

10 Y E A R S  
DEDICATED TO  
E Q U A L I T Y



# Table of Contents

**Foreword: Borusan Group CEO, Erkan Kafadar — 7**

**Chronology — 8**

**Sustainable Equality Approach**

**An Oasis in the Midst of Inequality: Equal Borusan; An Interview with Nursel Ölmez Ateş, Borusan Holding Chief Human, Communication and Sustainability Officer — 10**

**Equal Opportunities in Career Management — Equality Approach to Wage Management**

**The Optimism of Will Refusing to be Balked by the “Natural Flow”:  
Simay Alsan / Borusan Otomotiv — 18**

**Equality Approach in Training and Development**

**Reflection of Equality from Behind the Curtain to the Stage:  
Borusan Sanat Round Table — 24**

**Equality Approach in Performance Management**

**Reaching for the Sky: H. Özlem Caymaz / Borusan Cat — 30**

**Equal Opportunities in Career Management**

**Envisioning a World without Edges:  
Muzaffer Öztürk / Borusan Mannesmann — 36**

**Gender Equality Approach of Our Partners and Stakeholders**

**Energetic Trails: Borusan EnBW Enerji Round Table — 42**

**Equal Opportunities in Recruitment**

**“Turns out we are the masters of this business...”: Gözde Yıldırım / Borçelik — 50**

**Equal Opportunities in Recruitment**

**“Not an Impossible Job!”: Gökçe Gökdeniz Aka / Borusan Port — 54**

**Equality Approach in Working Conditions**

**A Story of Collective Coping: Volkan & Derya Könez / Supsan — 58**

**Equality Approach in Performance Management**

**“Everyone Has Grown Accustomed to Us...”:  
Mesude Ceylan / Borusan Lojistik — 62**

**Equality Approach in Training and Development**

**Finding Yourself in a New Language: Beyza Nur Şen, “Let’s Code, Girls” Project — 64**

**Equality Approach in Career Management**

**Joy Factory: Ebru Şimşek, “My Mom’s Job is My Future” Project — 70**

**BORUSAN**  **EŞİTTİR**

**10 YEARS DEDICATED TO EQUALITY**

**Published by** Borusan Holding Baltalimanı  
Hisar Caddesi No: 5 Perili Köşk Rumeli Hisarı  
34470, İstanbul

**Project Coordinators** Nursel Ölmez Ateş, Dilek Özkan, Büşra Yılmaz Can

**Editor** Esen Özdemir

**Visual Director** Emre Çıkınoğlu

**Edition** April, 2023

**Copyright** This publication may not be reproduced in whole or in part, without written approval.  
Texts and photographs from this publication must be used by giving credit to Borusan Holding.

## Equal Borusan Contract



Equal opportunities  
in recruitment



Equality approach in  
working conditions



Sustainable equality  
approach



Equality approach in  
performance management



Equality approach in  
wage management



Gender equality approach  
of our partners and  
stakeholders



Equality approach in  
training and development



Equality approach in  
career management

## Foreword



Gender inequality continues to be one of the most substantial structural and systematic inequalities around the world and in Türkiye. In order for us to instate a more egalitarian and just social order, we need to voice the demand for equality louder. That is why, as Borusan, we hold on to this belief in all our endeavors. In all the efforts we have carried out in the field of gender equality over the past 10 years, we have maintained that access to equal rights, opportunities and resources is a fundamental human right.

At Borusan, we believe in the power of equality in creating social value. Under the umbrella of the Equal Borusan

Platform, we are doing our best to implement inclusive policies and practices, and we continue to work towards offering Borusan members an atmosphere that is equal in all respects. Through our Equal Borusan Contract, which we prepared by ownership of the senior management, we are adopting a sustainable equality approach in recruitment, training, and development processes and working conditions as well as performance, wage, and career management. We care about contributing to the gender equality approaches of our stakeholders, and we are guided by this sense of responsibility in all our actions. In accordance with this sense of responsibility, we aim to create a corporate culture within our Group, where our employees are loved and respected, everyone enjoys an atmosphere of freedom and expresses their opinions freely. As we made headway towards this goal, we have touched the lives of many people over the past 10 years and delivered egalitarian projects that made a difference. Yet, we are well aware that we are only at the beginning of a long journey. Having a long way to go does not discourage us; to the contrary, we are exhilarated by the ideas we hope to carry into effect, and the transformations we are committed to deliver. We have told the story of our journey, what we have learned, and our experiences in our book called *10 Years Dedicated to Equality* so that the 10 years we have spent in dedication to equality would inspire those who set out to achieve equality. In this book, which we cherish so dearly, we have shared Borusan's work in the field of gender equality and the stimulating stories of people in whose lives we somehow made a difference.

As we are going through a period in which we need to work even harder each year to achieve gender equality, we hope that our 10-year journey inspires everyone, and we wish an equal world for our future.

ERKAN KAFADAR  
Borusan Group CEO

# Our 10-Year Journey through Equality

2012	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
We signed the "United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles" and we were qualified for membership to the "Leadership Group".	We established the "Equal Borusan Social Equality Platform".	We carried out the "Let's Code, Girls" Project and provided coding training to the daughters of 200 Borusan employees.	We published the "Guide to Avoiding Discriminatory Language and Behaviors in the Workplace".	We implemented the "Call Out Sexism" campaign.	With Borusan Mannesmann, we implemented the "Equal Together" campaign. In addition, we carried out the "First, I'm a Father" program.	We launched the "Gender Lens" program.	We implemented "2-Week Paternity Leave".	We launched "Childcare Support" for our employees.
We became a signatory to the "Equality in Business Platform".	We supported the "He for She" campaign.		We launched the "Love Begins with Language Movement".					
We implemented the "My Mom's Job is My Future" Project and we opened nurseries in OIZs.								
						We published the "Gender Equality and Domestic Violence Guide".	With Borusan Otomotiv, we carried out the "Women Hold the Key" project.	With Borusan EnBW Enerji, we launched the "Energy of Female Students - New Force of the Green Collar" program.
						We joined the "Business Against Domestic Violence (BADV)" network of companies.	With Borusan Araç İhale, we implemented the "Female Vehicle Expert Training" program.	We published the "Group Guide for Parents".
							With Borusan Port, we delivered the "From Ideas to Business - Customer Based Digital Marketing Training for Women Entrepreneurs".	With Borusan Port, we formulated a coaching program for Gemlik Atatepe AMT High School.
							With our commercial titled "Those who can't talk", we put domestic violence in the spotlight.	In partnership with Borçelik and BUIKAD (Bursa Business Women and Executives Association), we implemented the "Joint Forces for Women's Employment" project.
							With Borusan Mannesmann, we organized the "See the Life Equally and Leaders with an Equal Outlook" seminars.	With Borusan Cat ve Kaltun, we carried out a project to train female construction equipment operators.
							With Borusan Lojistik, we offered "Pallet Truck Driving License" training to our female employees.	In cooperation with Supsan, we implemented the "There's a Woman's Touch on This" project.
								"Borusan Lojistik ile With Borusan Lojistik, we organized the "Equality Through the Eyes of Children Drawing Contest". In addition, we gave away the <i>Equal Tales</i> Book to the children of Borusan members.

# An Oasis in the Midst of Inequality: *Equal Borusan;* *An Interview with Nursel Ölmez Ateş*

*You sense the brightness of the sun much better when it is filtered through closed shutters than when you are faced directly with its torrid harshness.*

**Simone de Beauvoir, Misunderstanding in Moscow**



Equal opportunities  
in recruitment

“It was my dream to achieve things that would add value to the lives of others” said Nursel Ölmez Ateş, Borusan Holding Chief Human-Communication and Sustainability Officer, and she went on to tell us about Equal Borusan. We talked about how this inspiring story, which has been a part of Borusan’s efforts in the field of gender equality for the past decade, started, the values that underpin that story, the areas where it was faced with challenges, the sources of its strength which assured its uninterrupted journey, and of course, how it fostered the faith in the prospect of creating a world that is more equal, just and inclusive.

**Could you please tell us about the historical background of Borusan’s decade-long adventure of gender equality efforts? What is the motivation behind the emergence of Equal Borusan as one of the episodes of this adventure, and what stages has it gone through until today?**

First of all, I must say that Equal Borusan is an initiative we launched not because we thought that equality had lately become a trending topic that would provide us with a competitive advantage across the business world or that it would boost our prestige, but because we genuinely care about creating an inclusive corporate culture. Because equality is one of our core values, which is owned by every Borusan member at all levels. Equal Borusan is an umbrella term for the policies and practices aimed at translating our shared belief in equality into action through a systematic approach.

Through the efforts we carry out as part of Equal Borusan, with a mandate to create an inclusive working environment that incorporates diversity, we have accomplished a lot that directly touched people’s lives and yielded tangible outcomes. I believe that a significant factor contributing to our success is the way our equality policies, primarily formulated at the management level, are genuinely embraced, internalized, and shared by all our colleagues. As a result, the social impact of every task we undertake has multiplied, serving as inspiration for new project ideas.



The work we have been doing under the umbrella of Equal Borusan could be assessed in two phases. The first phase was the period of awakening where we started pondering by asking questions such as: “What is gender equality? What is the cost (in every sense) of inequalities to the society and the business world? How do these inequalities affect individuals? What should be done to eliminate inequality and what can we do to be part of the solution?”. One of our significant achievements in this phase was the establishment of the Equal Borusan Platform, with the aim of coordinating our efforts toward equality.

In the second five-year phase, we came to realize it was important to raise awareness about this issue; yet it was not enough. We needed to drive transformation in favor of equality, which would also be reflected in our figures, and take solid steps to achieve that. Therefore, our second five-year phase was one of taking action. During this period, we developed the “Gender Lens Program”, which incorporates our perspective on equality and outlines specific actions we can take in various areas. A tangible outcome of these actions is the increase in the number of women in leadership positions and in male-dominated lines of business. In addition, we provided support for childcare and paternity leave, organized parenting trainings, and we took concrete steps to promote equality

regarding performance, promotion and wages. Alongside these efforts, I believe that we gained momentum during our second five years.

So, after implementing all these policies and practices, did we attain where we want to be? Despite having made significant progress, we are still aware that there is a long road ahead. Nevertheless, as we set out for our third five-year period, we are delighted to see that we now have the capacity to generate projects that drive higher social benefit and make a difference for more people. We are at a turning point where we can channel our resources and energy into endeavors with greater impact. To do that, we have set our 2030 targets and we are moving, step by step, towards achieving these targets.

**Could you provide further details on Equal Borusan Platform, which you described as one of the key actions you took in the first five-year period? For example, what kind of a governance model do you use to coordinate all the efforts you carry out under the umbrella of this Platform?**

Equal Borusan Platform is established for formulating Borusan’s gender equality perspective, ensuring that policies and projects that are in line with this perspective are implemented across all group companies, and carrying out activities designed to raise awareness of equality in all companies and making equality an integral part of their corporate culture.

When efforts in the field of equality first began, a committee was established within the Holding, tasked with coordinating these efforts. Company representatives from all levels (managers, sales representatives, assistants, etc.) volunteered to sit on this committee. In addition, company committees were formed within each company, whose purpose and organizational structure were similar to that of the central committee. In 2018, we reviewed this governance model, and decided to make slight changes to it. Two separate committees continued to exist, but we combined them under the umbrella of the Equal Borusan Platform. We also made changes regarding



Equal approach to  
wage management

the member composition of the central committee. We ensured that the committee within the Holding included colleagues from each company who are known to be highly influential, work in decision-making positions, have strong familiarity with the business dynamics and the capacity to drive the organization. Today, the central committee of the Holding, which we call the “Group Committee” consists of Chief Human, Communication and Sustainability Officer, Chief Corporate Communications Officer, Specialization Center Director and Equal Borusan Company Leaders.

The reason why we modified the composition of the central committee was that we believed the Committee should consist of people who have what it takes to implement the agreed policies and practices. Because, for example, when the general manager of a company is included in the “equality picture”, the way that company addresses this issue differs. When the general manager also reflects on gender equality and acts as a component of the structure designed to develop equality policies, employees are also positively affected. This is how the general manager becomes a role model for equality, in addition to the executive role they play within the company. Moreover, when a general manager incorporates this issue into their company’s agenda, it stimulates pleasant competition between the companies about equality – which is something we all desire.

The Group Committee convenes four times a year. As committee members, we use a shared “gender dashboard” to monitor all our work. By regularly monitoring the gender metrics, we identify the areas where there are gaps or that require strengthening, and we develop solution-oriented projects to address them. The decisions on policies and practices (such as childcare support or paternity leave) that are supposed to conform to a binding and common standard for all companies are made by the Group Committee.

The company leader and volunteer company representatives sit on the company committee within each company. These Committees are tasked with internally analyzing the decisions made by the Group Committee at the central level, developing company-specific projects in line with the main objectives, monitoring whether the company-level targets are achieved, and planning actions designed to improve what is at hand. In other words, while the Group Committee has the mandate to set the main objectives, the roadmap and the methodology, the Company Committees are in charge of executing them. However, this division of labor does not mean that the Group Committee makes the decisions and the company committees implement them word-for-word. Initially, perhaps the guidance and influence of the headquarters were more dominant, but over time, also thanks to the efforts we have carried out, companies are now in a position to develop their projects and bring them to the central agenda.

**Could you also walk us through the backstage of the Equal Borusan Platform? How do you make such difficult decisions that roll out Borusan’s equality roadmap, and have an extensive sphere of influence? How would you describe the decision-making mechanism at Equal Borusan?**

If I were to pick three words to describe our decision-making mechanism, they would be “participation”, “shared wisdom” and “total benefit”. The key is that, for each and every issue we discuss in the Committee, we care about talking and listening to one another until we all reach to a common ground. We know that our potential to generate social benefit grows when we are in a position to discuss different ideas in an inclusive way; letting this awareness guide our decision-making is one of our strengths. In other words, our faith in shared wisdom promotes participation, and in turn, the decisions we make through participatory methods increase the total benefit we get.

It is vital for us that every meeting yields solid outputs; therefore, we have a strict preliminary preparation process in place for these meetings. Before each meeting, we collect proposed agenda items from the headquarters and the group companies, and



we do some preliminary work on how and in what context we would address these items. At the first meeting of each year, we identify our main equality theme on which we would work that year. To do that, as the first course of action, we review our gender breakdown data and perform a general assessment. We determine our priority areas on which we would work that year by answering the questions such as: Which areas are our strong suits? Which ones need improving? Which areas make more sense for us to start, considering our resources?

We set our targets by discussing where we are in the areas we have selected and where we want to be. We make sure that these targets are realistic, but to us, realism never means settling for less; to the contrary, one of our fundamental approaches in this regard would be pursuing ambitious targets, setting the bar as high as possible and trying to get there. This is because, as Borusan, our motto is “Equality in results, not in words”!

After setting our targets, we discuss what our short, medium and long-term actions might be. Over this discussion, we also try to answer questions like what action would make a greater impact or which ones should be taken at the Holding and company levels. At the end of all these efforts, we develop our equality action plan we are to implement for the next year, which helps us achieve the targets we set for each thematic area. We split the actions in this action plan into two as group level and company level. Because, whereas there may be matters that would crosscut all companies horizontally and be incorporated into each one’s agenda, not every action may yield the desired outcomes in each company or turn out to be meaningful for it. Appreciating the subjective nature of all companies (internal dynamics, field of activity, personnel structure, etc.) in every decision we make is another key feature of our decision mechanism.

*We make sure that these targets are realistic, but to us, realism never means settling for less; to the contrary, one of our fundamental approaches in this regard would be pursuing ambitious targets, setting the bar as high as possible and trying to get there. This is because, as Borusan, our motto is “Equality in results, not in words.”*

I would like to give a practical example to describe the way our decision-making mechanism works. When the suggestion that we should provide childcare support to our colleagues came up at our Group Committee, we all thought it was such a good idea, and agreed to provide childcare support. Then, we proceeded to discuss how we could provide this support in practical terms. We asked questions such as “To whom we should give it?”, “Should we give it only to women or also to men?”, “What amount should we give?”, “What would be the terms and conditions for providing this support?”, and “For how long we would be providing it?” etc. Then, we reflected on questions such as whether we should pay the childcare support in cash or reimburse our colleagues in return for an invoice, etc. As you can see, we have to answer many questions with multiple dimensions, to be able to make a decision even on a matter we all agree. At the end of our deliberations around the axis of such questions, we reach an agreement on a formula specifically designed to address the relevant issue, and only then, we make our final decision. Of course, what we agree on may not always be the ideal decision, but we feel compelled to land on the most feasible and rapid action in order to move forward. For example, childcare support is available to all our female colleagues, yet not to our



Sustainable equality approach

male employees, since our resources are limited. We don't say, "If we can't provide it to all of them, then let's not do this, let's not provide this support at all". We try to maximize the benefit by pondering on where and how to begin, to whom it would benefit and how.

