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## TURKISH WOMEN IN POLITICS, THE ECONOMY AND SOCIETY

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In Turkey, the status occupied by women has repeatedly emerged in current debates. The issue of the Islamic headscarf in particular has troubled the Turkish public. The prohibition on wearing the *hijab* at universities has been lifted in practice without any statutory regulation whatsoever. This did, however, incite a debate on the *hijab* at secondary level in schools and in public office. With the elimination of the obligatory school uniform in 2012 and the associated regulations regarding the dress code for female pupils, this debate gained an added dimension.

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, a professed opponent of the headscarf ban, takes every opportunity to express the view that it is absolutely essential for Turkey's future that every woman in Turkey bear three children. At the latest women's conference of his party on 27 May 2012, he explained his opposition not just to abortion but also to caesareans, triggering vigorous discussion. The school reform undertaken by the current 61<sup>st</sup> Turkish cabinet, generally described by the formula "4+4+4", has also elicited a heated debate with respect to women's rights. Some sectors of society fear the twelve-year compulsory education divided into three sections will result in an increase in the number of underage girls getting married.<sup>1</sup> Against the backdrop of frequent assaults on women, the question of domestic violence and how to prevent it is also an issue that the media repeatedly come back to.

1 | See the explanation provided by Güler Sabancı, one of the most influential personalities of social and economic life in Turkey: "Sabancı'dan 4+4+4 açıklaması: Kaygı; çocuk gelin ve çocuk işçilerin artması", *Zaman*, 24 Feb 2012, [http://zaman.com.tr/\\_1250177.html](http://zaman.com.tr/_1250177.html) (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

The fact that discussions about problems affecting women continue to be on the agenda is due to overlapping interests. For one, the decisions women make about their own lives and the degree to which these decisions are accepted by society play an important role in view of Turkey's negotiations with the European Union regarding full membership, which have been ongoing since 2005. The discussions on the discrimination relating to women's dress exemplified by the *hijab* must be seen against this backdrop.

Secondly, Turkey experienced a change from absolutist rule to a secular nation state at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century under the leadership of Kemalist cadres, which entailed a radical modernisation project. The country thus represents an exception in the "Muslim World". Although not entirely without problems, the principles of the rule of law, the division of powers and multi-party democracy are reality in Turkey, and important steps have been taken during the last decade to overcome the remaining issues. When measured by the criteria of a modern state, Turkey is the most advanced country of the region. Turkey also offers stability where politics and economics are concerned. For these reasons, and in view of the wave of revolutionary upheavals which led to the end of dictatorships also referred to as the Arab Spring, there is talk about Turkey's ability to act as a model state. But at the same time the question arises as to what extent Turkey is being influenced by the Islamist movements that are gaining momentum in the region.<sup>2</sup> In the search for an answer to this question, the policies of the governing party AKP, which has Islamist roots and defines its current profile as "not Islamist, but conservative democratic", represent a kind of barometer on women's issues. This background must be borne in mind when considering the discussions

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2 | On 21 Dec 2011, a workshop entitled "Regional Meeting on Women's Empowerment In The Economic, Social and Political Transformation of the Middle East" was held in Istanbul, held jointly by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the KAGİDER association; the aim of the workshop was to gain an understanding of the involvement of the women in the Middle East and North Africa amidst this fundamental shift. In follow-up to the workshop, a report (in English and Turkish), the session minutes (in English) and a collection of articles (in English) were published: [http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_31725-1522-1-30.pdf](http://kas.de/wf/doc/kas_31725-1522-1-30.pdf) (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

surrounding endeavours relating to a new abortion law and education reform.

### **LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE AREA OF GENDER EQUALITY IN TURKEY**

**The CEDAW convention on women's rights has the status of a binding contract. Whether the contracting states fulfil the associated obligations is checked by a CEDAW Committee on the basis of status reports drawn up by the contracting states every four years.**

By ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, Turkey committed itself to gender equality. The CEDAW convention on women's rights has the status of a binding contract. Whether the contracting states fulfil the associated obligations is checked by a CEDAW Committee on the basis of status reports drawn up by the contracting states every four years. The CEDAW convention is known as one of the international agreements with the greatest participation, but also with the greatest reservations on the part of the contracting parties. Turkey withdrew its reservations in September 1999.<sup>3</sup> It ratified the binding Optional Protocol to the CEDAW on 30 July 2002. The European Social Charter is a further agreement whereby Turkey has agreed to terms in the area of gender equality. In addition, the country has signed numerous agreements of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).<sup>4</sup> The last agreement in the area of women's rights, to which Turkey has acceded to date, is the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which was signed in Strasburg on 7 April 2011. Turkey was the first state to ratify this important document, the first contract of this kind that entails the power to impose sanctions.<sup>5</sup>

3 | Cf. İkinci Kadın Devrimi, "Feminizm, İslam ve Türkiye Demokrasinin Olgunlaşması", Avrupa İstikrar Girişimi – European Stability Initiative (ESI), İstanbul/Berlin/Brussels, 2007, 8.

4 | Cf. "Türk Siyasetinde Kadın: Çok Oluyoruz!", Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu (USAK), USAK report No. 11-05, Ankara, 8 Jun 2011, <http://www.usak.org.tr/rapor.asp?id=123> (accessed 15 Feb 2013). According to the Action Plan of the governing party AKP of 2010 on policies regarding women and employment, Turkey does have to sign the ILO agreement No. 183 on safeguarding maternity rights, but there has been no visible progress in this matter to date.

