



## 2021-2022 Science Academy Report on ACADEMIC FREEDOMS

### A. Introduction

The Constitutional Court of the Republic of Türkiye, in its judgement of 1975, exactly 47 years ago, made exemplary findings on the governance and autonomy of universities while explaining in which respects the establishment of a Higher Education Council, which was being considered at the time, was contrary to the Constitution.<sup>1</sup> When the Court's approach is compared to the prevalent approach in Türkiye in the year 2022, the severe pressure of the political authority on the universities, and the extent to which university autonomy is compromised is revealed:

*"Universities are autonomous public legal entities. They shall be managed by self-elected organs under the supervision and control of the State. These organs, as well as professors and assistants cannot be dismissed by authorities outside the university. Research and publication of findings are free. It is essential that learning and education take place freely and securely, in accordance with the requirements of modern science and technology and the principles of the national development plan. It is obvious that a university under the management and supervision of the legislative cannot comply with these principles. The state supervision and control mentioned in the third paragraph of Art. 120 of the Constitution cannot be interpreted in a way that the government can carry out the administration, as otherwise the principles stated above would lose their effect. As stated in a decision of the Constitutional Court: 'The State's power of supervision and control does not justify its interference in the administrative procedures and affairs of an institution with administrative autonomy. If a body or institution outside the university intervenes in its administration, on the one hand, it can no longer*

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<sup>1</sup> The Higher Education Council (HEC) was established after the 1980 coup d'état with an amendment to the Higher Education Law No. 2547 in 1981, and later on it was constitutionalised by being regulated in Art. 131 of the 1982 Constitution.

*be said that the university is governed by organs elected by the university itself, and on the other hand, the limits of the objective pursued by the acceptance of State supervision and control would be exceeded. Indeed, the involvement of a body or institution outside the university in the completion of a process or the execution of a task, which is one of the administrative activities, means that this process or task can only be carried out by the involvement of an institution other than its own organs. Again, the placing of universities under the supervision and control of the State by the 1971 amendment to the Constitution is based on the idea of ensuring that universities, which are autonomous organisations, achieve their objectives by preventing them from deviating from their aim of teaching and researching only according to scientific requirements and in an environment of freedom; The participation of an institution outside the university in the governance of the university, on the other hand, to a certain extent results in the influence of political power over the university administration and restricts the university from functioning in freedom and according to the objective requirements of science.’ (Constitutional Court 4.5.1972, E.1969/52, K.1972/2 Journal of the Constitutional Court Decisions, n. 10, p. 352-353).”<sup>2</sup>*

In the past year, just what was experienced at Boğaziçi University is enough to reveal the severity of the political oppression on Turkish higher education. Without doubt, these problems faced by the universities are almost a ‘natural’ reflection of the erosion of democracy in Türkiye, corresponding to just a piece of the bigger picture. Indeed, following findings in the European Union’s 2022 report on Türkiye underline this:

*‘There are serious deficiencies in the functioning of Türkiye’s democratic institutions. During the reporting period, democratic backsliding continued. Structural deficiencies in the presidential system remained in place. Key recommendations from the Council of Europe and its bodies have yet to be addressed. Parliament continued to lack the necessary means to hold the government accountable. The constitutional architecture continued to centralise powers at the level of the Presidency without ensuring the sound and effective separation of powers between the executive, legislative and the judiciary. In the absence of an effective checks and balances mechanism, the democratic accountability of the executive branch continues to be limited to elections.’<sup>3</sup>*

*‘The human rights situation continued to deteriorate. Broad restrictions on the activities of journalists, writers, lawyers, academics, human rights defenders and critical voices continued to have a negative effect on the exercise of their freedoms. The damage caused by the state of emergency on fundamental rights and related legislation adopted was not remedied.’<sup>4</sup>*

According to the findings of the 2022 *Academic Freedom Index*, between the years 2011-2021 Türkiye, together with Brazil and Thailand, has lost 0.4 points, becoming a potential danger

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<sup>2</sup> Constitutional Court Decision 11, 12, 13, 14 and 25 February 1975, E. 1973/37, K. 1975/22, RG 3.12.1975, no 15431.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission, Türkiye 2022 Report, SWD(2022) 333 final, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> European Commission, Türkiye 2022 Report, SWD(2022) 333 final, p. 24.

zone for researchers and students today. In this research where 1 is the highest value, Türkiye was with 0.5 points in the country category C in 2011 while in 2022 it went down to 0.1 points and was ranked in the E country category. In this lowest category, Türkiye is paired with countries such as China, North Korea, Egypt, Iran, Rwanda and Syria.<sup>5</sup>

As a matter of fact, the *Democracy Report 2022* also confirms that this radical downfall in academic freedoms goes hand in hand with the collapse of democracy in Türkiye. According to this report, while Türkiye scored around 0.35 points in the liberal democracy index in 2011, it dropped down to 0.10 in 2021 and ended up in the 10-20% segment of the index.<sup>6</sup> Countries like Bangladesh, United Arab Emirates, Burundi, Cuba, Rwanda and Russia are in the same segment. The countries in this category are considered to be electoral autocracies, rather than democracies.<sup>7</sup>

In addition to all the painful consequences of this obvious decline in Turkish science, another inevitable aspect is the significant increase in brain drain.<sup>8</sup> Both seasoned academicians<sup>9</sup> and the most successful new graduates<sup>10</sup> are shifting the focus of their lives abroad and this results in the further weakening of Turkish academia. On the other hand, parallel to the higher cost of living, it is getting harder for students to study in big cities, and the inability to solve the dormitory problem often pushes students into the arms of sectarian dormitories.<sup>11</sup> In Türkiye, free thought, criticism and differences are not tolerated, uniformity permeates every aspect of life, a suffocating lifestyle is imposed, and the young population, which is the most important potential of the country, is pushed into a dead end. Unfortunately, it will not be possible to ensure that universities operate only according to objective requirements of science and in freedom, as determined by the Constitutional Court, without changing this understanding that is wasting Türkiye's future.

## **B. Constant Erosion of the Institutional Autonomy of Universities**

### **1. Developments at Boğaziçi University**

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<sup>5</sup> KATRIN KINZELBACH/STAFFAN I. LINDBERG/LARS PELKE/JANIKA SPANNAGEL, 2022, Academic Freedom Index 2022 Update. FAU Erlangen-Nürnberg and V-Dem Institute (DOI: 10.25593/opus4-fau-18612/ <https://v-dem.net/publications/democracy-reports/>).