As you can see, we have a multidimensional decision mechanism in place, where each variable is meticulously addressed, which is therefore rather lengthy and thorough. Yet again, I think this is one of the strengths that makes us who we are. As a matter of fact, looking at the magnitude of the value we created through the decisions we make, we get to say that it was really worth it.

**Is there a special reason why instead of "committee" or "board" as is commonly used by companies, you preferred the term "platform" which is something we are not used to hearing?**

First of all, we are not quite keen on words like "committee" etc. because they tend to be associated with bodies that give people instructions on what to do and how to do it, as opposed to structures in which they can get involved. After all, we don't want anyone to feel that way. When we say platform, on the other hand, we send out the message that this is a place that provides everyone with the chance and space to exist with their own voice, is open to interaction, and promotes diversity. So, yes, we thought calling it a "platform" would reflect the way our company works. That's why we chose the name Equal Borusan Platform, rather than a committee or board; we are also delighted to see how this name has been embraced by people.

**It can't be easy to make your way to a position where you roll out the roadmap in the field of gender equality across the business world. You underlined multiple times that one of the distinguishing characteristics of Borusan in making it to such a position is your perspective to take action towards concrete targets. A key indicator of this perspective would be your "Gender Lens" which you showcased with the motto "We need to see and think differently to be able to find our way around these sexist minefields". What is this "gender lens"?**

The Gender Lens program is one of the most effective and outstanding products of our shared wisdom and the participatory discussion method we apply. With this program that we launched back in 2020, we ventured into holding a mirror to ourselves and our working environment as well as to the whole society, to identify the inequalities. We are well aware that, sexism often takes place behind the curtain. This is exactly why we used the Gender Lens as a metaphor to unveil this curtain and allow us to spot gender inequalities across all spheres of life. Yet, on top of that: "It is essential to make inequalities and the daily life practices that create them visible, but it is not enough," we said. That is why, acknowledging that we need to take action and responsibility to eliminate inequalities, we drew up the "Gender Equality Contract". All of our company leaders signed this Contract which consists of eight main areas of responsibility and is a part of the Gender Lens program. Essential articles of the Contract include the following: Equal opportunities in recruitment, equality approach in training and development, equality approach in career management, equality approach in wage management, equality approach in

performance management, equality approach in working conditions, equality approach in sustainability, and gender equality approach of our partners and stakeholders.

The Gender Lens is our key policy document that describes our approach and commitments to gender equality. In addition to the "Gender Equality Contract", we also published a guide called "Are you wearing your Gender Lens?" to demonstrate our will to implement our Gender Lens perspective. In this guide, we included checklists that are designed to remind our employees, leaders, communicators and human resources departments, of their responsibilities to achieve an egalitarian working life. Through these lists, we helped our colleagues hold a mirror onto themselves with questions such as "Do you take action to reach the targets for promoting women's representation?", "Do you avoid sexist expressions in all your public discourses", "Do you use expressions that glorify masculinity and degrade femininity?", "Do you avoid making sexist jokes?", and "Do you make sure men and women have balanced representation in visual materials?" which point out to the attitudes and behaviors that employees at all levels should adopt or avoid within the scope of their respective fields of authority and responsibility.

As you can see, these checklists are warning tools designed to remind us that each of us needs the "gender lens" when doing our jobs, and that when we take off or forget to wear this lens, we have the potential to become subjects of a system that fosters inequalities and discrimination.

**"Are you wearing your Gender Lens?" seems to incorporate a set of guidelines that could be challenging for and resisted by employees at all levels. As a person who has been leading all these efforts, what kind of resistance did you face or are you still facing?**

At one point, we faced some resistance against working with quantitative targets. Some of our colleagues refused to adopt the targets by saying "I don't want to put this issue into figures" or "This matter cannot be reduced to numbers". However, this is a quite neat escape point. Of course, we do not reduce gender equality to numbers when setting quantitative targets; yet, this does not make quantitative inequalities or the fact that we need to address them disappear! Today, we have come to a point where this resistance has been eliminated, and all of our leaders and executives now embrace our targets as the horizon for their work. When you make sure that people have a clear picture of the goals and the destination, the resistance fades away. Apart from that, the biggest problem we may face is losing focus or getting lost. There is a milliard of issues; they could lose track of them while thinking about which one to address, or where to begin. Or they could have a difficult time spotting where the problem is. And our task is to support them and provide guidance as they formulate their priority matrices. For instance, when we look at the company data, if we see a lack of mid-level female executives, we offer guidance by making a recommendation such as "In order for you to reach your target regarding the number of midlevel female executives, you need to increase the number of women at the entry-level by recruiting more white-collar women, which in turn would feed the middle level; this way the female employees you have hired would be promoted to the middle level in 3 to 5 years."

**The very existence of the Platform reflects your perspective on gender mainstreaming, and therefore, on the sustainability of Equal Borusan. In addition, having people with an extensive sphere of influence sit on the Group Committee is a key pillar of ensuring that what you do remains sustainable. What other plans do you have to promote the sustainability of Equal Borusan?**

I would like to answer this question in terms of Borusan's sustainability, rather than Equal Borusan's sustainability, because Equal Borusan is a key heading under Borusan's sustainability. As Borusan, we have three focus areas in the field of sustainability:



Equality approach to working conditions



Gender equality approach of our partners and stakeholders

*As you can see, these checklists are warning tools designed to remind us that each of us needs the "gender lens" when doing our jobs, and that when we take off or forget to wear this lens, we have the potential to become subjects of a system that fosters inequalities and discrimination.*

Climate, Human and Innovation. To us, innovation is a tool. One pillar of our sustainability efforts is tackling the climate crisis, and the other pillar stands out as reducing inequalities between people and promoting the sustainability of talent. Our commitment to reducing inequalities is where Equal Borusan comes into play. Therefore, Equal Borusan happens to be one of the six thematic working groups on sustainability. In this sense, their relationship could be likened to that of the egg and the chicken. That is to say, they are in a cycle; our equality efforts promote sustainability, and in return, our sustainability focus areas promote the persistence of these efforts.

**In My Opinion, Gender Equality is... How would you describe gender equality?**

I basically see equality as a human rights issue. Therefore, I consider gender inequality -for which there are attempts to justify on the basis of people's biological sexes- as a violation of human rights, and I am using my best efforts to stand up against this violation across all spheres of my life. Because, drawing on my personal experience, I know very well what gender inequality means, and the extent to which it can negatively affect a person's life. Personally, I have evolved from Nursel, who used to say "Luckily, I have not been treated differently because of my gender", to a point where I say, "Actually, I was subject to discrimination too". Obtaining this awareness is in fact, not an easy task; it requires spending time and effort, being honest with yourself, and not being afraid of learning and changing.

We need to see the world through the lens of gender equality to be able to grasp what equality and inequality entail, and to distinguish diluted forms of inequality. That's why

we say everyone needs the "gender lens"! This is because all of us, regardless of our class, education level, nationality etc. we face discrimination to different extents and in different forms, just because we are women.

Spotting inequalities and discrimination also means discovering what we can do to turn them around. As you navigate the sources of a problem, you would also follow the traces of solutions. As I indicated while describing our decision mechanism, when layer by layer discussing the problem, which we want to resolve, we also develop recommended solutions for each layer, simultaneously.

In my opinion, gender equality is an indispensable component of a decent life. In my work life before Borusan, I also developed and implemented projects aimed at promoting equality across the business world. Having reached where I am today after working for twenty-seven

years, I feel I have a much greater responsibility to use the power I have, to serve for equality. Although this is such a huge responsibility, I am truly glad to be in a position to implement equality policies. As we witness the impact of our work as Borusan, we recognize that we've got more things to say, further projects to develop, and new paths to discover.



appreciated as Borusan employees. That is why we say "Equal Borusan" instead of "We should be equal at Borusan"!

Secondly, Equal Borusan is like the manifestation of the roadmap I have drawn up for myself in life, based on the values I believe in. Equal Borusan is where my belief that an egalitarian and inclusive world is possible, and Borusan's corporate vision intersect. So much so that it doesn't even feel like I'm working while I spend all this time carrying out these efforts, because I see it as a pivotal opportunity and chance for me to touch the lives of so many people and lead the way for such remarkable endeavors.

Through the activities it carries out under the main heading of sustainability, of which Equal Borusan is also a component, and by creating an oasis -so to speak- in the middle of today's world where inequality is rampant, Borusan helps us foster our hope that a totally different world can be achieved.

*Personally, I have evolved from Nursel, who used to say "Luckily, I have not been treated differently because of my gender," to a point where I say, "Actually, I was subject to discrimination too." Obtaining this awareness is in fact, not an easy task; it requires spending time and effort, being honest with yourself, and not being afraid of learning and changing.*

We have named our decade-long work "10 Years Dedicated to Equality". We all cherish Borusan's efforts in the field of equality, which also make room for the personal dreams of each of us. Our mandate is to keep developing new projects that would make the world a more livable place for all of us... As we always say, "We are inspired by the world, we are inspiring the future."

**According to me Opinion, Equal Borusan is...**

**What would you say if I asked what Equal Borusan meant to you?**

First of all, it makes me feel appreciated. Of course, we all know that each one of us is appreciated and entitled to equality because we are human, but it is highly likely that we forget that due to the systematic inequalities and discrimination we go through. Borusan's declaration that each of its employees deserves equality and that it would mobilize its resources to achieve that, helps us remember and never forget that we are





# The Optimism of Will Refusing to Be Balked by the “Natural Flow”: *Simay Alsan / Borusan Otomotiv*

*Remove that protection, expose them to the same exertions and activities, make them soldiers and sailors and engine-drivers and dock labourers... Anything may happen when womanhood ceases to be a protected occupation.*

**Virginia Woolf, A Room of One's Own**



Equality approach in career management



Equality approach in wage management

I studied mechanical engineering at METU. I met Borusan during the METU career days. It was 1995. Since then, for the past twenty-seven years, I have been working for Borusan Otomotiv group. Over these twenty-seven years, I have worked in almost every position. I have had a multi-tier professional experience where I learned about the field, sales, parts, brand management, and marketing; in other words, I learned about the customers, the processes and the commercial aspects of the business. Currently, I am the General Manager of Borusan Otomotiv, and I also sit on the Executive Board.

## Trusting What You Feel

I always thought that I was very lucky to start my professional life in a company like Borusan Group where people are valued. I guess, partly because of that, when I set foot in the business world, I was not truly aware of the gender-based barriers. And of course, when they are young, people tend to be more idealistic and enthusiastic, so they may be willing to turn a blind eye on the barriers that stand in their way. But on the other hand, we all know that spotting gender discrimination is not that easy. This is because many forms of discrimination are indeed implicit. Gender roles and stereotypes associated with them are ingrained in people's codes. That is why, even if you sense something is going on, you may not take it as a direct discrimination against yourself, and at times, when such behaviors seem to be embellished with goodwill, it becomes even harder to spot the discriminatory aspects. On account of all these, I did not ponder over these issues until I got a position in senior management.

When I became a senior executive and joined the Executive Board for the first time, I was faced with two challenges: The first challenge was that I was an insider; so, everyone in senior management used to be my supervisors until a couple of days ago. The second one was that I was the only woman there. Hence, for a while, I felt alone and sometimes powerless. I am a straightforward person; if I have something on my



mind, I would say it without turning it around, and I do this even in settings where everyone thinks otherwise. But there were days when I couldn't voice my thoughts at that table. It's not like anyone was saying "You don't get to talk, Simay," but there was something preventing me, and that was, indeed, a feeling. And it was a feeling that rendered me inert. It was this feeling, I can say, that made me understand what it meant to be a woman in the world of business.

While I went through the situations I mentioned earlier as a member of the Executive Board, I came across the Women on Board Association Türkiye (WOB Türkiye) and it was where I found women's solidarity I was looking for. I saw that I was not the only one who felt that way and experienced all those things: It was only when I said "Oh, everyone is going through the same thing as me," I was able to understand even better what I had been going through. Based on our exchanges at the association, I came to realize that all women who made their way to level C, began to question themselves and tried to cope with feelings of loneliness, powerlessness and inadequacy when they encountered the men's club in the business world.

Another upside of the WOB experience that empowered me and all the women in it was that we talked about not only the barriers, but also coping strategies for them. Personally, I learned a lot from these exchanges. Besides, when you listen to these

stories, you also figure: If she overcame these problems, if she was able to thrive despite all this, I can do it, too.

In a nutshell, getting involved in WOB benefited me in many ways. After that, I promised myself that I would always support my female colleagues at the company. And of course, I also thought: Across the automotive industry, there is only a handful of women who made their way to level C. And I happen to be one of them. Therefore, if I am not the one who looks out for the women in the automotive industry, then who would that person be? Since then, starting with the recruitment process including who would be chosen as candidates, who would be hired for which position, and how much they would be paid, I started thinking about what more I can do to promote gender equality at every stage of the business processes and how I can contribute to building a more egalitarian and inclusive working environment at Borusan Otomotiv, and developing projects to achieve that.

## Women Hold the Key Project

A key endeavor I started with the aim of achieving gender equality across the company and of whose results we are all proud of is the "Women Hold the Key" project. It was me who came up with the idea for this project, but its actualization and success were of course the work of committed teamwork. All company employees, especially human resources and workshop teams took ownership of this idea and we worked together in harmony to carry it into effect.

Let me tell you the story of how the idea for the *Women Hold the Key* project materialized. When I started working, the ratio of female employees was around 23%. Over the years, this ratio went up to 25%, and then to 28% with a little more push; yet we were unable to reach the desired level. At the meetings, people would always say "Actually, as Otomotiv, we are doing fine in terms of women's ratio, but since we have the workshops, it is only natural that this ratio won't go up anymore." What they called "natural" was having men in the workshops! At last, I said, "We are fooling ourselves with

this discourse; if we find it natural to not have any women in the workshops and we don't do something about it, this won't work." In other words, I argued that we should start with "disrupting the natural" in the workshops. First, "No way that would work!" people objected. Most colleagues raising these objections were referring to the experiences of female employees who previously started working in workshops but did not continue. Whenever I brought up hiring women at the workshops, they were telling stories of how some female employees had quit, trying to convince me that it would not work.

It was true that the women who had been hired to the workshops did not turn out to be longterm workers, but this was a negative outcome whose underlying reasons we had to address; it could not be used as an excuse for not employing women again. I set forth two main strategies to turn this around. First, we will recruit women in groups to make sure they don't feel alone. When they are hired one by one, women quit their jobs before long because being the only woman in a room full of men is difficult for everyone! Second, "We need to develop a program designed to expand the pool of female technicians in the industry" I said. This is why, I suggested not only hiring inexperienced women and training them based on our own corporate culture, but also collaborating with technical high schools. That was my suggestion, but there were no girls in those schools, either! (Laughs). In addition, of the tiny number of female students in vocational high schools, most do not start a career after graduating. There is a school in Beylikdüzü: Borusan Asım Kocabıyık Vocational High School. I went there and talked to the teachers. "I promise to hire all female students in your mechanics and motor departments as soon as they graduate. "Invite female students to graduate from this school with the promise that 'you'll have a job waiting for you at Borusan when you graduate', and I will hire them immediately." I said.