5 | Nazan Moroğlu, "Kadına Yönelik Şiddetin Önlenmesi 6284 Sayılı Yasa ve İstanbul Sözleşmesi" (law on the prevention of violence against women No. 6284 and Istanbul agreement), [http://portal.ubap.org.tr/App\\_Themes/Dergi/2012-99-1169.pdf](http://portal.ubap.org.tr/App_Themes/Dergi/2012-99-1169.pdf) (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

Through the judicial reforms of the past decade, Turkey has created a legal framework in line with the fundamental guidelines of the CEDAW convention. These reforms represent a great achievement, for which civil society organisations and the independent women's movement in particular can take credit. Two changes to the constitution, dating back to 2004 and 2010, are of great significance for gender equality. In 2004, the following statement was added to Article 10: "Men and women have equal rights and the State is responsible for the measures to implement those rights." In 2010, a further addition was made to the same article: "Measures taken for this purpose shall not be interpreted as contrary to the principle of equality." This means that Turkey is one of the few countries where positive discrimination is enshrined in the constitution. Women are involved in endeavours to draw up a new constitution, which began after the parliamentary elections of 12 June 2011, through the founding of a "Women's Platform for a New Constitution", which has already made various submissions to the commission.<sup>6</sup>

There have also been changes at the level of ordinary law, starting with the first civil code enacted on 17 February 1926, which represented a milestone for gender equality in Turkey. The achievements it entailed include the enforcement of monogamy and marriage by law, women's right to divorce and custody of the children and equal treatment in terms of inheritance shares. However, the civil code also contained some discriminatory provisions which would come to be unacceptable in the late 20th century. Once Turkey had withdrawn its reservations about the CEDAW convention in 1999, women's rights organisations intensified their lobbying activities for a reform of this legislation, in which they were also supported by the EU. As a result of the efforts made by 126 women's organisations from all over Turkey, the new Turkish civil code was enacted on 22 November 2001 and entered into effect on 1 January 2002. One change meant that provisions relating to the "head of the family" and associated gender inequalities were removed from the legislation.

**The first civil code enacted on 17 February 1926 represented a milestone for gender equality in Turkey: it includes the enforcement of monogamy and women's right to divorce.**

6 | "Eşitlikçi, Demokratik ve Özgürlükçü Bir Anayasa. Anayasa Kadın Platformunun Talepleri", [http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/images/belgeler//Anayasa\\_kadin\\_platformu\\_talepler.pdf](http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/images/belgeler//Anayasa_kadin_platformu_talepler.pdf) (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

**Family courts were set up with effect of 1 January 2003, which are responsible for family law in general and for proceedings relating to domestic violence.**

The greatest achievement brought about by the reform is that assets acquired during a marriage would in future be divided equally in the event of divorce. This acknowledges the contribution the wife makes in managing the household by assigning it material value and is indicative of a paradigm shift. As part of the reform, family courts were set up with effect of 1 January 2003, which are responsible for family law in general and for proceedings relating to domestic violence. In addition, Labour Law No. 4857 was approved on 22 May 2003. Employers are now under an obligation not to discriminate on the basis of gender. In addition, sexual harassment by the employer was defined as an activity that represents sufficient grounds for the employee to terminate her employment without notice. A further important innovation of the new labour law is a provision stating that female employees must be granted eight weeks' maternity leave both before and after the birth of a child.<sup>7</sup>

With the law on protection of the family that entered into effect in 1998, domestic violence was defined as a criminal offence for the first time, and measures such as restraining orders excluding the perpetrators from the home laid down in law. Although the scope of the law was expanded in 2007, that revision did not go far enough which meant that a new law was required. Law No. 6284 about the protection of the family and prevention of violence against women entered into effect on 20 March 2012.

The old Turkish penal code, which was in effect from 1926 to 2004, had originally been formulated by adapting Italy's penal code of 1889 to Turkish values and traditions, and it contained a number of problematic sections, particularly with respect to the evaluation of sexual crimes. Rape was regarded in the context of the violation of honour, which is why rape within marriage in particular was not recognised as a criminal act; at the same time, a man perpetrating a rape was exempt from criminal prosecution if the woman agreed to marry him; if a woman was actually raped by several men, it was sufficient for her to marry one of them

7 | Nazan Moroğlu, "Kadın ve Yurttaş Hakları" (women and civil rights), Türk Üniversiteli Kadınlar Derneği, <http://tukd.org.tr/makaleler.asp> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

for the accusations against the other men to be dropped. While the kidnapping of an unmarried woman was punished by imprisonment for up to three years, the same offence involving a married woman carried a penalty of at least seven years' imprisonment (because of the damage to the husband).<sup>8</sup>

The new penal code was enacted on 26 September 2004 and entered into effect on 1 June 2005. It contained changes to a total of 35 articles relating to women's rights and sexual freedom. With this reform, sex crimes against women were taken out of the context of "offences against social morality" and classed as "violations of personal rights". In concrete terms, the following changes were effected with the reform: life imprisonment due to aggravated circumstances in the case of premeditated murder "motivated by honour"; "imprisonment of up to three years for sexual harassment in the workplace"; "recognition of rape within marriage as a criminal offence upon official complaint by the rape victim"; "exclusion of the provision for non-prosecution in cases of rape if the woman marries the perpetrator/is married off to him". In addition, continual use of domestic violence is classed as a criminal act of "physical abuse" under the new provisions.<sup>9</sup>

The changes made to the penal code represent some of the most important achievements made by the independent women's rights movement. The associations Women for Women's Human Rights – New Ways (Kadının İnsan Hakları – Yeni Çözümler Derneği), Istanbul, and Flying Broom (Uçan Süpürge), Ankara, jointly coordinated a highly effective campaign. However, one cannot maintain that the legal framework created with these reforms is reflected fully in reality as one aspect has been consistently ignored:<sup>10</sup> Although the age at which men and women can get married was harmonised in the course of the reform of the civil code, setting the minimum age at 17 has had serious

8 | Devrimi, n. 3, 13 et seq.

9 | Moroğlu, n. 7.

10 | Cf. Feride Acar, "Türkiye'de Kadınların İnsan Hakları: Uluslararası Standartlar, Hukuk ve Sivil Toplum" (Women's human rights in Turkey: International Standards, Law and Civil Society), Istanbul, 2010, [http://insanhaklarimerkezi.bilgi.edu.tr/Books/khuku/turkiyede\\_kadınların\\_insan\\_hakları\\_uluslararası\\_standartlar.pdf](http://insanhaklarimerkezi.bilgi.edu.tr/Books/khuku/turkiyede_kadınların_insan_hakları_uluslararası_standartlar.pdf) (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

consequences. This is because marriages where one of the parties is under 18 are defined as “child marriages” in the agreements to which Turkey is also a signatory.

**Deficiencies of mechanisms to ensure gender equality can be put down to the fact that the persons involved in the legislation process did not consider these changes to be necessary.**

The mechanisms to ensure gender equality are not defined in sufficient detail in the labour legislation. There are no provisions regulating important aspects such as promotion modalities and the availability of internal training opportunities. According to Feride Acar, the deficiencies and irregularities, which already became obvious when the legislation was being drawn up, can be attributed to the fact that the persons involved in this process did not consider these changes to be necessary or did not believe in the purpose of this legislation. This shows that there is a direct link between the repeatedly displayed weakness of the legislators in issues of gender equality and the small number of women actively involved in politics.

