

KAGIDER (Women Entrepreneurs Association of Turkey)

Views and Demands on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment

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A) Background

Women's Status in Turkey

Women's economic, political and social empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable economic and social development. Achieving women's empowerment requires sound public policies, a holistic approach, and long-term commitment. Additionally, gender-specific perspectives must be integrated at the initial stage in designing policies and national programs. Although women's participation in economic, political and social life has improved in Turkey, it is still not sufficient enough to comprehensively provide women empowerment.

Turkey already has a National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2015-2020 which was prepared with the attendance of relevant parties on eight different matters such as "Women and Education", "Women and Health", "Women and Economy", "Women and Poorness", "Women and Environment", "Women and Media", "Women in Power and Decision-Making Mechanisms", and "Enhancing Gender Equality in Turkey". Most of these goals are still underway to be realized.

In addition, a persistent issue is the continued violence against women. Despite the Turkish government's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), violence against women remains a serious concern, including deaths due to domestic violence and so-called "honour" killings.

While violence against women, both in public and private spheres, is increasing in Turkey, we are also faced with attacks against the notion of gender equality. An example to these attacks is the declaration by the Ministry of Education, that they have ceased the "Gender Equality in Education" project they were undertaking with the support of the European Union. Another recent example is the cancelation of the "Gender Equality Position Paper" by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), with the justification that it is not "in line with the values of Turkey."

B) Major Problems

In terms of gender equality at workplace major problems that we see as KAGIDER are :

B1 : Women's Low Political Participation and unfriendly local environment for women

B2 : Women's participation to labor force is 34 %, the lowest in OECD countries; women are not economically empowered. Lack of women's participation in economic decision-making processes

B3 Major Problem : Women entrepreneurship rate is very low in Turkey, women owned SMEs are underrepresented in the economy, international trade and public procurement

B1 Major Problem :

Women's Low Political Participation and unfriendly local environment for women

Information :

With the 31st March 2019 Local elections results, in the 21st century women are represented very low at the local level and this is quite unacceptable. Our biggest aim is that all political parties will make more efforts to represent women in equal numbers with men in the next local and general elections. Turkey needs to make sustained efforts to increase women's political representation. Compared with the international standards, Turkey lags behind in terms of women's representation in political decision making at national, local and municipal levels.

With the 1st November general elections, women's representation increased to 15% in the Turkish General National Assembly, a total of 81 MPs are now female. Nonetheless, Turkey needs to encourage the political representation of women, at all levels municipal and national level and make sustainable efforts to increase women's political representation.

Recommendations :

- Equal opportunity should be provided to women in the local conditions within the local government, in the municipal facilities or in the social support received by the family.
- "Service" concept should be carried out with an understanding that supports and empowers women's sphere of influence.
- Local governance actors should work to give priority to women suppliers in terms of services and supplies.
- Women's representation in local governments should be strengthened.
- Active participation of women in city management should be ensured.
- Services for women should be improved such as infrastructure and services provided by local governments on child and elderly care.
- Cities need to be gender equal

B2 Major Problem :

Women's participation to labor force is around 34 %, the lowest in OECD countries; women are not economically empowered. Lack of women's participation in economic decision-making processes

Information:

Women in Statistics 2018 was published on March 6th 2019. When labour force participation rate by education status is investigated, it is seen that the higher the education status of females, the more they participated in the labour force. The labour force participation rate of illiterate females was 15.9%. This rate was 27.7% for females who graduated from school less than high school, 34.3% for females who graduated from high school, 42.6% for females who graduated from vocational high school and 72.7% for females who graduated from higher education.

The proportion of females in management position was 17.3%. According to the results of household labour force survey; the proportion of females in upper and middle level management position in the companies was 14.4% in 2012 and 17.3% in 2017.

Number of employed persons aged 15 years old and over realized as 28 million 738 thousand persons with 549 thousand persons increase and employment rate occurred as 47.4% with 0.3 percentage point increase. Employment rate occurred as 65.7% with 0.1 percentage point increase for male and 29.4% with 0.5 percentage point increase for female. Labour force participation rate realized as 53.2%. Labour force participation rate was realized as 72.7% with 0.2 percentage point increase for male and 34.2% for female with 0.6 percentage point increase.

Turkey now ranks 130 of 144 in the gender gap index of the World Economic Forum 2018 , based on access to health services, educational attainment, economic participation and political empowerment.