*In the end, the person we hire may not be a woman, but I think it is essential for an executive to know that they must also recommend a female candidate, and that the female candidate continues to have a shot at being hired, at least up until the job interview. In short, the will of "having a female candidate is a must" is a must for equality!*

In the meantime, we transformed the working environment as well, taking into consideration women's presence. First, we made changes to the physical conditions. For example, the workshops did not have any women's restrooms or women's dressing rooms. Without ever finding excuses for these shortcomings, we promptly and neatly introduced women's restrooms and dressing rooms into the workshops. In addition, we prepared our male employees for the arrival of their female colleagues. We organized awareness-raising workshops on how to behave and how they can transform their language. The main theme of these workshops was: Women are not flowers, or angels; nor they are delicate beings that you hold dear and not hurt. They are your equal coworkers, whom you will support or compete with when the time comes.

In the first year of the project, we hired seven women to whom we provided training. One of them gave up and got another job, but six stayed. In the second year of the project, we recruited ten more women all of whom are still working with us. In addition, women from outside the project also began to apply for jobs individually. At Borusan Oto, we currently have a total of seventeen female technicians working with us. While

the ratio of female workers employed in the workshops was 2% a year ago, it went up to 7% the next year. I had the privilege of carrying many great ideas into action at Borusan, but there is something special about this project, with which I am satisfied on personal level, as well. Having made room for women in an area that is traditionally seen as a "man's job" thanks to the "Women Hold the Key" project happens to be the pursuit on which I pride myself the most in my life.

Inspired by the results of the Women Hold the Key project, we are more eager than ever to explore what else we can do to eliminate the distinction between what people define as a "woman's job" and a "man's job". Employing women, especially in units where there are no women is now my number one goal. Furthermore, I am also using my best efforts to increase the number of women working in each position. Even if you are at the top of a company's decision-making mechanism, it is way more difficult than you think to convince people for change. The second I turn my back everything goes back to 'factory settings'. Especially when there is an opening for a position which has the potential to disrupt the functioning of the company, it takes great commitment to be able resist for promoting equality in recruitment procedures. For example, in our industry, sales consulting is a key position that needs to be filled quickly, because prolonged vacancy in this position is directly reflected in your sales figures. Therefore, executives want to promptly fill an opening in sales consulting. Another key aspect of sales consulting across the automotive industry is that it is a job that is mostly sought after by men. Therefore, when you wish to fill this position as soon as possible and leave the process to its "natural flow", it is inevitable that almost all sales consultants are male. In order to turn this around, someone has to stop this "natural flow" and ask, "Wait, are there really no female candidates for this position?". Only then, a transformation in favor of equality can be feasible. That is why, I have imposed the requirement not filling a position -any position- unless there are enough female candidates, and I have persistently stood by this principle. We went through some tough times when I first introduced this requirement, but today, the executives intrinsically know that they should shortlist a female candidate. In the end, the person we hire may not be a woman, but I think it is essential for an executive to know that they must also recommend a female candidate, and that the female candidate continues to have a shot at being hired, at least up until the job interview. In short, the will of "having a female candidate is a must" is a must for equality! When you really hold on to this commitment, you see much better female candidates turning up, which in turn means that women's ratio in employment will increase over time.

If we want to eliminate the labels of "woman's job" and "man's job" in professional life, we need to see the other side of the coin, as well. In other words, our aim should be to increase the number of male employees in positions where there are no men. For example, all of the customer representatives in our industry are women. Across the company, there was an entrenched idea of referring to them as "girls in the front," which I forbade. Welcoming people and hosting them with a smiling face is associated with femininity. Yet, men are also perfectly capable of doing that job. As a matter of fact, we had so many male employees who excelled in this position in the past. In short, I am doing my best to eliminate the gendered segregation of labor by giving an opportunity to both male and female candidates for all positions that are traditionally associated with either gender.

#### **Diversity is Our Strength**

Back in 2017, I joined the London Business School Senior Executive Program. During my time in this program, which had existed for so many years, I got acquainted -in a striking manner- with how diversity have a positive impact on performance and business outcomes.



As part of the program, we did an activity: We were a group of about eighty people and they divided us into smaller groups of ten. They gave the same puzzle to each group and sent every group to separate rooms to solve it. Our group solved the puzzle in like five minutes and left the room. But the other groups did not leave their rooms. In the meantime, we talked among ourselves saying "It's actually such an easy puzzle, why does it take so long for them?". At the end of the activity, the organizer explained what happened in background. We learned that the groups had not been formed randomly. Since they had a lot of information about us, including our character analysis, they had divided us into groups according to our qualities. For example, they made sure that a group consisted only of analytical people, a group only of creative people, a group only of those with dominant leader qualities, a group only of men, and so on. The thing about my group was that it was characterized by diversity. At the end of the activity, they explained that the result was always the same with all ninety-two groups that had come before us: Each time, the group to solve the puzzle first was the one with diversity. It was a very impressive moment for me, because, in fact, it was like a practical crosschecking of what I had already known very well. Then, I truly believed in this. Throughout my professional life, regardless of my position, I cared about creating teams of diversity, not only in terms of male-female balance but also in every other sense.

Whatever we do, I have always believed that diversity is our strength and I have experienced this in practical terms, as well. For example, having women employed in workshops has changed the entire workshop environment in a positive way. The most obvious and effective changes took place in language. In women's presence, men began to speak more carefully and attentively. Such a positive change in communication was reflected upon the working environment as a whole. Now, whenever I visit the workshops, I can clearly see that the employees are happier than they used to be. That's why I have always insisted: We don't hire women as a favor to them. The main reason we hire women is to boost our performance. This is because we know that only through diversity, could the quality of our work be enhanced. The reason why we try to increase women's employment is not guided by a sentiment like "We need to support women." I would never want people to think that the policies and practices we adopt are underpinned by such a frame of mind. We aim to augment the quality of our work by integrating women's perspective as well as different knowledge and experiences of women into the team. So, our goal is: to address our shortcomings by incorporating what we do not have into our content, thus achieving better business outcomes.

#### In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...

In my opinion, gender equality is a core value and fundamental human right. The common denominator of all gender identities, male-female or other, is that they are human. In other words, some people are hardworking, and some are lazy; some are skillful, and some aren't. These qualities are not specific to any gender; they vary from person to person, and it would be wrong to label them based on gender. In my opinion, gender equality means basically turning to human rights by removing all kinds of labels.

#### In My Opinion, Equal Borusan is...

Equal Borusan is an umbrella perspective that incorporates the concept of equality, including gender equality, into the agenda of all executives. It is safe to say that Equal Borusan Platform is the embodiment of this perspective as a forum where we work on questions such as "What have we done to promote equality? How far have we come? What are our goals? What steps will we take?" and make decisions together with the representatives of group companies. The Platform is an organization promoting diversity, where numerous people of different genders, age groups, statuses and locations become involved. During our work with the platform, each and every time, we experience the power of shared wisdom, which is created by different ideas interacting with each other. Because no matter who they are, there is a limit to what a single person can contemplate, but the voice of a majority where diversity is embraced would, of course, have what it takes to uncover ideas that are more creative and solution-oriented. We are so glad to have it. Borusan has put an incredible effort into this pursuit for the past decade. Promoting equality in every sense is, of course, a responsibility I have taken upon myself as the General Manager of Borusan Oto, but I believe the way Borusan Holding has taken ownership of this issue and made sure that it stayed on our agendas for the past ten years is also something remarkable and worthwhile. We are well aware that there is a long way ahead of us to achieve equality, which requires a tenacious struggle. Therefore, we continue to ponder and discuss what else we can do together, by also paying heed to the changes that take place around the world.

*We aim to augment the quality of our work by integrating women's perspective as well as different knowledge and experiences of women into the team. So, our goal is: to address our shortcomings by incorporating what we do not have into our content, thus achieving better business outcomes.*

# How Equality is Reflected on Stage from Behind the Curtain: Borusan Sanat Round Table; Aydın Dorsay, Pelin Halkacı Akin, Sinem Duman Balkan

*Men are men, women are women, fathers are fathers, mothers are mothers, Japanese are Japanese, Americans are Americans... The categories into which people are included are constantly imposed on them by the outside world. Still, everyone surely possesses elements in mind and body that far overstep the bounds of name, function and position assigned by society. That is what I mean by gray areas. And that which gives shape to these gray areas that do not usually surface in everyday life is art.*

**Yasumasa Morimura**

"We see better when the curtain is closed," says Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra (BIPO). We had a chat with the Director of Borusan Sanat Aydın Dorsay, BIPO's Chief Violinist Pelin Halkacı Akin and Borusan Sanat's Corporate Communications Director Sinem Duman Balkan, and talked about the historical background of the technique called "blind auditioning", which is one of BIPO's hallmarks. We discussed how this technique is related to gender equality and the equality approach of BIPO.

**BIPO applies a method that is referred to as blind auditioning in the literature when selecting orchestra members. In this technique, which was first used in the United States back in the 1970s to prevent ethnic discrimination, the jury makes their decision without seeing the candidates who perform behind the curtain. So, as BIPO, when and how did you begin applying this method, which is also used by various orchestras around the world? Could you tell us about this method, including the stages of the process?**

**AYDIN DORSAY** After our Artistic Director Sascha Goetzl joined us in 2009, we have been using this method since 2010. We started using this method because it allows us to assess the musician's performance solely based on their talent, regardless of who they are, their gender, age, ethnicity, appearance, etc. This is because the realm of music is free from race, religion or gender; there are only musicians, and we principally seek after good music and good musicians.

**SİNEM DUMAN BALKAN** Let me describe the stages of our auditions and the method we use as follows: We offer auditions to people over the age of eighteen who have graduated from the relevant departments of the relevant conservatories or equivalent schools. We announce the conditions of our auditions on our website and corporate social media accounts. Through this announcement, we also provide the candidates with details of the five tracks they would be expected to play during the audition. Our auditions take place at Borusan Oto office in İstinye, which is also our rehearsal space.



The venue is arranged in such a way that the jury has no way to see the candidates or encounter them in any way. A black curtain is drawn on the stage so that the person behind it can't be seen.

We also take measures to protect the jury from hearing other sounds than that of the instrument. For example, we cover the floors with carpets and we also ask the candidates not to wear high heels so that the footsteps do not give any ideas, either. We prepare sequence numbers and ID numbers for the candidates, write them on pieces of paper and put them in two separate bags. Candidates draw their sequence and ID numbers from the bags before the audition. This way, we ensure that sequence and ID numbers are randomly assigned to candidates, eliminating any potential bias. When it's their turn, each candidate plays their instrument behind the curtain, and when their performance is over, they quickly leave the stage without being seen by anyone. Sitting in front of the curtain, the jury listens to the candidate's performance without ever seeing them, and gives scores based on the ID numbers.

**PELİN HALKACI AKIN** Although BIPO has been applying this method systematically since 2010, I would like to underline that our history of using this method actually dates back to earlier. For example, in 1999 (when we first began recruiting members) we played together with our beloved Cihat Aşkın and used this

method in an audition. We listened to the candidates from behind a curtain, as we do today. I think this is a very well suited and proper method for auditions, and I can assure you that the results from our audition so far, are proof of that.

**Professor Pelin, how does listening to a musician without seeing them relate to being egalitarian? If we see the performer as we listen, would the music we hear be any different?**

**P.H.A.** Herbert von Karajan once said, "The listener uses not only their ears but also their eyes." This is such a decent and accurate statement. This is because it is impossible for a person not to be influenced by what they see as they listen. For example, the person you are expected to appraise may be a friend of yours, and when you see them on stage, you would inevitably sympathize with them. There may also be people whom you find unlikable or disapprove as soon as you see them. All these feelings are human and when you take the seat as a jury member, you don't get to be free from them. That is why, having the curtain is essential not only because it prevents inequality between women and men, but also allows you to isolate yourself from all personal feelings such as empathy, sympathy or dislike. This way, you find yourself in a position to objectively rate the candidate based on the music you hear, which is ideal. Therefore, listening without seeing is closely related to the principle of equality.

Let me tell you a pleasant story from the world of music, about the relationship between seeing and listening. There is a widespread postulate that the famous violinist Jascha Heifetz was "too cold". Indeed, when you watch Heifetz perform on stage, he seems like a stone when he plays. Talking about this widespread discourse in an interview, another famous violinist, Itzhak Perlman says: "How can you call Heifetz cold? Close your eyes, he is not cold at all." Indeed, when you do as Perlman says and listen to Heifetz with your eyes closed, there is absolutely no way you call him cold.

**How do the members of the orchestra feel about this method you apply?**

**S.D.B.** They believe it is remarkably fair, and it builds trust. This is because everyone rests assured that, if someone has been recruited to the orchestra, it means they have earned it.



Equality approach in training and development

Everyone knows that they can get there if they have worked hard enough, and otherwise is not an option. Thanks to this understanding, no concern of injustice in connection with the auditions has ever been raised so far. Therefore, it is safe to say that this method allows us to choose decent musicians based on their talent. In addition, it leaves no room for doubt in the minds of the candidates as to whether the auditions were objective or not.

**It goes without saying that the blind audition method, as you have underlined, has a preventive effect against all forms of discrimination. Some studies suggest a positive correlation between the use of this method by orchestras and the surge in the number of female members. Could you say, this is also the case for BIPO?**

**A.D.** I can't really say that there is a direct positive correlation -like the one you have mentioned- between our use of the blind audition method and the number of our female members. When you look at the orchestras in Europe, you'd see that the ratio of female members is much lower compared to that of ours. Up until fifteen years ago, almost all orchestra members in Europe were men. And the few existing female members were unfortunately not given main roles. But when you look at the history of BIPO, you'd see that it has always had female orchestra members since its inception. Right now, 45% of our orchestra consists of women. Although the number of our male members is still slightly higher, we are nearly there, in terms of equal gender distribution. When we go on tours abroad, people are almost always surprised by the large number of our female members, which is probably something that has to do with prejudices against Türkiye. In addition to the general number, we have quite a few women in key positions including ensemble conductor. This is a factor that adds to their surprise.

When we look at the background of the increase in the number of female members over the years, on the other hand, I believe that other dynamics have been more effective than the blind audition method. One of them would be the greater number of women graduates applying for positions in orchestras driven by the surge in the number of female students in conservatories. In addition, I think the perspectives of the executives who have worked at BIPO to date have contributed to the positive picture

we have in sight today. Our executives' pursuit of good music regardless of the performer's gender and their commitment to bringing together the best musicians, must have yielded this result. As gender equality became a hot topic, people suddenly began to refer to us as the leading orchestra in this area. Yet, as a matter of fact, today we keep doing what we have always done in the past. What I mean is, we've never been driven by an ambition to have more female members in any of our endeavors; what we do is just avoid any form of discrimination as we pursue good music. In other words, the balanced distribution of men and women in our orchestra is indeed a "natural" outcome of our "normal" way of working.

**P.H.A.** I also think it is somewhat difficult to conclude that there is a direct link between the method we used in the auditions and the number of women in the orchestra. Over the past two decades, there has been a spike in the number of women across the music industry, and the surge continues.

When you look at the rest of the world, you'd also see a greater increase in the number of women in orchestras compared to that of men, except for very conservative orchestras such as the Vienna Philharmonic and the Berlin Philharmonic, or in countries like Russia where

male musicians are at the forefront. When we look at women's role across the music industry in Türkiye, on the other hand, I think we are ahead of Europe. For example, there are virtually no women in leadership positions in European orchestras, and the perception that women can't make their way to these positions is quite established. I would like to share an interesting story from my personal experience about this: This one time, I was in Vienna for a concert of Borusan, and my husband was with me, carrying my violin. When we stepped in the concert hall, our orchestra director introduced me to the hall manager by saying "Here's our chief violinist". Although our director pointed at me as he introduced us, the manager turned and shook my husband's hand. This is not something you would encounter in Türkiye, because here, people don't necessarily expect the chief violinist to be a man. Therefore, I have always considered myself very lucky to be a musician in Türkiye. Thankfully, I had role models like Gülden Turalı, Suna Kan and Ayla Erduran, who inspired me.

*As gender equality became a hot topic, people suddenly began to refer to us as the leading orchestra in this area. Yet, as a matter of fact, today we keep doing what we have always done in the past. What I mean is, we've never been driven by an ambition to have more female members in any of our endeavors; what we do is just avoiding any form of discrimination as we pursue good music. In other words, the balanced distribution of men and women in our orchestra is indeed a "natural" outcome of our "normal" way of working.*

I don't know how many people are really aware of this, but we are a generation that truly enjoys the advantage of having a leader like Atatürk, as we were born into an atmosphere of equal opportunities. Of course, the violence and discrimination women face in Türkiye cannot be denied. Every day, we hear all kinds of sad stories about it, but personally, I can't say I have ever been discriminated against on the grounds that I am a woman in the music industry. Besides, due to the nature of what we do, being discriminated against is indeed a bit far-fetched. This is because you perform your work on stage, in front of everyone. So, if you are doing it well, no one can argue that you are not good. If you are a good musician, your gender would not stand in your way.