### **Institutional Developments**

The institutional opening up of Turkey through the development of projects for gender equality did not become possible until the signing of the CEDAW convention, which made the implementation of certain political measures for equality between men and women a prerequisite.<sup>11</sup> Institutes for women’s issues were set up at universities. In the individual provinces, women’s authorities were established under the auspices of the governors. Many legal chambers established women’s rights committees. The national statistics authority included statistics relating to women in the statistics catalogue. Women’s refuges were opened,<sup>12</sup> as was an art and information centre for women. “Women’s Law” was included in the curriculum in law faculties (e.g. in the law faculty of the Yeditepe University in Istanbul). In the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, the national parliament, an Equal Opportunities Commission was established and an investigating committee for “crimes motivated by tradition and honour” was set up.

11 | Moroğlu, n. 7.

12 | You will find more details on developments regarding the setting up of women’s refuges in Turkey in section “Gender Conflict in Turkey: Difficulties Experienced by Women in Society and Family”.

The greatest achievement at the institutional level is represented by the General Directorate on the Status of Women (KSGM), which was set up in 1990 under the auspices of the Ministry for Labour and Social Security. No doubt, the most far-reaching development since its inception was the abolition of the State Ministry for Women and Family Affairs simultaneously with all other ministries on 8 June 2011. The abolished ministry was replaced by the Ministry for Family and Social Policies. The abolition of the “women’s ministry” elicited protests both from women’s rights organisations and other NGOs. The signatories of a joint declaration, in which the measure was described as a retrograde step, included important organisations such as Women for Women’s Human Rights – New Ways, the Turkish doctors’ association, KADER, the Turkish CEDAW Secretariat and Human Rights Watch.<sup>13</sup> Women intellectuals from Islamist groups close to the AKP have also criticised this development.<sup>14</sup> There is a broad consensus that the KSGM has lost in terms of significance and effectiveness through this institutional change. However, there has been one measure in the opposite direction, namely a doubling of the budget of the government agency just recently.

**The abolished “women’s ministry” was replaced by the Ministry for Family and Social Policies, which elicited protests both from women’s rights organisations and other NGOs.**

## WOMEN IN TURKISH POLITICS

The first discussions on women’s rights in Turkey took place after the Tanzimat reforms by the former Ottoman Sultan (1839), i.e. in the early days of the era of modernisation. The topics discussed most frequently at that time were women’s education and the disadvantages of polygamy. After the second constitutional reform (“overthrow of 1908”), the first women’s organisations were founded. This laid the foundations for a movement that promoted gender equality and even demanded a “women’s revolution”. The organisation Mudafa’a al-Huqûq an-Niswan (Defence of Women’s Rights), for instance, addressed the issue of

13 | “Women for Women’s Human Rights: ‘We Oppose The Closure Of The State Ministry Of Women’s Affairs!’”, *Kadının İnsan Hakları – Yeni Çözümler*, <http://kadinininsanhaklari.org/kategori/haberler/29968/kadindan> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

14 | For an example of criticism by “Muslim women” see Özlem Albayrak, “AK Parti ve kadın”, *Yeni Şafak*, 5 Jun 2011, <http://yenisafak.com.tr/yazarlar/OzlemAlbayrak/ak-parti-ve-kadin/28088> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).



women's active and passive suffrage in 1921.<sup>15</sup> However, it would take until the time of the republic's foundation for women's demands for political rights to be fulfilled.

The most significant developments regarding women's political rights in Turkey took place during a period of twelve years from when the republic was proclaimed in 1923. The first parliamentary debate on the issue was held in the very year the republic was founded, but did not initially yield any results.<sup>16</sup> On 16 June 1923, a party named People's Party of Women (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası) was founded. However, the women's attempt at organising as a party was not successful in view of a lack of state authorisations.<sup>17</sup>

Table 1

**Number of female representatives in the National Assembly by election year**

Election year	Number of seats	Held by women	Proportion (per cent)
1935	399	18	4.5
1939	429	16	3.7
1943	455	16	3.5
1946	465	9	1.9
1950	487	3	0.6
1954	541	4	0.7
1957	610	8	1.3
1961	450	3	0.7
1965	450	8	1.8
1969	450	5	1.1

15 | Mustafa Çadır, "Kadının Siyasal Yaşama Katılımında Siyasi Parti Kadın Kollarının Rolü", TC. Başbakanlık Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü, Ankara, 2011, [http://kadininstatusu.gov.tr/upload/kadininstatusu.gov.tr/mce/eski\\_site/Pdf/uzmanlik\\_tezleri/mustafa\\_cadir\\_tez.pdf](http://kadininstatusu.gov.tr/upload/kadininstatusu.gov.tr/mce/eski_site/Pdf/uzmanlik_tezleri/mustafa_cadir_tez.pdf) (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

16 | Kadın, n. 4, 10.

17 | Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, in: Yesim Arat, *Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar* (Modernisation project in Turkey and women), 1998, 82-98; Beatrice Gorawantschy, "Türkei - Zwischen Tradition und Moderne" (Turkey - between tradition and the modern era), *Die Frau in unserer Zeit* (The woman in our times), Vol. 4, KAS, 1994, 45-50.

<b>Election year</b>	<b>Number of seats</b>	<b>Held by women</b>	<b>Proportion (per cent)</b>
1973	450	6	1.3
1977	450	4	0.9
1983	399	12	3.0
1987	450	6	1.3
1991	450	8	1.8
1995	550	13	2.4
1999	550	23	4.2
2002	550	24	4.4
2007	550	50	9.1
2011	550	79	14.3

Source: Turkish Statistics Office (TÜİK), 2001; USAK, n. 4, 12.

Women were granted active and passive suffrage for the first time at local level. In 1930, they were able to vote and stand as candidates in the elections for mayors and municipal councils, in 1933 also in those for village councils and councils of elders. In 1934, women were granted the right to stand for parliamentary elections and to vote in them. After the first elections that women were allowed to participate in in 1935, female members of parliament numbered 18, which equated to 4.5 per cent.<sup>18</sup> This proportion was not equalled again in subsequent elections until 1999. During the intervening 64 years, the number of female members of parliament remained vanishingly small, reaching a low point in 1950 at 0.6 per cent (Table 1). This can be explained as follows: Turkey encountered multi-party democracy with the elections in 1946. At that time, topics such as the market economy, the democratic constitutional system, the configuration of a multi-party landscape and industrialisation had top priority. Women's participation in politics and their relatively low representation in parliament were pushed far into the background by these topics, and the proportion of women in parliament went down steadily not least due to competition between the parties.<sup>19</sup>

18 | Kadın, n. 4, 11.

