



# DEVELOPING POLICIES FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Association for Gender Equality Policies  
Report on Experiences and Observations

2022-2023

Cinsiyet  
Eşitliği  
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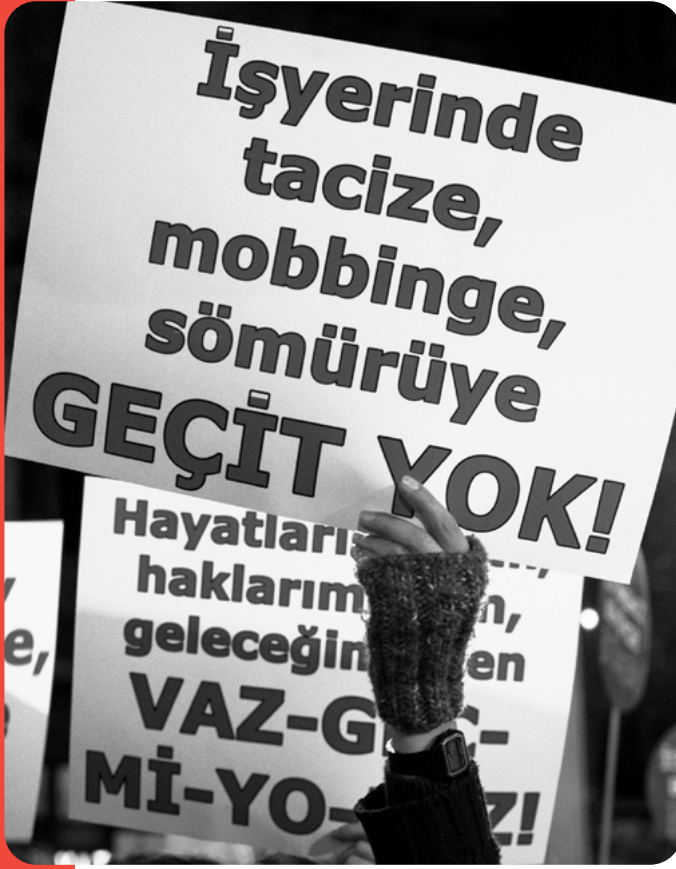
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# **Table of Contents**

Introduction.....	5
Gender Equality in the World of Work.....	6
The Current Situation Regarding Gender Equality in the World of Work in Turkey .....	7
Legal Regulations.....	8
Association for Gender Equality Policies.....	9
2022-2023 Observations.....	9
Conclusion .....	14



## Introduction

We have prepared a report reflecting the experiences of the Association for Gender Equality Policies on institutional policy development for gender equality in the world of work in Turkey during 2022-2023. This report is based on the observations of an association established in 2022 and working with limited capacity with its two employees. We hope that this report, which compiles developments and problem areas in gender equality and institutional policies, will be useful for current and future work in the field.

# Gender Equality in the World of Work

Gender equality in the world of work means that, irrespective of their gender, one should have:

- Equal access to employment, professions, work opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes,
- Equal advancement in profession, equality in job security and continuity, equality in productivity, and equal pay for equal work,
- Equal treatment, equal rights, equal rewards.

A holistic review of an institution from a gender equality perspective requires a thorough and inclusive analysis, encompassing various factors that make up and define the institution, such as field of activities, scope of operations, employee relations and dynamics, interactions with those receiving services or support, physical infrastructure and its accessibility. The cornerstones of such policy include childcare provisions as well as other care support services, convenient transportation, promotion of gender equality in professional advancement and decision-making positions, reassessment of work and activities through a gender-sensitive lens, implementation of mechanisms against violence and harassment, as well as regular monitoring, evaluation and updating of said policy. Institutional policy for gender equality entails an internal effort to transform the institution and therefore extends beyond addressing “beneficiaries of the institution”.<sup>1</sup>

Discriminatory behaviors, sexual harassment and violence are indicators of inequality in the world of work. According to Kadriye Bakırcı (2000), who has extensive experience and many studies on gender equality in the world of work, violence and harassment that take place in workplaces devoid of equality constitute,

- “A violation of the personal rights of the person subjected to violence or harassment;
- A violation of the right and freedom to work;
- A violation of the prohibition of discrimination or the principle of equality;

- A violation of the right of employees to work in favorable conditions/in an environment conducive to human dignity;
- A violation of employees’ occupational health and safety;
- A violation of labor peace;
- A violation of public order and security.”<sup>2</sup>

Adopting a holistic and inclusive approach is necessary to ensure that world of work becomes a safe and equal environment for everyone. Moreover, fostering a safe and equal working life is the responsibility and right of all persons in the organization, with a particular emphasis on the employer. Consequently, even if an incident of harassment or violence transpires “between two people” it is a matter of concern for the entirety of the organization.