<sup>6</sup> [file:///Users/yatame/Downloads/dr\\_2022-1.pdf](file:///Users/yatame/Downloads/dr_2022-1.pdf). According to their own data: ‘*Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem)*, from 1789 to 2021, they produce the largest global data set on democracy for 202 countries with over 30 million data points. V-Dem measures hundreds of different features of democracy with the participation of more than 3.700 academicians and other country experts.’

<sup>7</sup> For a detailed study on this subject cf. YEŞİM ARAT/ŞEVKET PAMUK, *Turkey Between Democracy and Authoritarianism*, Cambridge University Press, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Since 2020 the Turkish Statistical Institute does not report data on TR citizens migrating from Türkiye.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. the documentary ‘Academic Freedom and Brain Drain in Türkiye’ [Türkiye’de Akademik Özgürlük ve Beyin Göçü](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXh_zuXpYCo) and the interview on the documentary: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXh\\_zuXpYCo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXh_zuXpYCo)

<sup>10</sup> [En parlak gençlerimiz gidecek, bir daha geri gelmeyecek](https://www.gazetevox.com.tr/ilk-400-e-giren-ogrencilerimizi-altin-tepside-yurt-disina-sunuyoruz), (Our most brilliant students will leave and never come back) *Gazete Oksijen*, 07.01.2022; [İlk 400’e giren öğrencilerimizi altın tepside yurt dışına sunuyoruz](https://www.bbc.com/turkish/news-turkey-60711111), (We are presenting our top 400 students abroad on a golden tray) BBC.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/siyaset/akp-donemi-tarikat-yurtlarina-yaramis-3331-tarikat-yurdu-var-1994896>

When the grave intervention that started with the appointment of the rector of Boğaziçi University in January 2021 is analysed, it can be seen that every step taken so far has been taken in a highly planned manner in order to 'subjugate' this university. Boğaziçi University, whose 'crime' is to defend university autonomy and independent thought, and to be one of the highest performing universities in Türkiye, is being pulled into the line desired by the government with the logic of 'divide and rule'. The observations we made in August 2022 are still valid:

*"With the appointment of Prof. Dr. Naci İnci as rector, who received 95% negative votes in a poll conducted with the participation of all stakeholders of Boğaziçi University (82% of 746 voters participated in the voting), we are witnessing the reorganisation of the University in a way that will eliminate any critical voice, or even any voice at all. BU, which has a tradition of transparent, participatory, and accountable management based on merit, is being transformed into a top-down, centralised, 'partisan' institution dominated by cronyism. As has happened to every well-established institution of the Republic of Türkiye in recent years, BU is being reduced to the level of an implementer of government policies.*

*There is no doubt that the interventions are carried out according to a bigger plan.<sup>12</sup> Eliminating 'unwanted' names from the academic staff, ending contracts arbitrarily, closing down or defunctionalisation of numerous research centers, unjustified releases from positions like department heads or deanships, baseless investigations done with the aim of harassment, appointments having nothing to do with academic merit, interference with student clubs, closing down of BU publishing house, arbitrary campus exclusions, cancelling of the graduation ceremony... The list is so tragic, the interventions are so harsh that they are similar to the experiences during military junta periods in Türkiye.'*

As we stated in our Academic Freedom Report for 2020-2021,<sup>13</sup> the legal foundations of many of the interventions to B.U. are very controversial. In particular, the amendment made in 2018 to Annex Article 30 of the Law on the Organisation of Higher Education Institutions, granting the President of the Republic "the authority to establish faculties, institutes and colleges and to merge, close, connect and change the name of these" violates the rule in Article 130, par. 9 of the Constitution that these matters can only be regulated by law. Pursuant to Article 5 (f) of the Law No. 2547 on Higher Education, faculties must be established by law. In fact, the request of the Prosecutor of the Council of State (the court that has to decide on the closure claim of the much debated Faculty of Law, Faculty of Communication and the Institute of Data Science and Artificial Intelligence established at B.U. by Presidential decree) to stay proceedings and to bring the matter before the Constitutional Court in order to decide on the constitutionality of

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<sup>12</sup> For a detailed breakdown of these interventions cf. BINNAZ TOPRAK, [Boğaziçi Üniversitesi'nde 600 Gün](#), (600 Days in Boğaziçi University) T24.

<sup>13</sup> [Bilim Akademisi Akademik Özgürlükler Raporu 2020-2021](#), (The Science Academy Report on Academic Freedoms 2020-2021) p. 6.

Annex Article 30 is absolutely justified.<sup>14</sup> However, as we stated in our previous report, the problem does not change even if these faculties or institutes are established by a law. What is important is that such decisions are taken by the universities' own administrations. Undoubtedly, when we talk about 'university administration', we do not mean the administrators who are currently appointed through antidemocratic procedures. It is clear that Prof. Dr. Naci İnci, who received 95% of the negative votes in the poll conducted with the participation of all stakeholders of B.U., cannot be accepted as the representative of this institution.

Regarding the steps such as dismissal of elected administrators<sup>15</sup> and board members<sup>16</sup> of B.U., the dismissal of lecturers in a manner incompatible with academic ethics<sup>17</sup>, and the opening of unjustified administrative and even criminal investigations<sup>18</sup> against both faculty members and students, we hope that, although it will be a long process, one by one, the unlawfulness will be determined by the judiciary and a reinstatement of the aggrieved parties will be possible.<sup>19</sup> However, until this stage is reached, both Boğaziçi scientists and students, and ultimately Turkish science, will suffer seriously.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. Personalized Staff Advertisements Replacing Merit-based Selection Processes

It comes as no surprise that parallel to the appointment of university rectors according to their closeness to the government rather than their merit, that the academics are determined according to the same 'criteria'. As a matter of fact, it is becoming customary to give directly in the job advertisements extremely detailed research area descriptions and especially citing the thesis topics of the academician who is aimed for hire as the selection criteria. An example of this is the advertisement<sup>21</sup> given for 47 assistant professors to be hired by ITU published in the Official Gazette on December 8, 2022.<sup>22</sup> The same illegitimate method was applied also by the newly established Faculties of Boğaziçi University, but the advertisements were later defined as illegal

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/471901/danistay-savcisi-bogazici-universitesinde-enstitu-kurma-karari-anayasaya-aykiri>; <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/egitim/danistay-savcisi-bogazicinde-iki-yeni-fakulte-hukuka-aykiri-1988663>

