



The Higher Education Council in Türkiye has declared on February 11, 2023 (*in the aftermath of the earthquake*) that they have decided all universities should go over to “instruction at a distance.”

Although it is a pressing task to provide our citizens, who have lost their homes and loved ones, with the most comfortable lodging, unfortunately the university dormitories are not equipped for this purpose. The decision to force all universities to adopt “instruction at a distance,” in spite of the fact that many alternatives are available in our country for lodging the earthquake victims, is a top-down edict which makes no room for the special needs of different institutions.

It has been clearly shown during the pandemic that “instruction at a distance” jeopardises both the essence and the quality of the learning process. Moreover, it is doubtful that the dislocated students will be able to benefit from such distanced education. The decision of the Higher Education Council (HEC) will also damage the equality of opportunity. Graduates with diplomas, but with insufficient acumen, will be a loss to the country. All these drawbacks mean heavy losses.

When the essential functions of the universities are taken into account, it is in the interest of our country that these institutions remain open and continue their educational activities, collaborate with other institutions, undertake joint tasks, try to minimize the losses due to the earthquake and keep their students and faculty together.

Under such extraordinary conditions, instruction may be stopped for a short period, only for necessary rearrangements, with each institution assessing their special needs. HEC’s functions should be restricted to such administrative tasks as, allowing students in the earthquake areas to freeze their academic status, allowing faculty to take leave; coordinate the re-location of university students and staff according to needs and opportunities of the universities, taking into account both the lodging situation and the means of instruction.

We would like to respectfully express the urgent need to reverse the present decision.

Bilim Akademisi (Science Academy) Board. February 2, 2023