment destination. (Akçay, 2018:8)

Macroeconomic data from 2004 to 2007 show that productivity growth in Turkey is spectacular and inseparable from the above mentioned labor reform, but there were still many gaps in this area despite the reform in the second half of the 2000s. Foreign observers noted that the further development of the Turkish economy could be hampered by the fact that workers' income tax rates and many other contributions also hit workers hard. However, they also point out that high minimum wages can be repulsive for some foreign investors. The Turkish vocational training system was also not perfect and the modern training of industrial workers was not completely solved. (Macovei, 2009:14)

The AKP has indeed been successful in tackling the extremely high inflation rate. While in 2001, the year of the Strong Economy Transition Program, consumer prices were still increasing by a rocketing 54.4%, three years later, in 2004, for the first time in 34 years, the annual money deterioration reached a single digit, with inflation rising to a moderate 9.4%. The extent to which this was a steady decline and due to the good functioning of Turkish financial markets is no better indication that inflation continued to moderate until the 2008 global economic crisis, and this also allowed the introduction of the new Turkish lira in 2005. (Karagol, 2013:36)

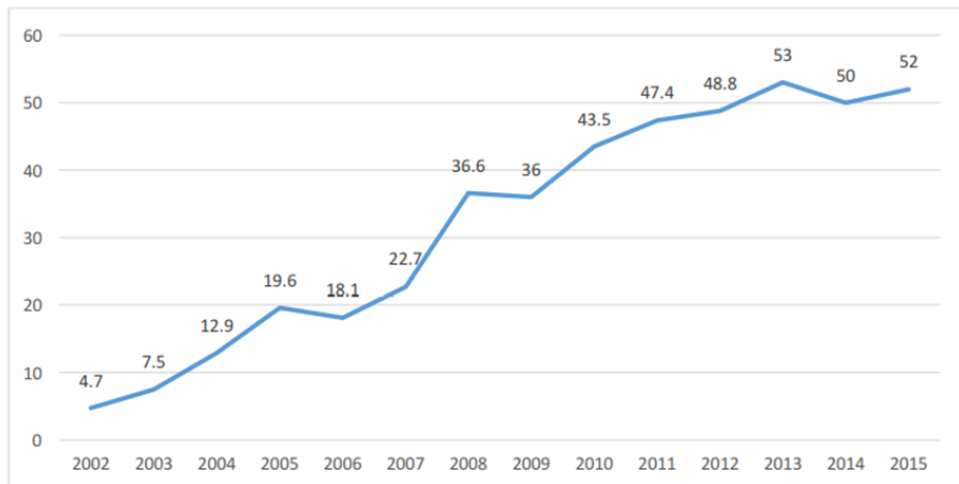
Until the 1980s, the Turkish economy's financial needs were largely met by cash. Due to very high inflation, millions of numbers appeared on the banknotes, which in many cases, both at home and abroad, led people to make fun of the Turkish currency. Even in the coalition negotiations of the 1990s, it was repeatedly suggested that 6 zeros should be cut off from Turkish money, but this theoretically set goal had not yet been achieved by Turkish

governments at the time. The AKP government, already led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, finally took this radical step in 2005. The fact that the AKP's disciplined fiscal policy essentially regulated inflation by 2004 paved the way for this important decision. In addition to curbing inflation, the ever-increasing gold and foreign exchange reserves of the Turkish Central Bank (TMB), which was pursuing an increasingly independent fiscal policy, have also contributed to the success of monetary reform. While TMB's reserves were only \$ 28.2 billion in 2002, by 2005 it had almost doubled to \$ 50.2 billion. (Karagol, 2013:38)



**Table n. 1.** Privatization revenues in Turkey between 1986 and 2017  
 (source: Akcay, 2018:9)

One of the most significant pillars of the AKP's liberal economic policy was privatization, which provided Turkish and foreign investors with state assets. The volume of privatization in the early 2000s coincided with the privatization process under Turgut Ozal in the mid-1980s, and was the second largest step in the AKP's history in which Turkish state property was taken into private hands. In 2005, at the culmination of the first AKP privatization, \$ 8,222 million in value went to private investors (see table above). Trade unions weakened by labor law were unable to take action against the process, and frustrated organized workers left the unions en masse. While in 2001, the year before the AKP came to power, 29.1% of Turkish workers belonged to one of these organizations, by 2015 their number had fallen to 6.3%. Interestingly, privatization has led AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdogan to settle accounts with one of the potential domestic critics, organized workers. (Akcay, 2018:8)