<sup>15</sup> <https://bianet.org/bianet/egitim/256501-bogazici-universitesi-nde-uc-dekan-gorevden-alindi>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.diken.com.tr/hedef-gosterilen-dort-bogazicili-akademisyen-okuldan-uzaklastirildi/>; <https://www.diken.com.tr/hedef-gosterilen-bogazicili-akademisyen-kisisel-bilgilere-onaysiz-erisim-izni-tespit-ettilik/>; <https://www.diken.com.tr/bogazicinde-veri-skandalini-ortaya-cikaran-tuna-tugcunun-gorevden-uzaklastirilma-karari-kaldirildi/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://medyascope.tv/2022/07/18/bogazici-universitesi-akademisyeni-can-candanin-gorevden-alinmasina-iliskin-karar-iptal-edildi/>; <https://www.diken.com.tr/mahkeme-bogazicili-akademisyeni-hakli-buldu-iznin-iptali-hukuka-aykiri/>; <https://medyascope.tv/2022/12/09/mahkeme-bogazicili-akademisyeni-hakli-buldu-dr-ravichandranin-calisma-iznin-iptali-hukuka-aykiri/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2022/gundem/bogazicili-tutuklu-ogrenciler-serbest-birakildi-6874276/>

<sup>19</sup> For a list of the lawsuits BU stakeholders have filed against these illegal interventions cf. <https://universitybogazici.wordpress.com/hukuki-davalarimiz-ongoing-lawsuits/>

<sup>20</sup> On the reverberations of the unprecedented resistance of BU stakeholders and receiving the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) reward see <https://bianet.org/bianet/egitim/254204-mesa-2021-akademik-ozgurluk-odulu-bogazici-bilesenlerine>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2022/12/20221208.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.diken.com.tr/itude-adrese-teslim-kadro-ilanlari/>; <https://www.diken.com.tr/akpli-yoneticinin-itudeki-hizli-yukselisi-bir-yilda-adrese-teslim-iki-kadro-iki-idari-gorev/>

during a judicial process.<sup>23</sup> Clearly, a spoils system with ‘partisan’ academicians rather than selecting the best person as a result of a healthy competition is one of the ultimate impediments preventing scientific development in Türkiye.

### 3. Cancelled Graduation Ceremonies due to Feared Student Reactions

In universities like ODTÜ and Boğaziçi graduation ceremonies, considered as one of the most important institutional days of universities, were either cancelled or were poorly attended due to restrictions imposed to avoid criticism and reactions from students and professors – a perfectly normal situation in a democracy.<sup>24</sup>

### 4. Arbitrariness in Opening Universities/Faculties

As we had identified in our 2020-2021 Report,<sup>25</sup> another grave consequence of taking away the institutional autonomy of the universities is the unprincipled opening (or closing) of universities/faculties.

For example, a faculty opened at Ondokuz Mayıs University in Samsun, that became a topic of conversation<sup>26</sup> when an opposition MP made a motion regarding the issue, was initially a faculty of business, then it became a faculty of health sciences and was lastly transformed into a faculty of pharmacy.<sup>27</sup> However, after signing a protocol with Gazi University due to shortcomings in physical infrastructure and academic staff, it was decided that all of its students would study in the faculty of pharmacy in Ankara instead of Samsun.<sup>28</sup> Sadly, this is not the only example.<sup>29</sup> Given that there are criteria published at regular intervals by the Higher Education Council which specify the minimum conditions that faculties are required to possess, it is impossible to understand why such a faculty was founded in the first place.

The extent to which this authority has been used arbitrarily, without any feasibility report, and how careless foundation universities as well as state universities have been opened, becomes strikingly evident when we look at the number of unemployed university graduates. According to the 2021 edition of the Factsheet on Demographic Developments in Western Balkans and Turkey<sup>30</sup>, in the year 2020, 56% of Türkiye’s population has received low, 22% medium and

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<sup>23</sup> <https://gazeteoksijen.com/turkiye/bogazici-universitesinde-kisiye-ozel-kadro-ilani-160486>; <https://www.diken.com.tr/mahkeme-bogazicindeki-hukuk-fakultesi-icin-acilan-adrese-teslim-ilanlari-hukuka-aykiri-bularak-iptal-etti/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/odtu-yonetiminden-mezuniyet-aciklamasi-ic-isleyise-saygi-duymaya-davet-ediyoruz,1048554>; <https://medyascope.tv/2022/07/05/bogazici-universitesinde-alternatif-mezuniyet-toreni-gerceklestirildi/>

<sup>25</sup> [Bilim Akademisi Akademik Özgürlükler Raporu 2020-2021](#), p. 6-7.

<sup>26</sup> [CHP’li Taşçier: Fakülte mi kuruyorlar market mi açıyorlar anlamak mümkün değil.](#)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/samsundaki-hayalet-fakultenin-uc-kez-ismi-degistirildi-1917314>.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.omu.edu.tr/tr/icerik/haber/omu-ile-gazi-universitesi-arasinda-eczacilik-fakultesinin-kurulusuna-yonelik-onemli>

<sup>29</sup> Cf. below D/1.

<sup>30</sup> [Demographic developments in the Western Balkans and Turkey — factsheets — 2021 edition](#)



22% high level of education.<sup>31</sup> When it comes to unemployment rates, 12.6% of the population with a low education level, 15% of the medium education level and 12.6% of the high education level are unemployed.<sup>32</sup> These rates are extremely different than those in the European Union. Firstly, in the EU the low education rate is 21%, medium education rate 47% and high education 33%. The unemployment rate is highest with 13.4% among the population with low level of education. People with medium and high levels of education follow it with 6.4% and 4.7%. Which means that in Türkiye, the population with higher education is nearly 2.5 times more unemployed than their counterparts in the EU. Another striking aspect of this outlook can be seen in the student numbers (independent of their graduation status). For example, a study conducted in 2019 shows that 95 out of 1000 inhabitants in Türkiye are university students, while this ratio in the EU is 38 out of 1000 inhabitants. This means that there are 2.5 times more university students in Türkiye when compared to the EU.<sup>33</sup> Yet due to the low quality education these students receive, their unemployment cannot be prevented. On the other hand, the numbers reveal that what really needs to be done in Türkiye is to increase the number of those finishing medium level education to and develop policies for their employment.