**BIPO seems to have done a marvelous job regarding the number of female members, which is above the world average. Yet again, in view of the fact that the number of women and members of all alienated social groups has been gradually decreasing as they hit the "glass ceiling" when climbing the career ladder; how would you rate BIPO's performance with regard to gender distribution across the positions of conductor or soloist, which can be described as the "glass ceiling" of an orchestra? Do you have a special strategy to support people to break the "glass ceiling" that we call invisible borders?**

**A.D.** First of all, I would like to underline that I/we do not prefer to use expressions such as "female conductor" or "female soloist", but I/we do use it to promote visibility considering the circumstances of today's world. Hopefully, we will soon see the days when we won't have to use the adjective "female", and just refer to them as conductors or soloists.

We do not follow a strategy of including more female composers, conductors and soloists when formulating our concert programs. As in the case of how we pick





orchestra members, gender is not a criterion that drives our program choices.

For example, if you look at the time period from October to December 2022, you would see that our program features compositions exclusively by male composers. But starting from January, mainly female soloists and conductors will be on the stage. This is not something I did on purpose. It's just that the calendars coincided that way. In programming, our priority is ensuring that individuals excel in their roles, regardless of gender. After that, a series of parameters including the cost, calendar, repertoire, popularity, etc. come into play. We formulate our program after assessing all these variables all at once.

I have already emphasized that gender is not among the criteria we use in our programming; nevertheless, I should also note that we have sustainable planning in place, designed to make sure that female conductors are included in the program. I was truly surprised when I learned that, in the history of BIFO, there had been no female conductors in the program. This season happens to be the first time that female conductors have been included in the program.

We care about giving opportunities to female conductors (in view of all the dynamics I have just mentioned, of course). This is because I believe that experiencing their conduct will entail an educational and transformative aspect for all of us, and we need that. I can give you a first-hand account of a solid example as to how much we need this experience. At the 2020 music festival, a Norwegian female conductor directed BIPO for the first time. Later, I heard some people had felt uncomfortable being directed by a female conductor or made fun of it. Of course, a conductor's technique or professional competence can be criticized, and that is another issue; however, it is unacceptable to ridicule someone on the basis of their gender or use demeaning phrases like "How would a woman make a conductor?". Think about it: Things like this can happen even in an organization like BIPO. I got very upset when I heard all this, and after this experience, I said to myself, "There should always be a female conductor." You have to include female conductors to make sure that the members of the orchestra have a first-hand experience of this understanding. If you do that only once, it wouldn't be an experience; that's why I think continuity is essential and we all need this experience to be able to build a more inclusive work environment. Only if we can make this a perpetual experience, could it become usual for women to lead an orchestra, just like when men do it. Orchestra members should not see whether the conductor is male or female. During the concert, they must forget everything else, follow the baton in the conductor's hand and focus on playing the common tune that would satisfy us all.

We need to get our audiences used to seeing female conductors, too. The audience also has certain habits and edges. It's an experience they're not accustomed to, either. In short, I believe we need to educate both our audience and ourselves about this. Our 2023 program will feature three different female conductors of different age groups. Let's see how our experience with them would be like; we can't wait to see the concerts.

**P.H.A.** Maybe it will be repeating what has already been said, but I would like to note that I am also against using the expression "female conductor". If a conductor gets a wonderful result when they stand before me in the orchestra, I don't care whether it's a woman or a man! But unfortunately, I will keep using the term "female conductor" for now in the name of positive discrimination, especially in view of the inequality across Europe.

Going back to your question, I'm not sure if there is any discrimination against female conductors. At least that's not the case in Türkiye, I can say. But when we examine the statistics, it becomes evident that there are more male conductors than female ones. This may be due to the global perception of conducting as a predominantly male occupation, and it appears that women are less inclined to pursue it. Additionally, conducting is a demanding profession, and only a small fraction of individuals, typically three or four out of a hundred, possess the qualifications for it. When the number is tiny, good examples are also scarce. In other words, the more material you have, the greater the number of people would be, who are highly qualified and have the capacity to properly do what the job requires. But there are also incredible female conductors like Marin Alsop, who decided to become a conductor, with great determination at a very young age. A truly impressive documentary about Alsop has recently been released. When she tells her father that she wants to be a conductor, her father says "In what world could a woman be a conductor?", but in the end, she doesn't give up on her dream. Of course, she must have gotten there by pushing her way through some very established prejudices. But somehow, she made it.

What I mean is, as I said earlier, if you do a job well, no one can tell you otherwise. But you have to do it so well that they can't hold you back. If you do a mediocre or slightly below average job, you would be easily hindered. This is how I interpret the proportional scarcity of female conductors. Greater participation by women in this field would likely yield more remarkable female conductors who can leave a lasting legacy, much like Claudio Abbado and Leonard Bernstein.

#### What do you think gender equality means? How would you describe it?

**A.D.** I would describe it as a paradigm where equal conditions and opportunities are available to all social groups, and they have equal access to these conditions and opportunities. In my opinion, equality means under no circumstances one party is favored or to the contrary, discriminated against; that is, everyone is treated as equally and fairly to the greatest extent possible.

**S.D.** In my opinion, gender equality means that people are allowed to express themselves freely, and that everyone in a society can speak up and exist as individuals with equal rights.

**P.H.A.** I too perceive gender equality as being able to assess a person completely on their merits, regardless of their gender, race, nationality, religion, i.e., no matter who they are.

#### What would you say if I asked what Equal Borusan meant to you?

**A.D.** In my opinion, Equal Borusan is the understanding that prioritizes not "me" but "us".

**S.D.** In my opinion, Equals Borusan means belonging; working for an organization that is equal gives me a sense of belonging.

**P.H.A.** On my part, I have always been proud of what Borusan does. You know how Asım Kocabıyık said "I owe this country a debt of gratitude. I have worked all my life to pay it off". Borusan is indeed a company that fulfills its responsibilities to pay off this debt, moving forward on the path to a modern civilization drawn by Atatürk. Today, Mr. Ahmet and Ms. Zeynep continue to manage Borusan with the spirit of accomplishing the mission they have inherited from Mr. Asım. As a matter of fact, it would be wrong to call Borusan a company; Borusan is rather a family. I am so happy and proud to be a part of this family, which has never stopped supporting musicians during the pandemic -a very difficult time for Türkiye, but especially for musicians, and which offers educational scholarships to girls, takes action to promote equality under the umbrella of Equal Borusan and implements a series of other social responsibility projects.

# Reaching for the Sky: H. Özlem Caymaz / Borusan Cat

*We are a group that has been the target of the sarcastic laughters of men who call us 'the ones with long hair but short intellect'. We will do our best to prove them wrong. By not preferring masculinity over femininity or femininity over masculinity, we will resist as much as possible as we follow the clear and true path of labor.*

**Arife, Şükûfezar Journal, 1886**



Equality approach in  
performance management

I'm from Borusan, born and raised. I started working at Borusan Cat in 2002 right after graduating, and I have been here for the past twenty-one years. First, I started working at the financial control and finance department as what they called "trainee" back in the day, which is the equivalent of what people call "alpha" today. Later, I became a black belt in 6 Sigma (management strategy for operational excellence). Then, in the chronological order, I worked as the financial control leader in the energy-transport industry, the strategy and 6 Sigma Project Manager, and then I got transferred to the operations (parts & service & after-sales) department. For the past three years, I have been working as the CFO (Chief Financial Officer).

I am very glad to be familiar with all the business procedures and processes that I have the privilege of managing today as the CFO, thanks to the experience I got by working across different fields in the past. I know the difficulties associated with issuing an invoice, the complex nature of reporting, the excitement one draws from following new strategies, the satisfaction of fulfilling a customer's request, or the challenges of working for a service. In other words, I have full command of all the dynamics involved in business processes, which I think a CFO should know about.

## The key to overcoming all challenges: Self-Confidence

Looking back over my career at Borusan, I feel the hardest but most enjoyable times would be my years in the operations department. It was marvelous, indeed. At my job in operations, I was responsible for the service, parts and all after-sales support functions. All the positions I worked in prior to the service were more or less central roles, but even though I was the operations manager, my job at the service required my *de facto* presence in the field.

When I was offered the position as the head of operations, I had so many questions in my mind. I was not an engineer; I did not know about the parts, the machinery, or the processes in the service. I have always had a thirst for learning and a self-confident



nature. Back then, there were five hundred and fifty people working in the operations department and more than 90% of them were men, but that I wasn't intimidated by that. Borusan has an egalitarian culture where. This egalitarian corporate culture, where your accomplishments and efforts are appreciated, also boosts your self-confidence. Nonetheless, when you are offered such a key role at Borusan Cat, no matter how great your self-confidence may be, you get butterflies in your stomach. As the highlight of my story at Borusan, I was thrilled about the target of "Transformation in Service" which was assigned to me as part of this new role, and I rolled up my sleeves (Smiles).

When I became the head of the service and started working, I saw that some of the concerns I felt, from time to time, in connection with being a woman, were not that unfounded. My company and I were ready for this role, but we also made sure that our colleagues and stakeholders get accustomed to working with a female executive. Frankly, during that time, I must admit I had some difficulties with the relationship we had established and at the end of the period where I finally grasped how to manage this process, I had been blessed with a series of new executive qualifications. Just like our team of highly qualified, well-equipped and well-educated 'nice people' at Borusan Cat, a great majority of our customers consist of stakeholders who have the same qualities and with whom we are proud to be business partners.

However, on rare occasions, people may look at you in surprise in a manner of asking "Oh, are you the manager?". In such cases, the question pops in your mind: "Is this person disappointed to see me?" The support of your managers who trust you and have faith in you is what makes it much easier to focus on your work at such times five hundred and fifty people working in the operations department and more than 90% of them were men, but that I wasn't intimidated by that. Borusan has an egalitarian culture where success and effort are acknowledged. That's exactly what I did over this period and focused on my work under all circumstances. When I got the support and resources I needed, it became easier for me to get out of even the most difficult situations. I've learned that you have to accept certain situations as they are and take actions that would empower you in that setting. For example, if I was convinced that the client would be more comfortable talking to a man, I would bring along a male colleague from my team to the meeting. Before the meeting, we would make a division of labor like "These are the questions you'll ask, and these are the ones I'll ask". In other words, I never said "I'm the boss so I'll do the talking"; I always came up with tactical solutions on how to communicate more robustly, and how to do our job better. In other instances, some people thought I was too young. On such occasions, I would talk about my fifteen-year-old son and my plans for him, which promoted a sense of empathy.

While I went through all this with external stakeholders, I can confidently say that I have never had any negative experiences with any of my colleagues in this regard. I told you, I was born in Borusan. The genes of this group are now my genes, as well. So, this actually doesn't surprise me at all. I am sure that, even if some people said "A woman will be our manager, but what does she know about our job" after hearing that I was going to be the head of this unit, we have overcome these prejudices together, learned how we are confined by the stereotypes we have in our society, and experienced how nice it is to break down the prejudices. Looking back over those days from where I stand today, I see that I experienced some emotional difficulties from time to time

because I was a woman. As I said earlier, I have managed to handle all these difficulties by resorting to various tactics, but in the end, I am an executive, and sometimes I find myself wondering “What am I dealing with?”... Back in those days, our job was the only thing that mattered, so we focused on doing it properly, then we didn't care about the rest. Maybe I also had some concerns regarding what people would think about me because I was a woman. But my faith in myself and my job always pushed them down the list, and I focused on thriving by holding on to the sentiment that I could do this job.

By the way, if I'm being honest, after I take office, there were times when I really didn't understand anything. Someone talks about engines, others about gearboxes; a milliard of technical terms of which I had no grasp were flying around. I was nodding in approval of what was being discussed during the meetings, but it was as if they were speaking another language. I had a notebook where I jotted down the words, I didn't understand so I could look them up later and learn. But I got a grasp of the field by working hard and listening carefully to my colleagues; and I believe I did a fine job managing this entire process with the help of great teamwork.

### Revolution in Service

Service is one of the most difficult and complex jobs in the world. Usually, everyone calls you only when they need a solution. That is why, as I explained earlier, the job itself, that is, due to the nature of things, had its challenges.

When you step into a service, you would hand over your equipment and you demand the quickest, best quality and most cost-effective solution. And you would want to be informed at each and every step. As in the case of others, people in our industry have no patience to wait. A day lost is the largest cost item. Therefore, providing fast and quality service is crucial in the service business.

When I took office, there were nine warehouses, nine different workshops, nine different external services located in nine different regions. This system led to a low customer satisfaction rate and necessitated improvements in our business processes. We had to change our business model so that we could provide faster and higher quality service. Our first course of action was to review -one by one- all processes involved in customer experience. What would customers want in the first place? They would want a prompt way to reach you, deliver their equipment quickly, and of course, receive quality service. We developed a system that effectively incorporated all these elements, and it was so successful that we dubbed it a ‘Service Revolution’.

The first step of this revolution was to establish a call center designed to enable customers to reach us quickly by dialing a standard phone number and allowing us to collect incoming requests in a single pool. At the service, we have experienced technicians who have what it takes to solve some problems even over the phone; so, we made sure that these colleagues are part of the communication center, and we introduced a premium membership system. Customers who signed up for this system now had the chance to dial the number of the call center and directly get through to our experienced technicians who would solve their problems. Then “Why do we bother managing nine different facilities using nine different capacities, and different methods?” we asked.

Therefore, after a series of analyses, we decided that we would have workshops in two main locations, one in Ankara and the other in Istanbul. Thus, we transformed nine small workshops into two large workshops (actually, it would be more accurate to call them factories). In the same vein, we reduced nine different warehouses to two, and we partnered with Borusan Lojistik to do that. We have been managing the warehouses through Borusan Lojistik, which are essentially under our administration. The other two key pillars of the revolution are our WEKING digital platform, which integrates external services through a mobile app, and the SWAT team consisting of

our most experienced team, which has been designed as the technical brain of the service. (SWAT: Special Ways and Tactics) Thanks to WEKING, we can keep track of all the steps including when the technician leaves the warehouse and turns up to meet the customer. Providing 24/7 services all over Türkiye, SWAT has the capacity to detect the problem in the field and offer guidance to the technician on how to address the problem, thanks to the equipment and practices used by the field technicians, in the event that the situation requires showing up at the scene in person.

Therefore, if we call it a revolution, then we should not be afraid of crossing the borders, we thought. In other words, we said “We should be able to provide the equipment and expertise that a customer needs, regardless of where they are” and it was a success. Thanks to this approach, where we made sure that we had the customers' needs at heart, we were able to establish a system that also improved our working conditions, reduced the costs and amplified our speed. That's why we proudly call it the “revolution in service.”

Another aspect of this process that I cherished on a personal level would be the way we made room for women's employment. I wanted the new ten engineers to be hired to the service team to consist predominantly of women, but since most of the CVs we received had been submitted by men, we were able to recruit only four female engineers. Later, similarly, my plan was to definitely pick some female candidates when recruiting technicians, and we employed two women in this position.

Ultimately, I am so delighted with and proud of this entire process which we call the “Revolution in Service” and the results it has yielded. We were able to achieve all this thanks to a great team who knows what they are doing. When I look at things now, I admit we still have a long way to go. Development and change are something that's never over, but I believe, with all the work we have done, we have taken the right steps on this path.

*As I listened to my friends in the association talk about their experiences, I came to realize how genuine the “glass ceilings” were, and how strong the women who could break them are. This is because when going through all that, you may even not realize it that well. And sometimes, as you listen to others, you become estranged from yourself and wonder “Did I also go through that? What a difficult life it must be.”*

### “...so much work to do here.”

A year ago, I joined the Women on Board Association. I have been attending its program for the past year, and I will be graduating in 2023. I am pleased to be a part of the association with my sisters. It has been both an educational and enjoyable experience for me. We all have so much work to do here.