**Table n. 2.** Household debt to disposable income in Turkey between 2002 and 2015  
(source: Akcay, 2018:14)

Measures to reduce inflation and increase the balance of public finances have further aggravated the living conditions of families. In this situation, the AKP government has sought to improve the life condition of the Turkish families with innovative social policies, facilitating access to benefits and subsidies and reducing territorial disparities within the country. Families themselves, on the other hand, often found no other way out than to get into debt. Simultaneously with the decline in inflation and the gradual stabilization of the Turkish currency, domestic credit markets opened up to citizens. The marginal willingness of the Turkish population to borrow money has been steadily increasing since 2002. At first, personal loans were taken out for the purchase of the necessities of life and subsistence, and then, in an increasingly growing welfare situation after 2005, the purchase of less essential consumer goods was also financed from credit. While in 2002 Turkish families were indebted to only 4.7% of their income, by 2005, with the introduction of the new Turkish lira, that figure had quadrupled to 19.6%. Falling inflation, the stabilization of the national currency, despite the still high unemployment rate, filled people with optimism and they were not afraid to partly finance their own well-being with credit. This mixed economic development eventually led to the AKP performing much better in the 2007 parliamentary elections than 5 years earlier. (Akcay, 2018:14) Despite the continued indebtedness of families, it cannot be said that increasing money supply has had a positive effect on consumption. Household spendings did not increase in 2002 and 2005, on the contrary, there was a noticeable decline. While Turkish families spent 68.2% of their income in 2002, in 2005 it spent only 67.8%. This 0.4%

decline resulted in a severe downturn in the market, with traders and manufacturers of consumer goods facing a noticeable loss. (Inan, 2006:27)

### **Economic growth and globalization**

Of course, the relative development of the Turkish economy cannot be decoupled from world economic processes. The AKP certainly benefited from the fact that its first term of government, between 2002 and 2007, was in a phase of rapid expansion of the world economy, which was hampered by the 2008 global economic crisis, from which Turkey was able to recover relatively quickly with relatively small losses. Although the Turkish economy survived the 2008 crisis relatively well, after 2009 the recession will be felt in the Turkish foreign economy as well, and from then on it will become increasingly difficult to finance Turkish public and private debt from money coming from abroad. The importance of financing private debt is easy to understand if one considers the above detailed trends of the households. Similarly, the share of working capital from abroad was declining after 2009. (Benlialper et al., 2015:4)

The European Union is also emerging in the international context of the transformation of the Turkish economy. In 2002, one of the priorities of the AKP in power was European integration, for which they were ready to comply with all the requests coming from Brussels. One of the most fundamental expectations of the European Union vis-à-vis Turkey was to significantly liberalize its markets and strengthen the financial sector, as the pre-AKP government had already attempted with a project called the Strong Economy Transition Program, whose banking policy was also carried on by the new political elite. The EU has also required Turkey to create an investor-friendly environment and to transfer a significant part of its state assets to private owners. This means that privatization was not only aimed at creating a new Anatolian bourgeoisie, but was also an essential corollary of joining the EU. The Brussels bureaucracy also had a say in Turkish interest rate policy. They wanted Ankara to cut interbank rates. AKP governments also appreciated this request, as it also coincided with Muslim traditions that prohibit interest-taking. (Karagol, 2013:26)

### **The Urgent Action Plan (AEP)**

The economic policy changes presented so far culminated in the Urgent Action Plan (AEP) stimulus package announced by the AKP in 2002 and introduced since 2003. The Urgent Action Plan was drawn up by the 58th Government of the Republic of Turkey in the last days of 2002 in the economic situation outlined above. The development plan was presented to the Turkish public on 3 January 2003 by Prime Minister Abdullah Gul. According to the Prime Minister's approach, the Turkish economy can develop freely if its



bureaucratic burden is reduced. According to Gul, there are constant struggles in Turkey between the two opposing parties, economic actors and the administration. However, in the wake of the 2001 crisis, policy-makers can do nothing but favor and cut red tape for businesses. This political philosophy shows that the AKP's development plan sought not only to remedy economic problems, but could also be seen as a political turnaround. (Yilmaz and Guler, 2016:301)