In the last 20 years, 131 universities have been founded in Türkiye. 76 of these are state, 55 are foundation universities. This policy has to end. The scientific competencies and qualifications need to be reviewed by a council (e.g. an accreditation body) comprised of scientists independent of the government and urgent measures must be taken accordingly.

## 5. Foundation Universities

Regarding foundation universities, their random establishment, unsustainable management structures, sub-par education and research standards, lack of protection of the rights of the professors and limited research opportunities offered therein are highly problematic. Especially with the intensification of the economic crisis, problems such as employing professors at low wages, keeping them in poor working conditions and mass layoffs are on the increase.<sup>34</sup> Although Law No. 2547 was amended to stipulate that academic staff working at foundation universities cannot be paid less than the salaries paid at state universities according to their titles, payments are not made accordingly.<sup>35</sup> Given that in 2022 the high cost of living has

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<sup>31</sup> Eurostat's online charts present data for three main groups based on ISCED classification: low - medium – high education level ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International\\_Standard\\_Classification\\_of\\_Education\\_\(ISCED\)#Implementation\\_of\\_ISCED\\_2011\\_28levels\\_of\\_education.29](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED)#Implementation_of_ISCED_2011_28levels_of_education.29)). Low education level is between ISCED 0-2 (primary and lower secondary school), medium level is between ISCED 3-4 (upper secondary school and ve post-secondary school pre-university education) and high level is between ISCED 5-8 (winter term high education and above).

<sup>32</sup> According to the Turkish Employment Agency's 2021 Statistical Yearbook, in the chart citing the education level of the unemployed the number of unemployed with a graduate degree (graduate and doctorate) are 468.708'dir.

<sup>33</sup> [https://tr.euronews.com/2021/11/16/avrupa-da-nufusa-gore-en-cok-universite-ogrencisi-turkiye-de-grafik?utm\\_source=aposto](https://tr.euronews.com/2021/11/16/avrupa-da-nufusa-gore-en-cok-universite-ogrencisi-turkiye-de-grafik?utm_source=aposto)

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/466416/vakif-universitesi-gercegi-reklamlerin-ardindaki-gercek-baski-ve-kotu-calisma-kosullari; Aydin Üniversitesi'nde görev yapan 60'a yakın akademisyenin iş durumu belirsiz, rektörlük 70 kişilik öğretim üyesi ilanı verdi; Nişantaşı'nda akademisyen kıyımı ve vakıf üniversiteleri gerçeği - Nuray Sancar - Evrensel>

<sup>35</sup> <https://bianet.org/bianet/egitim/264853-yok-9-vakif-universitesiyle-ilgili-sorusturmayi-tamamladi>

become a major problem, it is unacceptable that lecturers working in foundation universities face financial difficulties while the universities focus solely on their profit. Parallel to this, the rising student fees in foundation universities is afflicting students.<sup>36</sup>

It is of utmost importance to study in detail the situation of foundation universities in Türkiye and to define a legal structure for their regulation. Foundation universities are trying to attract students in a specific ‘market’ through providing a service at a cost. Yet in these kind of service contracts, the situation is very different than buying a conventional product in a free market. First of all, it is impossible for students to pre-evaluate the quality of the service they will receive other than from some reports published by Higher Education Council and rankings in the university entrance exams. The quality of the university where they will study for four years and learn the occupation they will practice throughout their lives is almost a closed book for them. Given the legal restrictions it is nearly impossible for them to terminate the contract, namely to go to another university, in case the level of education is not as expected or diminishes in time. They have no way of applying any kind of pressure regarding the level of service; it is a lock-in situation. In this respect, it is imperative that an audit is made at regular intervals to ensure that the level of service is maintained. It is crucial that an independent accreditation council inspects foundation universities as well as state universities, providing a meaningful university ranking.

## **C. Freedom to conduct scientific research and to share the results of research**

### **1. In General**

As we have reported in previous years, unfortunately, the practice of academic staff being subjected to administrative investigations at their universities, being prevented from promotion, being denied their titles and even being subjected to criminal investigations if their scientific work is critical of the government's policies or if they do not share their world view continues in the same way. For example **Dr. Mehmet Baki Deniz**, whose PhD thesis written in the State University of New York (SUNY) has not been granted equivalence so far; moreover not only did he have to file a lawsuit just to be able to use his fairly-earned title, a criminal complaint was also filed against him by the Interuniversity Council to stand trial for defamation of the President.<sup>37</sup> As we have stated in our previous report, it is shameful that the Interuniversity Council inspects contents and acts as an office of censorship.

On the other hand, Prof. **Dr. Celal Şengör** being summoned to the chief public prosecutor's office to give a statement regarding his words (How is Harran described in holy books? <sup>38</sup>) on a TV show he attended, upon the complaint of the Directorate of Religious Affairs is a striking

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<sup>36</sup> <https://bianet.org/bianet/genclik/266634-vakif-universitesi-ogrencileri-zamlara-boyun-egmeyecegiz>.

<sup>37</sup> <https://gazetedavul.com/gundem/turkiyede-siyasi-otoriterlesme-konulu-teze-cumhurbaskanina-hakaretten-yargilama-talebi-35781.html>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=965qoi9DfPY>



new example of how academic freedoms and freedom of speech is misunderstood and violated. As we stated in our declaration made on September 5, 2022:

*‘What Prof. Şengör stated on the program is that there are no historical documents on the prophets and events mentioned in the holy books of the Abrahamic religions. In his talk, Prof. Şengör refers to Prof. Fuad Köprülü’s book ‘İlk Mutassavvıflar’ (The First Sufis), also referring to Yunus Emre and Ahmad Yasawi mentioned in the book, differentiating between epic versus documentary accounts.*

*Absence of historical documents or evidence is not a shortcoming in terms of the believers or a matter related to the respectability of the faith. By definition, faith does not require proof or document. On the other hand, basing the academic and practical assessments of worldly matters on proof and documents is an essential component. Religions are certainly among the discussion topics of history and archeology that progress via the research of proofs and documents.*

*A talk made before the public regarding the existence of documents, being penalized by the Radio and Television Supreme Council, Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs making a complaint after Prof. Şengör’s statement regarding the absence of documents and Prof. Şengör being summoned to the İstanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office Press Offences Investigation Bureau to testify on this matter are grave violations regarding the freedom of speech and academic freedom. Investigating a claim regarding the absence of documents and proofs concerning religious beliefs is naturally against reason but also democracy and secularity. Discussions on documents and proofs have remained outside the scope of religious institutions’ interference since the Renaissance, Enlightenment and the development of modern democracy. In the Turkish Republic, claimed to be a secular state, this being made into a subject of complaint by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs, which is a state institution, is unacceptable.’*

Although the verdict of non-prosecution after getting Prof. Şengör’s statement by the prosecutor’s office is a positive development, knowing the existence of a threat of such investigations result in academicians self-censuring instead of exercising their freedom of expression. A similar kind of pressure is spreading in universities as well. Lecturers being put under administrative investigations because of statements they make during lectures, with the reason that they have been critical towards government policies or insulting religious values, is an indication of how large a threat freedom of speech is facing.

