

# **A REPORT ON DOCTORATE PROGRAMMES IN TURKEY**

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## **Part I:**

### **1. History (through changes in law, policies and structural frameworks etc):**

With “the Law on Unification of Education”, which was introduced on March 3, 1924, the dual structure of education (i.e. secular and religious education systems) was brought to an end. This law has remained same for a long period of the time. Here the education has been described as a social asset that is important for the national development and for growing new educated citizens. So, at that time education had socio-political and economic value for building the new nation state. In the 1960s, the educational planning programs were carried out within or in integration with the development plans, active use of the resources reserved for education was foreseen. Therefore, economic aspect of the education has expanded.

Historically, all the legislative regulations, except the university law enacted in 1946, have been done through and after the Military Coups in Turkey. In parallel to this historical continuity, one of the most fundamental changes in history of higher education in Turkey was put into practice after the 1980 military coup. Expected changes in higher education were enacted with the new Higher Education Law (No. 2547), that came into being following 1980 military coup d'état. This new law not only privatised but also centralised the higher education system with the aim of disciplining universities and transforming them into entrepreneurial universities. In 1981, the administration of higher education (HE) in Turkey was comprehensively rebuilt with all higher education institutions tied to the Council of Higher Education. The Council of Higher Education (CoHE) was established to administer all universities and to keep them under the state control. Since 1984 with the amendment of related law, along with the state universities, so called non-profit foundation universities (private universities) started to be established. Hence, HE turned into a dual system or structure and began to be composed of a two-tier structure: state (public) universities and so-called non-profit foundation (private) universities.

The emergence of this neoliberal conception of HE can also be traced in the Public Administration Reform (PAR) packet. PAR, with a set of amendments and regulations, was brought to the agenda in the late 1990s. The most important in the PAR packet was the Public Administration Basic Law Draft that was enacted in 2003 in the first year of the AKP's government. In the late 1990s, the Bologna Process has been another important opportunity for the government for reconstruction of HE through its internationalization. In this process “entrepreneur university” as a new model for the universities in Turkey was expanded. The seeds of this model were planted in 1995 through the work into build Technology Development Zones's (TDZ) which gained legal status in 2001. However, in any of these reform attempts, the centralized structure of higher education system in Turkey has been questioned and changed. Also, the last CoHE's (YÖK) laws are very important. Although, the last one was presented as the “silent revolution in higher education”, it was a kind of further progress towards a centralised/depoliticised but economically productive neoliberal/authoritarian HE system in Turkey.

Historically, attempts to depoliticize universities, reintegrate them into state authority and put them in the service of production relations have never been new to the Turkish Higher Education system. It was the main aim of the military regime and following new right regimes after the 1981 Coup for instance. But recently Turkey faced with a new turn in this sense. The authoritarian developments have been fascinatingly strong and visible under the AKP rule in the last few years. Obviously, this has some historical background which has been briefly touched upon above. Everything that had been mentioned above actually prepared appropriate conditions for such authoritarian interventions to universities in the late 2000s. In other words, authoritarian conventions that exist in Turkey has never been shaken by neoliberal governments of the last three decades which made the universities open to centralized interventions from above. In fact, all of them made use of this centralised systems in transforming the universities into economically productive unites. While critical and reflexive thinking have been vanishing from universities, the trade union in the field of Higher Education and Education were losing their weight. Academy institutionally have been increasingly centralized and forced to get under the central authority of the state and the government. If so, despite some good developments like increasing number of scholars, academics, universities, university students, international interactions, international researches, etc., the general picture of HE in Turkey has not been very positive. So that, in the age of internationalisation and globalisation, academic on the one hand began to find more active and interactive academic spaces open to critical, elf reflective thinking and scientific quality, one the other hand there had been widening disciplinary measures and regressive attempts to control such developments and attempts to decrease the qualities of Higher Education in Turkey. Therefore, academics, who have a critical perspective and have had a chance to deepen their critiques through and together with existing international networks, understood that they have not been working in a very protected environment and under the roof of strong institutional settings particularly after the authoritarian interventions started in 2016. The related statistics and data on the recent authoritarian attempts of the government and official institutions to increase the control over universities cannot be followed through existing official statistic. It requires to be examined not through official documents, but through documents of the critical institutions such as “Eğitim Sen” and “BAK”.