The essence of the AEP was to bring about real structural changes in Turkish economic governance, to accelerate privatization, to provide capital to certain productive sectors, and to increase financial discipline, resulting in the radical decline of the public debt that fell under the Maastricht criteria, bringing Turkey's accession to the EU in theoretical proximity. (Karagol, 2013:14)

The Urgent Action Plan is essentially a national independence program, as the creators of the AEP had the goal to pursue economic policies separate from those of the major international financial power centers. Experts speculate that if the AKP had not come to power, but, say, a center-left political formation, it would have also formulated its economic plans against the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. These institutions put such strong pressure on Turkish governments in the 1990s that there was an almost complete political consensus surrounding the need for Turkey to regain its economic sovereignty and decide on its own finances. Of course, there are degrees of independence from the IMF. It is conceivable that a left-wing government would not have repaid all the loans so quickly or entered into new stand-by arrangements, i.e. a flexible policy of secession instead of the AKP's gradual but radical withdrawal policy. (Konukman, 2003:18)

The AKP also differed from other contemporary parties in that they saw not only indebtedness as a negative in IMF loans, but also failed to identify with the economic policy direction expected by the IMF. There were basically three topics on which there was a serious disagreement between the liberal approach of the AKP and international neoliberal experts. On the one hand, the AKP wanted to spend the public resources obtained from the loan mainly on the development of the productive sectors. On the other hand, it would have paid special attention to social spending. It was believed that it was only with the help of the lagging lower middle class that Turkish society could recover. Thirdly, the system of additional payments to agriculture would have been maintained. In the early 2000s, Turkey was still an industrial-agrarian country, with agriculture accounting for close to 20% of production, exports and employment. At that time, Turkey was not yet ready for a post-industrial turnaround. (Konukman, 2003:18)

According to the AEP, the Turkish manufacturing sector will be able to pull the country out of the deep economic crisis if small and medium-sized

enterprises strengthen. The recapitalization of these companies with the help of the AEP has become an overriding goal of the independent Turkish economic policies. To this end, AKP governments have encouraged the SME sector to build links with similar foreign companies as much as possible and to involve their funds in the Turkish economy. In addition, the government has earmarked funds to help Turkish small businesses benefit from the challenges of globalization, improve their digital equipment and access state-of-the-art technology. (Konukman, 2003:18)

According to AEP policy, the most urgent social reform was to be led by the AKP government in the health sector. The system of GP care has been modernized. Hospitals were merged and these modernized conglomerates were given relative independence. Social security was made available to all, but at the same time a significant amount of private capital was attracted to health care, which led to a noticeable improvement in a short time. This part of the program was a success that was most noticed by the less favored sections of the population, increasing the popularity of the ruling party was partly due to these measures. (Konukman, 2003:18)

The AEP has also introduced significant reforms in the area of agricultural financing. A new insurance scheme has been set up for farmers, guaranteeing that producers have their money even if a natural disaster destroys their crops. It is an extremely big challenge for farmers to produce in 9 months of the year but have no income, and in the remaining 3 months there is no field work, but then its financial fruits are ripe. This new insurance system provides a satisfactory answer to this duality and guarantees the financial stability of those living from agriculture. The new law establishes advocacy organizations to protect producers and simplifies their accounting, which will make it easier for villagers living in an increasingly difficult situation and increase the population retention capacity of rural areas, as the Turkish village is being depopulated due to the ongoing rural exodus. (Konukman, 2003:19)

The Urgent Action Plan set basically economic goals, but it also wanted to have an impact on politics. In addition to its classic economic policy goals, it has also announced a program of stronger action against corruption. To this end, a coordinating body has been set up around the person of the prime minister to investigate and discuss allegations of corruption in politics. It has been decided that the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption and the Civil Law Convention on Corruption would also be ratified. According to these bills, the penalty for corruption had to be raised and citizens had to be given the right to be properly informed about corruption cases. In other words, the Turkish government advocated transparency. (Bigpara, 2002) This is very interesting in light of the fact that in many cases in 2010, the AKP's leading

politicians were linked to significant corruption charges that did not spare Recep Tayyip Erdogan himself or his family.