As I listened to my friends in the association talk about their experiences, I came to realize how real the “glass ceilings” were, and how strong the women who could break them are. This is because when going through all that, you may even not realize it that well. And sometimes, as you listen to others, you are estranged from yourself and wonder “Did I also go through that? What a difficult life it must be.” (She smiles). But in fact, you get so focused on doing your job well that you later come to realize





that you can't even define what you've been through because you didn't even have the chance to look back over what you had experienced.

This is the twenty-first year of my professional life. It's evident that things have improved recently, but the past was significantly more challenging. In many companies, senior management positions were almost exclusively occupied by men. And as a woman, you couldn't even dream of becoming a senior executive, looking at that picture. Similarly, you turn around to look at the board, and see they are all men. So, when you look up, you don't see diversity! And of course, this keeps you from looking "up". "How can I even get there?" you ask yourself. But what's worse is that, after a while you stop wondering and don't even think that's even a possibility. That's why, I always personally meet my female colleagues who have just started working with us and do my best to motivate them about all the things they can achieve. For me, fulfilling this role is both my duty and responsibility as a leader.

Let's say you've decided to follow your dream to climb "up" despite this almost entirely negative picture, and you aspire to advance in your career. It means that you acknowledge, from the beginning, that you have to make a lot more sacrifices. For example, if there is a business trip, and you are married with children, people may assume that you wouldn't want to travel. Therefore, they can scratch your name off the list thinking "She can't travel anyway," without even asking you. However, first of all, how would you know that I can't go on a trip

after arranging my household and family responsibilities? Secondly, do I really have to travel that much to be able to do my job? As a matter of fact, I can manage a lot of work remotely, which is something we all experienced during the pandemic.

The need for positive discrimination as a strategy to help women break the glass ceiling is another hot topic. Personally, I informed my supervisor that I didn't want to benefit from positive discrimination, under any circumstances. This is because, again, it can potentially have adverse effects on women. It can be frustrating to feel like people think you only got your job because you're a woman. But I am in favor of positive discrimination to increase women's employment, i.e. choosing a woman among two equally qualified candidates. This has to happen so that the numbers of men and women can be properly equalized at some point in history.

I think that one of the biggest difficulties female managers face is that they do not have a margin of error. Personally, I have had much less tolerance for failure in every role I have assumed throughout my career. You have to prove that you can excel under any circumstance, because there are many people who are waiting for you to fail and will be quick to label your failure. I should also point out that this self-assertion is not something I associate just with my superiors or co-workers. I am working hard to set an example for future generations and my own daughter. And yes, this approach puts a lot of pressure on oneself. We may question whether a female leader should bear such a heavy burden. Maybe not, but I personally believe we should see it as a burden of transition and carry it. Our generation did not have the chance to climb the career

ladder without feeling pressure, but perhaps, thanks to this shared burden, the next generation of female leaders will feel less pressure, and they will be able to continue on their way with less weight on their shoulders. Personally, I am not troubled by these burdens. In fact, I am happy to bear them for the sake of other women and the next generation.

#### In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...

For March 8, 2020, Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra released a video in which the conductor said: "We see better with the curtain closed." I think this video explains very well what we really need to understand about gender equality. In the video, we see that BIPO selects candidates by listening to them play behind a curtain. In other words, a person is selected for the orchestra or not based on their work and how well they play their instrument, regardless of their gender or any other qualities. I believe this is what equality means: Making sure that people are (or can) be assessed only on the quality of their work, regardless of their eye color, school, religion, hair color, gender, or country. If we can get to a point where we assess people only by their work and abilities, that means we have taken the most important step on the path to equality.

#### In My Opinion, Equal Borusan is...

In my opinion, Equal Borusan is the general name for the work we are doing to reach a world where we no longer need to have conversations like this one, and where we no longer need to publish books about the tenth or twentieth anniversary of equality. Borusan Equal is working towards a world where these conversations will no longer be necessary. It is dragging us towards this goal.

Even though we are not there yet in every area, I believe it is an achievement in itself that we now talk about equality, Borusan has incorporated this concept into everything we do, and never takes it off our agenda.

*Özlem'in yaptığı, Ayşe'nin yaptığı ancak 1+1=2 olur. Ama bu bir kurum politikası olduğunda, kurumun DNA'sının içerisine yerleştirildiğinde, 1+1=5 olabilir hatta belki 10 da olabilir. Bu nedenle Borusan Eşittir'in yarattığı etkiyi ve değeri çok önemli buluyorum.*

I think Equal Borusan has an impact that increases the likelihood of female employees having dreams for their career journeys. It is also very admirable that the organization acts as the catalyst in this regard. This is because, only through individual efforts, what Özlem or Ayşe does would be only 1 + 1 = 2. However, when this becomes a corporate policy that is embedded in an organization's DNA, 1 + 1 could equal to 5 or even 10. That is why I find the impact and value created by Equal Borusan to be very important.

When we say "Equal Borusan," we don't just mean gender equality, although that happens to be the case for most people. We mean that we will strive to ensure that all groups that experience discrimination and inequality in life are treated equally. Today, when we look at the figures, I am happy to see that we are on our way to a good place in terms of women's employment.

# Envisioning a World without Edges: Muzaffer Öztürk / Borusan Mannesmann

*Imagine living in a world where there is no domination. Imagine living in a world where females and males are not alike or even always equal, but where a vision of mutuality is the ethos shaping our interaction. Imagine living in a world where we can all be who we are, a world of peace and possibility.*

**Bell Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody***



Equality approach in  
career management

I am Muzaffer. I was born in Bursa in 1980. I am married with four children. I am what people used to call a 'tomboy' back in the day. I love this saying because it perfectly reflects me: Someone who does not hold back from doing things most people would hesitate to do, and successfully overcomes every challenge.

I graduated from the electronics department of a vocational high school in 1997. Because I studied in a male-dominated department, I was the only female student throughout my school life. In my work life too, I have consistently worked in male-dominated industries and roles traditionally associated with men. After getting married, I didn't work for a while, but then I started working for our family business, which was also in a male-dominated sector. My husband owned a business where he manufactured awnings and tarpaulins. When his apprentice left, he was unable to keep up with the workload, so I started working there. After a while, I took over the manufacturing entirely, and the only thing my husband did was collecting the orders (Laughs). This business of ours went bankrupt, and my husband got a job in a factory. At that time, my son got into college. I also needed to get a job to pay for his tuition. That's when, I applied to Borusan Mannesmann. I don't know where the idea came from, but I had always wanted to work at Borusan. Thankfully, my prayers were answered.

In 2017, I started working as a machine operator at Mannesmann. I was the only female machine operator at the time. Later, I was promoted to head the newly established treatment plant. I then switched to mechanical maintenance. I am currently one of the few women working in mechanical spelling mistakes: maintenance.

So, what does a mechanical maintainer do? They detect malfunctions, perform predictive maintenance (just-in-time maintenance: maintenance that allows you to know when a malfunction would occur), and intervene immediately in the event of a malfunction. In short, I can do anything with machines, such as troubleshooting noise, maintaining bearings, cleaning boron oils, and replacing filters. Thanks to Borusan, I discovered how much I love machines. You see, the machines here are my babies (Laughs).



## **"I can do it!"**

When I applied for a job at Borusan, I was 37 years old, weighed 124 kilograms, and wore a headscarf. I looked like an "aunt". I describe myself this way because we all know that first impressions are important, and it was hard for me to give the impression that I was a machine-savvy person based on my appearance. When I showed up for the job interview, I remember the look on Mr. Arif's face when he saw me at the door. He looked at me as if he said "What are you doing here?" Obviously, he didn't expect someone like me to apply for the job. During the interview, Mr. Arif's astonishment continued to grow. He was surprised to learn that I had graduated from the electronics department of a vocational high school. My diploma score was also quite good; I was one of those students who finished school in two and a half years under the score credit system which was in place back then. "There are a lot of men out there waiting in line for this job. Do you think you have what it takes to leave them behind?" Mr. Arif then asked. I replied, "Sorry, but I don't categorize people as men and women. It is just some people do their job well, and some do it badly." I pointed to my hands and said, "Look, I have large hands. I've done a lot of 'manly' things with them." I will never forget how Mr. Arif's smiled as he said, "I believe you can do this job." I smiled back and said confidently, "I believe in myself too. I can do it." (She smiles). This is the story of

how I got into Borusan. Everyone around me told me "They won't hire you," but I didn't even hesitate and always said "I can do it!". I always believed in myself, but Mr. Arif and Borusan might not have believed in me. They gave me the opportunity to see what I can do and prove myself, and in return, I worked hard to do my job at its best. That's what I continue to do so today.

When I first got into Mannesmann, two other female friends were hired at the same time as me. Another group of women had been hired before us, and we were the second group. Mannesmann was a male-dominated factory, and at the time, men didn't believe that women could do the same jobs as them. We had to struggle with a lot of prejudice, especially when we first started working.

I'll never forget the first day I stepped into the factory with my two colleagues, after our training finished. One of them looked around and said, "We're going to die here!". And I said, "No, why would we? We'll work and do our job just like they do." We were hired as machine operators, but we didn't know what exactly we would be doing. I set my eyes on the saw machine and said, "I want to work on that." Everyone laughed at me. The saw machine is a dangerous equipment that is hard to operate. Then, our supervisor came over and asked me where I wanted to work. I said, "I want the saw." "Are you sure you can do it?" he asked. "We won't know unless we try. If you trust me, I'd like to give it a shot." I said. He gave me the opportunity, and I'm so grateful. As I said earlier, it doesn't matter how much you say you can do something. If you're not given the opportunity, if you are held back, you'll never know.

When I started working on the saw machine, some of my colleagues asked, "What is a woman doing here?". Others laughed and said, "Are you going to be a saw operator?". Despite the exclusionary and cynical attitudes I faced, I resolutely said, "Yes, I will do this job." Two or three days after I started working on not come to an end, the saw

machine, I asked my supervisor for permission to use the stone engine. Normally, they wouldn't let someone use it so soon due to the risk of accidents, but my supervisor gave me permission. A stone engine is a tool used for cutting metal pipes to take samples. When I said, "I can take the samples if you want," my friends were startled. I told them that I had used these tools in my previous job where I worked with my husband, but I guess they didn't believe me, because they stood next to me the entire time to see if I could do it. They probably expected to get a good laugh after seeing me run away when sparks would start flying around after I turned it on (Smiles). But to their astonishment, I successfully took the sample, examined it, and performed the crush test. They were shocked to their core. Even though they had seen me operate the equipment, they couldn't believe their eyes.

*I knew I was precious as a child, and I know it now. But I always had to fight to get the appreciation I deserved. Right now, I don't want anyone, especially children, to have to fight so hard.*

At first, our male colleagues thought we couldn't do the job because we were women. Some of them tried to teach us with good intentions, thinking we didn't know how to do the job (but I knew so much about it). Then, when they saw that we were perfectly capable of doing it, they started to compete with us. I can say that the way our male colleagues approached us and our work went through a transformation.

Once they were convinced that I was good at my job, they accepted me. Now, I am like an older sister to them. However, until they accepted me, I went through a lot. Some days I left the factory crying. I can say that what I went through was psychological violence. I was constantly exposed to words and behaviors that implied or openly stated, "You just can't do it." But I have to admit, once they accepted me, I was so pleasant that I forgot all about those bad days. I am now in mechanical maintenance, which is one of the most difficult parts of the job. Being able to accomplish something so difficult makes me even happier.

#### **Transformation is Viable**

Yes, my colleagues have accepted me, but I think they still don't fully comprehend what women can do. A year ago, we attended training together to work in the mechanical maintenance department. During training, one of my male colleagues said to another, "Even a woman can do what you do", pointing at me. The other replied, "You think she is a normal woman?" (Laughs). We all laughed at this comeback, but although it seems to praise me, it actually underestimates me as a woman. According to him, I can do this job because I'm not "normal," so he continues to think less of women who he believes are "normal". It's not enough for male employees to see me as their older sister and accept me. They also should be prepared to welcome all women who would start working there, and show them the respect they deserve. So, what I mean is that the words and behaviors that look down on women will not come to an end, but our rightful cause to defeat them will not end, either. Referring to my warrior personality, they once called me an "Amazon." I didn't know what it meant back then, but when I found out that it

means "warrior woman," I liked it so much. Indeed, when someone tells me I can't do something, it gives me great pleasure to fight tirelessly and to prove them wrong.

Despite all the prejudices I have mentioned earlier, there have been many positive changes among our male colleagues and in our working environment. It truly pleases me to see these changes. Currently, there are 30 permanent female employees working here, and although our number is still low, it is growing. Borusan is doing a lot of work to transform its male employees. Thanks to these efforts targeting men and the gradual increase in the number of women, our working environment is becoming much more egalitarian. As you know, men like to talk and act "comfortably" among themselves. But our male colleagues, even our supervisors, and managers, think twice about how they would speak if we are around or if they have something to tell us.

Our division of labor in the workshop is also very egalitarian. I am meticulous and I can't work in a messy environment. One day, I couldn't take it anymore and started cleaning up the workshop. Seeing that, my supervisor came up to me and said, "We work here together. We will clean the workshop together. Next time, don't start cleaning up on your own". Now, when I start cleaning, my colleagues follow my lead right away. In other words, at Borusan, we learned that we should not only be able to use the same equipment in the workshop but also that we should be equal in all kinds of work.

Borusan has imbued us with this awareness, but I also know that we still have a lot to learn and change. This is because we all grow up with a lot of preconceptions about what femininity and masculinity are or should be.

#### **Knowing that you are equal and precious**

I wasn't truly valued in my childhood. I was always in my brother's shadow. He was given opportunities that I wasn't, and I always felt like I was second best. There is a memory from my childhood, which I never forget, but could only come to terms with after I turned forty. I remember one day when my father came home with my brother. He had bought him a suit and a bicycle. I thought he must have bought me a dress too, so I ran to get the bag. When I opened it, I was crushed to find that it was the second suit he had bought for my brother. Whenever I think of that moment, I can imagine it vividly, but it took me years to understand why my father did that, and how exactly I felt as a child.

It was only at the age of forty that I realized that all this was called discrimination. My father loved me, of course, but he saw my brother as the one who would carry on the family name. He valued him more, and I knew it. As a child, I also sensed back that no matter what I'd do, I could never be as good as my brother, and it took me years before I could admit that I was seen as less valuable just because I was a girl. I knew I was precious as a child, and I know it now. But I always had to fight to get the appreciation I deserved. Right now, I don't want anyone, especially children, to have to fight so hard.

Today, I do my best to make sure my children don't go through what I did because of the way my father treated me. I constantly strive to make them feel that their gender doesn't matter. Each one is precious, and I will always respect their choices in life. I value their opinion in every decision they make about their own lives. All I ever do is stand by them in their decisions. They decide for themselves what color their rooms would be, or which major they would choose in college. I didn't paint my daughter's room pink and my son's blue. I never told my daughter, who wants to become a physiotherapist, "The best profession for a girl is being a teacher". I think it's cruel to stereotype children by their gender. Judging them solely based on their gender means not giving them the chance to show us what they can do. We kill all their potential by dictating "This is how



girls should act and this is how boys should behave". I saw a cartoon that illustrates this perfectly, which I found very amusing and inspirational: In the cartoon, children are sitting at their desks, daydreaming. Their dreams are floating above them in the form of clouds. Then, their teacher shows up and replaces each cloud with squares. We should not be adding edges to our children's dreams based on their gender. Instead, we should set them free, let them be themselves, and help them unleash their enthusiasm to achieve things.

In connection with that, let me share a pleasant story about my 9-year-old daughter. She is a bit mischievous, and she keeps getting into fights with boys and comes home with bruises (She laughs). One day, she got into a fight again, and her teacher called me and said she needed to see me. The teacher was very upset with my daughter, and she said, "Madam, she needs to act like a lady and sit quietly. None of these happen to other girls." I responded, "I don't want my daughter to act like a lady and sit quietly. She needs to keep moving and fighting so that she can learn to stand on her own two feet in life." Sure, the teacher was not happy with my answer, but I stood my ground. I learned how to respond to my daughter's teacher and stand up for her at Borusan. This is where I discovered my own capacity and power. When a person succeeds in one area, they can speak out in other areas as well. It is all about being aware of our own worth.