<https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/English>

[http://egitimsen.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/%C4%B0dari-ve-Teknik-Personel-%C3%87a1%C4%B1%C5%9Ftay%C4%B1-Rapor\\_bask%C4%B1.pdf](http://egitimsen.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/%C4%B0dari-ve-Teknik-Personel-%C3%87a1%C4%B1%C5%9Ftay%C4%B1-Rapor_bask%C4%B1.pdf)

<http://egitimsen.org.tr/ohal-sonrasi-turkiyede-universiteler-raporu/>

Here you can find figures on the number of discarded instructors/scholars and the number of departments/faculties /universities closed.

On the other hand, despite all these drawbacks, as can be seen from the following data, higher education in Turkey has been continuously expanding. In parallel, since 2009 in particular, the number of students in graduate and doctorate programs has generally increased steadily each year. According to Günay, in the last decade, the highest increase in the number of students in both master's and doctoral degrees occurred in 2015. There are several reasons for this. One is economic dynamic. It is an important motivation to train qualified personnel who can serve the R & D researches needed in production processes. Under the conditions of international competition, the need for qualified workers increases. Another important factor is the rapid increase in the number of universities in Turkey over the last decade. This numerical increase also increased the need for academics or faculty members. In addition, there has been an

increase in the number of faculty members in order to meet certain standards in doctoral programs. Finally, graduate students are not only coming from Turkey but also from abroad. These international students arrive to Turkey from abroad also for doctoral education. As you can see in the date, 2018 is the year of serious recession which can be explained by the political developments described above.

Despite these indicators which show steady increases in the number of universities and doctorate programs/students until the last year, the shortages of researchers and faculty members have not been solved, and it can be foreseen that after 2018, this problem will be deepened due to the reasons mentioned above. As indicated by many researchers to have worked on this subject, problem is not only quantity but also quality of universities and doctorate programs in Turkey. In other words, to increase the quality of existing PhD programs or to increase the number of PhD programs which are qualified enough is the main problem that requires to be address, not only the number of programs. Educators and training units dismissed or rendered dysfunctional as a result of the political pressures mentioned above also mean the elimination of the accumulation of long-term labour in years. This results in the recruitment of qualified staff and the activation of unqualified programs in order to rapidly renew this loss. It is not easy for faculty members who are not dismissed from their jobs to carry out their works under the current conditions. Working under self-censorship and pressure also increases unhappiness and anxiety of existing scholars.

On the other hand, despite the significant increase in R & D and innovation resources allocated in Turkey in recent years, the share of R & D expenditures in GDP (0.94%) 1 is not yet at the desired level. In order to reach this target, the total number of researchers and the number of private sector researchers should increase in parallel with R & D expenditures. In this context, the target of increasing the number of researchers in our country to 300,000 in 2023 has been determined. However, as of 2016, the number of researchers in our country is approximately 100,000. When we compare with countries like China, Japan and Germany, it is seen that our country is far behind in terms of the number of researchers. Therefore, there is a serious lack of researchers in our country. In addition, this gap is deeper as there is no increase in parallel with the growth in higher education in general. Apart from all these, serious problems related to the quality of doctoral education should be underlined once again.

**2. Size and Demography of Doctorate Pool:** The main source of statistics used here is <https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

Due to the reasons explained above, it is important to address not only statistics specifically on Doktorate programs in Turkey but also some data concerning Higher Education System in Turkey. The two are quite related. For instance the expansion of universities all over Turkey is increasing the demand for qualified academic staff. According to the statistics given fort he 2016-2017 year of education, the number of universities is 183 in Turkey. Despite a stagnation in 2017-2018, the increas is continues. Today the number of universities reaches to 207. This situation enlarges the need for qualified personel with PhD degrees.