19 | Çadır, n. 15, 36.

With currently 79 seats in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, women have achieved the highest proportion since the republic was founded (14.3 per cent). But their share is far below the worldwide average. The women's proportion in the Turkish parliament has developed in line with that in the Arab states, which are at the bottom of the worldwide ranking. Discussions about possible measures to ensure gender equality in parliament always focus on the term "quota". Turkish women's organisations keep demanding the introduction of suitable measures. But there are no provisions for positive discrimination, either in party legislation or election legislation. In fact, the only provision with a regulatory remit aimed at increasing the proportion of women at the level of state institutions emerged from the Capital Markets Board (SPK), which issued a regulation stating that the board of directors of any stock company, whose shares are traded on the open market, must include at least one woman.<sup>20</sup>

The low representation of women in the Turkish parliament is an indication of the problems existing with respect to women's participation in political life in Turkey generally.

The numbers of women in local politics confirm this realisation. During the 2009 local elections, only 3,709 of the 301,759 persons voted onto the local representative bodies were women, corresponding to 1.22 per cent. There were only 27 women among the nearly 3,000 people elected mayor. In the 81 provincial capitals of Turkey, only two women were elected mayor. Women made up just 3.25 per cent of the provincial councils, 4.21 per cent of municipal councils. However, it should also be pointed out that there is a positive trend apparent in this area. Compared to 2004, the figures for 2009 represented an increase of around 100 per cent.<sup>21</sup>

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In the final declaration of the first UN World Conference on Women held in Mexico City, equality in political participation was defined as "equal participation of women and men in all political structures and processes shaping public policies". Against this backdrop, the figures for 2011 and

20 | Cf. KAGİDER and KAS, n. 2.

21 | Çadır, n. 15, 42-43.

2012 published by KADER are giving cause for concern.<sup>22</sup> Women accounted for only one of 26 ministers, 26 of 2,924 town mayors, 65 of 34,210 village mayors, one of 81 governors, five of 103 university rectors and 21 of 185 ambassadors. Women were equally poorly represented in the managing bodies of the bank supervisory authority, among high court judges and at the national audit office as well as in the upper echelons of the most important trades unions.



"Does one have to be a man to make it into parliament?" Billboard of the 2007 KADER campaign. | Source: © KADER.

When you look at the proportion of women in the central executive committees of the four parties currently represented in parliament, you see entirely different results: While women make up 42.8 per cent of the central executive body of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), the figure is just 5.2 per cent for the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP). The proportion of women among the top echelon of the governing AKP is 15 per cent. Women make up 23.5 per cent of the leadership of the second strongest

22 | "2012 Kadın İstatistikleri" (Women's Statistics 2012), Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği (Association for the Support and Education of Female Candidates, KADER), İstanbul, Mar 2012, [http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/down/2012\\_KADIN\\_ISTATISTIKLERI.pdf](http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/down/2012_KADIN_ISTATISTIKLERI.pdf) (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

party in parliament, the Republican People's Party (CHP).<sup>23</sup> While the BDP achieves its high proportion by applying a women's quota, a women's quota of 30 per cent is applied in practice in the provincial party organisations of the AKP according to its women's organisation.

The women's organisations of the political parties in Turkey experienced a severe setback through the military coup of 12 September 1980. Because during the subsequent 15 years right up to 1995, women's and youth organisations affiliated to political parties were banned. In view of this, the high degree of organisation that the women's organisation of the AKP has achieved is astounding. Membership of the AKP women's organisation stood at 3,237,742 on 15 January this year. This means that the AKP has the largest political women's organisation in the world. This fact has to do with the political history of the AKP and the vision of its leader Erdoğan with respect to the organisational structures of his party. When Erdoğan was the provincial leader of the Islamist Welfare Party (RP) in Istanbul, he expanded the party structure at city district level in unrivalled form and achieved this success to a large extent through the social connections of his party's female followers. By the mid-1990s, the RP had approx. one million female members.<sup>24</sup>

The ability of the Islamist and now post-Islamist/conservative democratic movement to mobilise women for politics through party activities is remarkable and has already been the subject of several studies. It is worth noting, however, that women's organisations in Turkey are not involved in actually furthering women's participation in politics.<sup>25</sup> They should not be viewed as associations where current politics are discussed and implemented and where strategies to foster gender equality are developed, but instead they aim predominantly at attracting new members and increasing the voter potential for elections. The activities of the women's organisations are not so much political as social in nature. They engage in activities that make it easier for the party to reach the people, such as neighbourhood meetings, craft fairs and fundraising. There is not a great deal of desire amongst the women's organisations to put up candidates for political decision-making

23 | Cf. KADER, n. 22.

24 | Devrimi, n. 3, 10.

25 | Çadır, n. 15.

positions. The women who are active in the parties' women's organisations also frequently have a similar profile. A large number of these women have obtained their secondary school diploma or an equivalent qualification, or they are housewives or pensioners. The great majority of the women who are active in the women's organisations have a husband or close relative who is also in the party.<sup>26</sup> For women in Turkey, involvement in a party still depends to a large degree on support from within the family.

There are a number of different factors that make political participation difficult for women. Social and economic problems and the associated difficulties for women to benefit from educational opportunities as well as a culture of gender discrimination and division of labour affecting women in virtually all areas, most notably politics, all play a role. A study conducted by the KADER association in collaboration with research institute KONDA has shown, however, that at a social level this discriminatory culture does not actually present a great obstacle for women to participate in political affairs.<sup>27</sup>

**Social and economic problems and the associated difficulties for women to benefit from educational opportunities as well as a culture of gender discrimination and division of labour make political participation harder for women.**

For this study, personal interviews were conducted with 5,434 people in 36 Turkish provinces. 72 per cent stated that they were in agreement with the statement: "It does not matter whether one is a man or a woman when it comes to working in politics or taking political responsibilities such as being an interior minister, parliamentary speaker or national security minister". 56 of the respondents stated they believed Turkey would develop and become a better society if the number of female politicians increased. 71 per cent of the respondents were not in agreement with the statement that there was "no need for women to take a bigger part in politics and the parliament". A similar assertion was: "Even if women take part in politics, they cannot have opinions on subjects such as the economy, finance, international relations and national security." 65 per cent of the respondents did not agree with that statement. Among all the possible solutions offered for measures to allow women to play a larger role in politics, 23.7 per cent of the subjects

26 | Cf. Çadır, n. 15, 155-57.