Lastly, some students filing a complaint to the rectorate regarding **Prof. Dr. Uğur Kutay**’s talk during his “script writing” course, leading first to an administrative and then to a criminal investigation, charging him of “insulting religious values”, then preventing him from teaching upon the decision of Yıldız Technical University’s management, is a tragic example of these developments.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> <https://medyascope.tv/2022/12/16/ders-anlatirken-soyledikleri-nedeniyle-sorusturma-acilan-akademisyen-ugur-kutay-medyascopea-konustu-rektorluge-dilekce-verildigi-gunden-beri-hedef-gosteriliyorum/>; <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/adnan-ekinci/ugur-kutay-in-katli-vacip-mi,37928>. It is another equally disturbing development that universities allow or facilitate the organisation of meetings on astrology, for example, and

Another similar case was TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) filing a criminal complaint against ENAG's (Turkey Inflation Research Group) data, which we covered in our last year's report as well.<sup>40</sup> This time the university he is employed at initiated a disciplinary procedure for **Prof. Veysel Atasoy**.<sup>41</sup> The problem is that ENAG's data does not match TÜİK's; the inflation rate calculated by ENAG is higher. While TÜİK blames ENAG for not properly explaining the data and methods used in their calculations, interestingly in its Türkiye Report, the European Union criticizes that the TÜİK data are no longer reliable. We feel it is necessary to quote the statements in the report:

*‘Türkiye is moderately prepared in the area of statistics and made limited progress during the reporting period. Frequent managerial changes within the Turkish Statistical Institute over the last few years, including during the reporting period, have significantly undermined the institution's credibility. The reliability of key economic data has been repeatedly called into question. In the coming year, Türkiye should in particular:*

- *ensure the credibility of TurkStat as well as reliability and public trust in the macroeconomic statistics, including through the establishment of transparent, professional criteria on the appointment of the president of TurkStat and of the causes for his/her dismissal, which cannot include reasons compromising professional or scientific independence;*
- *step up efforts to fully align national accounts with the European System of Accounts 2010 (ESA 2010);*
- *improve statistics on agriculture, migration and asylum; [...]*

## 2. Special Issue: The Problem of Publication in Predatory Journals

Without a doubt, the freedom to publish or not to publish their scientific research is up to the scientists themselves. However in Türkiye, as in some other countries in the World, the phenomenon of publishing in predatory and fake journals has reached serious levels. According to the results of a study published by Selçuk Beşir Demir<sup>42</sup>:

*‘[...] the majority of predatory/fake journals (PFJ) are located in developing countries; 119 journals provided incorrect postal addresses; the greatest number of researchers who published in PFJs are from India, Nigeria, and Turkey, suggesting that most of the publications in PFJs are submitted by researchers in developing countries; the interviewed Turkish researchers submitted their articles to PFJs in pursuit of rapid academic promotion; the incentive allowance system encourages researchers to publish*

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allow the use of the university logo on subjects that have no scientific content:

[https://twitter.com/CukurovaOED/status/1593306628169736193?t=zLpYeXrQx4krJLeG\\_WbbCQ&s=19](https://twitter.com/CukurovaOED/status/1593306628169736193?t=zLpYeXrQx4krJLeG_WbbCQ&s=19).

<sup>40</sup> Report p. 10.

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/prof-dr-veysel-ulusoy-enagin-varligi-bastan-beri-rektorlugu-rahatsiz-ediyor-1947337>

<sup>42</sup> SELÇUK BEŞİR DEMİR, Predatory Journals: Who publishes in them and why? Journal of Informetrics 12 (2018) 1296–1311, 1296.

*in PFJs; and the well-known “publish-or-perish” pressure and unawareness are other potential factors that drive participants to submit their papers to PFJs.’*

According to the findings of the author, Türkiye ranks second after the US in the list of countries with the most editors of predatory/fake journals. The unplanned and uncontrolled opening of universities/faculties, which we have identified above, has undoubtedly been one of the most important blows to Turkish science. According to AA data, while the number of academics at universities in Turkey was 74,134 in 2003, this number reached 183,601 in 2021.<sup>43</sup> In other words, there has been a 2.5-fold increase. The necessary steps have not been taken to train these academics in a scientific way, the necessary control has not been carried out regarding the quality of publications in order for them to move up the ranks quickly, and the number of publications has taken precedence over the content. Undoubtedly, there is a serious error in the policy choice here. On the other hand, the inclusion of these journals in certain recognised indexes also poses a serious problem. It is clear that indices are not an indicator of the quality of these journals.<sup>44</sup>

## **D. Violations of Personal Rights and Security of Academics**

### **1. Higher Education Council Academic Mobility (‘Exile’) Project**

With a statement sent by the Higher Education Council to universities in June 2022, it was declared that the academic staff and knowledge of well-established universities would be made available to the Anatolian universities with limited experiences under the name of **Academic Mobility Project**.<sup>45</sup> According to the Council, thereby the young lecturers in the universities that have not quite completed their development in terms of staff would benefit from seasoned academicians coming from well-established universities. As mentioned above, this problem stems from universities/faculties established without conducting any feasibility studies. This project that grasps at straws had first come up after the 1980 coup, with the amendment to Art. 41 of the Law of Higher Education no. 2547 in 1983, making an arrangement with the aim of ‘Meeting the Need for Faculty Members’. According to this act *‘The Higher Education Council shall determine the faculty member needs of the State higher education institutions within the scope of this law in various branches of science and art and the higher education institutions from which these faculty member needs will be met, taking into account the faculty member availability, and notify the relevant universities to meet the needs. [...] These assignments shall be made for not less than one semester and not more than four semesters, provided that their positions remain in their universities.’* The phrase *‘The rectors of these universities shall notify the Higher Education Council of the faculty members they have assigned to meet the needs within a maximum of two weeks from the date of receipt of the need lists by the Higher*

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<sup>43</sup> <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/egitim/turkiyedeki-universitelerde-kadin-akademisyen-orani-yuzde-45in-uzerine-cikti/2525426>; ayrıca bkz. <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr>.

