



**TÜRK SANAYİCİLERİ VE İŞADAMLARI DERNEĞİ**

**TÜSİAD**

**GENEL SEKRETERİ**

**ZAFER ALİ YAVAN'IN**

**“A 2020 PERSPECTIVE**

**GENDER EQUALITY IN EU & TURKEY” SEMİNERİ**

**KONUŞMASI**

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Distinguished members of the European Parliament, dear colleagues, dear guests,

It has always been a great honor and pleasure for TÜSİAD to be a partner in this annual conference organized by the ALDE group in association with KAGİDER.

The topic of the conference, “gender equality in the EU 2020 perspective” is at the core of TÜSİAD’s vision for Turkey.

TÜSİAD represents today over 60% of the Turkish economy’s added-value, 80 % of Turkey’s exports and 85% of Turkish state’s corporate tax revenues. As the main representative organization of the Turkish business world and a member of BUSINESSEUROPE, the Confederation of European Business, TUSIAD is committed to promoting a Turkey that is more competitive globally and is a member of a more competitive European Union. We expect from the European Union to support entrepreneurship, innovation, social development, sustainable growth, and therefore generate more and more jobs.

This is why gender equality is a priority for us, not only as the fundamental value of our democracy but also because the empowerment of women is a key driving-force to reach the goals of EU 2020 Strategy.

The membership process of Turkey to the EU has played an influential role and will continue to be a triggering factor in terms of women’s rights in Turkey with the insistent efforts of NGOs, particularly women’s organisations.

As the progress reports prepared by the European Commission address, gender equality remains a major challenge in Turkey despite notable examples of high-level presence of women in the Turkish society. Rate of women's labour force participation, employment and access to education are still among the lowest in the EU and OECD countries. At the other end of the spectrum, women’s participation in certain professions, as lawyers, professors and doctors is relatively strong. The number of women in top management levels at multinational and national companies in Turkey is also worth mentioning. In Turkey we need to have a comprehensive strategy to increase women’s employment. I will not go into detail in this issue since it will be handled by the presentation of Ms. Nur Ger, the President of TÜSİAD Gender Equality Working Group.

Distinguished guests,

Participation of women in the political decision-making mechanism is one of the most crucial elements not only for democracy and development, but also for its impact on decision-making at all levels; from the family, to the nation, to the international community. There is an ultimate need for women role models in positions of power and decision-making. After the last elections held in 2007, the proportion of women in the parliament has doubled to 9.1%. Although the current situation is definitely far from gender parity, it is a positive step forward. We know that temporary special measures like quota systems have been implemented by many countries. In Turkey, we, as representatives of NGOs, aim to continue our persistent efforts to bring these temporary measures to the agenda of the Turkish political parties.

Although men continue to hold a monopoly over Turkish politics and are the majority in the labour force, women in Turkey are taking more and more important roles in the economic and social life. This is very positive for social progress and sustainable economic welfare.

Participation of women in politics, economy and social life is a crucial determinant of democracy and the development level of any country. We know that the main goals of the European Union are full employment, a high level of social protection, long-term economic growth, and sustainable development in a knowledge-based society. As there is progress in supporting active participation of women in the labour market and in reducing gender gaps in different spheres of life, we believe that Turkey will contribute to social and economic welfare of the EU.

As TÜSİAD, we published two reports in 2000 and 2008. The second one, which was prepared in collaboration with KAGİDER, included subjects related to EU framework and Turkey's candidacy from the standpoint of gender equality. We have also organized seminars both in Turkey and in Brussels since 2006. I believe that these seminars provide a valuable platform to discuss the latest developments and exchange of views on the steps that should be taken towards gender equality. The distinguished speakers will tackle thoroughly all these issues. Thank you very much for your presence and contribution to this event today and I wish you all a fruitful debate.