

# 2023-2024 SDG 8 REPORT



# 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth



Scholarly Output:  
**35**



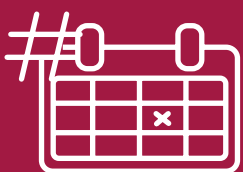
International  
Collaboration:  
**3**



Field-weighted  
Citation Impact:  
**1.22**



Number of Current  
Projects:  
**20**



Number of Annual  
Events:  
**92**

## 1. Research Project on Perceptions and Experiences of Workplace Violence and Harassment

The research titled “Perceptions and Experiences of Workplace Violence and Harassment”, led by Prof. H. Canan Sümer, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, coordinated by Dr. Oğuz Can Ok, Social Sustainability Consultant at the Sustainability Platform, and involving academics from different disciplines as researchers, has been awarded support by the ILO. The project involves a household survey to be conducted in Istanbul with a sample size of 3,000 individuals. The survey is intended to examine the types and frequency of workplace violence and harassment experienced by women and men, attitudes of employers towards these situations, and coping strategies. Covering a broad spectrum of subjects in particular physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence and harassment, the research aims to both reveal the current situation and guide the development of preventive programs and policies. Within this framework, the research is one of the first studies to be conducted in this field in Turkey.

## 2. Careers and Employability of Our Students

ÖZÜ Professional Development team organizes seminars, training, case studies, mock interviews and on-campus interviews in cooperation with leading companies, in order to contribute to the students’ professional life and job search processes. The team offers a rich selection of training to students to vest them with the required skills before they take the leap into professional life. The training programs focus on key skills, including CV development, interview techniques, and interpersonal communication. In addition to required internships, a rich selection of non-credit internship opportunities both at home and abroad is offered. In 2022, students received careers guidance and support through professional development services which includes peer-to-peer appointments and one-on-one appointments. The unit also provided events including resume reviews, and job-ready workshops. Students received 216 one to one CV counseling, 1 speed-networking event with 74 participants, 2 interview counseling & 27 interview simulations, 23 career counseling, and 50 unplugged talks adding up to more than 3580 students participating in Professional Development events.

### **3. Militant Minority at Work: A successful Case of Unionisation of Garment Workers in Istanbul**

Alpkan Birelma, from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, examined a successful unionisation struggle among garment workers in Istanbul. He found out that in the last four decades, Turkey has become a global showcase of authoritarian anti-labour neoliberalism and one of the world's top garment and textile exporters. The latter has come at the cost of worker exploitation and precarity. Such conditions led a group of knitting workers to unionise at the beginning of the 2010s. He showcased that after five years of struggle, they signed a collective bargaining agreement covering nearly 400 workers. This very rare success rested on two key factors: the efforts of a militant minority and transnational labour solidarity.

### **4. (Non-)deport to Discipline: The Daily Life of Afghans in Turkey**

Deniz Sert, along with a scholar from Kadir Has University, explores the politics of (non-)deportability in Turkey by focusing on Afghan migrants, the largest community without formal protection in a country that hosts the most refugees globally. This research delves into how deportation policies are shaped and enacted for Afghans and the everyday strategies they use to navigate the constant risk of deportation. The study reveals that Turkey's deportation policies are largely influenced by the demands of the informal labor market, which comprises roughly one-third of the national workforce. The findings indicate that the state both tolerates and conceals the forced labor and hypermobility of Afghan migrants, using the constant threat of deportation as a means of discipline and control. This is against SDG 8, which promotes decent work and economic growth, by underscoring the need to address exploitative labor conditions and provide fair and secure employment for all workers, including migrants. The study further suggests that Afghans employ various strategies to avoid deportation, including leveraging their qawm-based (ethnic or kinship) networks, seeking support from Afghan associations, and engaging in street-level negotiations with authorities.

### **5. Imagining Decent Work towards a Green Future in a Former Forest Village of the City of Istanbul**

The Aegean Atelier, exemplifies sustainable and inclusive education by focusing on the ecological and sociocultural richness of Anatolia, with an emphasis on local crops. One of its recent projects, Mahalle Mantarı, centers on mushrooms and truffles found in the Ömerli-Şile region, aiming to foster understanding of the interconnected relationships between humans, animals, and plants.