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-03759-y>

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2022/yok-akademik-hareketlilik-projesi-basliyor.aspx>

*Education Council*’ in the relevant paragraph was annulled by the Constitutional Court in 2011.<sup>46</sup>

*‘There is no provision in the Law on the criteria by which the university rectorate, which will assign the lecturers, will determine the lecturer to be assigned. In this framework, it is clear that the rectorate may appoint any faculty member who is the addressee of the subject matter, and this situation will create uncertainty in terms of the work of the universities that will send faculty members and the relevant faculty members.*

*The provision subject to objection is incompatible with the principle of rule of law, which aims to provide legal security to individuals, since it does not contain any criteria within which the authority granted to the rectorate will be used, and it is also contrary to the Constitutional rule that orders the assignment of academic staff according to inter-university needs to be regulated by law.’*

Although the relevant Constitutional Court decision became effective after one year, a legal regulation to eliminate the lacuna in the Law of Higher Education was not made. Namely, according to which criteria the authority in question will be used, was left open to this day. Nevertheless, the Higher Education Council has initiated the project and asked ‘43 university rectorates, 20 of which are research universities, to appoint lecturers within the Project, preferably on a voluntary basis, upon the decision of the university’s board of directors and rector’s approval and determine the staff, for not less than one semester and not more than four semesters, provided that their position remain in their own universities’. For example with the official writing no. E-82444403-299-86199, eight lecturers working in various departments of Middle East Technical University were asked to be determined to be appointed to cities like Ağrı, Burdur, İzmir, Nevşehir, Kahramanmaraş, Kırıkkale and Tunceli. Regarding the criteria of this assignment, it is only stated that it should ‘preferably be on a voluntary basis’, other than this, the right to choose is left to the rectorates. In other words, the fact that the work places of lecturers cannot be changed arbitrarily, which was the reason for the annulment decision of the Constitutional Court, is being practiced *ad verbum*. In the absence of a volunteer candidate, this project will create an opportunity for the expulsion of ‘undesirable’ faculty members. This practice can be expected to be the subject of a court case in a short period of time, as it is not only a violation of the rights and freedoms of academics, but also a striking example of the violation of the institutional autonomy of universities.

## **2. Suspension of Ünal Zenginobuz, Head of the Department of Economics at Boğaziçi University**

Another dimension of the illegalities in Boğaziçi University mentioned above, are the random disciplinary investigations, suspensions, and dismissal the lecturers of the institution face. For example, a disciplinary investigation has been opened against Prof. Dr. Ünal Zenginobuz, Chair of B.U. Department of Economics by the rectorate on August 21, 2022 with the claim that a

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<sup>46</sup> Constitutional Court decision dated 28/4/2011, E. 2009/56, K. 2011/71, RG 06.07.2011, no 27986.

student who returned to the university after being pardoned was not let in to an exam in a timely manner. Therefore, he was suspended from work for three months, prevented from entering the university and teaching during the fall term.<sup>47</sup> In the intervening time, four more disciplinary investigations were opened against him without any legal basis, and his suspension from duty/university was last extended for three months on 21 November 2022.

### 3. Non-Renewal of the Contract of Dr Tolga Sütü, Lecturer at Boğaziçi University

An unfortunate event in Boğaziçi University again, was experienced by Dr. Tolga Sütü who works in the Molecular Biology and Genetic Department whose contract was not renewed and was discharged from the university. While Tolga Sütü was a PhD student at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden, he was the 21st named author in an article published in the Lancet with 24 authors. After the withdrawal of a study in which he took part due to ethical violations, he was subjected to an investigation opened by the Karolinska Institute. This investigation was completed in June 2018, and Tolga Sütü and his PhD supervisor Prof. Evren Alici were found blameworthy for not following up whether the necessary responses were given to the criticisms from the referees and not asking for more details about the project underlying the article, but no scientific misconduct was found.<sup>48</sup> As a matter of fact Prof. Alici and other authors of this article continue to work in the Karolinska Institute and other organizations to this day. When the investigation in question was completed in 2018, Dr. Sütü, who was working in Sabancı University, informed relevant authorities on the results of the investigation, yet no harm was seen in continuing the employment relationship.

When Tolga Sütü later left Sabancı University and applied to Boğaziçi University Molecular Biology and Genetics Department, the retracted article and investigation process was evaluated by the university and it was decided that Dr. Sütü participated in the study in question in the capacity of a PhD student, thus that he was in a position without direct expertise or authority regarding the clinical practice and patient selection which were the subjects of the investigation.<sup>49</sup> Consequently he was appointed by the rector at that time and began working at Boğaziçi University Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics as of September 2019.

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<sup>47</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/bogazici-universitesi-ekonomi-bolum-baskani-unal-zenginobuz-gorevden-uzaklastirildi,1054384>; <https://t24.com.tr/haber/bogazici-universitesi-ekonomi-bolumu-baskani-universiteye-alinmadi,1054627>; <https://gazeteoksijen.com/turkiye/gorevden-uzaklastirilan-bogazicili-prof-dr-zenginobuz-absurt-bir-sorusturmaya-karsi-karsiyayim-159939>

<sup>48</sup> For a detailed report of <https://retractionwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/KI-decision.pdf>, as stated in p. 3 and 22. As stated in page 22 ‘In the project Evren Alici and Tolga Sütü conducted laboratory studies (flow cytometry). Even Alici, was the advisor of doctorate student Tolga Sütü. There are no signs that their studies were carried out to include data manipulation. They are both among the first group of authors and both should have requested a reply to referee comments or retracted from authorship. They would be expected to ask for more information or react to the five month status notification stated in the article that was clearly faulty. They are both blameworthy in this respect but not in the extent of a scientific misconduct.’

<sup>49</sup> <https://www.diken.com.tr/hedef-gosterilip-gorevden-alinan-bogazicili-akademisyene-bolumu-sahip-cikti/>; <https://t24.com.tr/haber/hedef-gosterildikten-sonra-gorevinden-alinan-dr-tolga-sutlu-bogazici-yonetiminin-aciklamasini-yanladi-hicbir-sey-saklamadim-hatam-yok,1068761>.

