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# The Drivers of Excessive Labour in Turkey's Coal Mining Sector

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# Outline

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- Motivation and research question
- An outlook on Turkey's mining and quarrying sector
- Drivers of excessive labour in the sector
- Concluding remarks

Motivation



# Soma mine disaster in 2014

Turkey mine explosion: more than 200 dead and hundreds trapped (The Guardian, 2014)



Turkish Trade Unions Strike Over Soma Mine Disaster (Foreign Policy, 2014)



ADEM ALTAN/AFP/Getty Images



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# Motivation

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- Turkey: one of the top 12 coal producers in the world, yet low labour productivity
- High frequency of fatalities: 1983 - 2018, explosions, fire and other reasons took at least 1754 lives in Turkey's mining sector (TBB 2014; TMMOB 2019).
- 2014 Soma mine disaster: 301 died and several injured



Excessive labour at the expense of mechanization



Undermining health and safety conditions; high frequency of fatalities

Research question

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What are the drivers of excessive labour at the expense of mechanization in Turkey's coal mining sector at least until the 2010s?

# An outlook on Turkey's mining and quarrying sector



# Low macroeconomic significance

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Mining and quarrying sector in Turkey		
% of Total	1998	2018
Gross value added	0.92	1.00
Employment	0.67	0.48
Exports	1.35	2.02

Source: Turkstat (2019); ILOSTAT (2019)

Yet, significant contribution to employment in economically important mining basins

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Mining and quarrying in Turkey, 2018		
Province	% of provincial employment	Number of workers
Manisa	9.7	11,908
Kütahya	7.4	2,117
Amasya	6.4	877

The drivers of excessive labour in the sector

## 3 major drivers at least until the 2010s

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- Dysfunctional trade unionism and labour law enforcement
- Low private investment and insufficient government incentives
- Subcontracting practices

Trade unionism and labour law  
enforcement

# Trade unionism in Turkey

<b>Trade union density, %</b>	<b>Former</b>	<b>2019</b>
Turkey, formal	35.3 (1975)	13.7
Turkey, formal and informal	n.a.	10
Mining and quarrying	68.5 (2003)	19.1
<b>Collective bargaining coverage ratio, %, 2016</b>		
Turkey		5.9
Mining and quarrying		17.7

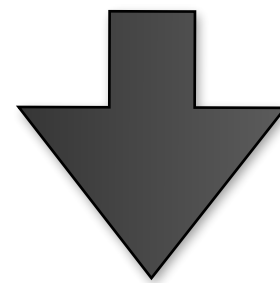
Source: CGBS (2003, 2019); DISK (2017); ILOSTAT (2019); Visser (2011)



# Trade unionism in Turkey's mining and quarrying sector

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- Fragmentation into eight trade unions: Some of which are clearly dysfunctional with a membership of only 0.01 percent of the total workforce in the sector (CSGB 2019).
- Manisa province (Soma basin): The highest ratio of trade union density in mining and quarrying with around 70.7 percent in 2016 (CSGB, 2016a).



- Yet, organised labour was dysfunctional in preventing the indecent working conditions in Soma

# Labour law enforcement: Hours of work

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- ILO's convention (C001): upper limit of 8 hours per day and 48 hours per week
- Turkey in the period of 2009-2014: mean weekly hours actually worked per employee in the mining and quarrying sector remained above 48 hours
- After Soma mine disaster in 2014, alterations in Turkish labour law: an upper limit of 7.5 hours per day and 37.5 hours per week for work in underground mines

# Labour law enforcement: Hours of work

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Mean weekly hours actually worked per employee in mining and quarrying, 2017	
Czechia	39.7
Greece	42.1
Ukraine	39
Turkey	49.8

# Labour law enforcement: Health and safety

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- ILO's convention (C176): Health and safety in mines
- Only after Soma mine disaster Turkey ratified this convention, yet the rate of fatal occupational injuries remains to be relatively high