**The presence of a policy that is managed, implemented, evaluated, and updated in a holistic manner, covering all individuals associated with the institution, such as managers, employees, volunteers, service providers, etc., indicates the existence of institutional policy.**

The most crucial aspect of establishing such a policy is to adopt a preventive perspective that ensures gender equality in the world of work rather than a punitive perspective. Today, many institutions in Turkey, particularly universities and civil society organizations, have policy documents. However, albeit being important steps taken at the institutional level, the mere existence of these documents do not guarantee the presence of functional policy. A policy is a cohesive framework that comprises various steps such as planning, programming, implementation, and evaluation. In recent years, international organizations and funding agencies have mandated the applicants to address this issue, primarily through policy documents. This has spurred action especially in universities, companies, and NGOs. However, as mentioned, it is also common to find policies that remain merely “on paper” and not fully internalized or integrated. For some institutions, one-time gender-focused training sessions may be used to give the impression that the employer or the manager has fulfilled their responsibilities in this area.

<sup>1</sup> Many studies are already being carried out in this field, particularly by the International Labor Organization (ILO). For some examples, see, [https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS\\_865042/lang--tr/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/ankara/publications/WCMS_865042/lang--tr/index.htm) <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2023/10/four-actions-to-forge-workplaces-free-from-sexual-harassment-and-violence> [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_863800.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---europe/---ro-geneva/---ilo-ankara/documents/genericdocument/wcms_863800.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Kadriye Bakırcı, 2020. <http://tbbdergisi.barobirlik.org.tr/m2020-151-1940>

In Turkey, universities have the longest-standing tradition in this regard. Following the establishment of women's research centers, women's clubs, and gender studies courses, universities began founding CTS units (commissions and boards against sexual harassment and assault) and releasing policy documents in the 2010s. In 2015, the Council of Higher Education dispatched a "Gender Equality Position Paper" to universities, encouraging holistic and comprehensive work in this area. While this document, which is in line with the Istanbul Convention, is no longer in circulation, in today's environment where even the word gender has become suspect, many universities are still establishing new units, crafting documents, and organizing preventive initiatives – even if this is not a generalizable situation. The CTS units of universities come together semiannually to engage in discussions. However, there is a pressing need for comprehensive research and analysis of universities' institutional gender equality policies and their gains and progress in this field.<sup>3</sup>

## The Current Situation Regarding Gender Equality in the World of Work in Turkey

According to hierarchical roles and responsibilities stemming from gender inequality, men are associated with public and productive labor, while women are assigned to the domestic/private sphere and associated with reproduction/unpaid care labor. As of 2023, women's employment rate in Turkey sits at 30.4%, and this figure has been under 40% for many years now. Women's labor force participation hovers around 35%. In contrast,

for men these rates are higher with an employment rate of 65% and a labor force participation rate of 71.4% as of 2023.<sup>4</sup> Several factors contribute to this disparity, including lower levels of education among women, the burden of caregiving responsibility falling on women, and married women being less likely to participate in the workforce compared to unmarried or divorced women.<sup>5</sup> The patriarchal structure of the country impedes women's access to, retention, and advancement in the workforce. In addition to the burden of care labor, discrimination and harassment women face in the workplace further hinder women from participating in the workforce.