Dr. Sütü applied for the renewal of his contract three years later in September 2022 and although the extension was approved unanimously by the department, BU rectorate rejected the request. News in various newspapers that distort the truth and even make false statements were shown as reasons for the rejection.<sup>50</sup> The reply of Boğaziçi University Department of Molecular Biology and Genetics to this decision and the claims that were used to justify it were not taken into account by the rectorate. Dismissal of a successful scientist using false news as an excuse, just because he is protesting against the illegalities in Boğaziçi University is a tragic example of abuse of administrative power. As a matter of fact, Dr Sütü has filed a lawsuit against the university administration in this regard.

#### **4. Forced Resignation of Şebnem Oğuz, Elected to the Advisory Board of a Party with a Group in the Parliament**

Prof. Dr. Şebnem Oğuz who is among the 43 names elected to the Advisory Board on the 5th ordinary grand congress of HDP, was forced to resign by the Rectorate of Başkent University.<sup>51</sup>

#### **5. Terrorist Organisation Propaganda Investigation Due to the Statements of the President of the Turkish Medical Association**

The Constitutional Court, in its decision regarding the Academicians for Peace in 2021<sup>52</sup> clearly identifies the difference between freedom of expression, which is protected as a constitutional right, and propaganda for a terrorist organization.<sup>53</sup>

*'127 / b) The most important factor to be assessed when a statement of opinion is alleged to be propaganda for terrorism or a terrorist organisation is whether the statements have the potential to cause violence. In the circumstances of the concrete case, it could not be shown that the publication of the statement subject to the application on the internet had negative consequences on the life of the state and society and had a significant impact on the state's counter-terrorism activities.*

*(...)*

*128. The mere fact that an opinion expressed is harsh, criticises the authorities harshly, is expressed in sharp language or is even one-sided, contradictory and subjective does not mean that it incites to violence, poses a danger to society, the State and the democratic political order and thereby encourages persons to commit acts contrary to the law.*

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<sup>50</sup> <https://www.aksam.com.tr/guncel/macchiarini-skandalinin-ucu-bogazici-universitesine-uzandi/haber-1287978>; <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/tip-skandali-eylemciye-uzandi-3839664>; <https://www.yenisafak.com/gundem/bogazici-universitesinden-tolga-sutlu-aciklamasi-calismalarini-parlatmak-icin-hastalarin-olumunu-gizledi-3866915>.

<sup>51</sup> [Başkent Üniversitesi, HDP Danışma Kurulu'na seçilen Prof. Dr. Oğuz'u istifaya zorladı \(gazeteduvar.com.tr\)](https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/baskent-universitesi-hdp-danisma-kurulu-na-seçilen-prof-dr-oguz-u-istifaya-zorladi)

<sup>52</sup> AYM, Zübeyde Füsün Üstel and others, Application Nr. 2018/17635, Decision Date 26.7.2019, RG 19.9.2019, no 30893.

<sup>53</sup> Also pls. see Science Academy's Statement on Freedom of Expression and Science in February 2018 <https://bilimakademisi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ba-ifade-ve-bilim-ozgurlugu-konusunda-aciklamasi-13-subat-2018.pdf>



129. There can be no doubt that the limits of criticism of the State, as the largest political subject, are much wider than criticism of individuals.'

Prof. Dr. Şebnem Korur Fincancı, retired lecturer at Istanbul University Department of Forensic Medicine and president of the Turkish Medical Association, was accused of making propaganda for a terrorist organisation and was arrested for her statements regarding some images on a media channel. There is no evidence as to where the images subject to the statements of the TMA president on this media channel were taken. However, despite the fact that she returned from abroad and stated that she was ready to be interrogated, the fact that her house was raided in the early hours of the morning and she was taken into custody, the images of the raid were broadcast on the news, and she was arrested quickly, as if she was a criminal and a person with suspicion of fleeing, are not practices that can be accepted within the framework of the jurisprudence of the Constitutional Court cited above. Undoubtedly, defending Prof. Korur Fincancı's freedom of expression does not mean agreeing with her statements.

On the other hand, the Turkish Medical Association established on January 23, 1953 with the law no. 6023 is clearly under the protection of Constitution Art. 135 just like any other professional organization having public institution status. Professional organizations with public institution status are important components of civil society and therefore democracy. It is unacceptable to use a personal statement against the TMA and other professional organisations based on scientific and technical expertise.

It is highly objectionable in terms of the constitutional guarantees of professional organisations with the status of a public institution to even discuss the wearing down of the TTB, which has many scientists within its body and fulfils important functions such as informing the public in the light of scientifically based findings and keeping the rights of healthcare professionals on the agenda during the pandemic, dismissing its organs and preventing the appointment of new ones through an election to be held by the TTB.

## E. Gender Equality

Academics have appeared in news of sexual harassment and threat towards their colleagues, students and third parties this year as well.<sup>54</sup> However, as there are solid doubts that university administrations take decisive steps and run effective investigations on the serious claims against these individuals,<sup>55</sup> it is also notable that there is no consistent and pertinent case law.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/universitede-skandal-profesor-akademisyeni-taciz-etti-serbest-birakildi-2007284>; <https://www.diken.com.tr/egitim-senden-kadin-akademisyenin-odasini-basip-tehdit-eden-prof-bulent-arinin-serbest-birakilmasina-tepki/>; <https://www.birgun.net/haber/kirikkale-universitesi-nde-taciz-iddiasi-savcilik-sorusturma-baslatti-373225>.

<sup>55</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/necmettin-erbakan-universitesi-rektoru-taciz-tehdit-ve-santajla-suclanan-profesore-idari-sorusturma-baslatmadi-denilerek-yok-e-sikayet-edildi,1038279>; <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/cinsel-saldiridan-hapis-cezasi-almisti-iranli-akademisyen-icin-universite-sorusturma-baslatti-42030262>

<sup>56</sup> <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/252620-sayin-meclis-baskani-mustafa-sentop-un-dikkatine>; <https://www.memurlar.net/haber/996661/danistay-hocanin-ogrencisine-attigi-mesajlar-cinsel-taciz-degil.html>;

On the other hand, the harassment and oppressive practices in student dormitories are not dealt with properly; on the contrary, investigations are being opened on the students protesting these practices.<sup>57</sup> Oppression of LGBTI+ students is increasing.<sup>58</sup> This is in line with the severe discrimination public workers with LGBTI+ identities face. As a matter of fact, according to a study, 95 percent of LGBTI+ public workers in the sample cannot be fully open about their sexual identity, sexual orientation and sexual features.<sup>59</sup>

According to 2021 data, the ratio of both female academicians (45%) and female professors (32.5%) are higher than the EU average (ratio of female professors 41.3% and female professors 20.8%).<sup>60</sup> According to HEC statistics there are 10 thousand 11 female professors in Türkiye. Even though Türkiye performs well in terms of female representation in European Research Area (ERA), the low number of women in leadership positions in academia, especially as rectors, is quite striking. According to the 2021 statements of the HEC, 17 female rectors work in 203 universities and according to the statements made in 2022, the ratio of female rectors is 9.5%.<sup>61</sup> In the same statements, it can be seen that 377 female deans worked in 203 universities in 2021.