#### **In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...**

In my opinion, gender equality is primarily about seeing the other person as a human being. Being a woman or a

man does not define who we are. Our genders, like being rich, poor, or an engineer, are just one of our many qualities. In this world, we all need to be valued, treated kindly, respected, and loved. Everything else is trivial. We need to celebrate the fact that we are still breathing. As long as we are alive, there is nothing we cannot fix. But once our breath is gone, that is when our ability to fix things ends.

#### **In My Opinion, Equal Borusan is...**

When someone says Borusan, the first word that pops into my mind would be "value". The most obvious feeling I got as I worked here would be that I was valued and I deserved equality just because I am human. We are truly equal in everything, including opportunities, pay, and education. I always feel cherished, special, and respected here, and it means everything to me.

Equal Borusan touches the lives of not only the employees of Borusan, but also those of their children. Based on what I learned during the trainings I attended here, the way I treat my children and my relationship with them has also changed. Imagine a world where every Borusan employee's home goes through a transformation like the one in mine, thanks to what I learned at Borusan. All these efforts are so marvelous and essential!

Looking back over the fear I felt when I first started working for Borusan, wondering if I really could do it, the prejudices I faced, and the way my selfconfidence grew as I

thrived... After fighting my way through to where I am today, I can say I am both proud and happy with what I have accomplished. Now I say to myself, "You have done all that, and you can do anything else." After spending five years at Borusan, I am now a totally different person who says "I am valuable and self-sufficient."

*When someone says Borusan, the first word that pops in my mind would be "value". The most obvious feeling I got as I worked here would be that I was valued and I deserved equality just because I am human. We are truly equal in everything, including opportunities, pay, and education. I always feel cherished, special, and respected here, and it means everything to me.*

# Energetic Trails: Borusan EnBW Enerji Round Table

## Canan Coşkun Güleç, Ece Yetişen Sun, Gülcan Taş, Hanife Serin, Demet Sekman Karabağ

*Given that women are now as involved in business as men, and that there is no reason why they should not be even more involved in two years' time, why shouldn't there be a trade department for our girls in our schools? Why should our girls be denied vocational education?*

**Hayganuş Mark, Hay Gin, 1920**



Ortak ve paydaşlarımızın toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği yaklaşımı

We had a conversation with Demet Sekman Karabağ, a Renewable Energy Technologies teacher at Aydın/Efeler Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School, high school students Gülcan Taş and Hanif Selim, and Borusan EnBW Enerji's Human Resources Manager Ece Yetişen Sun and Corporate Communications Manager Canan Coşkun Güleç about the background, objectives, activities that are realized and planned, the effects on participants and outcomes of "Energy of Female Students: New Force of the Green Collar" project which is implemented by Borusan EnBW Enerji in partnership with Aydın/Efeler Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School.

**What does the Energy of Female Students: New Force of the Green Collar project entail? Where did the idea for this project come from? Could you tell us about the project's background?**

**ECE YETİŞEN SUN** Green collar workers are those who work in sectors such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, ecological manufacturing and services, sustainable design, and organic agriculture which are sectors that work to address the climate crisis and environmental threats facing humanity. We launched the "Energy of Female Students: New Force of the Green Collar" in 2022 for the students of vocational high schools in an effort to increase the number of 'green collar' women in the renewable energy industry. It is a holistic project is designed to boost the interest of female students of vocational high schools in renewable energy and electricity departments, encourage them to remain in the sector, and support them throughout their career journeys through awareness-raising seminars, field trips, internship and scholarship opportunities, mentoring support, and leadership training.

The energy sector, like all other sectors, faces challenges in finding qualified human resources to hire. As Borusan EnBW, we launched this project with the aim of contributing to the efforts to address this problem. When the company first set out, the plan was to reach out to female university students. However, when we looked at the number of female students in university departments that trained people for the energy



sector, we saw that the number was very low. This indicated that we needed to take a step backwards and focus on the high school level to solve the problem. Therefore, we turned our focus to vocational high schools.

Female students who graduate from vocational high school can either start their work life immediately, or they can choose to pursue a career after graduating from engineering departments of universities or other departments in other higher education vocational schools. What is important for us is to make sure that female students would want to stay in the sector. Therefore, the primary goal of our project is to raise awareness among female students about the industry and to encourage them to remain in it.

**CANAN COŞKUN GÜLEÇ** Ten years ago, when I first started working in the energy sector, if you had taken a photo during one of the energy conferences or seminars I attended, you would have easily seen the level of gender equality across the sector. As female employees, we were so few in number that we were virtually lost among our male colleagues. Additionally, the main topics of these conferences were focused on the needs of manufacturing companies that relied on traditional energy sources. As those working in the field of renewable energy, we were also a minority, and issues related to the needs of the sector were addressed as the lowermost items on the agenda of the last day. Therefore, back in those days, the representation we got as women in the renewable energy sector were quite limited. It was even worse for field workers. However, today, we are at a turning point where the policies designed to scale up renewable energy resources across the sector, both at the global and national level, are gaining importance. Because currently our world is going through two major crises simultaneously -the energy crisis and the climate crisis- and renewable energy sources lie at the heart of the solution to both of these crises. For this reason, the trend is now in favor of increasing investments in renewable energy all over the world. This trend has also brought along the need for qualified workforce, and a gap called the "green skills gap" has emerged in the sector. With this project, our aim is to contribute to addressing this gap within the sector. Of course, our priority is to have trained staff at Borusan EnBW. However, I would like to emphasize that our main goal is to close the human resource gap across the sector by taking into consideration equal participation of women employees.



With this program, we want our female students to have the chance to say, “I am doing something good for the world,” when they join the workforce, just as we say to ourselves every day when we go to work. We look forward to the days when we would contribute to the solution of the energy and climate crisis around the world together with our project participants, who will be our colleagues in the future.

**Is there a special reason why you chose Aydın/Efeler Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School as the starting point of your project?**

**C. C. G.** We chose Aydın/Efeler Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School as the pilot school of our project because one of our technician colleagues graduated from this school and he suggested it. During an event we organized as part of our Vocational High School Coaches volunteer program, talking about his old school, he said, “I wish we could do volunteer work together there one day”. While our project idea for collaborating

with high schools was still in the development stage, we thought “Why not in this school?”. In such projects, it is customary to choose a school in the province where the company facility is located. Although we do not have a facility in Aydın, we chose this school, which had made a name for itself with its successful practices across the region. We found out we had great chemistry with the teachers of Aydın Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School and we decided to choose it as the pilot school of our project. At this point, we are very pleased with our decision; it has been a great collaboration for us.

**Professor Demet, could you tell us a little bit about your school and your field of expertise before we move on to discussing project activities?**

**DEMET SEKMAN KARABAĞ** We offer education in ten different fields at Aydın/Efeler Mimar Sinan Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School. One of them would be Renewable Energy Technologies. This department aims to train the workforce for the energy sector that produces electricity by utilizing wind and solar energy. It is a fairly new department for the high school level in Türkiye, so it is not very well known. This department was first opened in high schools in 2013, and the one in our school is among these first ones as it was also introduced in 2013. Currently, this department is available in sixty-eight vocational high schools throughout Türkiye, and in Aydın, the one in our school is the only one.

**So, Gülcan and Hanife, how did you decide to choose such a novel field? What was the reaction of your family and friends?**

**GÜLCAN TAŞ** Before I started high school, I had not decided what I wanted to be when I grow up. When a friend of mine said she was going to a vocational high school, I said, “Why not?” and decided to go to a vocational high school. My department choice was, indeed not an informed one. When I told my family about this decision, they were taken aback and the people around me did not have a positive take on my choice, either. Because when it comes to renewable energy, it doesn't ring a bell for those looking for something tangible, and everyone was asking questions like “What good would it make for you to study in that department?”. After getting such reactions from the people around me, I wondered if I had made the wrong choice. I was questioning my decision, and at one point, I even thought of changing departments. Later, I started to really like what I learned at school. However, I was still unsure of my department until I met Borusan EnBW Enerji. But right after the first seminar of the project, I had made my final decision: I was going to work in the field of renewable energy.

*With this program, we want our female students to have the chance to say, “I am doing something good for the world,” when they join the workforce, just as we say to ourselves every day when we go to work. We look forward to the days when we would contribute to the solution of the energy and climate crisis around the world together with our project participants, who will be our colleagues in the future.*

**HANİFE SERİN** I chose this department after researching it. I saw that there were more job opportunities in the future in this field, so I wanted to study here. I am immensely happy with my choice. My family also objected to me studying in this department at first, because they didn't know much about it. In addition, a hot spring was discovered in our village and there was a plan to build a geothermal power plant there. My family was against this plan, along with the rest of the villagers. They opposed my choice because they thought I would work in a geothermal power plant after graduating from this department. My grandmother was particularly angry with me. I explained to her that geothermal energy was not bad if the necessary filters were installed, and it would not harm the environment. As I said, our field is not geothermal, it actually has to do with the sun and wind (Smiles). But my grandmother still answers “geothermalist” when someone asks what I study, and then I tell them what I actually study.

**Could you tell us which of the activities you have planned within the scope of the project have you been able to implement so far?**

**E. Y. S.** The first step of our project was designed as the awareness-raising phase. To do that, we organized an awareness-information seminar in our pilot high school. This seminar was aimed at encouraging students to stay in the industry by enabling them to listen to the firsthand accounts of representatives from the industry about their experiences and give them the chance to meet with women leaders who would potentially inspire the students.

In the first part of our seminar, we introduced them to Borusan EnBW Enerji and the energy sector in which we operate. We also discussed the role of the energy sector in finding a solution to the climate and energy crises and where the sector is at in Türkiye and around the world. Our colleagues, who work in different positions in our company, talked about their jobs and how they spend their day at work. Thanks to the stories they heard, our participants were able to see concrete examples as to what it was like to be an employee in the energy sector. Thus, we not only took the big picture of the sector and illustrated where Borusan EnBW Enerji is in this picture, but also taught them about the value chain ranging from investing in electricity generation to sales by blending theoretical and practical information. After this seminar, as part of the project's second phase, we organized a field trip to our Fuatres Wind Power Plant located in İzmir, so that the students got a chance to see the real-life implications of what was explained during the seminar.

**C. C. G.** In addition to the activities, we carry out as part of the program, we also regularly provide infrastructure support to our school. When the school administration and teachers mentioned the need for a renewable energy laboratory to improve

the quality of education in this field, we provided the necessary support for the establishment of the laboratory, especially the computer equipment. This laboratory currently operates under the name “Energetic Trails Laboratory”. We plan to continue to address such needs of the school by offering periodical support every year.

**Let’s hear from the program participants about the seminars and field visit activities that took place as part of the project. What were these experiences like for you?**

**D. S. K.** The first time I heard the phrase “women’s place in the energy sector” was at this seminar. Since I studied electronics in a vocational high school, I have been in a maledominated field since my school years. Throughout my education (high school + university), being a woman in this field has caused me a lot of distress. For instance, back in high school, we were required to do internship for a certain period, but the companies were reluctant to hire us because we were female students. To them, we were somewhat a burden, and they preferred to recruit male students.

When I met some female employees at the seminar, I saw how high women can climb up the career ladder in the energy sector and can be even more successful than men if they made a commitment. Throughout the project, the senior executives from the Borusan EnBW Enerji team who attended the meetings almost always consisted of women, while the men were usually technicians. Seeing that, I told my female students, “You see, you can be just like these women.” Borusan EnBW Enerji gave me the chance to say this to my female students and get their hopes up.

**G. T.** At first, we were unable to make sense of what was explained in the seminar for the most part. There were so many terms which we had never even heard of before. I remember panicking as I thought to myself “Will they be asking questions about these terms later? Should I take notes?”. Then, I decided to put aside what I did and didn’t know and focused on the people who talked about their professions. I started pondering “Which of these professions could be something I like to do?”. Then, I thought, “This stuff is so hard, can I really do it?”. But when we went on the field trip, everything became clear in my head because I was able to see everything they talked about during the seminar, in real life. The officials who shared their professional experiences with us at the seminar also came along on the field trip and showed us everything one by one, saying, “Remember what we told you earlier? Now let’s show you.” Information which we found very confusing the first time we heard the terms no longer seemed that difficult or incomprehensible to any of us when they explained everything by showing us the equipment. Therefore, we were all relieved during the field trip, and we were thrilled not only about what we learned, but also because it was the first time ever, we saw a wind farm.

The seminar and the field trip broadened our horizons, I can say. During the seminar, we saw which professions we could choose, and during the field trip, we saw under what conditions we would be working. And these allowed us to see a future in the industry for ourselves. When I first started vocational high school, I had no plans for the future. Borusan EnBW Enerji offered me this life plan. It allowed me to imagine myself working in the energy industry.

You know, women have a special charm and they spread it around; that was what I saw in that seminar. When I saw those women talking about their profession, I said to myself, “I could be there too, wouldn’t that be great?” and decided to continue advancing on this path.

**H. S.** Both during the seminar and the field trip, we learned a lot of new things we had never heard of, but we were all especially impressed with the trip. I also thought to myself, “Can I become so competent and climb that high?” when I saw such a company where women were at the forefront.

**D. S. K.** When I put myself in my students’ shoes during the seminar and on the field



trip, I couldn’t stop thinking how lucky they were. Back when were students, if we saw a human resources director or a project manager, we would think of them as very high-ranking people who are impossible to reach. But it was a great opportunity for all of us to meet and have a candid conversation with the executives from Borusan EnBW Enerji, and finding out that most of them are women is something else I admired so dearly. I was struck by their true sincerity. I say this because there is also a fake kind of sincerity when people act “as if”, but all Borusan officials were really candid, with the way they made eye contact as they spoke to us, and listened to what we had to say. I also think that this sincerity overcame the fear we felt when we heard people talk about subjects about which we knew nothing about during the seminar. As an educator, I can say that people show greater perceptivity when they are in a setting where they feel safe.

After that seminar, I also decided to stay in this sector just like my students (Laughs). I was considering switching to electronics

teaching, which is my original field, but after attending these trainings, I realized that staying as a renewable energy technologies teacher was going to be better for my career. It seems that the situation with the energy and climate crisis will not take a turn for the better but for the worse in the coming years, so the need for renewable energy will continue to increase.

**Ms. Ece, according to what the participants told, your project seems to have reached its initial goal; moreover, you convinced not only the students but also the teachers to remain in the sector (smiles). How would you evaluate the outcomes of the project’s first phase from Borusan EnBW Enerji’s point of view?**

**E. Y. S.** Yes, we seem to have motivated people to stay in the industry. Fortunately, we did a good job explaining the purpose and importance of the renewable energy sector. At the beginning of the program, we asked our participants, “What do you expect from the program, would you consider working in this sector?”. The way their answers changed between the beginning and the end of the program made us very happy back then, too. The answers the participants gave at the end of the program suggested a high tendency to remain within the sector. We are delighted to see that spirit in our conversation today too, and we will continue to support them in a way that would keep their enthusiasm fresh in the future.

**Well, as Borusan EnBW Enerji, what other plans do you have as part of this project?**

**E. Y. S.** In the upcoming period, we plan to launch the second phase of our program. This phase entails preparing our students for business life by supporting their personal development with a series of modules including mentoring, personal leadership and awareness trainings, anxiety and stress management exercises, motivational activities, and guidance counseling on university choices. In this context, starting from ninth grade, we will both continue to share our experiences from the sector with the students, and provide guidance to them in every subject they are curious about. For the mentoring program, we will be working with companies Evolve and Rezonans as our consultants. We met these companies through Turkish Win and they partnered with us in the development of the program. Having implemented numerous projects with vocational high schools so far, Evolve and Rezonans have supported us in formulating a holistic program that takes into account the differences between grade levels. Our managers who work in different positions at the company will receive a mentoring training that will be specially designed for this program, and then they will share their experiences

with our students to guide them through group mentoring activities.

In addition to the mentoring program, we have also designed a four-year leadership program where they will receive training on different subjects, which would contribute to their professional and personal development. Moreover, we are formulating a module for twelfth graders which will help them choose a university. This module will offer information about universities and departments that are aligned with the purposes of the renewable energy sector. Alongside a series of methods of coping with exam anxiety and stress, the module will incorporate different motivation and focusing techniques.