Gender inequality determines not only women's participation in the workforce but also the type of professions they pursue and the sectors in which they work. Concepts such as horizontal and vertical segregation and glass ceiling are used to elucidate these phenomena. Professions manifest gender-based concentrations of employees; for instance, textile jobs or teaching are seen as women's professions, whereas there are almost no woman drivers, construction workers, building caretakers, waiters, or cooks. Male dominance is particularly pronounced in the automotive and industrial sectors. The same inequality results in women working in unskilled, temporary or part-time positions characterized by low wages, poor working conditions, no opportunity for advancement, and absence of unionization. Also, women who are in the same profession as men work in lower positions. For instance, women's access to managerial positions such as rector, dean, manager, boss, business owner, politician, mayor, mukhtar, chief is laden with obstacles. Furthermore, achieving "equal pay for equal work", in other words, equal pay for those working in the same profession with the same qualifications regardless of gender, remains to be a problematic issue in Turkey.

### According to government data:

- Half of all doctors are women, while 16% of chief physicians are women (Ministry of Health, 2020)
- 40.33% of public employees are women and only 11.69% of senior employees are women (Directorate General Directorate of Labor, 2020)
- The rate of female professors in academia is 33.2% (TURKSTAT, 2023)
- The number of women in senior and mid-level management positions in companies is 20.7% (TURKSTAT, 2023).

3 For an analysis of CTS units, see, Seda Kalem, 2021. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/federgi/issue/60250/946931> and Ceren Akçabay, 2021. <https://aramizda.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CTSRaporu-CerenAkçabay-2021.pdf>

4 TURKSTAT, 2024. <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Istatistiklerle-Kadin-2023-53675#:~:text=TÜİK%20Kurumsal&text=Adrese%20Dayalı%20Nüfus%20Kayıt%20Sistemi,1%27ini%20ise%20erkekler%20oluşturdu>

5 Zahide Gençtürk, 2022. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1880622>



It is worth noting the scarcity of research and reports on the problems women encounter in the world of work and the lack of supportive efforts in this sphere. This deficiency hampers evaluation, monitoring, and needs assessment.

Another consequence of gender inequality is discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Alongside societal hostility, LGBTI+s often face labelling, fear of job loss, mobbing, and termination of job contracts<sup>6</sup> in the world of work. Addressing this issue and devising institutional public solutions is increasingly becoming difficult given the current climate of the country.

To date, the organizations aimed at combating gender-based discrimination and violence in Turkey have predominantly focused on addressing domestic violence experienced by employees. It is still, of course, hard to suggest that the needs in this area have been adequately addressed.

It is clear, however, that internal, holistic, and inclusive endeavors aimed at achieving gender equality within work/organizing spaces are not prioritized by institutions.

Labor Code also stipulates that sexual harassment constitutes a just cause for terminating a job contract, applicable both to the employer and employee. According to the Code of Obligations, employers are responsible for preventing psychological and sexual harassment and it is their duty to ensure a safe working environment.

However, given that the law holds employers responsible for preventing discrimination, ensuring an equal work environment, preventing sexual harassment, etc. and in the absence of a specific legal definition of workplace harassment (and the inadequacy of the term harassment in legally defining acts stemming from gender inequality), there is a crucial need for explanatory and binding documents such as internal regulations, by-laws, and policy documents for employers.

It should also be incumbent upon the state to ensure the implementation of these internal regulations, prepared in accordance with the law, and to compel employers to take proactive measures against gender inequality.

## Legal Regulations

The principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution covers equal treatment of everyone across all areas of life. As a fundamental right, constitutional equality entails legal protection against gender-based discrimination in the world of work. The obligations and responsibilities of employers are also rooted in the Constitution. Furthermore, the “principle of equal treatment”, also enshrined in the Constitution, is reinforced by Article 5 of the Labor Code, which mandates equal treatment based on gender. The

Threats, insults, deprivation of liberty, disturbing the peace and tranquility of the person, stalking, intentional injury, sexual harassment, sexual assault are defined as crimes in the Turkish Penal Code. And it is possible to issue cautionary decisions within the scope of the Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women. Some of the Court of Cassation decisions have recognized sexual harassment as a significant barrier that working women encounter in their ability to remain in the workforce.<sup>7</sup>

Another important pillar of legal regulations in the world of work is international conventions. The International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190 on the Prevention of Harassment and Violence in the World of Work, which entered into force in 2021, stands out as a notable gain of the struggle in this area. The Convention places responsibility on both the employers and the state, emphasizing the