# Labour law enforcement: Health and safety

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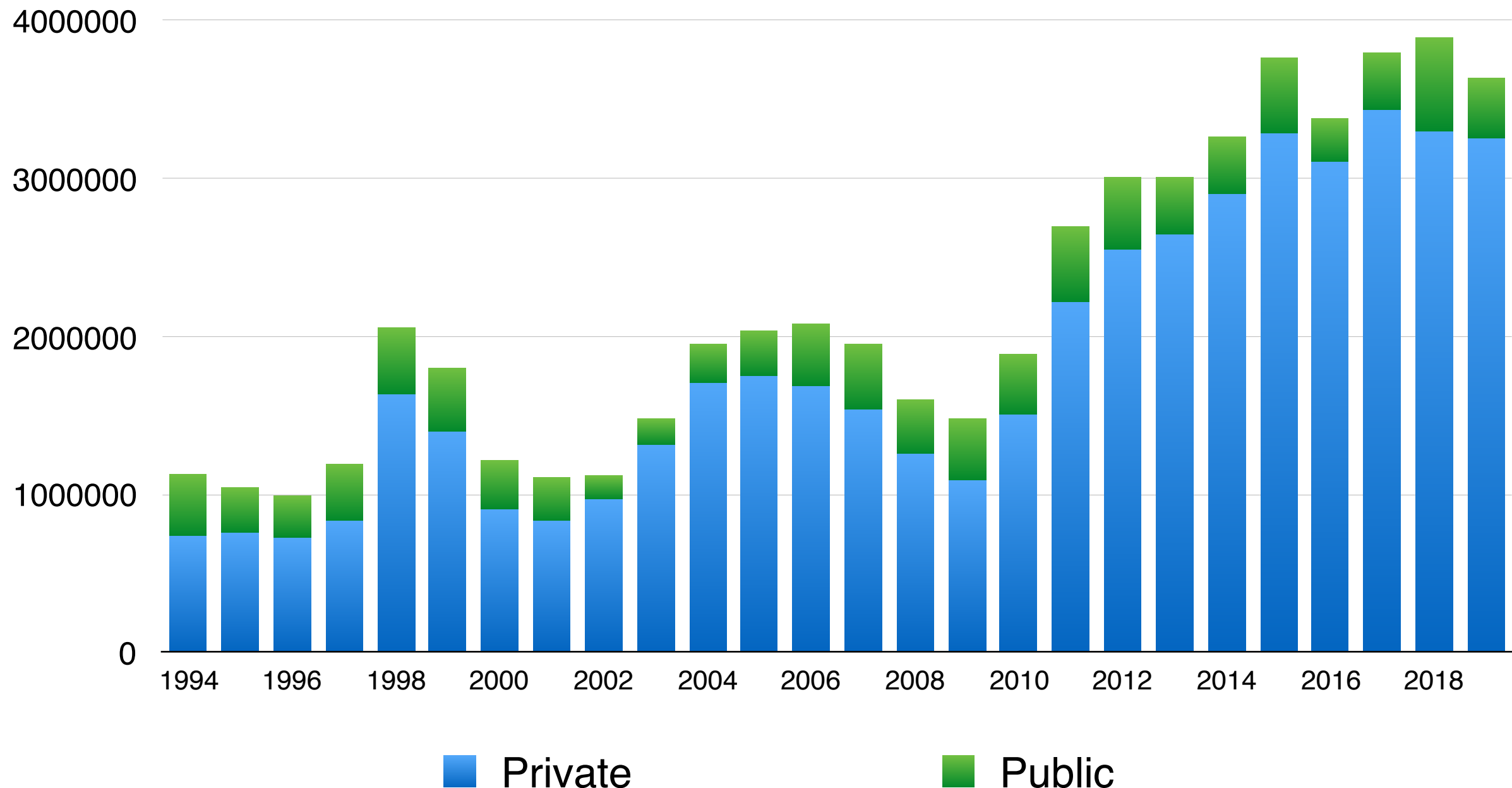
Fatal occupational injuries per hundred-thousand employees in mining and quarrying, 2015	
Czechia	17.1
Greece	0
Ukraine	12.2
Turkey	52.3