We want to expand this project, which we kicked off with a pilot implementation. We hope to carry on this project by revisiting our activities in light of the feedback we get from the pilot implementation. We already started planning the next period in line with the first feedback we received. For example, we will try to simplify the technical terms used in the awareness-information training. We are about to sign a protocol with a second school. Our plan is to establish partnerships of this nature with more schools in the future. When choosing schools, our priority will be the ones located in the same provinces and districts as our facilities, so that we can offer the graduates of these high schools the chance to work in these facilities later.

**C. C. G.** As Ece explained, we want to continue to be there for our students on their long journeys, starting from the ninth grade. Throughout this journey we embarked upon with female students we met thanks to this project, we hope to leave behind “energetic trails” both in their lives and in the sector thanks to the work we will be doing with them.

*Throughout this journey we embarked upon with female students we met thanks to this project, we hope to leave behind “energetic trails” both in their lives and in the sector thanks to the work we will be doing with them.*

### In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...

#### What do you think gender equality means? How would you describe it?

**D. S. K.** When it comes to gender equality, I believe that men and women can do anything together, without being categorized. That is why, women should have equal opportunities with men in all areas of life and be able to work under equal conditions. It is the only way we can talk about equality.

**G. T.** In my opinion, gender equality means not saying “Girls can’t do that, only boys can” or vice versa in a classroom, instead asking the question “Which one of you wants to do this?”. When we judge people based on their gender instead of their qualities, we objectify them. This means that we do not see them as individuals with their own unique skills and abilities, but rather as representatives of their gender. We make assumptions about what they can and cannot do based on their gender, and we judge them accordingly. However, each of us is a human being with a mind and will, who are not limited by their gender.

**H. S.** In my opinion, gender equality means that there is no difference in value between the work done by women and men, and equal opportunities are offered to both groups. But in society, unfortunately, the work of men is always portrayed as more valuable and more difficult. Yet, most of the “women’s jobs” require more finesse and attention, and most men are unable to do them, but for some reason this type of work is remains underappreciated.

**E. Y. S.** We dream of a world where gender equality is achieved. As human beings each one of us has strengths and weaknesses regardless of our gender; equality means that all these differences can work together in harmony. However, this harmony, which we

should have, is unfortunately disrupted by the qualities assigned to their genders when children are still in their mother’s womb; that is when the foundations of inequality are laid. Afterwards, these inequalities are “naturalized” and transmitted to all aspects of life with phrases such as “It is a woman’s job to take care of children” or “Men don’t cry”. At Borusan Group and our company, we are working to reverse these “naturalized” inequalities and to provide a working environment where people are judged by their work regardless of their gender. Of course, we know that this issue cannot be fixed only through the work we do at Borusan, because what we have at hand is a phenomenon that is embedded in all social layers, but we consider it our responsibility to drive change across our field and believe having started from somewhere is something to appreciate.

**C. C. G.** In my opinion, gender equality means that every individual is entitled to equal rights and treated as a “human” regardless of their gender. It means recognizing our innate differences and acknowledging that these differences are the colors of life and that each color has the power to create a different value..

### In my opinion, Energy of Female Students: New Force of the Green Collar means...

#### What would you say if I asked what this project meant to you?

**E. Y. S.** As our teacher noted, “Energy of Female Students: New Force of the Green Collar” is a project that we started with genuine sincerity and great enthusiasm. In other words, we didn’t just see it as a job that needed to be done, but we felt a responsibility to make it possible for female students to dream and say “I can be there too” and to support them in achieving their dreams. We are also very happy to share the excitement and pride of doing some meaningful work for our country and the world with our friends like Gülşah and Hanife, whom we hope to see as our colleagues in the future.

**D. S. K.** This project is meaningful to us in two different ways. Firstly, Borusan EnBW Enerji has made a great contribution to our learning environment and the quality of our education with the infrastructure support it provided for our school. Secondly, through the awareness-raising activities and field trips as well as the mentoring, scholarship and internship opportunities it offered, it has already made a significant difference in the lives of our students, who are at the very beginning of their career journey. I am already proud of them when I think about where they will be in twenty years. Also, as I have mentioned earlier, this project has had a transformative impact even on my own life plans. Until now, men always used to be one step ahead of women in technical fields, but right now, we feel we are one step ahead of them.

**G. T.** I can briefly describe what this project means to me as an “investment in my future”. I was dealing with the questions of what I should choose as my major and what kind of a job I would do; but now I have a future goal of becoming an electrical and electronics engineer and working in the renewable energy sector. I can’t thank Borusan EnBW Enerji enough for this.

**H. S.** As I said before, choosing this department was an informed decision of mine, but this project gave me greater hope for my future. This is because they offer internships and want to employ us, this has motivated me even more. So, now I’m even happier with the department where I study.

**C. C. G.** This project gives us the opportunity to provide guidance to our female students about their academic lives and future careers and support them in achieving their dreams by making use of our own experiences. On top of that, while ensuring the green transformation of energy in our country and in the world, our project also strongly supports the efforts towards being a pioneering sector in terms of providing equal opportunities for women in the renewable energy industry, whose employment opportunities will gradually increase thanks to the surge in investments. I look forward to working shoulder to shoulder with our new colleagues.



# “Turns out we are the masters of this business...”: Gözde Yıldırım / Borçelik

*You believe it when everyone says you can't do it. This is also what happened in literature; until a lot of women got tired of listening to them and wrote novels that were so good, they made the men who said women couldn't write novels look silly.*

**Ursula Le Guin, *Very Far Away from Anywhere Else***



Equal opportunities in recruitment

I'm Gözde. I'm 33 years old. Up until 2018, I worked in various companies in the service industry. I've been working as a crane operator at Borçelik since 2018. I didn't know what I was getting into when I applied for the job, or even after I was accepted. I'd never seen a female crane operator before, but I thought, "Why not?". Borusan is a well-established company, so I applied as soon as I saw the ad. That's how my story at Borusan began...

## The joy lies within challenge

I was one of the first female crane operators hired as part of the "No Job Too Tough for Women" project at Borçelik. The "No Job Too Tough for Women" project is designed to provide employment to women in male-dominated heavy industry sectors. Twenty-six women were employed in different jobs, 10 of whom were crane operators. Before starting work as crane operators, we received three months of training including two months of theoretical and onemonth practical training. A crane operator's job is loading and unloading. In other words, we both feed a line and then make it go hungry again. That's how I can describe what we do (Smiles).

Although it may sound like a simple task, it's actually quite complex. One of its core aspects is that it requires a lot of attention, I can say. The stakes are high and the margin for error is small. The slightest mistake can lead to a work accident that could cost lives. In addition to being attentive, you also need to communicate well. It takes strong teamwork. You should be in constant contact with the crane operator next to you and all the operators below. You should not miss a single word from each other. You should follow the workflow with great concentration.

The work also entails a series of physical challenges. You carry a load of approximately 35 tons and get shaken while doing so. It takes time for your body to get used to all that vibration. When I first started working, I still felt like I was wobbling when I got home (Laughs).



I had my doubts as to whether I could do this job, but thanks to the opportunity Borusan gave me, I saw that it can be done. Being a crane operator is not one of the professions that women dream of and think they can do in our society. I realized that, crane operator, which I hadn't even known exactly what it involved, was the perfect job for me, only after I started working. It's a risky and stressful job, but it's also fun. The stress is what makes it fun indeed; after every job I complete, I feel that I have come through by eliminating the dangers. Therefore, being a crane operator is a difficult, but an elating job, in my opinion. At the moment, I am also delighted because I think that I am doing my job very well.

## Our Existence, the Driving Force behind Change

On my first day I here at the factory, I was quite worried. I was going to work in a factory for the first time in my life and I was going to do a job that I hadn't even known until three months ago. I was also going to be one of the first female crane operators in a factory where the majority was men. As a matter of fact, when we started working at the factory after all that training, we all came to realize that this was going to be the most difficult stage.

Our managers were ready for us working there and they greeted us very warmly. They have always treated us equally since then, too. Yet, I can't say the same thing

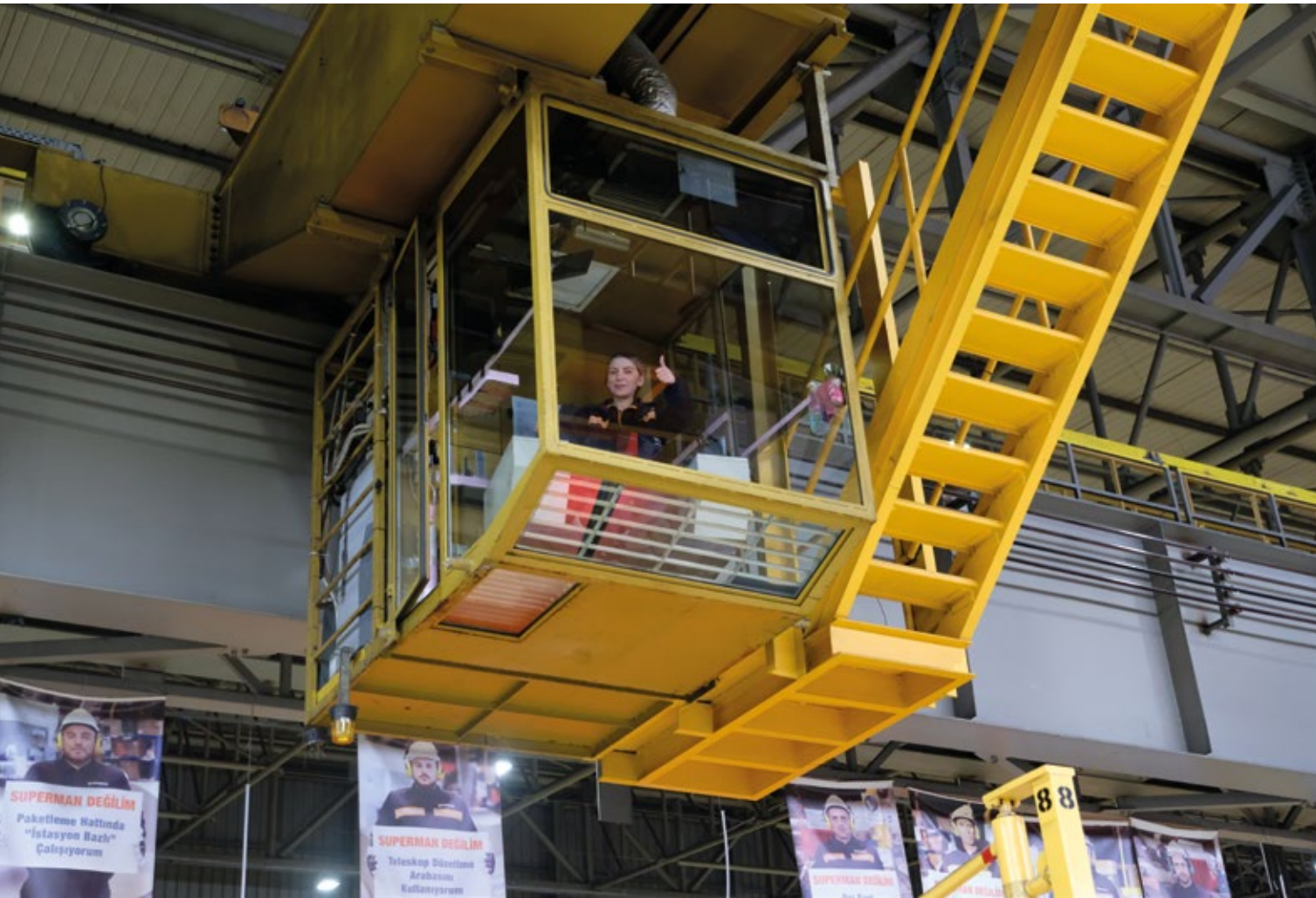
for our colleagues, I'm afraid. From the very beginning, there were colleagues who supported us, as well as those who had their prejudice. However, our colleagues' biases gradually waned and ultimately vanished as they became accustomed to our presence. Right now they have great trust in us and say we are very good at what we do. They even prefer working with us (Smiles). In other words, I can say that we have torn down all the prejudices against us by doing our job well.

As far as I know, scientifically women are more well suited for this kind of work. This is because being an operator is a meticulous job where you have to make very small and precise movements. I mean, I don't want to call men unsuccessful, but I think we, as women, are more successful in this business. Turns out we are the masters of this business (Laughs). Some of our male colleagues also agree; and some of them even said, "You are better than us." Operators in our group are called "masters", but if you ask me, there is no master in this business. You always have to be careful and watch out. But of course, you become more experienced over time.

As female crane operators in the first group, we had a really hard time getting everyone to accept us. But fortunately, our colleagues who came later did not have to face these difficulties. They were all greeted warmly by everyone who said "Welcome and good luck". Because now everyone has gotten used to the presence of women in the factory and has seen that they can do this job better.

## Comradery

Borçelik continues to provide women with the opportunity to become crane operators. Another group of women started working after us, and we are currently hiring more. As you can see, we are quite popular! (Laughs). Currently we are 14 female crane operators. However, I think this is not enough, and we should grow in numbers. We are so lucky



that our company agrees with us on this. They are working hard to increase the number of female employees in general, not just crane operators.

When our new female colleagues arrived, we were very thrilled as the members of the first group. As women, we inevitably feel close to each other because we are a “minority” here. We did our best to support our new colleagues, as well. We gladly shared our experience and knowledge whenever they needed it. Apart from the technical aspects of the job, whenever they were troubled by something, we lent an ear and tried to come up with a solution together. I have great faith in women’s solidarity.

I call my fellow female crane operators, especially those with whom I first started working together, “comrades.” We set out on this path together, and we have overcome all those difficulties together, in solidarity. If we hadn’t supported each other, what we went through would have been much more difficult for all of us.

We all agree that there should be more and more female crane operators. If you hear about this job and think you can’t do it, don’t be afraid. It’s not hard if you set your heart on it. I realized that I can do it too, after starting to work here. The more you practice and experience, the more self-confident you become. You just have to stay calm and not lose your faith that you can do the job.

I don’t think any job has a gender, religion, color, etc. I came to understand this much better through my own professional experience. When I started this job, many were surprised, in fact, even I myself was surprised. Now, when I tell people about my profession, they are usually astonished and find it very interesting. Then start asking a lot of questions about my job. It makes me proud to see such interest from people.

That is why, I encourage women to choose the job they want, regardless of whether it is traditionally considered a “male” or “female” job. If in any job, they think they can be happy they should go for it. As women, we have the power to do whatever we want. All we need to do is dream and believe in ourselves.

#### **In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...**

In my opinion, gender equality means that everyone can work in the same environment, shoulder to shoulder, under equal conditions, without a distinction between men and women.

#### **In My Opinion, Equal Borusan is...**

I am very happy and proud to work in a company that is committed to gender equality and violence against women. “You can do whatever job you want. I am working to remove the barriers in front of you.” says Borusan to all women. It is so meaningful that the company you work for tells all women these things. I know that I will not be discriminated against at Borusan because I am a woman, and I know that Borusan would stand by me in every way. And all this gives me incredible strength.

*I have great faith in women's solidarity. I call my fellow female crane operators, especially those with whom I first started working together, “comrades.” We set out on this path together, and we have overcome all those difficulties together, in solidarity. If we hadn't supported each other, what we went through would have been much more difficult for all of us.*

# “Not an Impossible Job!”: Gökçe Gökdeniz Aka / Borusan Port

*A wild wish has just flown from my heart to my head, and I will not stifle it though it may excite a horselaugh. – I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex confounded in society, unless where love animates the behavior.*

**Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 1792**



Equal opportunities  
in recruitment

I am Gökçe. I was born in 1992. I'm from Gemlik, born and raised. I graduated from Eskişehir Anadolu University with a degree in Economics in 2014. After graduating, I worked in the service industry for five years, including four years as a toll operator on a private highway. Five months ago, I started working as a driver in the Ro-Ro operations department at Borusan Port.

The Ro-Ro operation unit is tasked with providing vehicle transportation via ships. As a driver, my job is to stack the vehicles unloaded from the trucks in our stock area at the port.