<sup>6</sup> For annual reports of KAOSGL, see, <https://kaosgl.org/haber/2022-istihdam-arastirmasi-lgbt-calisanlar-arasinda-issizlik-yayginlasiyor>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.hukukihaber.net/yargitaydan-emsal-isyerinde-cinsel-taciz-karari#:~:text=İşyerinde%20cinsel%20tacizle%20suçlanan%20kişi,işçiye%20kiddem%20tazminatı%20ödenemeyeceğine%20hükmetti.&text=İşyerinde%20cinsel%20taciz%20ve%20cinsel,önemli%20bir%20sorun%20teşkil%20ediyor.> Another important point here is the knowledge that the verdict in the criminal case is not binding for the judge sitting on the civil case.



importance of preventive measures. ILO 190 shares a similar approach with the international Istanbul Convention from which Turkey withdrew in 2021. The Istanbul Convention prioritizes the fight against gender inequality as a central pillar of combatting and preventing violence. Although the Turkish state is not a party to the ILO 190 Convention, some municipalities (Eskişehir, Antalya, Bodrum, Bornova, Konak, Germencik, Ceyhan) have publicly declared that they are signatories to it.

In conclusion, Turkey does have regulations in place—albeit with questionable adequacy and effectiveness—that aim to protect women in the world of work and to prevent discrimination based on gender as well as acts such as sexual harassment, etc.

## Association for Gender Equality Policies

The Association for Gender Equality Policies (CEPD) was established in 2022 with the objective of contributing to the development of institutional policies in the world of work in Turkey. Over the decades, civil society in Turkey has amassed considerable experience in the field of gender. There has been a general lack, however, of institutions, associations, etc. that specifically work to support other organizations and provide consultancy services for policy development on gender equality in the world of work. There exists a limited pool of resources in Turkish on this issue. Channels and platforms (such as academic publications, sectoral research, etc.) that bring together research in this area are lacking. With the growing demand for institutional policy-making in recent years, the decision was made in the late 2021 to establish CEPD with the participation of people from various organizations engaged in gender-related work—including associations, foundations, academia, and the feminist movement—to support and contribute to the work in this area.

CEPD draws on previous experience. As is also true for civil society organizations and institutions, this experience is primarily based on the efforts of the feminist movement in this country, which has spread across various areas of life since the 1990s. Additionally, the CEPD coordinator's prior experience as the office coordinator of Boğaziçi University's Commission for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment for five years has equipped us with knowledge and

insights into the functioning of preventive units within institutions as well as their potential applicability across different organizational structures. Prior to 2022, various studies were conducted in this area in different organizations such as CSOs, professional chambers, professional associations, municipalities, companies, and platforms. Following the establishment of the association, which has two staff members—a coordinator and an assistant—in 2022, these connections were maintained, and in time as the association became more visible, expanded.

## 2023–2023 Observations

Between 2022 and 2023, CEPD conducted information sessions and provided support on policy formulation to 19 institutions. Additionally, consultancy services were offered to 15 institutions (which included assistance in establishing units and case follow-up). CEPD held preliminary meetings with 14 institutions to develop policies. These meetings were organized multiple times under headings such as organizational policy, policy document drafting, planning preventive activities and mechanisms, receiving applications, and conducting policy monitoring and evaluation. The duration of these initiatives varied, with some spanning a year or longer. As of January 2024, 14 organizations, which are to create or in the process of creating their policies, have collaborated with CEPD. During these two years, CEPD published 9 articles on its website and shared 41 informative content pieces on Instagram. In December 2023, CEPD hosted a closed workshop attended by 65 individuals representing relevant institutions. Insights gleaned from this workshop have also informed this report. CEPD contacted or worked with a total of 48 organizations during these two years, each interaction yielding different content and outcomes.

The majority of CEPD's contacts are civil society organizations working on the basis of human rights. These institutions are followed by university departments or academics with an interest in this field.

To a lesser extent, professional associations/ organizations and companies are also on the list. One significant factor contributing to this pattern is CEPD's ready access to rights-based associations, foundations, and platforms. Another reason is that these organizations have smaller and more democratic structures, making them easier to engage and mobilize. In some examples from big corporations, bar associations and municipalities, CEPD has encountered situations where initial efforts were begun but failed to progress due to various bureaucratic hurdles and shifting priorities. In such hierarchical and sometimes bureaucratically inert structures, we observe that progress often relies on the initiatives of individuals interested in the issue and that the process may become impeded at decision-making levels or halted entirely due to a lack of prioritization.