On the other hand, it was found that the number of universities preparing gender equality action plans or reviewing their existing plans for 2022 has increased and varied across Turkey (e.g. Bitlis Eren University; Pamukkale University, Atatürk University, Koç University). These developments at the university level are of structural importance for more effective utilisation of Turkey's female academic potential and for ensuring a university culture free from gender bias. However, the fact that Turkey does not have a systematic, planned and clear strategy for gender equality in higher education that sets quantitative and qualitative targets at the national level is a serious and questionable deficiency. Reliable and transparent sex-based data could not be reached through the decision-making bodies of the universities i.e. the senates and board of directors or HEC and the Interuniversity Council.

On the other hand, it is established that number of universities that prepared their gender equality plans or reviewed their current plans increased and diversified (for example; Bitlis

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<https://www.adalet.gen.tr/danistay-8-daيره-esas-no-2016-14219-karar-no-2021-2976.html>;

<https://www.sondakika.com/haber/haber-hocasi-tarafından-taciz-edilen-ogrenci-basvurdugu-14383970/>;

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/anadolu-universitesi-kiz-ogrenci-yurdundaki-tacizi-protesto-eden-ogrenciye-disiplin-sorusturmasi-acti-1939021>; also pls. see. <https://aposto.com/i/odak-yuksek-ogrenim-dosyasi>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/turkiye-39-nin-dort-bir-yanindaki-universiteli-lgbti-topluluklarindan-bulgbtia-39-ya-ortak-destek-22-05-2022>.

<sup>59</sup> For this survey not exclusive to university staff cf. MARY LOU O'NEIL/REYDA ERGÜN/SELMA DEĞİRMENCI/KIVILCIM TURANLI/DOĞANCAN ERKENGEL, The State of Public Worker Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Plus People in Turkey, 2021 Survey, Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association (Kaos GL) and Kadir Has University Gender and Women's Studies Research Center, p. 6: 'As observed, the conditions that cause reproduction of discriminative and hateful speech towards *LGBTI+ people* constitute a harsher outlook in the public sector than the private.' Also pls. see. MARY LOU O'NEIL/REYDA ERGÜN/SELMA DEĞİRMENCI/KIVILCIM TURANLI/DOĞANCAN ERKENGEL, The State of Private Sector Worker Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Plus People in Turkey, 2021 Survey

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2021/turk-universitelerindeki-kadin-profesor-orani-avrupa-ortalamasini-gecti.aspx>

<sup>61</sup> <https://t24.com.tr/haber/bakan-yanik-200-universitenin-19-unda-kadin-rektor-var-cam-tavani-burada-da-goruyoruz,1044407>; <https://www.yok.gov.tr/Sayfalar/Haberler/2021/turk-universitelerindeki-kadin-profesor-orani-avrupa-ortalamasini-gecti.aspx>.

Eren University; Pamukkale University. Atatürk University, Koç University).<sup>62</sup> These developments at the university level have structural significance in terms of providing a more efficient use of female potential and a university culture free from sexual prejudices. Nevertheless, Türkiye's lack of a systematic planned and open strategy that sets quantitative and qualitative targets at a national level for gender equality in higher education is a shortcoming that needs to be questioned.

## F. Conclusion

In this year's report we unfortunately identify, once again, the decline in academic freedoms and the increase in academic corruption and degradation. It is of utmost importance that this tendency that has been continuing for years is urgently reversed. As we stated in our Introduction, the state of universities is an indicator that shows the level of democracy in a country. As stated in the Magna Charta Universitatum declaration revised in 2020:

*'Intellectual and moral autonomy is the hallmark of any university and a precondition for the fulfilment of its responsibilities to society. That independence needs to be recognised and protected by governments and society at large, and defended vigorously by institutions themselves.*

*To fulfill their potential, universities require a reliable social contract with civil society, one that supports pursuit of the highest possible quality of academic work, with full respect for institutional autonomy.*

*As they create and disseminate knowledge, universities question dogmas and established doctrines and encourage critical thinking in all students and scholars. Academic freedom is their lifeblood; open enquiry and dialogue their nourishment.*<sup>63</sup>

Türkiye has the necessary know-how and preliminary preparations for urgent new regulations that will give universities a breathing space.<sup>64</sup> The Science Academy has frequently expressed its readiness to be a part of any work to be carried out in this direction. We wish it to be remembered that every restriction on universities is not only a loss of science but also a loss of the country.

Respectfully presented to the public,

Executive Board Members of the Science Academy

Canan Atılgan (President), A. Aydın Alatan, Yeşim M. Atamer, Durmuş Ali Demir, Orhan Yenigün, Kamil Yılmaz

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<sup>62</sup> [https://www.beu.edu.tr/Dosyalar/BEUAnaMenu/Raporlar/CEP\\_senato.pdf](https://www.beu.edu.tr/Dosyalar/BEUAnaMenu/Raporlar/CEP_senato.pdf); <https://www.pau.edu.tr/pau/tr/kurumsal/pau-cinsiyet-esitligi-plani>; <https://birimler.atauni.edu.tr/toplumsal-cinsiyet-esitligi-3/>; [https://ku-people.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/cdn/files/mailling/KU/KUGEP\\_2022-25.pdf](https://ku-people.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/cdn/files/mailling/KU/KUGEP_2022-25.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.magna-charta.org/magna-charta-universitatum/mcu2020>

<sup>64</sup> See e.g. the Final Report of the Workshop on the Restructuring of the Higher Education Area in Turkey, held in Ankara on 30 June - 1 July 2022, published on 9 December 2022: [https://univ-forum.org/images/pdf/Calistay\\_Sonuc\\_Raporu\\_Dijital.pdf](https://univ-forum.org/images/pdf/Calistay_Sonuc_Raporu_Dijital.pdf).