

Women Don't Want Privilege, They Want Equality

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Whenever I'm asked about women empowerment, I always say the same thing: I believe with all my heart that the 21st century is the era of women. The most important trend in today's world is the rise of female participation in the labour force. This is both an inevitable trend and a great potential for the world.

[G\(irls\)20](#) provides a good platform to emphasize the importance of expanding the number of women in the workforce. I am proud that we are the [Key Host Country Partner](#) and supporter of this year's [G\(irls\)20 Summit in Turkey](#).

G(irls)20 brings together a group of carefully selected young women, "[delegates](#)", equips them with leadership and communication skills and gives them the opportunity to meet with leaders from government, business and civil society. This is an excellent way of empowering young women to help them realize their full potential. The delegates will eventually make recommendations to G20 leaders about ways to improve female participation in the workforce.



At Sabancı Holding, one of our priorities is increasing women's participation at all levels of employment. At the [Sabancı Group](#), the rate of women's employment is 38.5 per cent, eight points about the average in Turkey (30.8 per cent). We are proud to have reached this level, but we will continue our efforts towards even higher female participation in employment.

According to the [work performed by the International Labor Organization, the ratio of female CEOs in Turkey is 12 per cent compared to five per cent in OECD countries](#). We believe that female leadership has a significant contribution to increased motivation and profitability. Moreover, female leaders are an inspiration for other women in the labour force. Therefore, women with high potential should receive mentoring and additional support to move to higher levels of employment. In terms of the ratio of female top managers, we are again above the Turkish average, with 14 per cent, compared to seven per cent back in 2012. In just three years we succeeded to double this rate.

This is the result of a dedicated strategy. In 2011, Sabancı Holding was the first Turkish company signed the UN Women's Empowerment Principles. We were proud that other Turkish companies followed in search for positive change.

In 2013, we took part in the "Equality at Work Platform", and signed the "Equality at Work Declaration" established under the auspices of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies that mobilized to minimize the gender gap in Turkey. We took part in the task group created under the roof of the World Economic Forum to fight against gender based inequality at work place.

Social development is not possible without the equal participation of women. To achieve increased female participation in labour force, we need to achieve gender equality in our society. This is why we focus our programs on achieving gender equality at the [Sabancı Foundation](#), which was founded 41 years ago. Through several programs such as the grant program for civil society organizations, the partnership with UN agencies, as well as our institutions and scholarships, our foundation aims to expand education opportunities for women, strengthen women's role in the economy, ensure active participation in politics and society at large, prevent violence against women and early marriages.

Women don't want a privilege, they want equality. To achieve equality, laws are not sufficient. Society's mindset, perceptions and traditions must change. That is the real challenge. I am confident that as women raise their voices and participate more in social and economic life, change and development will follow in all aspects of life.

*By **Güler Sabancı**, Chairman and Managing Director of [Sabancı Holding](#), one of the leading and most reputable business groups in Turkey. She started her career at the tire manufacturing company of the group and held various roles at the other group companies. Ms. Sabancı is the Founding President of [Sabancı University](#) and also acts as Chairman of the Sakıp Sabancı Museum and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the [Sabancı Foundation](#), the leading private foundation in Turkey.*