27 | "Siyasette Kadın Temsili Araştırması", KONDA, Mar 2011, [http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/down/SIYASETTE\\_KADIN\\_TEMSILI\\_ARASTIRMASI.pdf](http://ka-der.org.tr/tr/down/SIYASETTE_KADIN_TEMSILI_ARASTIRMASI.pdf) (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

opted for the application of quotas, 49.1 per cent for more advantageous conditions for women candidates. Only 19.3 per cent said there was no need for special treatment.

### **WOMEN IN THE WORLD OF WORK IN TURKEY**

The high growth rates the Turkish economy has achieved over the last few years are remarkable. Turkey is in 16<sup>th</sup> place in the world ranking of economic power. It is generally thought that the sustainability of this growth depends on an increase in the employment rate and in particular on a quantitative and qualitative increase in women's employment. It is thought that a five per cent increase in women's employment would equate to a 15 per cent reduction in poverty.<sup>28</sup> However, the positive effects of economic growth on the job situation for women have been very limited to date. In terms of the participation of women in economic development, Turkey is ranked 131st out of 134 countries, trailed only by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Yemen. The share of women in economic wealth is also low. Women own only nine per cent of land in Turkey.<sup>29</sup>

Besides the employment rate, the labour force participation rate<sup>30</sup> is one of two fundamental parameters to quantify participation in gainful activities.<sup>31</sup> When you examine the historic development of this parameter, you see that the participation of women in the labour force went down in Turkey between the mid-1950s and around 2005. The most important reason for this is the decreasing role played by the agricultural sector in the economy as a whole and the urbanisation that this has entailed. While 81.5 of women worked back in 1950, the proportion dropped to 23.3 by

28 | Short film about Turkish women in the economy: TÜSİAD, "Çalışma Hayatında Kadın", YouTube, 8 Mar 2012, [http://youtu.be/GZiY7fGZ\\_O8](http://youtu.be/GZiY7fGZ_O8) (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

29 | Ibid.

30 | Labour force participation rate = employed + unemployed ÷ labour force x 100. See e.g. European University Viadrina Frankfurt (Oder) Faculty of Economic Sciences, [http://www.wiwi.europa-uni.de/de/lehrstuhl/fine/econpol/lehre/downloads/eabp/Definitionen\\_zur\\_Arbeitslosigkeit.pdf](http://www.wiwi.europa-uni.de/de/lehrstuhl/fine/econpol/lehre/downloads/eabp/Definitionen_zur_Arbeitslosigkeit.pdf) (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

31 | Data regarding the quality and quantity of women's employment in Turkey were taken mainly from: İlyas Karabıyık, "Türkiye'de Çalışma Yaşamında Kadın İstihdamı" (Employment of women in the world of work in Turkey), <http://iktisat.marmara.edu.tr/iysdosya/iktisat/iibf%20dergisi/2012-1/12-karabiyik.pdf> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

2005. The first increase since then, which was an increase of 4.3 per cent to 27.6 per cent, was seen in 2010.<sup>32</sup> Like the representation of women in the Turkish parliament, the employment rate of women is far below the international average and shows a development in line with that in North African countries and the states of the Middle East. Figures from the Turkish Statistics Office TÜİK for 2012 show the large gap between the participation of men and women in economic activities. According to these figures, 30.1 per cent of females aged 15 to 24 are employed, while it is 71.9 per cent of men.<sup>33</sup> There is obviously a lack of political measures in Turkey to further women's employment.

Table 2  
**Women's employment rate worldwide,  
by region (in per cent)**

	2000	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
World	48.6	48.9	48.9	48.9	48.6	48.1	47.8
Developed Economies (incl. EU countries)	48.0	48.4	49.0	49.5	49.7	48.9	48.6
Central and South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS	44.0	44.1	44.5	45.1	45.3	44.7	45.1
East Asia	67.1	65.7	65.6	65.6	64.8	64.6	64.6
South-East Asia and Pacific	55.6	54.3	54.4	55.1	55.5	55.5	55.5
South Asia	33.4	35.2	34.7	33.6	32.5	31.4	30.5
Latin America and Caribbean	42.9	46.1	46.5	47.2	47.7	47.5	48.4
Middle East	13.2	15.3	15.1	15.1	14.3	14.5	14.8
North Africa	17.5	18.2	18.6	19.8	19.9	19.8	20.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	56.4	58.3	58.5	58.6	58.8	58.8	58.7
Turkey	31.2	20.7	21.0	21.0	21.6	22.3	24.0

Source: ILO Global Employment Trends, 2012, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2012, 94.

32 | Cf. "Türkiye İşgücüne Katılım Oranı", Turkish Statistics Office (TÜİK), Ankara, 2012, <http://tuik.gov.tr> (accessed 15 Feb 2013). According to 2010 figures, women's employment rate in rural areas (36.6 per cent) is larger than in urban areas (23.7 per cent). However, approx. 84 per cent of women in rural areas work in agriculture and 77 per cent of those as unpaid family labour.

33 | Ibid.



According to the TÜİK figures, the employment rate increased from 24 per cent in 2010 to 25.6 per cent in 2011. The unemployment rate during the same period was 11.3. (The equivalent figures in the E-27 were 58.2 per cent and 9.8 per cent respectively). The particular significance of unemployment among women in Turkey is illustrated by a report of the research institute of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK-AR) from July 2012. According to this report, women who have at least a secondary school qualification are affected by unemployment almost at twice the rate as men.<sup>34</sup> The number of unemployed women academics actually increased by 55,000 by June 2012, which equates to a jump in unemployment from 12.9 to 15.5 per cent. Tallying with these figures are the gender pay gap of 25 per cent and women's poverty rate among household members, which is around 19 per cent.<sup>35</sup>

Table 3

**Women's employment by status (in per cent)**

Year	In paid employment	Employer	Working on own account	Unpaid family labour
1990	21.6	0.4	8.7	69.2
2010	50.7	1.3	12.8	35.2

One of the main reasons for unemployment among women is poor access to childcare and care for the elderly. Only twelve per cent of working women are able to access care facilities for their children.<sup>36</sup> The proportion of children between three and six who are in preschool education is 44 per cent. In Turkey, only 0.5 per cent of the elderly (one in 191) are cared for in a nursing home.<sup>37</sup> The fact that some sections in Turkish politics have recognised the problem is illustrated by a campaign of the Ministry for Family

34 | "İşsizlik Verilerinde Tehlike Sinyalleri", Confederation of progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), <http://disk.org.tr/default.asp?Page=Content&ContentId=1430> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

35 | Cf. Sabancı, n. 1.