### Number of Universities in Turkey

Year	State	Foundation/Private	Foundation/ Vocational High School (MYO)	Toplam
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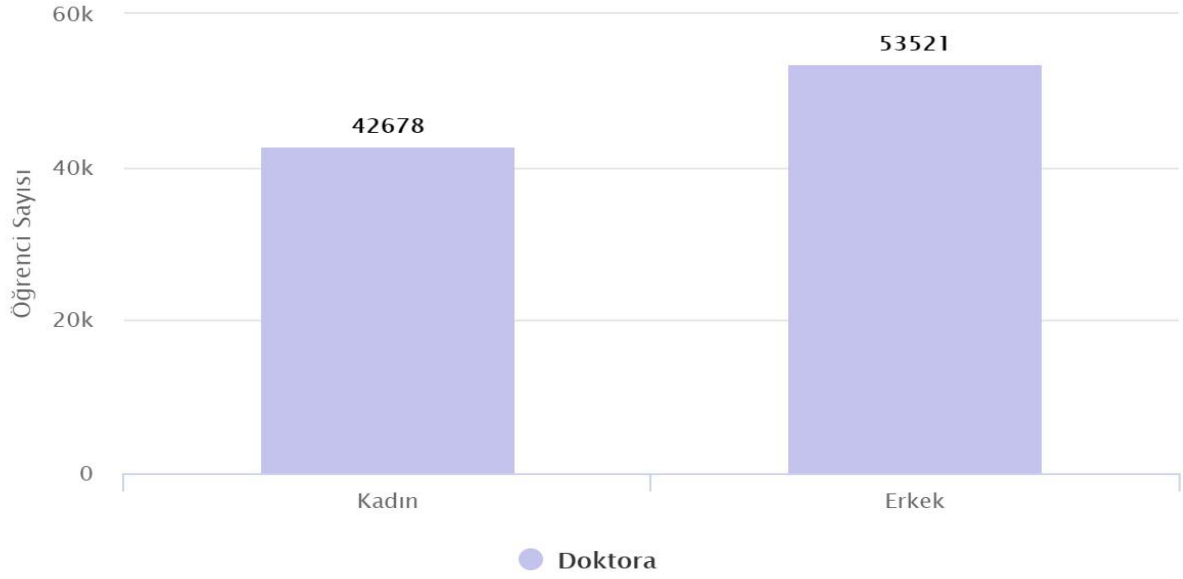
2019-2018	129	73	5	207
2018-2017	112	69	5	186

### Number of PhD Programs in Turkey

Year	State Universities	Foundation/Private Universities	Foundation Vocational Training Schools	Toplam
2018-2019	4989	507	0	5496
2017-2018	4827	468	0	5295

### The Number of PhD Students Öğretim Düzeyine Göre Öğrenci Sayısı

2018–2019 Yükseköğretim İstatistikleri



Doktora: PhD ; Kadın: Female; Erkek: Male

### Tablo: Number of students registered in PhD programs

Year	F	M	T
2016-2017	53600	37667	91267
2015-2016	35072	50392	86094
2014-2015	32688	45535	78223
2013-2014	28890	38267	67157

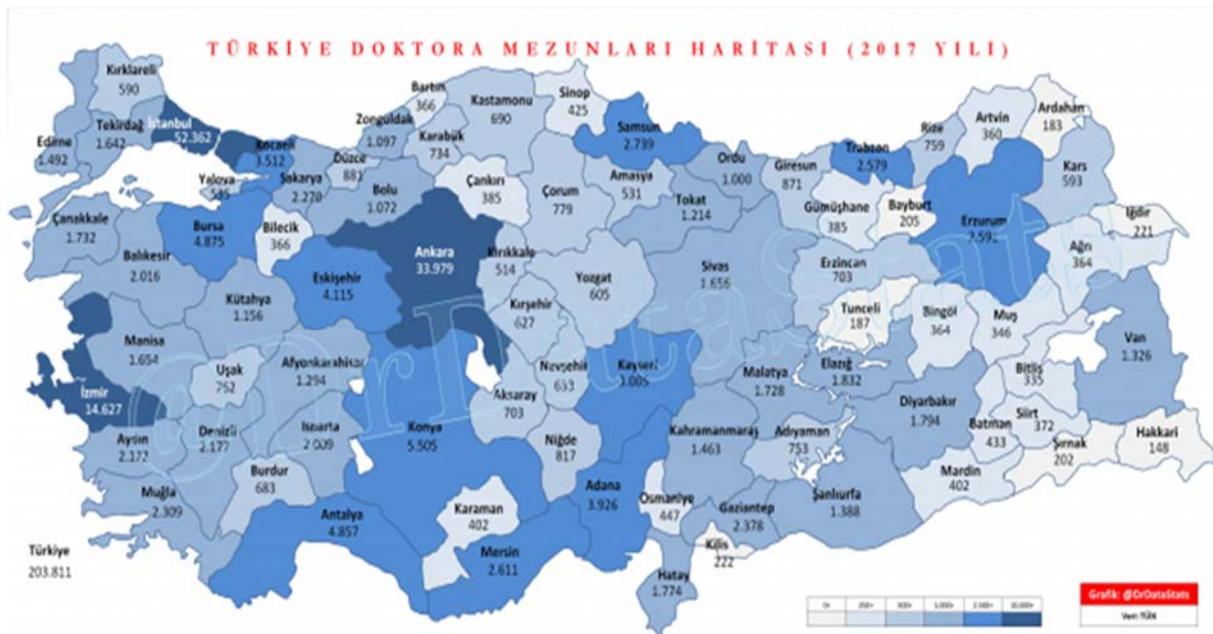
<https://istatistik.yok.gov.tr/>

## Number of Students in PhD Programs in Turkey in the last two Education Years

Year	State Universities	Foundation/Private Universities	Foundation Vocational Training Schools	Total
2018-2019	4989	507	0	5496
2017-2018	4827	468	0	5295