When assessing the recent increase in demand for institutional policy-making regarding gender equality in Turkey, it is also necessary to address the obstacles encountered in this field of gender studies and policies in the same period. Amidst the consolidation of conservative and authoritarian rule in the country, women's and feminist organizations with years of experience in the field of gender and in combatting violence were excluded from workshops, meetings, and discussions pertaining to these issues. Moreover, they were sidelined from legislative, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation processes. Furthermore, the Gender Equality program was cancelled by the Ministry of National Education in 2019 and the Gender Equality Position Paper was abolished by the Council of Higher Education in the same year. Understanding the broader context entails acknowledging significant changes such as the replacement of "gender" in the names of university research centers with "family and women," the restrictions imposed on the activities of these units, increasing pressure on civil society organizations engaged in gender-related work, the decision to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention with a presidential decree in 2021, the increased targeting of LGBTI+s within this framework, and the term gender becoming a near-banned word associated with LGBTI+ issues.

In Turkey, it's crucial to recognize that the issue of gender equality often takes a backseat. The country's pressing concerns, such as earthquakes, economic crises, and general elections, which disrupt long-term programmatic efforts, and the fact that policies promoting gender equality are rapidly and frequently sidelined in a patriarchal society like Turkey, make it difficult even for institutions that outwardly proclaim egalitarian values to develop a program on gender equality. For rights-based civil society organizations with a broad awareness of gender issues, the

institutional dimension of gender equality may be overlooked. This oversight can also extend to feminist or women's associations, foundations, and other groups.

However, external factors such as EU institutions, embassies and consulates, and funding initiatives like Horizon Europe, often require such efforts. For instance, universities seeking Erasmus agreements are required to prepare Gender Equality Plans—even if some aspects remain on paper. Similarly, associations, foundations, or companies receiving EU funding may be obligated to develop policy documents on sexual harassment or gender equality, and even employment projects. The internalization of these plans and policies within institutions is crucial here. While documents lacking implementation programs or mechanisms may appear as mere corporate papers, they can serve as a foundation for action in cases where policies are not enforced within the organization and commitments are breached. Such documents, decided upon by administrations, can be utilized to activate mechanisms. However, it's imperative for management to endorse these measures; they must take ownership of corporate policies and try to disseminate and promote them within the organization. We recognize that initiatives driven solely by individuals are not sustainable, and the accumulated experience and efforts may dissipate with changes in personnel or administrations, or due to resource constraints, etc. In addition to management support, a participatory process that considers various stakeholders is crucial for raising awareness and enhancing effectiveness.

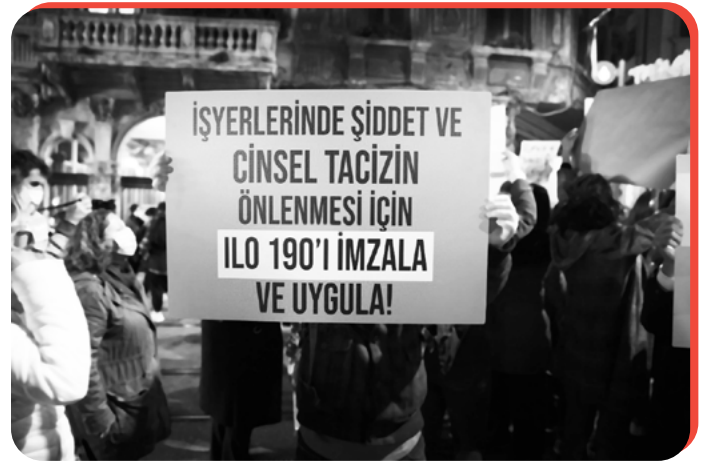
As mentioned above, the steps for creating an institutional policy include determining a general policy, writing a policy document, establishing directives on how this document will function, forming a group responsible for this policy, planning activities to prevent discrimination and violence, determining the implementation mechanism, and revising the policy through monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, there is need to organize informative meetings for all employees of the organization on the importance of gender equality in the world of work.