36 | TÜSİAD, n. 28.

37 | Ibid.

and Social Policies entitled "My mother's job is my future", which aims at creating childcare facilities in the industrial areas.<sup>38</sup>

The scope of the problems of gender inequality is also illustrated by women's working conditions as well as the quality of women's participation in economic activities. The greatest problem indicated by these figures is the low number of female entrepreneurs, who make up just 1.3 per cent. The second largest problem is the high number of women performing unpaid family labour. 35.2 per cent were working in these circumstances in 2010. There is some hope due to the fact that there seems to be a clear trend noticeable since 1990 towards paid employment and away from unpaid family labour. During the period from 1990 to 2010, the proportion of women in paid employment has more than doubled, rising from 21.6 to 50.7 per cent. At the same time, the proportion of unpaid family labour amongst women dropped from 69.2 to 35.2 per cent.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, the fact that the number of women performing unpaid family labour has decreased by one half and that of women gainfully employed has simultaneously doubled over the last 20 years has not brought about a commensurate increase in the proportion of women paying social security contributions. 58 per cent of employed women in Turkey work without being registered with any social insurance agency. This has a direct impact on women's poverty.

In view of the low numbers of women in employment and the great inequalities between women and men in the area of employment, the AKP-led government published a circular entitled "Increasing Women's employment and achieving equality of opportunity" in 2010. There is a study by the Women's Labour and Employment Initiative (Kadın Emegi ve İstihdamı Girişimi, KEİG) available on the practical implementation of this guideline. The report shows that the circular is entirely unknown in numerous state authorities

38 | TC Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı (Republic of Turkey, Ministry for Family and Social Policies), <http://www.aile.gov.tr/tr/html/4925/Organize-Sanayi-Bolgelerine-Kres> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

39 | İlyas Karabıyık, "Türkiye'de Çalışma Yaşamında Kadın İstihdamı", Marmara University Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, bulletin, Vol. 32, No. 1, 245-246.

**There has been a noticeable increase in projects to expand employment among women, but the indications for a successful implementation of these projects are not promising.**

and among many officials. Positive discrimination in favour of women and granting them special consideration in the workplace thus remain dependent on the individual initiative of the decision-makers. According to KEİG, there has been a noticeable increase in projects to expand employment among women, but the indications for a successful implementation of these projects are not promising. The projects, which are generally financed from state sources and EU subsidies, tend to lack effective coordination. Nor is there any monitoring of the impact of the projects once they have come to an end. For this reason, the expectations of what these projects can achieve in the medium and long term are modest.

Despite many problems women face in the world of work in Turkey there have been some notable encouraging developments. The proportion of female CEOs in Turkey, for instance, lies above that in Europe and the rest of the world. While women only occupy five per cent of the CEO posts worldwide, it is as much as twelve per cent in Turkey, which places Turkey in fifth place worldwide.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, 23 per cent of executives at board level, 22 per cent of division and department managers and 21 per cent of lower-level managers are women.<sup>41</sup>

## PROGRESS IN EDUCATION POLITICS

The creation of the 8-year primary schools, merging what was previously the primary and middle schools, represented an important advance in terms of girls' right to education. In the school year of 2001/2002, 92.4 per cent of all children attended school at the primary level, the figure for boys being 96.2 and for girls 88.4. By the school year of 2011/2012, the numbers had virtually balanced out at 98.77 per cent for boys and 98.56 for girls. In this area, one must acknowledge that the AKP governments of the last few legislative periods have achieved much in the field of education in collaboration with different social institutions.

40 | "Kadın CEO'lar dünyaya meydan okuyor", BUGÜN, 2 Jun 2011, <http://ekonomi.bugun.com.tr/kadin-ceo-lar-dunyaya-meydan-okuyor-157081-makalesi.aspx> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

41 | Survey among female executives (Kadın Yöneticiler Anketi), TİSK, Sep 2009, [http://tiskweb.com/isveren\\_sayfa.asp?yazi\\_id=2629&id=118](http://tiskweb.com/isveren_sayfa.asp?yazi_id=2629&id=118) (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

During the same period, the proportion of girls attending secondary school has increased by 20 per cent. In higher education, too, the proportion of women has more than doubled over the last ten years. 45 per cent of students enrolling at university for the academic year 2010/2011 were female.

However, when considering the subject of gender equality in education, school attendance and university student numbers only represent one side of the coin. The other side is the illiteracy rate. According to figures from the Ministry of Education, there were 3,825,644 persons living in Turkey in February 2012 who could neither read nor write. 81.6 per cent of these were women. In a report by the General Directorate on the Status of Women (KSGM) entitled "Status of Women in Turkey – as at December 2010", the proportion of illiterates in Turkey is around eight per cent of the population. This means that there are approximately 900,000 illiterate men to four million illiterate women; 2.5 million of these women are 50 or over. In the six to 24 age group, there are 220,000 girls and women in total who are classed as illiterate.

The educational statistics underscore the inequality women have been subject to in terms of development. In a country in which four million women cannot read or write, the proportion of postgraduate students is 40 per cent. In view of these figures, the most serious accusation raised by civic society is that a considerable proportion of girls were being pushed out of education at the secondary level. There are even concerns being voiced that the school reform which entered into effect in 2012 will exacerbate this development further. Because in the new system, the school age has been reduced to five, which means that pupils will be able to leave the regular school system from age 13 by participating in distance learning or evening classes. The concern is that girls reaching puberty will be taken out of school and shut away at home. This is the point where the debate about child brides begins.

**Pupils will be able to leave the regular school system from age 13 by participating in distance learning. The fear is that girls coming into puberty will be taken out of school and shut away at home.**

## DEBATE ABOUT "CHILD BRIDES" AND ABORTION

In Turkey, weddings involving underage persons are widespread. One of five weddings involves a person under age.<sup>42</sup> A study of the demography and health of the population conducted by Hacettepe University makes even more disturbing figures available. According to this study, the proportion of underage persons getting married in Turkey is 28 per cent. This is subject to regional variation, constituting 37 per cent in Central Anatolia and as much as 40 to 42 per cent in East and Southeast Anatolia.<sup>43</sup> Political countermeasures are urgently required.