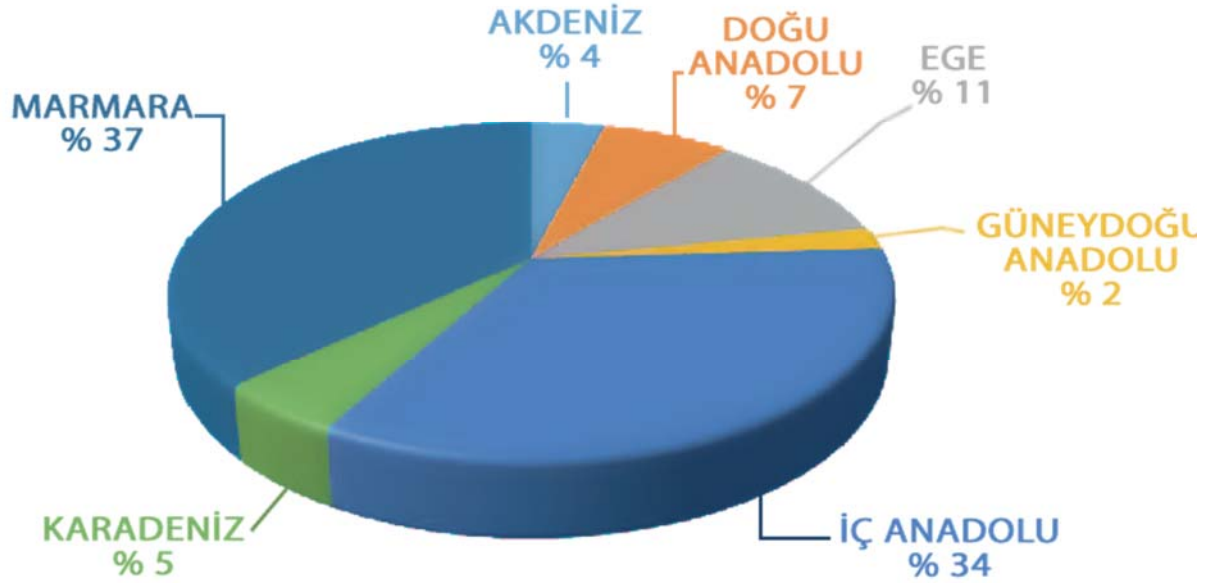
According to Günay in Turkey the highest number of graduate students Institutes are as follows: Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Medical Sciences, Educational Sciences and Institutes of Art

## MAP OF Students graduated from PHD programmes in Turkey (in 2017)



Official Statistics are providing us an opportunity to look at the situation in 2016 in Turkey more microscopically.

## DOKTORA ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN BÖLGELERE GÖRE DAĞILIMI



### Regional Distribution of PhD Students in 2016

**MARMARA:** MARMARA; **AKDENİZ:** MEDITERENIAN; **DOĞU ANADOLU:** EASTERN ANATOLIA;

**EGE:** EGIAN; **GÜNEYDOĞU ANADOLU:** SOUTH EASTERN ANATOLIA; **İÇ ANADOLU:** CENTRAL ANATOLIA

## PART II:

### 1. General Structure of Doctorate Programs

There are two main doctorate programs in Turkey: PhD and Doctorate in Art.

There are two main actors who are able to provide doctorate degrees: State Universities and Foundation Universities. In Turkey there is no other institutions (research institutions or so) who are allowed to run PhD programs and provide doktorate degrees.

Applying and Being Enrolled to a PhD Program:

All doctoral programs, regardless of their fields, are organized within the framework of the Graduate Education and Training Regulation by the Council of Higher Education published in the Official Gazette dated 01.07.2007 and numbered 22683 in Turkey. In accordance with this, for instance in the Ankara University (State University) to be able to accepted into a doktorate program, the necessary requirements are: • to have a Master's Degree • Average Bachelor's Degree (2.5 points); Master's Degree (3.0 points) • ALES (55 points) • ÜDS (60 points) or equivalent language score • Interview • Reference letter and purpose composition if requested (Optional) (Letter of intent, background and reference letter are not mandatory). The critical point here is the impact of a centralized exam, such as ALES, and an oral exam in terms of decision-making for an application of a student. While a central examination such as ALES

prevents universities and departments from making their own decisions and conducting their own preferences, oral examination provides a limited opportunity to them for doing so. On the other hand, such oral examinations open up the basis for nepotism and patronage relations among students and university authorities without any change in centralised institutional settings and with no check and balance mechanisms. These are creating deep problems in every stages of doctoral education. These problems are touched below.