When creating a policy, it is important to proceed in stages, such as: declaring the intention and commitment with the policy document, articulating the organization's approach to gender equality, and specifying its interventionist function. In other words, determining how the organization will respond to violations of the document (such as not remaining silent and addressing the issue) and establishing a mechanism are also part of this policy. This mechanism needs to align with existing legal regulations. A team or teams can be identified to

draft, implement, and evaluate this policy. The legally binding nature of the organization's policy is ensured by including it in bylaws and contracts.

When we look at the needs of the organizations that reach out to CEPD, it's evident that the majority turn to policy-making as a response to a specific "case" within the organization, especially when there isn't external demand as mentioned earlier and when there's a belief in advancing in this direction internally. In CEPD's experience, these cases often involve complaints against individuals who are not employees but people who have engaged in short-term working relationships with the organization, and the complainant is external to the organization. Resolving these issues prove to be challenging. Such incidents have the potential to shake the shared assumption of an "institutional culture" within the organization. Even for institutions that have already drafted a policy document, the lack of internalization and failure to translate it into practice become apparent when violations occur. For organizations that operate within the realm of rights-based civil society and whose primary focus isn't gender-related, the incident can prompt a reevaluation of awareness of gender equality, which is often taken for granted in such contexts.

Difficulties can arise regarding the institution's response to incidents including defining its responsibility, its take on how to determine what happened, determining the appropriate course of action, and understanding the legal implications. The process is complicated by the fact that the complainants' lawyers may pursue legal action claiming defamation or damages<sup>8</sup>, which can intimidate institutions. In such cases, the focus on achieving fairness for the complainant may overshadow support for the individual subjected to discriminatory behavior. As a result, in addition to external circumstances, internal incidents of violation can also prompt organizations to develop policies. In other words, the organization initially focusing on specific incidents, then may realize the need to address the broader situation and create written policies. In CEPD's two years of experience, only one out of 48 organizations approached CEPD with a request to develop a general policy, i.e. to review its field of activity from a gender equality perspective. Revisiting activities from a gender equality perspective entails more than just creating a policy document—it involves reevaluating all policies, contracts, collaborations, and activities through this lens. For instance, Hafıza Merkezi, the organization that sought to holistically implement this approach, aimed to review its work, projects, and business plan



accordingly. As an example of operationalizing this policy, they cited ensuring that the tourism agency they collaborated with adhered to these principles and provided training to hotel staff before organizing events. While holistic approaches can be challenging, they are essential for comprehensive transformation of the world of work.

**What stands out in the lack of institutional policies is the absence of research into whether individuals associated with the organization, particularly employees, experience equality in access to work, retention, promotion, decision-making, opportunities, and overall working conditions. Factors such as job positions, employee expectations, working hours, and leaves are rarely assessed in terms of gender equality, and underlying issues often go unrecognized.**

In Turkey, there is a scarcity of gender equality surveys at the institutional or sectoral level that are made public. Institutional and sectoral research plays a vital role in informing policy formulation. Without research-backed data, particularly in large organizations, it becomes challenging to develop realistic and effective preventive strategies as problems remain unidentified. Secondly, as we have mentioned, even if a policy is planned, it may remain a mere document, and its implementation may be incomplete. This can lead to inadequate and ineffective handling of violations and a shift from a preventive, holistic equality approach to a punitive mechanism, raising legal concerns.

<sup>8</sup> For a relevant decision, see, <https://www.instagram.com/p/C347XXPoXQf/?igsh=MTikNDNhYnBnanZpZw==>



An illustrative example of addressing these challenges is the experience of the Commission on Elimination of Gender Inequality and Prevention of Gender-Based Violence established by the Professional Association of Translators (Çevbir). In our conversations with them, the Çevbir commission explained that they initiated the process of drafting a policy document by conducting research and organizing experience-sharing meetings. In this context, the commission stated that they met with various institutions, including associations, international organizations, and trade unions to understand their approaches, operational methods, and practices for updating their policies. During this process, the commission identified a lack of information on specific incidents experienced by translators, which hindered the development of preventive policies. Consequently, they undertook the task of conducting sectoral research to address this gap. A notable example of such research is the 2021 study on sexual harassment and mobbing in the performing arts, conducted by Dissensus Research with the initiative of Women in the Performing Arts Group.<sup>9</sup> This research aims to comprehend the prevalence of harassment and how employees in the sector experience harassment as well as their awareness of it, and underscores the significance of data in combating discrimination.