Poster of the project against child brides of the Turkish Association "Flying Broom". | Source: © Flying Broom.

42 | TÜİK, n. 32; Cf. "Çocuk gelin sayısı artarsa' endişesi", *Milliyet*, 23 Oct 2012, <http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/-cocuk-gelin-sayisi-artarsa-endisesi/gundem/gundemdetay/23.10.2012/1615893/default.htm> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

43 | "Uçan Süpürge Erken Evlilikler/ Çocuk Gelinler Politika Notu" (early marriage / child brides report by Uçan Süpürge), 2012, <http://ucansupurge.org/veri/dosyalar/%C3%87ocuk%20Gelinler%20politika%20notu.doc> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

Abortion legislation is also a controversial topic of discussion in Turkey. This subject greatly concerned the Turkish public during the second half of 2012 because of several statements made by Prime Minister Erdoğan. There have been regulations on abortion in Turkey since the inception of the republic. In the penal code of 1926, abortion constituted a criminal offence. In Law No. 557, enacted in 1965, the strict prohibition was modified and curettage permitted if the mother's life was in jeopardy. In the 1970s, new discussions about abortion regulations were instigated in Turkey by developments elsewhere in the world. Concerns about women's health were being voiced (proper performance of abortions, hygienic conditions and state control), which in turn brought about demands for the abortion ban to be lifted. On 14 April 1983, a law entered into effect which meant that an abortion performed within the first ten weeks of a pregnancy would no longer be subject to criminal prosecution.

Prime Minister Erdoğan voiced his criticism of abortions and caesareans for the first time on 25 May 2012 and confirmed his opinion at the 3<sup>rd</sup> regular women's convention of his party on 27 May. Shortly afterwards, it became known that preparations were being made for a draft bill that envisaged the period for legal abortions to be cut from ten to four weeks, thereby practically prohibiting abortion. But vociferous protests by civil society organisations and women's rights advocates resulted in this legislative initiative being withdrawn.

However, according to the platform "Abortion is a right, it is up to the woman to decide",<sup>44</sup> it is virtually impossible in Istanbul today to find a state hospital that will perform abortions, and the number of privately funded clinics that offer abortions is apparently also declining rapidly.<sup>45</sup>

**According to women's organisations it is virtually impossible in Istanbul today to find a state hospital that will perform abortions. The number of privately funded clinics that offer abortions is apparently also declining rapidly.**

Because of the widespread protests against the attempts to reduce the period for legal abortions, the government's legislative initiative has changed its approach. A commission

44 | Kürtaj haktır, karar kadınların, <http://kurtajhaktir.com/anasayfa> (accessed 8 Feb 2013); Interview mit Selin Dağıtlanlı: Nacide Berber, "Kadınlar ,Kürtaj Yasası' nın Takipçisi", bianet, 25 Nov 2012, <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplumsal-cinsiyet/142307> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

45 | Ibid.

made up of representatives from the Ministry of Health and the Ministry for Family and Social Policies has apparently drawn up a new bill. The aim of the new legislation is said to be “making abortions possible and safer and curtailing their numbers”. According to these proposals, the ten week period would remain untouched, but pregnant women or prospective parents would have to undergo compulsory counselling before terminating a pregnancy. In addition, a “cooling-off” period of two to four days is envisaged. Rather than making abortion a virtually unattainable alternative, the plan apparently is to extend statutory paid maternity leave from eight weeks to six months. However, this draft bill has not yet been presented to parliament.<sup>46</sup>

### VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

As is the case in the rest of the world, domestic violence makes up a large proportion of violence against women in Turkey as well. The most reliable data on this subject comes from the “National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey” by the Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies in Ankara (2008). Accord-

**Throughout the country, 39 per cent of married women suffer physical violence. 73 per cent of women who are divorced or separated report physical and 44 per cent sexual violence.**

ing to this study, 39 per cent of married women throughout the country suffer physical violence, which frequently goes hand in hand with sexual violence.<sup>47</sup> The figures are particularly disturbing for women who are divorced or separated and who report having experienced physical or sexual abuse; 73 per cent of this group report physical and 44 per cent sexual violence.

46 | “Kürtaj yasaşının ayrıntıları belli oldu”, internethaber, 18 Jul 2012, <http://internethaber.com/kurtaj-yasasi-kurtj-tasarisi-recep-akdag-ensest-iliskiler-siniri-ertesi-gun-hapi-443748h.htm> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

47 | Approx. 20 per cent of women and five to ten per cent of men worldwide report having suffered sexual abuse as children. In addition, between 0.3 per cent and 11.5 per cent of women worldwide report having been exposed to sexual abuse by a stranger at some time. Cf. “Türkiye’de Kadına Yönelik Şiddet”, USAK, USAK report No. 12-01, Ankara, 8 Mar 2011, <http://www.usak.org.tr/rapor.asp?id=143> (accessed 25 Feb 2013). It follows that sexual abuse to a large extent takes place within the family. Rape crisis centres, which play a very important role in combating sexual abuse and rape, were first set up in Australia in 1976 and in the UK in 1977. In Turkey, there are still no such institutions in existence. Cf. interview with Aksu Bora: “Cinsel Şiddetle Mücadelede Nereye Geldik”, bianet, 12 Sep 2009, <http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/117024> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

If you examine the frequency of acts of violence by region, Northeast Anatolia stands out most strongly at 57.1 per cent. At 26.2 per cent, the western area of Marmara is the region with the lowest rate of violence against women in Turkey. Violence against women is most noticeable in the cities. The proportion of women living in urban areas who suffer physical violence is 42 per cent higher than that of women living in rural areas. In view of this distribution, one can assume a certain impact of the continuing urbanisation and rural exodus on the prevalence of violence against women.

Violence can affect women of all levels of education. However, the frequency of violence against women decreases clearly as the level of education rises. According to the findings of a study conducted in 2007 entitled "Study on Violence against Women in Turkey",<sup>48</sup> women who contribute more than their husband to the household income are twice as likely to suffer domestic violence. Two out of three women in such an income scenario suffer violence at the hands of their partner. Although violence against women is thus a problem that is common to all social strata, the figures show that a large proportion of the women experiencing violence (47 per cent) come from the lower income brackets. The numbers for sexual violence also increase in reverse proportion to rising income.