In 2003, the reform of AEP's economic policy was not considered definitive. Contemporaries were convinced that the AKP was planning further steps, but only wanted to introduce them gradually. For example, they were confident that the Conservatives would significantly reshape the Turkish tax policy. Despite the fact that the AKP is a right-wing party, it was predicted that they would want to guarantee the stability of public finances and pay growing social and health spending by increasing certain taxes. Among other things, there has been speculation that they will increase the value added tax, which will be used for debt service and to reduce its interest burden in addition to the above objectives. (Konukman, 2003:19)

Due to the Urgent Action Plan, Turkey's financial awareness was also improving. AEP has created a sound fiscal environment, which has made Turkey attractive to foreign investors. The AKP governments have achieved this goal not only by reducing the country's indebtedness by repaying an important part of the IMF debt, but have also done their utmost to keep the operating costs of the Turkish state and the Turkish public sector as low as possible and to reduce the need for expenditure is financed by foreign loans. The fact that the Turkish government reduced to 3% the government deficits by 2007 impressed the experts and the policy-makers, they also expressed their contentment seeing that the Turkish government did not want to increase the deficit with non-essential foreign loans. (Macovei, 2003:11)

The success of the Urgent Action Plan has also been recognized by the international financial community. According to the OECD, Turkey had the most important growth rate in the first half of the 2000s from among its member states. The OECD highlighted most that the AEP in Turkey had led to a comprehensive economic policy turnaround that had a beneficial effect on the economy as a whole. „The main economic reforms took place in several key areas, such as fiscal and monetary policy, tax policy, financial sector prudential regulations, product market regulations, labor market regulations, capital markets, foreign direct investment, privatization of state-owned enterprises, infrastructure and agriculture.” (Macovei, 2009:18) Part of the international recognition is that between 2002 and 2007, Turkey's foreign trade activity also showed a significant increase. Two and a half times the increase can be detected during the 5 years examined. Exports rose from \$ 36 billion to \$ 107 billion, while imports rose from \$ 50 billion to \$ 170 billion. (Sakarya, 2014:247)

### **Scientific Findings**

The Urgent Action Plan implemented by the AKP government was a comprehensive stimulus package that played a critical role in stabilizing the

Turkish economy after the 2001 crisis. It included measures such as tax incentives, infrastructure development, and support for small and medium-sized businesses, all of which helped to boost economic growth and set Turkey on a path towards rapid development.

The AKP's economic policies, including privatization and social spending, helped to improve the lives of Turkish citizens and reduce poverty. However, some of these policies, such as the labor reform, have been criticized for favoring employers over employees and leading to higher unemployment rates. Additionally, the increase in household debt due to the opening of domestic credit markets has left some families in a precarious financial situation.

Economic policies and the subsequent economic recovery of the AKP resulted in the stabilization of the Turkish economy in the early 2000s. However, the reliance on borrowing and debt-fueled growth left the economy vulnerable to external shocks, as evidenced by the impact of the 2008 global economic crisis. Despite this, the AKP's economic policies have led to a significant increase in productivity and the growth of a new national bourgeoisie, which has helped to revitalize the economy and attract foreign investment.

The AKP wanted Turkey to be independent from international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank, which were believed to favor the interests of powerful Western nations. To achieve this, the AKP focused on boosting domestic production and innovation, investing in sectors like technology, energy, and agriculture, and promoting entrepreneurship and small business growth. These efforts aim to create a more self-sufficient, prosperous Turkey that is less dependent on foreign powers.

The AKP implemented measures to meet the EU's strict economic criteria by investing in infrastructure, encouraging foreign investment, promoting entrepreneurship, and developing new trade partnerships. These policies led to significant economic growth and modernization, but critics argue that it was not always equitable and came at the expense of workers' rights and environmental protections.

The economic policies of the party, including the Urgent Action Plan, were popular among the Turkish public for stimulating economic growth, creating jobs, cutting taxes, and increasing infrastructure spending. The plan was effective in reducing unemployment rates. The AKP's focus on improving access to education and health care also resonated with voters. These policies played a key role in their electoral success.

## **Methodology**

This article is a literature review that examines the economic policies and reforms implemented by the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in

Turkey in the early 2000s, specifically focusing on the Urgent Action Plan (AEP). The sources used in this review include academic articles, working papers, and internet sources. The information provided in this article is based on the analysis and interpretation of these sources.

The review begins by introducing the AKP's economic policies and the importance of privatization in their liberal economic policy. It then discusses the impact of the AEP, which aimed to bring about real structural changes in Turkish economic governance, accelerate privatization, provide capital to certain productive sectors, and increase financial discipline. The article also examines the relationship between the AKP and international financial organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, and how this affected their economic policies.

