



I. Statement of Continued Support

This UN Global Compact Communication on Engagement report is designed to reflect Tohum Autism Foundation's dedicated efforts in following the Ten Principles of UN Global Compact and display the outcomes of said goals and efforts.

In this CoE, we describe the actions that Tohum Autism Foundation has taken to uphold, support and advance global sustainable development goals. Furthermore, we'd like to communicate the principles that has informed Tohum Autism Foundation's activities since its establishment in 2003. The principles of UN Global Compact are synonymous with Tohum Autism Foundation's founding values that have been interwoven into the fabric of all Tohum's endeavors.

With this CoE, we would like to confirm that Tohum Autism Foundation reaffirms its support to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles with respect to human rights, labor, environment, and anti-corruption.

Sincerely,

Aylin Sezgin

Founding Vice President
Tohum Autism Foundation

TOHUM Türkiye Otizm Erken Tanı ve Eğitim Vakfı

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II. Tohum Autism Foundation

Our vision

Our vision is to ensure the early diagnosis of children with ASD in Turkey, the health, education, the acquisition of a profession, employment, independent life and the integration of children who have been diagnosed and their families, according to world class standards. In addition meeting the needs of those children and young people who require specialist education for their integrated learning.

Our mission

- For those children who have been given a diagnosis of ASD, for young people and their families; also for those children and young people as well as their families who require specialist education for their intergratd learning.
 - To meet their information and support needs in order that they may lead lives in a civil society,
 - To cultivate teaching cadres and to ensure that education and research takes place,
 - To increase capacity in related fields as well as in specialist teaching and integrated learning and to help Turkey fill the gap of missing teaching professionals;
 - To support and help improve health and education services nationally,
 - Work towards improving legal frameworks and policies
 - Educate the general public
 - To effectively cooperate with other public and private institutions to work towards mutual goals
 - To bring ASD diagnostics, detailed assessment and diagnosis put to world standards and disseminate nationally
 - To ensure that children with ASD get specialist intensive education, to create capacity for them to have the least intrusive educational environment through to integrate in all of the stages of their life
 - To create a model school which uses the PCDI program to teach children and young people with ASD and to disseminate the program nationally.
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Our Principles

- Science-oriented
- Leadership and Leading
- Partnership
- Communication and cooperation between institutions
- Efficiency and effectiveness in resources
- Trustworthiness
- Transparency
- Value humanity and children and protect their right to receive the best services

III. The Ten Principles

Human Rights

Principle 1: Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights; and

Principle 2: make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.

As a non-profit organization, Tohum Autism Foundation (est. 2003) has been working towards providing a framework for persons with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to lead respected, independent, and valued lives.

The cornerstone of said framework is laid down by equitable dispersion of services concerning health, education, labor, and social cohesion. Tohum is not satisfied with the illusory sense of charity that's been born from mere tolerance; rather Tohum's advocacy calls for the real legislation, prescription, and application of human rights, which is what every human being is entitled to.

Tohum Autism Foundation's work pertaining to Principles 1&2:

- **Network for Rights of Children with Disabilities [ECHA]** was first established in 2018 with UNICEF's support. ECHA's mission is to:
 - bring the human rights of children with disabilities to the attention of the public,
 - monitor, detect and prevent legislative deficiencies and human rights abuses that precipitate acts of violence, negligence, discrimination and oppression towards children with disabilities,
 - advocate for the rights of children with disabilities in an evidence-based fashion,
 - develop strategies for the betterment of public policies.

Tohum Autism Foundation has been a Member of the Secretariat since ECHA's inception. Tohum was the coordinator of the network all through 2018.

In June 2020, ECHA's grant application (ref: EuropeAid/162384/DD/ACT/TR) was approved by the European Union, which is represented by the European Commission. This project aims to strengthen ECHA and its members and Tohum Autism Foundation is one of the four official partners responsible from the execution of the project's actions.

- **Shadow Report Submission to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

As the Coordinating Secretariat Member of ECHA, Tohum was instrumental in the preparation and the submission of a Shadow Report in response to Turkey's state report submitted to the Committee.

In this report submitted, the focus has specifically been on disabled children's right to education in Turkey and other rights in line with this right, however, it must be emphasized that the network works on the rights of disabled children and preventing the violation of these rights in general.

By means of this report ECHA aimed to help build a more constructive and collaborative ground between the Republic of Turkey and the UN CRPD, which is in line with the spirit of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities.

ECHA's Shadow Report can be accessed via the link:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CRPD/Shared%20Documents/TUR/INT_CRPD_ICO_TUR_33864_E.docx

- **PROJECT – “Disability Rights in Education: Together at School, Together in Life”**

Tohum Autism Foundation, in partnership with the Istanbul Bilgi University Sociology and Education Studies Center (“SEÇBİR”) together with support from the Sabancı Foundation have joined forces to run the Together at School, Together in Life Project which aims to contribute to the lessening of discrimination against disability in education.

In this project, the negative perception and attitudes against disability are aimed to be reversed. Ultimately, the goal is to attenuate the discrimination against disability in education, primarily with teachers but also with other stakeholders.

The project started in September 2017 and has been prolonged to continue through 2020.

- **February 11, 2020: International Day of Women and Girls in Science Day at the United Nation Headquarters**

Tohum's Founding Vice President Aylin Sezgin took the floor at this year's Assembly to address the “double disadvantage” girls and women with autism face in life. Ms. Sezgin also touched upon the realities of Turkish women in the STEM fields and put the situation in context for the lives of girls and women with autism who aspire for STEM careers.