#### PhD-structure and Completing a PhD Degree:

Partly due to Turkey's candidacy for EU membership, Turkish degrees follow the Bologna Process. Therefore, doctoral programmes in Turkey are broadly similar to other European PhD programmes. However, Turkish PhDs typically follow a very structured process. This includes several courses, seminars and exams to a total of 240 ECTS credits. There may also be a preparatory class at the beginning of your programme. Generally speaking, in a PhD program, doctorate courses are offered for the first two years. At the end of these two years, the **proficiency exam**<sup>1</sup> takes place. Those who are successful in this exam earn the right to continue their doctorate studies and begin their dissertation. The subject of PhD thesis and the name of **supervisor**<sup>2</sup> are determined at this stage. The level of initiative and involvement of PhD candidates into decision making processes varies from university to university or from specific programs to programs. Particularly in state universities the level can be decreasing radically. In some universities, a candidate might have no right to choose even her/his supervisor in some others they have right to make their own choices with the approval of the chosen supervisor. After successfully completing the proficiency exam and defending the purpose of your research, one can begin her/his PhD proper. During the doctorate she/he will be regularly assessed every six months by a **follow-up committee**. This functions as a regular evaluation of your progress, ensuring your PhD is on track. The committee will examine your current studies, results, methodology and the working plan for your research through a submitted report. The work on a PhD dissertation continues in the following 2 years. In this process, the **follow-up committee** meets at regular basis in order to monitor the progress of the doctoral study. Once a candidate has completed her/his research, her/his final PhD thesis should be assessed by a **dissertation jury**. This is similar to the viva voce exam in the UK, but it takes the form of a public thesis defence. **This final jury** has the authority to request the correction of the thesis (by defining a certain period of time) or to pass it without any correction or to find it unsuccessful and fail it.

Foundation Universities (FUs) are not completely autonomous in their research activities and curriculums. The Higher Education Act requires all FUs to be subject to the same regulations as public universities in terms of their structural organization. Although this general structure, specific content of the program might vary between universities and programmes, but all taught components must be completed to be awarded with PhD. For instance the Sabancı University, which is a Foundation University, application to a PhD program involves a combination of on-line application and document preparation. An applicant should have two recommendation

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<sup>1</sup> Proficiency exam: Proficiency exam Firstly, you will be examined through the proficiency exam at the early stages of your doctorate. This is similar to the MPhil to PhD upgrade in the UK. A proficiency committee will examine your thesis proposal through two written assessments and one oral assessments. The proficiency committee also sets up an exam jury committee, who organise and evaluate various exams during the remainder of your doctoral training; the results of these exams will also be considered by the proficiency committee.

<sup>2</sup> Supervision: In Turkey, a candidate's doctoral development and thesis is overseen by various supervision committees. Her/his main thesis supervisor becomes a member of most of these committees. They must be an academic lecturer with expertise in the related research area and are appointed within the first year of the candidates' PhD. One may have a second supervisor, who can also be a member of these committees.

letters. She or he also need to have to take GMAT/GRE or TOEFL tests<sup>3</sup> and is asked about her/his scores in the application form. For admission to a PhD program, all prospective students must provide proof of the following tests: •A minimum total score of 600 from GMAT or a minimum score of 730 from GRE old / 157 from GRE new and • A minimum score of 88 (IBT) from TOEFL. Proof of English proficiency (TOEFL) and GMAT / GRE scores are required. Any of the following science test results baring the min. scores and which are within the validity period as indicated here: TOEFL (IBT) KPDS / UDS / YDS 88 – 73. It is also required to write a statement of purpose which would include personal and professional objectives of the applicant and what motivates her/him to seek the degree in Sabancı in the choosen specific program. In short, the required application package should include the following items: Signed on-line application affidavit; the statement of purpose; detailed resume including specific details on work experience (if available); A copy of her/his undergraduate diploma; Transcripts from all the schools attended at undergraduate and graduate levels; Official scores from TOEFL and GMAT/GRE.