The general figures on violence against women must be seen in connection with data on the problems relating to a lack of awareness.

Women who suffer this type of violence often don't have any concept of violence against women being a social problem. In Turkey, half the women suffering violence at the most disclose the fact to someone within their immediate environment. 92 per cent of women keep silent about the violence they have suffered and don't inform the authorities.<sup>49</sup>

**Women who suffer domestic violence often don't have any concept of violence against women being a social problem.**

The data on the numbers of murdered women published by the Ministry of Justice in August 2010 also give cause for concern. These cases have increased considerably in the period from 2002 to 2009. While the number of murdered

48 | Cf. Altınay and Arat, n. 17.

49 | Cf. USAK, n. 47.



women was 66 back in 2002, the figure went up to 1,011, 806 and 953 in the three years from 2007 to 2009.<sup>50</sup> In 88 per cent of the cases the perpetrator was known to the murdered woman. The proportion of women who were killed by their husband or former husband rose by 193 per cent. Three women were killed following a decision by a family council. In this context, honour killings represent an important aspect.<sup>51</sup> A large proportion of these murders are perpetrated with the intention of concealing preceding sexual violence. A KAMER study shows that 63 per cent of women in danger of an "honour killing" have experienced sexual violence. KAMER stresses in this context that all suicides by women should be considered with reservations.

The Turkish state bases its strategy to combat violence against women on action plans, which are drawn up in coordination with the General Directorate on the Status of Women (KSGM). According to the action plan for the period from 2007 to 2009, various protocols were signed by the Ministry for Women's and Family Policies and the departmental ministries about training for ministry personnel,

**In line with the action plan for 2012-2015, new protocols were signed. One of these is an agreement for the creation of new employment opportunities for women who have become victims of violence.**

based on which joint efforts were made by the Authority for Religious Affairs, the General Staff of the Armed Forces, the Police High Command and the Ministry of Justice. Training was thus provided to 71,000 police personnel, 65,000 healthcare workers, 326 prosecutors and judges and 17,000 religious officials. In line with the action plan for 2012-2015, new protocols were signed. One of these is a signed agreement with the Ministry for Work and Social Security for the creation of new employment opportunities for women who have become victims of violence.

Some of the most important mechanisms for the protection and support of female victims of violence are women's refuges and advisory services. In 2011, there were a total of 51 women's refuges attached to the Ministry for Family and Social Policies. In addition, there are 24 women's refuges

50 | "Kadın Cinayetleri 14 Kat Arttı", bianet, 15 Sep 2011, <http://bianet.org/bianet/kadin/132742> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

51 | The unpublished study of the platform "We Will Stop Women's Murders" about the killing of women in Turkey in the period from 2008 to 2011.

run independently by local administrations and three run by a private legal advice organisation. Advisory services for women who have become victims of violence or require assistance are offered by numerous organisations, such as ministries, private institutions, local authorities and legal chambers.

The efforts that have been made in Turkey on the part of the state and private organisations to stop violence against women have resulted in a shift in awareness and attitude amongst women. The number of women who have sought protection and shelter from the state has clearly risen since the new law on the "Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence against Women" entered into effect on 8 March 2012. Izmir tops the list amongst the large cities. Here, 4,650 women have sought protection and shelter from state institutions in the last eight months.<sup>52</sup> The police headquarters in Izmir has set up a special unit for women who have become victims of violence.

## CONCLUSION

On the *Global Gender Gap Index 2012* of the World Economic Forum (WEF), Turkey is ranked 124<sup>th</sup> of the 135 states listed. Data from the areas of politics, business, education and family life indicate the reasons for this poor performance. There is a noticeable gulf between the de jure and the de facto situation regarding gender equality in Turkey.<sup>53</sup> However, there is adequate potential in Turkey for rapid advances in the area of gender equality. Women were actually entitled to take high office before this was possible in many Western countries.<sup>54</sup> Striking is the disparity in parallel developments. While roughly every fourth woman in Turkey is still illiterate, one of four professors at

52 | Cf. Hasan Çilingir, "Kadına Şiddet Sıralamasında İzmir Birinci, Ankara İkinci", *Zaman*, 31 Oct 2012, [http://zaman.com.tr/\\_2009234.html](http://zaman.com.tr/_2009234.html) (accessed 5 Feb 2012).

53 | Serap Çileli, Ursula Männle, Angelika Niebler and Hans Peter Raddatz, "Women in Turkey – between legal equality and patriarchal tradition", *Politische Studien*, 401, Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung, 2005, <http://hss.de/downloads/PolStudien401.pdf> (accessed 15 Feb 2013).

54 | According to figures from February 2012, 14.2 per cent of the members of the constitutional court and 16.6 per cent of heads of department were women. Cf. KADER, n. 22.

Turkish universities is female.<sup>55</sup> The situation is similar in the workplace, where 39 per cent of all women contributing to the gross domestic product work as “unpaid family labour” while the proportion of women working in highly qualified jobs in law, medicine and other academic fields is almost 40 per cent.<sup>56</sup> With a proportion of women in top managerial positions of twelve per cent, Turkey is hot on the heels of Finland, the leader in the worldwide ranking.

A high economic standard, political institutions based on democratic principles, a legal infrastructure created through the tradition of a secular state with a constructive legal system and modern standards of gender equality – all these goals might actually be easier for Turkey to achieve than for many other states.<sup>57</sup> In this context, the existence of a women’s movement, which is to be taken seriously and which continues raising its voice in admonition and succeeds in making itself heard, is a further source of hope for Turkey. The Turkish women’s rights organisations have proved their capability through concrete achievements, particularly in the period since 2000, during which the changes in the social and political spheres in Turkey have gained momentum. The independent women’s movement in Turkey has sufficient substance to be able to act as a contact in discussions with political actors from within the country and abroad. At the same time, it can work towards reducing violence against women and help to make gender equality in Turkey reality.

55 | There are two women among the 15 members of the Higher Education Authority. According to figures from the Higher Education Authority, 27.6 per cent of professorships and 41 per cent of academic posts had been awarded to women in the period 2010-2011. KADER, n. 22.

56 | 37 per cent of all lawyers were women in 2010, for instance. “Number of Lawyers According to Bar Associations”, Türkiye Barolar Birliği, 31 Dec 2010, <http://www.barobirlik.org.tr/Detay.aspx?Tip=ENGHaber&ID=9360> (accessed 25 Feb 2013).

57 | Cf. Acar, n. 10.