The article concludes by discussing the success of the AEP and its impact on the Turkish economy. It also highlights the role of political communication in the acceptance of the AEP, as well as the peaceful economic crisis management by the AKP government, despite opposition from the old Kemalist elite or the army.

Overall, this literature review provides an overview of the AKP's economic policies and reforms in Turkey in the early 2000s, specifically focusing on the Urgent Action Plan. The sources used in this review provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic situation in Turkey during this time period and the impact of the AKP's policies on the country's economy.

## **Discussions and Conclusion**

The early 2000s saw a significant transformation of the Turkish economy, with the AKP implementing a range of policies aimed at stabilizing the economy and promoting growth. One of the key pillars of the AKP's economic policy was privatization, which allowed Turkish and foreign investors to acquire state assets. The AKP also sought to reduce inflation and increase the balance of public finances, which had a significant impact on the living conditions of families. While the AKP introduced innovative social policies to improve the life conditions of Turkish families, many found themselves in debt as a result of increased access to credit.

The AKP's economic policies coincided with a phase of rapid expansion of the world economy, which helped to drive Turkey's growth. The Urgent Action Plan (AEP) stimulus package, introduced in 2003, played a significant role in Turkey's transformation. The AEP aimed to bring about structural changes in Turkish economic governance, accelerate privatization, provide capital to productive sectors, and increase financial discipline. The AEP's success was recognized by the international financial community and helped to boost foreign trade activity.

However, the AKP's economic policies were not without criticism. The party's emphasis on privatization led to the weakening of trade unions, which were unable to take action against the process. Additionally, while the AKP government sought to reduce inflation and increase public finances, it also led to increased indebtedness of families. The AKP was also criticized for its close ties to international financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

Overall, the AKP's economic policies in the early 2000s had a significant impact on Turkey's economy and helped to stabilize it after a period of crisis. While some of the policies were controversial, the AKP's emphasis on privatization and reducing inflation helped to drive growth and improve the living conditions of many Turkish families.

Thanks to the strict neoliberal economic policies before the Justice and Development Party came to power in 2002 and the AKP's Urgent Action Plan, the Turkish economy has been on a spectacular growth path since 2003. Between 2002 and 2007, Turkey's GDP grew by an average of 6.8% per year. And if one looks at the per capita value and compares it with the growth rate of the EU member states, one can see that the development of the Turkish economy was 10% ahead of the EU average, ie the growth was more spectacular compared to Europe. Incidentally, this outstanding performance has also made a good impression on Brussels, and Turkey has begun to be truly seen as a potential candidate that will be able to meet the EU's economic criteria in the long term. By the end of the first cycle of the AKP, the soaring economy of the Turkish economy had already begun to be felt by the average citizen, as GDP per capita had almost tripled in five years. While in 2001, the last year of the crisis, it was only \$ 3,250, by 2007 that number had risen to 9,000. (Macovei, 2009:10)

It is also clear from the above that, despite some anomalies, the Turkish crisis management of the early 2000s was a success, and this success has been recognized by international markets and organizations. From a political point of view, it is very important to emphasize that the economic reforms of the AKP government are not hampered by the opposition, the old Kemalist elite or the army, which was still an important domestic political factor at the time. And all this is true despite the fact that AKP has built and supported its own clientele on several occasions. This peaceful economic crisis management may be explained by the fact that the actions of the AEP did not harm the economic interests of the old elite and the army. The opposition did not criticize the government's measures more seriously, because the left itself would have changed Turkish economic policy, sought to loosen its relationship with the IMF, and changed many rules in the social sphere. (Onaran and Oyvat, 2015:7)

In addition to real, tangible successes, political communication also played an important role in the acceptance of the AEP. AKP politicians have

recognized that the great macroeconomic indicators can be used to persuade voters even in a global comparison. In all of their speeches, they emphasized the numerical evidence of growth, but underlined much less that this development could only be sustained for some time, and that Turkey was nevertheless exposed to changes in the world economy. Thus, the pro-government part of Turkish public opinion was hit quite unprepared by the 2008 global economic crisis. This is true even if this crisis has hampered less the Turkish economy in its rapid expansion phase, than any other emerging market, including the former socialist countries. (Onaran and Oyvat, 2015:7)

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