Again for completing a PhD program at the Sabancı University requirements are more or less same with those for PhD programs in state universities. These are as follows: PhD program consists of 7 credit-courses that totals to a minimum of 21 credits for students admitted with master's degree. Furthermore, PhD program consists of at least 14 credit-courses with 42 credits, doctoral qualifying exam, thesis proposal and thesis for students admitted with bachelor's degree. Students admitted with master's degree should complete the courses in maximum 4 semesters and the program should be completed in maximum 8 semesters. Students admitted with bachelor's degree should complete the courses in maximum 6 semesters and the program should be completed in maximum 10 semesters. If the Ph.D. students, admitted with master's degree who can not complete their thesis in 8 semesters, can take 4 additional semester. If the Ph.D. students, admitted with bachelor's degree who cannot complete thesis in 10 semesters can take 4 additional semesters, too. These students must have been successful in PhD Qualifying Exam and their thesis proposal must have been accepted. (See file:///C:/Users/HP/Desktop/Doktoral%20Eğitim/application\_procedure-phd%20(1).pdf)

## **2. Funding Mechanisms:**

Because PhD tuition fees at Turkish public universities are relatively low, in these universities doctoral funding is typically offered to Turkish nationals or students from more economically disadvantaged countries. However PhD programs in foundation universities requires generally a large amount of fees. This is because, despite the CoHE's strict regulation in the fields of academic, administrative, and educational matters, FUs enjoy greater autonomy with regard to financial issues (CoHE 2007). Although the amount of state subsidies allocated to a FU is determined by a number of criteria defined by the CoHE, the two major income sources of FUs, namely contributions from the foundation and tuition fees, are not subject to any regulation by the CoHE.

For non-foreign students, there are some individual grants or fellowships provided by the Foundation University which you are aiming to study in. After being evaluated in respect to the applicant's success in her/his undergraduate study and in other grades that are required to have

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<sup>3</sup> Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT): This test is administered worldwide by GMAC. For more information, see <http://www.mba.com/mba/TaketheGMAT> or Graduate Record Examinations (GRE): This test is administered worldwide by ETS. For more information, see <http://www.ets.org/gre/> and Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL): This test is administered worldwide by ETS. For more information, see <http://www.bilmerk.com> or <http://www.ets.org/toefl>



(for instance English or other foreign language degree etc), the applicant might get this grand. The tuition fees for English-taught PhD programmes at Turkish public universities are typically being around €500-800 per year for international students. Fees are lower for Turkish citizens and for courses taught in Turkish. Bear in mind that exact amounts can vary somewhat depending on your university and doctoral programme. Tuition fees at private universities are significantly higher – around €5,250-17,500 per year. However, there are more funding options available at these institutions.

100/2000 YÖK PhD Scholarship (YÖK Doktora Burs Programı): It is stated that the program was created with the aim of eliminating the problem of lack in qualified people or human resources with doctorate diploma. It is a state scholarship granted for 1 year.

ÖYP is a process starting from graduate education to the end of doctorate. In fact, the ÖYP aims to train faculty members with a model obtained by blending the national and international graduate education programs. In this process, students are offered language training courses or programmes at home and abroad and the opportunity of studying abroad for one year during their MA or PhD studies<sup>4</sup>. It is stated in the reports prepared by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) that higher education system shows a shortage of faculty members, and the need for qualified faculty members emerges with the opening of many higher education institutions and therefore the need to expand the master's, doctorate and post-doctoral education programs<sup>5</sup>. At the website of the Middle East Technical University, it is stated that ÖYP was established in order to train academicians for smaller universities. To increase the capacity of science and technology development capacities of universities is also one of the most significant aims of the model. Programme was conducted with the cooperation of State Planning Organization and METU until 2010. Starting from 2010, the programme has been run by Higher Education Council and the scope of the programme has been widened. For this reason, at the end of the program, PhD candidates are appointed as research assistants to various universities. ÖYP Research Assistantship Process: 1- Applications and requirements for ÖYP are announced on [www.yok.gov.tr](http://www.yok.gov.tr). Applicants are ranked with respect to their ÖYP scores and assigned to universities through a central system. 2- The ones that became ÖYP Research Assistants apply to universities where they plan to have their Graduate and Doctoral educations via [www.yok.gov.tr](http://www.yok.gov.tr). The ones that plan to have their educations at METU for instance should follow the announcements on [www.oyp.metu.edu.tr](http://www.oyp.metu.edu.tr) 3- ÖYP Research Assistants that are admitted to the graduate programmes at METU can apply to their universities for their temporarily assignment to METU as Research Assistants during their Graduate and Doctoral Education. After finishing their studies they have to start working in their original appointed universities as research assistants and go on with their academic carriers there.