Private investment and insufficient  
government incentives

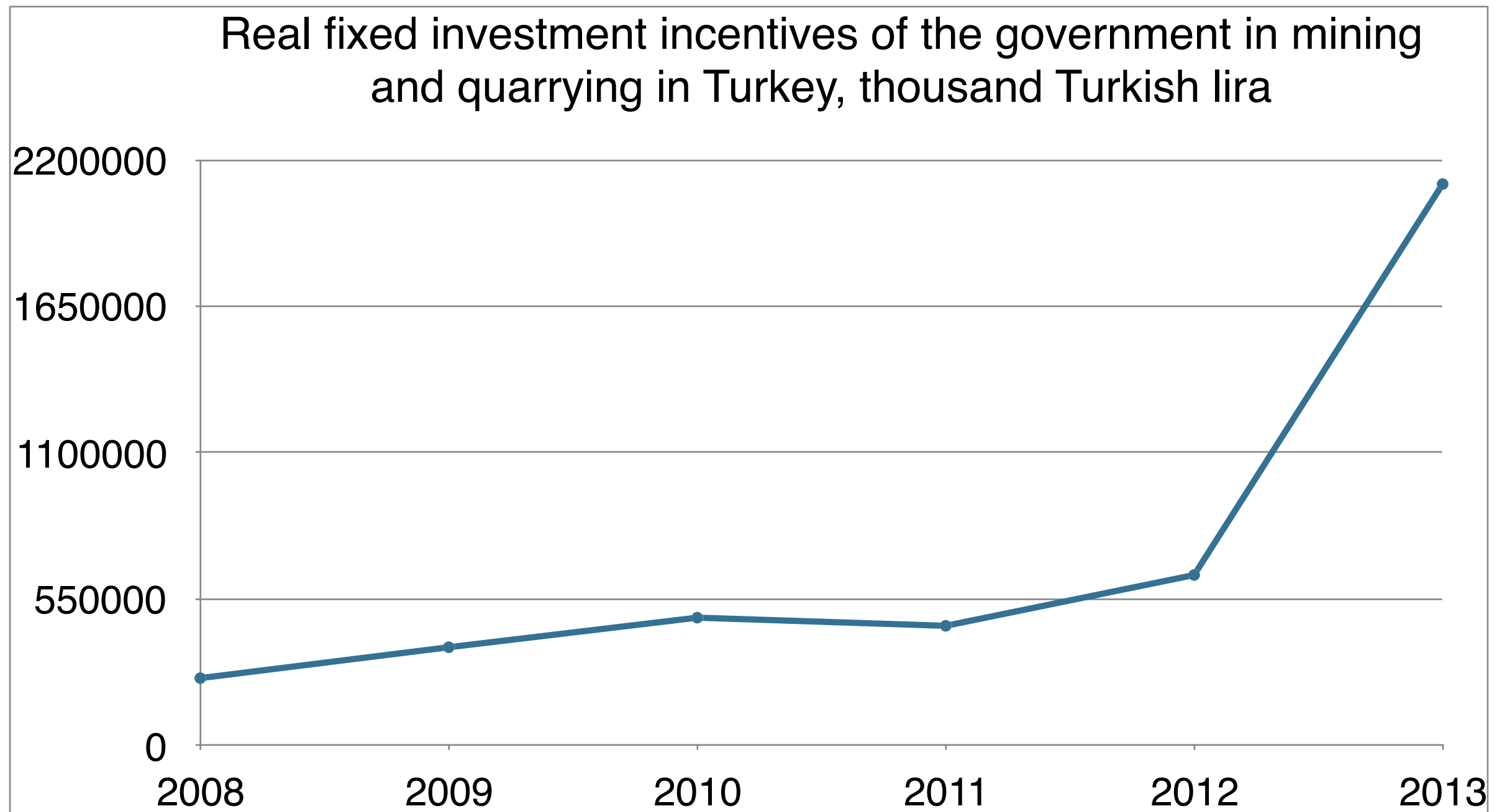


# Private investment and government incentives

Real public and private gross fixed investment in mining and quarrying in Turkey, thousand Turkish lira



# Private investment and government incentives



Source: T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı (2019); CBRT (2019); own calculations

# Labour productivity

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Gross value added per person employed in mining and quarrying in Turkey, thousand euro			
	2009	2013	2014
EU-28	n.a.	134	110
Czechia	41.2	39.2	37.2
Greece	55.7	51.1	51.8
Turkey	25.2	30.5	32.5

Subcontracting practices

# Subcontracting practices

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- Formal:
  - Until the end-2010s: State economic enterprises hire private firms to operate the mines ==> Ambiguity in liability
  - From the late 2010s on: “Privatization” of mines in terms of delegating the operating rights

# Subcontracting practices

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- Informal:
  - The mining firm informally has a deal with one of the mine workers, who hires the required number of workers through his social network
  - This agent manages the group of workers
  - His salary (informally paid) is much higher than average, dependent on the number of workers he hires and their work performance.



# Concluding remarks

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- Soma mine disaster in 2014: unmasking the indecent working conditions in mining and quarrying sector in Turkey
- Excessive labour at the expense of mechanisation: A fundamental factor of low health and safety conditions in mining at least until the 2010s
- Three major drivers:
  - Dysfunctional trade unionism and labour law enforcement
  - Low private investment in mechanisation and government incentives pushing towards technological advancements
  - Formal and informal subcontracting practices

# Concluding remarks

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- As of mid. 2010s: re-regulation steps of labour standards
- Increased government incentives for mechanization ==> yet, labour productivity criteria has the risk of overburdening labour
- A new privatization strategy aimed at boosting mining sector output ==> raising new controversies for labour standards, i.e more profit-orientation, potentially undermining labour standards further

Thanks!

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