Main Problem Areas are :

- Women's employment in rural areas
- low level of women's employment in urban areas,
- unregistered employment,
- huge pay gap,
- exclusion from social security,
- male-dominated structures of unions exclude women,
- pre-school education and enrolment rates to help promote women's participation in the workforce through improved childcare services

The main barriers surrounding women's participation in the workforce in Turkey are lack of social care services, lack of female role models in decision making processes, unregistered employment, unequal pay, exclusion from social security and the male-dominated structures of unions which excluding women.

Guaranteeing equality between women and men in employment could be realized by providing women with equal access to full employment, equal payment and social protection, promoting a healthy work environment that is safe and free from harassment, guaranteeing safe transportation to and from the workplace. Another key aspect of realizing employment equality is implementing conditions that foster a healthy balance between family and professional life such as paid maternity and paternity leave, increased maternity protection at the workplace, equal distribution of family and home tasks between women and men, and access to childcare and dependency services.

The progress in the field of gender equality requires certain policy development on several areas:

- the importance of mentoring, networking and role models for women's career advancement;
- quotas as an instrument to gender balance in politics and corporate boardrooms;
- the gender pay gap in management;
- It is important to create tools on how to engage senior men to promote women to senior decision-making positions in their organizations

Recommendations:

- Labour relations in the Labour Code should be defined to include an “engagement process” to eliminate discrimination during the recruitment process.
- Strengthening pre-school education and increasing enrolment rates to help promote women’s participation in the workforce through improved childcare services.
- Ensure gender equality should be adopted as the fundamental principle of Development Plans, and it should be linked to quantitative and qualitative targets within the development axis and sectoral priorities.
- Authorities should act in accordance with the target of ensuring gender equality while maintaining both financial and monetary policies, and medium-term programs, medium term financial plans and annual plans should be redesigned to this effect.
- Special budget items should be included in the budget for active measures to transform sexist structures.

- Implementation results should be evaluated and audited continuously by independent monitoring mechanisms.
- Strengthening pre-school education and increasing enrolment rates to help promote women's participation in the workforce through improved childcare services.
- A country that aims to be among the top-10 economies of the world in 2023 needs to mobilize the entirety of its human potential. A comprehensive approach is needed, which includes measures to ensure better working conditions, equal pay for equal work, lifelong learning, flexible work schedules and a fair balance between family life and work.
- report on the progress in closing the gender gap in labor force participation by 25 percent by 2025 (Target of G20 Leaders at Brisbane Declaration)
- Remove systemic legal and social barriers in the labor market and provide solutions for achieving gender equality.
- Enact and implement legal measures to achieve gender equality in all aspects of employment practices. In particular, take further action to close gender income gaps such as wages, pensions and other earnings in line with the SDGs.
- Prohibit gender-based gaps in recruiting, hiring, development, promotion, retirement age, and compensation, including pay, health care, benefits, and pensions.
- Apply legal measures to the public and private sectors, while minimizing the informal labour market by implementing the ILO labour norms
- Follow through on implementations and publicize the results annually and establish enforcement, monitoring, and punitive measures for non-compliance at the country level.
- Invest public funds in quality, accessible and affordable care infrastructure for children and elderly, and put in place mandatory paid parental leave to promote shared responsibility. -
- Promote the redistribution and shared responsibility of unpaid domestic and care work between women and men. In order to change workplace culture, raise the visibility of male and female role models who demonstrate equal and mutually supportive partnerships at work and in the home.

- Place more women in leadership roles to help shape a gender-friendly workplace culture.
- Incentivize employers in the public and private sectors to implement evidence-based policies and publicize progress on gender equality, leading to more women in decent and quality work and in leadership positions.
- Close the digital gender gap and ensure that women can exercise their digital rights.
- Take urgent measures to promote equal participation of women in the design and development of digital technologies with due consideration to ethics, and prevent amplification of gender discriminations by biased data-sets, models, and algorithms in Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Boost equal participation of girls and women of all ages in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM).
- Provide women in urban and rural areas with affordable, reliable, and safe internet and mobile services.
- End all forms of violence against women and girls in the public and private spheres, including social media.
- Establish effective legal frameworks, ensure access to justice, and strengthen law enforcement to end all forms of violence against women and girls in all spheres.
- Support the adoption of the ILO's proposed convention and a recommendation concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, as well as ratify international conventions related to violence against women.
- Establish effective and transparent governance and accountability mechanisms for achieving gender equality.
- Measure and publicize the following:
 - Retention rate gap of female and male employees.
 - Percentage of women taking maternity/child care leave.
 - Percentage of men taking paternity/child care leave.