There is no requirement for an interview or a written exam to receive the ÖYP scholarship. Ales 50% + Undergraduate Grade Point Average 35% + Language Score, if any, 15% is collected and placement is made according to the highest score. The scholarship is awarded for a maximum of six years, including 2 years master's degree and 4 years doctorate. The person

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<sup>4</sup> See "Öğretim Üyesi Yetiştirme Programları (ÖYP) Hakkında Bilgi Notu Ekim 2009, DPT ("Information Note on Faculty Training Programs (ÖYP) October 2009, Institute of State Planning (ISP))

<sup>5</sup> See "Türk Yükseköğretiminin Bugünkü Durumu", Kasım 2005, YÖK.

whose training is completed is obliged to perform compulsory service for another six years at the place of appointment.

TUBITAK (the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) is another important instated which has a scholarship program for PhD students. This is a national scholarship to offer research fellowships, but mostly for Turkish PhD Students.

In addition to all these specific grants, one should also mention special fellowships provided by firms, foundations and associations. There are also fellowships offered by universities. One can also apply to special positions announced by universities in their faculties and programmes. Such assistantship positions are various. Teaching/Research Assistantship (Öğretim Asistanlığı); Administrative Assistantship (Yönetim Asistanlığı), project asistanship gibi farklı türleri vardır. For being able to be appointed into these positions you may be expected to fulfil various requirements and be able to pass an exam (oral and/or written).

For Foreign Students: Some of the above-mentioned scholarships are also open to foreign students. There are also various scholarships funded through the Turkish government, aimed at students from Central Asia, Africa, the Middle East and eastern Europe (See below). Furthermore, individual universities often offer their own merit scholarships and grants for international PhD students.

### Part III: Trends

**International Collaboration:** The Universities in Turkey are in interactive relations with universities abroad through various exchange programs called Farabi, Mevlana, Erasmus, projects-based International Exchange Programme ([file:///C:/Users/HP/Desktop/Doktora%20Eğitim/Yuksekokretimde\\_Uluslararasılaşma\\_Strateji\\_Belgesi\\_2018\\_2022.pdf](file:///C:/Users/HP/Desktop/Doktora%20Eğitim/Yuksekokretimde_Uluslararasılaşma_Strateji_Belgesi_2018_2022.pdf))

Here I will focus only on the Project-based International Exchange Programme. This program has been started with the aim of promoting and strengthening the cooperation between higher education institutions in accordance with the purpose of improving quality in the 2016-2017 Academic Year with the support of the Council of Higher Education (CoHE). It is open to the projects within the scope of fields mentioned in the call by the CoHE and requires both student and academic staff exchange<sup>6</sup>.

TUBİTAK is also important grant providing institution through which students can have a PhD degree abroad or at least visit another country for a period of time on the basis of her/his PhD project. There might be some scholars/grants which are provided by the University or other institutes. There are also Erasmus programs for academics as well as graduate students.

Also, Turkey is accepting applications of international students around the world. *Türkiye Scholarship program* is a government-funded, competitive scholarship program, awarded to outstanding students to pursue full-time or short-term program at the top universities in Turkey. As of now, only international students interested to apply for bachelor, masters or Ph.D. are eligible to apply for the Turkey Scholarships. The reason for this grant is to improve mutual relations and understandings with other countries. Just like most of the other scholarship programs, the *Turkey Scholarship program* also provides a whole range of benefits to its

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<sup>6</sup> See [http://www.mevlana.yildiz.edu.tr/media/files/project%20based%20international%20exchange\(1\).pdf](http://www.mevlana.yildiz.edu.tr/media/files/project%20based%20international%20exchange(1).pdf)

students. Some of the best advantages of the program are **Free Accommodation, No tuition fees, Health expense** (i.e. the health expenses of all the students are covered by public health insurance), **Travel Expenses** (i.e. The *Turkey Scholarships program* even pays for the travel expenses of the students) In addition to that there is also Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) – funds PhD research programmes in Sustainability Science for students in IsDB member countries and Muslim communities.