**Regarding legal concerns, it is important to remember that, as explained above, there are legal regulations in place to prevent discrimination and violence at work. Employers and employees can utilize these regulations as a legal basis and refer to relevant court decisions.**

However, uncertainties regarding the implementation of the law and victim-blaming attitudes towards complainants may reinforce concerns about the perceived strength of perpetrators.

The repercussions of the absence of institutional policies in this domain are also evident in call-outs on social media. The absence of a reliable reporting mechanism or person within the institution, a general distrust regarding the institution's approach or policy in this field, and recourse to public naming and shaming as a fast and individual method cause acts

such as stalking, discrimination, humiliating behaviors, dating violence, and mobbing to be experienced on social media as well. This shift to social media instead of resolving issues within an institutional structure, in accordance with the institution's responsibility, can create new problem areas.

In CEPD's two-year experience, the majority of complaints and applications received by the institutions pertained to dating violence, toxic relationships, stalking, digital violence, persistent or disturbing behavior, humiliating statements, and mobbing. However, to a lesser extent, there were also requests to dismiss individuals who had been reported to the prosecutor's office for violence. It was observed that institutions often had difficulties especially in cases where it was unclear whether the application constituted a crime or not. Nevertheless, institutions can incorporate all of the aforementioned behaviors that violate the world of work into their policies and establish sanction mechanisms (beginning with verbal or written warnings). In this respect, it's crucial for institutions to be well-informed about the complaints covered by the law. Additionally, when some applications exceeded the capacity and responsibilities of the institutions, institutions referred them to women's organizations working in the field or to relevant institutions for psychological or legal support. It's important to remember and promote these referral mechanisms and support opportunities.

Such internal policies are crucial precisely because they prevent us from resorting to the judiciary and adopting a punitive mindset for every issue. It is essential to recognize that achieving equality requires preventive measures and that we should not get caught up in a disciplinary reflex. That said, when we emphasize not thinking in terms of punishment, we're not advocating for an approach that perpetuates the prevailing culture of impunity against violence in Turkey. Factors contributing to this culture of impunity include a reluctance to confront the issue, difficulty in acknowledging violations, the exacerbation of penalties on the one hand and various mechanisms to evade their execution on the other. Therefore, regarding institutional attitudes towards sexual violence and discrimination, the focus should not solely be on the severity of sanctions, but rather on the presence of sanctions and their consistent enforcement.

According to the experience of those who have worked with CEPD on policy formulation, policy has a function that is independent of individuals, i.e. it enables the development of a general principled

<sup>9</sup> The Dissensus team concludes their study with the following words: "The lack of research in this field prevents us from recognizing that sexual harassment and mobbing are common tools of coercion and oppression in the working life. Given that research is a form of knowledge production that is done at the behest of the oppressors, not the oppressed, we can understand why there is little research on this subject."

approach that is sustainable even if administrations and individuals change. Nevertheless, common experiences include the problem of internal memory and its transmission, and mechanisms that become unclear over time. Nevertheless, a policy grounded in specific principles and systematization, and therefore provides a fair and legal basis (bearing in mind that policy becomes a matter of discussion mostly when incidents occur), can alleviate institutional responsibilities. Such policies are essential to prevent panic, enable streamlining of processes, and to avoid exacerbation of issues with each new incident. When developing institutional policies, it's crucial to recognize that this endeavor aims to establish inclusive social rules. Institutional policy is important and necessary for transforming society, our living spaces and workplaces into environments of equality. It's not an imposition from external forces or merely a punitive measure. We all share the responsibility of fostering egalitarian spaces in which we live.