- Percentage of women who return to the workplace after taking maternity/childcare leave.
- Percentage gender pay gaps
- New female employees as a ratio to total number of new staff employed each year.
- Ratio of new promotions that go to female employees.
- Percentage of women in middle and senior management, executive positions, and board memberships.

B3 Major Problem :

Women entrepreneurship rate is very low in Turkey, women owned SMEs are underrepresented in the economy, international trade and public procurement

Information:

At the moment, in Turkey women entrepreneurs constitute %8.8 while the number is 29% in Europe. And the rate of women in exports is only 7%.

Main challenges are very much common all around: access to finance, access to information, training, access to networks for business purposes, reconciling business and family concerns.

Support is needed for Women-owned micro-small-and medium-enterprises and innovation, including different ownership structures and address women's economic empowerment through linkages between education, employment and entrepreneurship

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) launched by the UN in 2015 can only be achieved if countries manage to build up strong SMEs.

Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs in Turkey are :

1. Access to Finance: Limited access to capital (reliance on savings, inheritance and informal loans), limited access to collateral (only 7% of collateral is held by women)
2. Access to Markets : Limited access to markets, clients, buyers, supply and distribution chains, poor integration into business networks to access market information and business opportunities
3. Culture and Skills: Skill gap due to low female labour participation, discouraging social attitudes toward female entrepreneurship, lack of role models, insufficient support system so that women can manage dual responsibilities (child care)

Recommendations :

- Women entrepreneurship does need recognition in policies and special programmes for women and it should be encouraged by sustainable and longer term funding mechanisms to encourage and bring incentives for women entrepreneurs in Turkey

- Customs Union between EU and Turkey needs to be modernized as it is not only outdated but also excluding women dominant and active sectors. To move forward with the modernization of Customs union to expand / to make it more balanced and operative, and strengthen it at the same time with an agreement to cover the excluded sectors and excluded stakeholders (women). A modernized CU would be providing new market opportunities for women entrepreneurs, SMEs and women owned businesses in Turkey. A modernized CU would be providing new market opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Turkey
 - Giving women entrepreneurs access to international markets,
 - Allowing women entrepreneurs to promote their jobs and to increase their business volume,
 - Developing national and international policies to include women entrepreneurs in the supply chain and creating an environment where all the actors will cooperate and take action.
- To have gender chapters in Free Trade Agreements to secure diversity and inclusiveness in the international trade. We need to introduce gender sensitive public procurement processes.
- to systematically integrate gender analysis and gender budgeting into all agendas, growth strategy and policy frameworks.
- to support women entrepreneurs and female cooperatives to start up and scale their operations, build capacity, ensure their equal access to finance and markets, and accord them their fair share in global value chains.
- to swiftly bridge the widening digital gender divide; to improve digital skills for girls and women of all age and skill levels; to develop inclusive educational programs through the promotion and investment in initiatives that boost equal participation of women and girls in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- to improve infrastructure for working women by allocating budgets and human resources to supply high-quality, accessible and affordable care services for children and elders, and by monitoring progress in this improvement.
- to analyze the future of work from a gender perspective and identify knowledge and skills likely to be in demand in the future. In a globally connected world, it is also critical to educate women and girls in language and intercultural skills to be well prepared for future work.

- to multiply women owned and women led SME's contributions to the economy by mapping, developing and strengthening the ecosystem for women's enterprise development,
- to introduce gender sensitive public procurement processes.
- to improve work incentives, income support, other transfer payments and related forms of social security.
- to have stronger message to spread to our citizens on gender equality and its effects on our economy and daily life. The 2023 targets of Turkey on the women employment targets is far behind the world average.
- Ensure financial inclusion, promote women's entrepreneurship, and accelerate access to investment and markets.
- Ensure women's equal rights to economic resources and access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, and natural resources.
- Develop a policy framework and action plan to strengthen the business, financial and digital capacity of women's enterprises, including e-commerce.
- Create conditions for public procurement contracts awarded to women-owned and women-led businesses to increase their share by a minimum of 10 percent, taking into consideration national circumstances.
- Incentivize investors to proactively incorporate gender factors into investment analysis and decision making.
- Promote life-long learning, and education on gender equality in schools and workplaces, to eliminate gender stereotypes and unconscious bias.

- Develop mechanisms to monitor the implementation of G20 commitments on gender equality, together with international organizations, relevant national partners and in collaboration with the W20, and report progress on a regular basis. Jointly review progress, within G20, for achieving gender parity in leadership and all levels of decision making in the public and private sectors by 2030.
- Strengthen the mandate and capacity of national gender machinery to ensure that gender impact assessments are conducted on legislation, standards, and policies.”