## 2. Equal Opportunities:

The law on Higher Education 2547, which established the Council on Higher Education-CoHE (1981) and brought the regulatory framework for all higher education institutions, did not bring a working definition to the term 'equal opportunities'. The Law states that “*necessary measures to ensure equal opportunities (imkan ve firsat esitligi) shall be taken at higher education institutions*” (p:5350) and “*in the entry to these institutions.*” (amendment made in 1983, p: 5352-5353). Wider discussion of the term can also be found in the founding act of the ‘*The Higher Education Strategy of Turkey*’ (2007) with particular focus on socio-economic dimension and access to higher education institutions. Additionally, the Council set up a *Commission on Disabled Students* in 2010 to ease the conditions of higher education and take the necessary measures for disabled students. In 2015, the term ‘gender equality’ was published in a key policy document of the Council with the name of ‘The Approach Document’. Before its removal in 2019, the document introduced a series of policy recommendations which asked for the raising awareness in and the promotion of gender equality in higher education institutions. Mentioned Legal and Policy Documents:

- Law on Higher Education, 4/11/1981, No. 2547, Constitution of Turkey, p:5347-5394.
- The Approach Document, 2015, Council of Higher Education.
- The Higher Education Strategy Document of Turkey, 2007, Policy document by the Council of Higher Education. Commission on Disabled Students by the Council of Higher Education, 2010, <https://engelsiz.yok.gov.tr/>  
[https://engelsiz.yok.gov.tr/Documents/Mevzuat/engelliler\\_hakk%C4%B1nda\\_kanun.pdf](https://engelsiz.yok.gov.tr/Documents/Mevzuat/engelliler_hakk%C4%B1nda_kanun.pdf) <https://engelsiz.yok.gov.tr/hakkimizda>

As you may follow in these documents, there are some political statements on the issue of sexual discrimination and disability. However, particularly in the context of PhD programs, we have not encounter with systematic applications or policy packages.

**3. Digital Transformation:** We are not able to provide information on this specific point.

**4. Most Important Aspects for Your Country:** The present political pressure over universities is the most important problem that has huge impacts on existing PhD programs and students in Turkey. The alarming situation in Turkey have led the growth of already existing problems like nepotism, ideological pressures, lower quality and so on. Special decrees or emergency decrees which had been enacted by the state for dismissing number of academics from their positions and losing their civil rights. They also functioned for banning or shutting some universities for political reasons. The years after 2015 should be carefully analysed and written, since it signifies a new period in the Turkish Higher Education System. In 2015 Turkey witnessed a coup d'etat attempt which let the government to shift the political ground towards authoritarianism and applied a special law frame called “State of Emergency” (OHAL) which provided the government to surpass the law and reformat all universities by cleaning them from ll academics with critical perspectives. Under these circumstances, since 2016, in Turkey, many

academics have faced criminal investigations, detentions, prosecutions, mass dismissal, expulsion and restrictions on travel.

Therefore, academic freedom and freedom of speech can be pointed at as the main qualitative problem which might not be seen through statistical numbers or data, but have resulting in huge political questions and qualitative problems. The Ministry of education and CoHE has been developing some strategies to cope with these statistical results of their very authoritarian attempts and to conceal the outcomes of such authoritarian attempt of the government/state in order to prevent any public outrages particularly at the international level. This is supported by the outcomes of our workshop that we have conducted with 11 Graduate Students (8 of these were PhD students) from Turkey, we have collected their views about the present problems that they have been facing throughout their PhD studies. They raised the following points: Reports on current situation of PhD-candidates (especially on issues of women and gender studies) from Turkey, collected 2.-4.th of July 2019 in the framework of a summer school in Bremen:

- There is a stigmatization of certain topics in more 'conservative' disciplines like economy, law etc. If you deal with Gender or Women Studies this – they say, endangers your scientific career, as it is not accepted as valuable research and theory
- As supervisors have been dismissed or had to take their leave of university some PhD-Students now miss a qualified process of supervision and counselling of their thesis, Professors who are not familiar with the subject have been ordered to supervise the PhD thesis, as they are not interested in the issue they don't spent much time to supervise the candidates or help them in their career, Problem to find a new supervisor under the present political conditions
- If you are politically active, critical against the government you will have problems to be appointed to assistant positions, to get tenured positions
- The hierarchies in general are very high between Prof. and PhD-Student. Hidden hierarchical structures hinder an open discussion on controversial issues
- There is a financial problem as the YÖK-Burs 2000 is not accessible/available
- Transparency is missing as to the parameters and categories that are basis for decisions on granting a fellowship, a stipend or not (TÜBİTAK, YÖK)
- Students feel abused by being asked of adjusting to the needs of the supervisor in terms of work-live-balance (call to meet at home, looking after the children while the PhD student is present and awaiting for the time for discussion on the thesis...)
- There is little support for PhD students by universities for attending (international) conferences

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