In 2023, key facilitators of Mahalle Mantarı, İklil Selçuk, and Zeynep Delen Nircan, with a scholar from MSGSÜ co-authored a paper titled *Imagining Decent Work Towards a Green Future in a Former Forest Village of the City of Istanbul*. This research addresses issues pertaining to the future of work and sustainability through the lens of a case study of ecological deterioration and how it destroys and creates green jobs in a forest village in Istanbul. As elsewhere in major urban centers of developing countries, the hyper-expansion of city regions due to authoritarian developmentalism fosters the state-led construction sector in Turkey. Growth-driven economic policies continue to have adverse effects on the environment, resulting in deforestation among an array of ecological damage. Based on a qualitative analysis of oral history interviews and observations informed by a larger interdisciplinary research project, scholars observed resilience in the forest village under scrutiny as certain types of work are abandoned, and new forms are created by adaptation to the ecological and social conditions. The perceptions of changing conditions by locals vary across existing ethnic, gender, and class hierarchies in the local community.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the types of work available in the village prior to urban transformation were not all decent or green. In the face of ongoing ecological deterioration in a (formerly) forest community, participatory micro-initiatives, and grassroots, utilizing local community projects, emerge that nevertheless pursue a green and just transition. They focus on one such initiative, the Community Fungi platform, to demonstrate the possibility of working towards a collective imagination of a green future inspired by past but unforgotten sustainable communal practices, in the context of the forest village under scrutiny in this paper.



## 6. University Policy Commitments

ÖzU Human Resources Policy states that any form of forced or bonded labor is not used or tolerated. All work must be voluntary. Employees are free to terminate their employment. Recruitment that involves payments by employees to an agent will not be used. ÖzU is committed to offering equal opportunities to all its employees concerning recruitment, promotion, and any aspect of employment. Discrimination is not tolerated in any form based on gender, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.

## 7. Pre-Employment Training (PrET)

PrET is an exclusive education program designed for Özyeğin University senior students in collaboration with Özyeğin University's Sectoral Education and Professional Development Unit and TbeMark, the common platform of Education and HR professionals from Turkey's leading companies. It aims to expand the employment and skills development opportunities of students, by offering informal education and training activities designed to support the growth of our students as responsible professionals and citizens. The program, which was organized for the fifth time in the 2023-2024 academic year, has been held since 2019.

## 8. Student Initiatives

— The talk titled **"A Current View of Responsible Business Behavior in the Context of International Labor Standards, Social Justice and Decent Work Concepts"** took place in March 2024.

— The event titled **"Mediation in Labor Law"** took place in May 2024.

— **Future Greens:** ÖzU Social Awareness Club is one of our clubs dedicated to sustainability initiatives. One of the events it organized, Future Greens, brought together university students with executives from leading green companies such as KPMG, Garanti BBVA, QNB Finansbank, WWF, Eczacıbaşı, and Arçelik. The event, held at Özyeğin University's campus, offered opportunities for networking, connecting with various social clubs, one-on-one meetings with senior executives, and career opportunities related to future plans.



Future Greens  
Poster

## 9. Influencer Summit

The Özyeğin University Business Club organized the "Influencer Summit" event to inspire students about digital careers. During the event, Özyeğin University students had the opportunity to meet social media influencers Mustafa Ak, Özgür Uysal, and Selinay Yalçın one-on-one and benefit from their experiences. Participants gained insights into the world of influencer marketing and social media strategies through an interactive discussion environment.

The main goal of the event was to teach students how to use their social media accounts more effectively and consciously. Concrete advice and strategies were shared, particularly focusing on how participants could enhance their digital presence. Held at the Özyeğin University Faculty of Business, the event aimed to raise awareness about social media usage and provide students with valuable tips to guide their careers in this field.

## 10. University Impact Rankings for UN SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth ÖzÜ: The Top Foundation University in Türkiye.

Times Higher Education has meticulously assessed and ranked 1,149 universities from 107 countries/regions for their impactful contributions to the SDG 8. ÖzÜ ranked as the top foundation university in Türkiye in promoting productive employment opportunities, fostering secure working environments and driving substantial economic growth. Through targeted research, code of ethics and human resources policy, ÖzÜ addresses critical issues such as modern slavery, human trafficking and the integration of migrant workers into the workforce.

ÖzÜ not only aims to ensure youth employment but commits to creating educational and training opportunities that support sustainable economic growth. ÖzÜ with its academic and sectoral education programs and Professional Development Office equips students with the skills necessary for the evolving labor market, emphasising the importance of secure and decent