The policy-making process of the Istanbul Medical Chamber (ITO) and the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) serve as examples of good practice in terms of how various obstacles encountered are overcome. First of all, it is a good example in that the process started from the grassroots and local level and gradually expanded to the upper national level. A group of feminist women who put the issue on the agenda ensured the entire organization's engagement in the process. According to those who were involved, discussions for the policy document began in Istanbul, initiated by a core group within ITO's Women's Commission. These discussions expanded to include feminist women both within and outside the organization, as well as those working in the field of sexual harassment. Then, after the persuasion of the men in the organization and the management, the policy document was endorsed at the general assembly of the Istanbul Medical Chamber. The preparation of a five-page document turned into a one-year process of getting it accepted precisely because of the barriers we summarized throughout the report, but, ultimately, it gained a robust institutional basis. Consequently, in 2018, the Istanbul Medical Chamber established a Sexual Violence Prevention and Gender Equality Support Unit. Following this, the process of dissemination and adoption by the Turkish Medical Association (TTB) began, and this process culminated in 2021. However, the protracted nature of this process necessitates ongoing efforts to address issues of internal memory and transmission. The document's existence requires continual reinforcement, particularly considering the periodic turnover in administration due to TTB chamber elections every two years. Upon the document's nationwide acceptance in 2021, when



new boards of directors are elected in 2022, it became necessary to re-explain how the document, directive, and the unit function.

Despite challenges, the presence of a professional association with a policy document adopted nationwide to combat sexual violence and gender-based discrimination is significant at this stage. Out of 43 provincial chambers, 10 have established units, indicating progress. The Istanbul Medical Chamber unit reports that as the mechanism's existence has become known and the women's awareness of sexual violence increased, the number of applications has increased. One crucial aspect is that the unit's role does not involve deciding on or administering punishments for violations. Instead, the unit meets with women who file complaints, assesses their needs, provides support, and prepares reports for submission to the Ethics Committee, the decision-making authority. This approach prevents re-traumatization of victims by avoiding repeated recounts of their experiences. The unit therefore plays a supportive rather than punitive role, thus separating the supportive function from the punitive function. Those who shared the experience of the professional chamber note that in small towns where the ones against whom complaints are made are known locally, the unit may face challenges. Therefore, they emphasize the importance of central support, regular coordination board meetings, and instilling a sense of empowerment. In this context, institutionalization and the presence of documents with legal equivalents, recorded in the board of directors' records, serve as protective measures.

# Conclusion

In this report, drawing from CEPD's two years of activities and observations, we have sought to convey our insights into the development of institutional policies for gender equality in world of work in Turkey. While this report reflects a limited scope of experience, it offers insights applicable to various institutional frameworks, including municipalities, public institutions, companies, professional organizations, factories, trade unions, and political parties. While different structures will necessitate different solutions and practices, gender inequality in Turkey and its impact on the world of work are shared problem areas. Therefore, aiming to contribute to institutional policies fostering gender equality in the world of work, we outline solution proposals for prominent issues as follows:

- Increasing women's employment, offering them skilled, qualified, and secure job opportunities, promoting their professional advancement, and integrating them into decision-making mechanisms,
- Incorporating the prevention of discrimination against LGBTI+s into workplace gender equality policies,
- Giving priority to institutional policies aimed at gender equality and developing institutional capacity (human resources and budget in particular) accordingly,
- Recognizing that gender work requires perspective, knowledge and experience, and seeking guidance and support from people and organizations with experience in this field while implementing these initiatives within the institution,
- Developing policies to prevent inequality and discrimination in the world of work, conducting internal research for this purpose,
- Implementing, following-up, monitoring, evaluating and updating the institution's policy,
- Having managements assume responsibility for promoting and sustaining organizational policies, supporting and empowering employees to work towards gender equality and to take action against violations,
- Establishing a fair, standardized, and legal sanction mechanism for acts that violate gender equality, and ensuring that notification and complaint processes adhere to the institution's policy and are open to monitoring and evaluation,
- Ensuring that all employees of the organization and those with business relationship are aware of these policies and mechanisms,
- Adding clear definitions and regulations to existing laws that target gender equality in the world of work,
- Having the State take responsibility for gender equality in the world of work and fulfill its duty in developing policies,
- Ratifying ILO 190 and becoming a party to the Convention as a country, and subsequently fulfilling the requirements outlined in the convention.



# Publications

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Lloyd’s Register Vakfı – Gallup

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