



CASE STUDY

On-Site Childcare and Gender Equality Training Establishes an Award-Winning Reputation for Yeşim Tekstil

COMPANY PROFILE

Established in 1983, Yeşim Tekstil in Bursa, Turkey produces textiles for both domestic and export markets. Yeşim has grown from its original three hundred to more than two and a half thousand employees. Women make up fifty-eight percent of the company and are well represented in most categories of work with the exception of top managerial positions where 15 percent are held by women, slightly above the national average of 12.2 percent.¹ Yeşim is actively working to change their workforce and managerial composition through a number of projects that promote gender equality in the workplace.

“Yeşim has always had an interest in gender equitable practices,” says Dilek Cesur, Yeşim’s director of corporate communications, who has been with the company for 23 years. Yeşim has been involved in several initiatives for promoting men and women’s equal participation in the workplace over many years. Yeşim is signatory to the Women’s Empowerment Principles¹ (WEPs) set by UN Women in March 2015 and has worked with the International Labour Organization in the past on gender equality and equal labor force participation initiatives. Ms. Cesur and her colleagues play an active role in creating an enabling environment for women workers to thrive in the company. In addition to her role as at Yeşim, Ms. Cesur is the co-director of the Global Compact Women’s Empowerment Working Group, Turkey and coordinates the Bursa Platform of Women’s Empowerment Working Group. Yeşim provides a range of services to its employees to create a more equitable work environment including gender equality training, parental leave, and a review expanding flexible working policies. One of the most significant achievements in addressing care, however, is their on-site childcare center.

ADDRESSING CARE

Yeşim has been running an on-site childcare center for the last 30 years. It was initiated to recruit a stable female workforce just 5 years after the foundation of the company. With capacity for up to 1000 children, the center serves every age group from 2 months to 6 years, providing a parallel education to the private kindergarten system, and seeking to foster the personal and social development of employees’ children. Currently, it is available to all working mothers and to working fathers when the

mother of child is in employment, or if the father has the custody of child. The childcare center opens at 7 am and closes at 11 pm so that the workers in two shifts (7am-3pm and 3pm-11pm) can benefit from this center. As of July 2018, approximately 300 children were enrolled in the childcare center.

“‘PEOPLE FIRST’ IS CRUCIAL FOR THE COMPANY CULTURE. PUTTING ‘PEOPLE FIRST’ MEANS THAT THE EMPLOYER SHALL RESPOND TO EMPLOYEES’ NEEDS TO KEEP THEM AT WORK AND PRODUCTIVE AND TO MAKE THEM HAPPY.”

– Özlem Şenkoyuncu, Yeşim Administrator

The crèche is staffed by a fully qualified and licensed team of 24 childcare experts consisting of a manager, 2 rotating (shift) staff, 11 teachers, 1 nurse and 9 child-minders. Crèche teachers are given training on all subjects including communication, the current curriculum, and transition from traditional to contemporary teaching methods. Alongside the kindergarten’s curriculum, which is prepared in parallel with the Ministry of National Education’s curriculum, there are the optional courses, such as chess, English, and drama that support children’s personal development. These provisions have made the center well-liked by children and parents alike. In a satisfaction survey conducted by the company recently, 81 percent of children and 94 percent of parents reported being satisfied with the center. Parents felt that nursery management was easily accessible, that summer programs, social activities and teaching methods were well designed and implemented, and that health and nutrition practices at the center were consistently satisfactory.

In addition to the on-site childcare center, Yeşim also runs an education program for parents. A project titled *Equality at Home and Work* is offered in partnership with the Mor Salkim Women’s Solidarity Association. The parent-school offered by the project aims to support parenting workers. The parent-school program is composed of 6 seminars which aim to empower parents and support their parenting skills and gender equality in care tasks.

In 2015, Yeşim also initiated a project called *The World of Butterfly* in partnership with the Uludağ Soroptimist Club where women workers are offered seminars around the topics such as woman and family, personal development, health, and rights. Upon male workers' requests, the seminars on leadership, communication, gender equality, work-family life reconciliation, etc. are now extended to both men and women employees of the company.

MEASURING RESULTS

On-site childcare and their other equality initiatives have created many benefits for Yeşim and their employees.

Worthwhile return on investment. The average monthly cost of hosting per child is estimated at 380 Turkish Liras at the Yeşim childcare center. The total monthly cost then for the 300 children currently enrolled is around 110,000 Turkish Liras or USD 18,873. This rate includes personnel costs (around 70,000 Turkish Liras) and costs of utilities, meals, etc. On average, Yeşim reported spending USD 258,000 per year on childcare for its employeesⁱⁱⁱ but it in turn saves over USD 800,000 from reduction in women's turnover.^{iv}

This is beneficial for families with children too, as private preschool can be very costly for low- to middle-income countries. According to calculations by Mother Child Education Foundation (AÇEV), the cost of private childcare is around 1000 Turkish Lira, about three times what Yeşim is spending at its facilities.^v

Superior recruitment and retention of top talent. In an environment where recruiting and maintaining new talent has been getting harder as the industry becomes more competitive, the childcare center has helped garner interest among qualified women candidates who have children and are looking for full-time employment. An average of two phone calls a week come from women who are seeking a job in the company and asking

if they can register their children with the childcare center. The center has allowed Yeşim to retain quality workers and maintain a low turnover compared to the industry (1.7 for blue-collar workers, 2.3 for white-collar workers). Yeşim found enhanced employee commitment and motivation and reduced absenteeism from employees with childcare responsibilities.

Enhanced company reputation. Yeşim Tekstil has had received recognition from multiple platforms because of its gender equality policies:

- In 2010, BÜİKAD (Bursa Business and Professional Women's Association) awarded 'The Best Private Company for Prioritizing Women Employment' for the activities it has carried out for women and gender equality.
- The 'Scrub-birds Discovers Bursa' project also awarded Yeşim Textile Women and Children's Club a prize for their work in 2013.
- Yeşim Textile was selected as the second-best company in Turkey in a contest for 'increasing gender equality in work life' by the Ministry of Labor and Social Security in 2014."
- The Company also won € 5,000 grant from Soroptimist International Europe Action Fund in 2015 for their *World of Butterfly Project*.

According to Yeşim's management, the projects contribute substantially to building company reputation and differentiate the company from others. They are not short-term social responsibility projects but are fully incorporated into the company's routine activities. The interviewees underlined that the reputation earned from these projects greatly enhanced the company's relations with banks, suppliers, and other partners.

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Conclusions and opinions expressed in this brief and study are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or official positions of EBRD.

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ⁱILO. (2017). Women in business and management: Gaining momentum in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_624225.pdf.

ⁱⁱThe Women's Empowerment Principles, a partnership initiative of UN Women and UN Global Compact (UNGC) provide guidance to help the private sector focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community.

ⁱⁱⁱPublic Radio International. (2017). Why more Turkish women don't work. Retrieved from <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-05-04/why-more-turkish-women-dont-work>.

^{iv}Authors' estimates based on primary turnover data collected from Yeşim Tekstil and other Turkish businesses.

^vPublic Radio International. (2017). Why more Turkish women don't work. Retrieved from <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-05-04/why-more-turkish-women-dont-work>.