- Health and Safety Firm Med Academy advises Tohum on the arrangements pertaining to workplace health and safety regulations. These include risk assessment, emergency response plans and drills.
- Employee work and training plans are tracked on an annual basis.
- Pre-employment medical screenings are mandatory. Since Tohum Autism Foundation is officially a Low-Risk Workplace, formal inspections are done every five years.
- Employees receive yearly Occupational Health and Safety, Fire Safety and First-Aid Training.

Labor

Principle 3: Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining;

Principle 4: the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labor;

Principle 5: the effective abolition of child labor; and

Principle 6: the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

Overall, people with autism are the least employed disability group in the world. In Turkey, private businesses with more than 50 employees are mandated to hire people with disabilities; 3% of the workforce needs to be disability hires. Breaching this rule comes with a penalty and companies are sometimes willing to pay this amount instead of hiring people with disabilities.

Tohum Autism Foundation itself employs 92 people, 79 of which are women, and none of which are under 18 years of age. Employees are selected by following a set of objective criteria, and Official Staff Regulations are applied evenly and equitably to every single individual.

Unlike the majority of institutions in the field, social security premiums are paid as per employee salaries at Tohum.

Egemenoglu Law Office audits and advises the Foundation in terms of Labor Law and Social Security Regulations. Tohum closely follows the everchanging social security and labor legislation and has never been penalized for any issues in these areas.

Tohum Autism Foundation's work pertaining to Principles 3, 4, 5, 6:

- **Princeton Child Development Institute**

Established in 2006, Tohum Autism Foundation Special Education School provides students with ASD an education program that is based on Princeton Child Development Institute's (PCDI) framework.

PCDI has been providing education to children with ASD for over 40 years; it has a community based and rich syllabus and is known globally for its scientific and fact based applications, its research and dissemination work. Tohum Autism Foundation's Special Education School is the Turkish disseminating branch of the PCDI and provides education through their know-how.

This know-how mandates a thorough and intensive training for the School's special education teachers. Tohum's teachers become the best in the field and as our numbers rise, these qualified and well-informed professionals spread their knowledge all over the nation.

- **PROJECT – Autism Is in the Workforce**

In partnership with Tohum Autism Foundation, Eker Dairy Corporation started an employment program as a model to be utilized by every business in Turkey further into the future. By reifying the concept of gainful and meaningful employment for people with autism, "Autism Is in the Workforce" grants true independence, self-care skills, income and socialization opportunities for people with ASD.

The team that runs the project is comprised of a supervising specialist psychologist who trained the three "job coaches" in guiding people with autism through work as well as the social components of the workplace. Currently, 8 people with ASD are employed. On top of that one supervisor and three job coaches employed at Eker.

Progress reports so far has tangibly shown that the performance of the young workers with ASD have improved by 191% compared to day one.

- **Employment Program: İlk Firsat [First Prospect]**

İlk Firsat program provides a year of full time work at well-established NGOs to new graduates of less competitive state schools. They are paid fully for their work and through İlk Firsat, these recent graduates gather necessary connections and obtain job experience.

Tohum volunteered to become an employer of the program in 2016 and has been supporting young professionals ever since.

- **Salary Survey**

Tohum Autism Foundation took part in a country-wide salary survey of special education-focussed institutions by Willistowerswatson. Tohum's salary structuring was built in conjunction with the survey by the organizational consulting firm Korn Ferry.

- **Career Development and Life-Skills Program: Module D**

Tohum's Module D was developed for adults with ASD. Module D is separate from the Foundation and Tohum Autism's Special Education School. Located at a different building, students of Module D gain independence skills as well as career development opportunities. Through different sets of trainings, Module D's pupils are directed towards "Supported Employment Programs" where they can work, make their own money, get hobbies and meet new people.

Module D students work at Tohum's offices from time to time on a part-time basis.

Environment

Principle 7: Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges;

Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility; and

Principle 9: encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.

- **Recycling Project**

With the support of CarrefourSA, the Borough of Ataşehir, AGİD, Exitcom and the Tohum Autism Foundation, the project to “Support Raising Autism Awareness Through Recycling” has been launched. CarrefourSA stores in Ataşehir have been equipped with recycling boxes to collect used electric and electronic goods.

Anti-Corruption

Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

- **“Açık Açık” Membership** : Tohum Autism Foundation is a member of the NGO accountability platform Açık Açık [Openly]. Açık Açık was established to bring together donors/benefactors/contributors with accountable and transparent NGOs. Açık Açık mandates for the “Donors’ Rights Declaration” to be acknowledged and acceded by its member organizations.

Tohum’s yearly financial statements, members of its Board, and its Independent Audit Reports are openly presented on Açık Açık’s website: <https://acikacak.org/sivil-toplum-kurulusu/tohum-turkiye-otizm-erken-tani-ve-egitim-vakfi>

- **Independent Audit Reports**: Tohum is independently audited each year and the reports are presented on its website.
- **Executive Office of Foundations under the Culture&Tourism State Department**: EOF does incredibly thorough mandatory audits in 3-5 year periods. Tohum was started to be audited in 2003, the year it was founded. Tohum never received any admonitions or fines that resulted from these official audits.
- **Annual Activity Reports**: Tohum’s Activity Reports that include its financial statements, going back to 2013, are available on its website.

- **Privacy and Information Security Law:** Erdem@Erdem Law Office supports Tohum in applying the neccesities posed by the law, so that everyone's personal information is protected and respected.
- Parents and students at our school, donors, and volunteers are presented with clarification documents as well as explicit consent forms. All engagements are based upon the terms of consent that are provided to the Foundation.