I have known Borusan Port (the Port) since I was a little girl, but I never thought that I would one day work there as I had always seen men working at the Port. There have always been white-collar female employees at the port, but not blue-collar ones. Over the past decade, we have started to see blue-collar female employees, albeit in small numbers, and I am proud to be one of them.

I have always been interested in cars since I was a little child. I got my driver's license as soon as I turned eighteen, but to be honest, I did not think that I would be working as a driver until I saw Borusan's job posting. Because, as you may know, drivers in companies are usually men. I was both surprised and pleased that Borusan was specifically looking for a female driver to hire. I thought it would be something great for my career to work in a place that gave women such an opportunity. I applied for the job with a huge motivation, and I think my motivation was noticed, which is why they hired me (Smiles).

## Facing Prejudices

It is now accepted by everyone that men and women should be equal in business life, but I think the distinction between “women's job” and “men's job” continues to roam our minds. When I applied for this job, I didn't know exactly what to do and



therefore I was a little nervous. During the job interview, I was asked questions like, “You will be the only woman in this department, would it be a problem for you? How would your family take it?”. And I replied, “I can do it, I think I will like this job.” Then they asked once more, “We believe you can do this job, but are you confident you can do it, are you sure?” I thought to myself, “How hard can it be?”. I guess they wanted to make sure I really wanted the job as they were worried that I might quit before long. Finally, they were convinced that I could do it and they hired me (Smiles).

When I started working, my colleagues welcomed me very warmly and they were always helpful. For example, at first, I was so afraid of bumping into something while parking because we had to park the cars very close to each other. But my colleagues helped me a lot to overcome this fear. With their support, I can now park cars easily.

While my colleagues were so supportive on the one hand, perhaps unconsciously, they were prejudiced against me, on the other. Some of them, for example, asked with bewilderment, where I had learned how to drive, because they still saw driving as a man's job. Or, “Now it's fine, but when winter comes we'll see what you're going to do then, or how long you would last?” some of them said. Since we work outside, our working conditions can become difficult depending on weather conditions. They may think that they are stronger by nature, I don't know, but every time they said that, I thought to myself: “What is the worst that could happen? For every problem, there is a solution. If I get cold, I'd put on warmer clothes.” I haven't seen winter yet, but it's not an impossible job! Both men and women are perfectly capable of doing it.

**“I’m Hopeful for the Future”**

Seeing women do whatever they want gives us strength and hope. I remember watching an interview with a female truck driver on TV. “I love trucks and being on the road. People always see it as a man’s job, but thought I could do it too. So, I got my driver’s license and got the job.” she said. She expressed exactly how I felt. When I heard her say that, I thought, “Of course, anyone can do it! Why not?”. I hope that when other women see us, they will be inspired to pursue their dreams. Instead of limiting themselves to ‘women’s jobs,’ they can select their profession from a wider range of options. When you first apply for a job that is traditionally considered a “man’s job”, you might be hesitant and wonder if you can really do it. But once you start working, you realize that you can, and your confidence grows.

Not long ago, back in the 2010s when I was in college, there were almost no women working in blue-collar jobs in male-dominated industries. But today, the younger generation can see female crane operators and women like me who work as drivers at the Port.

When I was a child, I was surprised to see a female driver. But now, everyone considers it “normal”. I think that the prejudices about what jobs women and men can do are slowly fading away. I believe that one day, we will never have to talk about this again. I am hopeful for the future where gender-based job stereotypes no longer exist.

When I look back at my career, I am proud of myself for breaking down the barriers and working in a traditionally male-dominated field.

**In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...**

To me, gender equality means that women and men are equal in every sense both at work and all spheres of life, and that there is no discrimination based on gender.



*They may think that they are stronger by nature, I don’t know, but every time they said that, I thought to myself: “what is the worst that could happen? For every problem, there is a solution. If I get cold, I’d put on warmer clothes.” I haven’t seen winter yet, but it’s not an impossible job! Both men and women are perfectly capable of doing it.*

**In My Opinion, Equal Borusan is...**

For me, Equal Borusan means that I work in a safe and supportive environment where I know I will not be discriminated against. It also means that Borusan is committed to showing the world that men and women can be equal. I believe that Borusan’s decision to employ women in professions that are not traditionally considered “women’s job” is a powerful way to take down the prejudices. This is because I think the best way to change people’s minds about what jobs can be done by women and which ones by men is to show them that we work in these positions and thrive. Borusan is driving a positive transformation, not just in my personal and professional life, but across society as a whole.

# A Story of Collective Coping: Volkan and Derya Könez / Supsan

*I look forward to the day when a majority of men, as well as a majority of women, accept the absolute equality of the sexes, accept sharing of childcare and all other forms of work, accept freedom of sexual behavior and accept multiplicity of gender forms, as being plain common sense and the ordinary basis of civilized life.*

**R.W. Connell, Gender and Power**



Equality approach in  
working conditions

**VOLKAN KÖNEZ** I am 35 years old. My family originally comes from Zonguldak, by I am from Kadıköy, born and raised.

I spent my childhood running around the neighborhoods. I went to vocational high school and started working as a machinist in factories right after graduating when I was 17. I have been working as a machinist at Supsan since 2011.

My wife and I have been together since 2004 and we got married in 2015. I still love her as much as I did on the day we got married.

**DERYA KÖNEZ** My name is Derya. I'm 34 years old. We have been married for 7 years. We have a sixyear-old who has special needs.

## The Difference of Supsan

**V. K.** When I was in high school, I heard good things about Supsan from my friends. When I started working there, I realized that they were right. I am very happy to work at Supsan and I consider myself very lucky.

Supsan is the second factory I have worked for. The most important aspect in which it is different from my previous employers is that we are unionized here. The working hours are great. We work eight hours a day, so I am able to spend time with my wife and child. The managers here at Supsan value their employees more than I have seen in any other factory.

They always take our recommendations into consideration. Plus, we are also constantly learning new things. We go through face-to-face or online trainings and seminars on a wide range of topics which are beneficial both for our personal and professional lives. For example, my spouse and I attended a training on interfamily relationships and child development that we both liked a lot. This training really made a difference in our personal lives.

We also attended our online trainings on gender equality. These trainings have greatly influenced my personal ideas. Thanks to these trainings, I realized how much being a



woman or a man affects our lives. I also saw what I can do to be more egalitarian while raising my child. We are all taught from a young age that men and women should have different jobs, but indeed, they can do the same jobs. Borusan is where I found out that this is indeed possible.

## Division of Labor in Childcare

**D. K.** We have a six-year-old who has special needs. My pregnancy was uneventful, nothing was out of the ordinary. After giving birth, we found out that he was born with an underdeveloped esophagus. That is why, when he was only five days old, we had to rush to another hospital for surgery. We were very worried about the type of surgery he would need. Fortunately, the surgery went well. After the operation, "Everything is normal. You can go home without any further checks." said the doctor.

However, as our child grew, I began to realize that his development was not "typical." This is because I have nephews, and I could see that there was something different about my child. When our child was two years old, we took him to a psychiatrist, who diagnosed him with "developmental delay." He understands everything, he has no hearing problems but is unable to talk yet. He also acts more childishly than his peers. He is a couple of years behind, I can say. We found out the reason for this is that he was left without oxygen for a short time after

surgery due to negligence at the hospital.

When the doctor diagnosed our son with developmental delay, I had a hard time accepting it. It was our first child and we had never faced anything like this before in our families. We are slowly starting to accept the situation, I can say. We are currently receiving personalized training on how to care for our child.

It is a very difficult situation to deal with, and I pray that no one would have to go through this. I am still having a difficult time, but the first two months were especially hard for me. My family lives in Zonguldak, and here I have no one to support me. Back then, my husband was my rock during this time; I couldn't have gone through that period without him. Whenever I felt bad and needed him, he would just get off work and come home to me. There were many occasions when he came home and there was no dinner, or he had to go to work with very little sleep. These may not seem like a big deal, but they are actually huge sacrifices. My husband did his part in caring for our child; he

*Whenever I felt bad and needed him, he would just get off work and come home to me. There were many occasions when he came home and there was no dinner, or he had to go to work with very little sleep. These may not seem like a big deal, but they are actually huge sacrifices. My husband did his part caring for our child; he worked at least as much as me.*

worked at least as much as me. He does whatever it takes to help with our child's self-care; he doesn't mind doing these things. He does these gladly and willingly; he is very compassionate and self-giving. Supsan, has always been there for us, too. They allowed my husband to come home during work hours, they have been so supportive.

**V. K.** After birth, when we brought our child home from the hospital, we had to feed him with a syringe, and we were given a medicine to be used for the first two years of his life. My spouse didn't feel comfortable doing these by herself. So, I would either leave work early or come in late to give our son his medication and feed him. As my spouse said, all our managers, especially our union representative, have always been supportive. Thanks to them, I was able to support my spouse when she was having a difficult time. They still allow me to come in late or leave early without any problems when we have doctor's appointments. I don't think all workplaces would be this supportive, which is why I consider myself very lucky to work at Supsan.

Although not as much as in the first years, our child is still in need of special attention and care. And I still try to share the care work with my spouse. For example, as my spouse prepares breakfast in the morning, I help our child with his self-care. Then, if we still have time, we play together until breakfast is ready.

Yes, raising a child with special needs is difficult, but it is not insurmountable. To do that, through mutual support, together, we are using our best efforts to provide our son with the best possible care. We share the responsibilities, and we support each other. When our son wakes up in the morning, it is like the sun is rising in our home. He is both the challenging aspect of our lives and the joy of our home...

weretraditionally considered to be men's jobs, such as loom operators and machine operators. To be honest, at first, we found this odd. After all, we work in heavy industry, and we had never seen women in these roles before and we thought they didn't have what it takes to handle all that. We thought that the work would be too heavy for them and that they would eventually leave because, at times, you have to lift a huge rock or an iron box. We didn't believe they would be physically capable of it as most of them were short and slim. Personally, I thought they'd hire someone who looked stronger. After a couple of months, we saw that they did it, and they did a very good job, they were so determined. Seeing their success, we were convinced that women could also do this kind of work. In fact, some of our colleagues whose spouses does not work at a paid job, said "If women can work here, so can my spouse." Now, some of them are asking around here if there is a vacancy at Supsan for their spouses. Borusan's approach to equality has changed the way we think. By hiring women, Borusan has shown us that women and men can do the same job, and although we used to think otherwise and suggested that women were not qualified to work in the heavy industry, now we all believe that anyone can do any job.

We are happy to see women working at Supsan; we wish more women to be hired. In fact, there were female employees at Supsan even back in the 1970s. However, over time, the workforce became all-male. Supsan is now committed to increasing the number of female employees, and they have made great strides to this end. I believe we will see women everywhere around the factory, as Supsan provides women with the opportunity to work in the heavy industry. Thanks to this, one day, no one will be surprised to see women in the workshop.

*Borusan's approach to equality has changed the way we think. By hiring women, Borusan has shown us that women and men can do the same job, and although we used to think otherwise and suggested that women were not qualified to work in the heavy industry, now we all believe that anyone can do any job.*

#### **In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...**

**V. K.** In my opinion, gender equality means that men and women are equal in all areas of life, and they both can do everything at home and at work. Women working at Supsan, or the way I take care of my child are the living and breathing examples of that this is indeed possible. We all can do anything; it has nothing to do with being a woman or a man.

**D. K.** In my opinion, gender equality means that men and women are equal, but without having to replace each other. As I mentioned earlier, I believe that my spouse's willingness to take on housework and takes care of our child without seeing them as "women's job" is a good example of gender equality.

#### **Borusan Eşittir Benim İçin...**

**V. K.** Borusan has done a lot of work on equality, and I am proud to be an employee of a company that is committed to this important issue. Supsan regularly keeps its employees informed about equality, through trainings, e-mails and putting up posters all over the company. I see that these activities have changed our perspective on relations between men and women. In addition, Supsan hired female colleagues to jobs that

# “Everyone Has Grown Accustomed to Us...”: Mesude Ceylan / Borusan Lojistik

*Intellect has no sex; that strength of mind has no sex; and that our views about the duties of man and the duties of women, the sphere of man and the sphere of woman, are mere arbitrary opinions.*

**Sarah M Grimké, Letters, 1838**



Equality approach in performance management

I was born in 1991. I am from Çorum. This is my seventh year in working life. I worked as a human resources specialist in a catering company for four years. In 2020, I started working as a blue-collar worker at Borusan Lojistik and in 2022 I was promoted to a white-collar position as Land Transport Manager. Also, I am continuing my undergraduate studies in Labor Economics and Industrial Relations.

I started at Borusan as a Data Entry Personnel on a team of five people. Now, I am responsible for that team, having gained experience and worked my way up. Being promoted from blue-collar to white-collar was an important milestone in my career. I have always loved my job. I have always met the requirements of my job, and when necessary, I have gone above and beyond my responsibilities to ensure that things ran smoothly. I didn't do this to be rewarded by my superiors. But when I was promoted, I felt like I am seen by someone. I didn't do anything special just to be seen, but being seen makes a person feel appreciated. This is why I get out of bed happily every day and get to work.

### Transformation around the workplace

When I applied for a job at Borusan, many people around me told me that I would have difficulty in the logistics sector, because I was a woman. However, that was not the case. First of all, all of my colleagues, especially my supervisors, made it very easy for me to get settled in. They all made me feel very welcome. From day one, they have been nothing but respectful and supportive towards me. To this day, I have never heard a single bad word or seen any discriminatory behavior from any of them. I think Borusan's efforts to promote equality in the workplace also play a part in this. During the trainings on equality and in the periodical e-mails, we are constantly reminded that women and men are equal and that we should not discriminate against anyone based on their gender. Coming from the top of the company, this message naturally affects our working environment. This is how I, as a woman working in a male-dominated sector, can do my



job without being subject to any discrimination.

When I started working in the transfer department, I was the only woman. Now, four out of five people on my team are women, and there are twenty women working in the entire department. As the number of women increases, I think our work environment is improving. For instance, our male colleagues are more mindful of the words they use and how they speak in our presence. When I was the only woman, I noticed a change in their behavior right away. But as the number of women increased, I started to feel it even more. Our managers too see this positive change, and they want to hire more women. Now, everyone has seen that women can work in logistics, and I think everyone has grown accustomed to us (Smiles).

### Discovering Your Own Worth

Since the first day I started working at Borusan, I have always felt valued as an employee. One of the most recent examples of this would be when a trainer from Ankara was sent to teach me software that I didn't know how to use. Can you imagine, a trainer came all the way here just for me! I can't describe how happy I felt when I saw the trainer in the office. Our managers are also always in touch with us. They always remember to ask if we need anything. So far, every time I've expressed a need, it has always been met In addition to learning new things at

Borusan, I also came to realize what I already knew. Every time my company provided me the opportunity, I saw what I was capable of, and this boosted my self-confidence. Now I am more motivated to learn than ever and I can set new goals for myself.

As women, we should let nothing scare us and believe that we can do anything. We are free to choose the job we want, and we have what it takes to accomplish it. We can be truck drivers if we want, or taxi drivers. When I see the female employees at Borusan, I feel very happy, because I think they represent me as a woman. I am proud of both the women who do these jobs and my company as it offers them the opportunity. Women can achieve anything as long as they are united, support each other, and stand together!

### In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...

Gender equality means that women and men are equal in all matters. It means that men and women are not segregated on the basis of their gender in any area of life, and that all distinctions between genders are taken down.

### In My Opinion, Equal Borusan is...

In my opinion, Equal Borusan means feeling safe, believing in what I can accomplish, and taking pride in my company. Borusan's work in the field of gender equality and violence against women, makes me feel as a woman that my company always has my back. Since I started working at Borusan, the faith I have in myself has intensified with each passing day, and I have seen what I can achieve thanks to the opportunities made available to me. If Borusan hadn't decided to hire a female driver in particular, I don't know if I could be here today. I think that the job opportunities offered by Borusan to women should set an example for the rest of the business world.

# Finding Yourself in a New Language: *Beyza Nur Şen, “Let’s Code, Girls” Project*

*Children’s imaginative play is clearly a practicing at the acts and emotions of adulthood; a child who did not play would not become mature.*

**Ursula Le Guin, *Why Are Americans Afraid of Dragons?***



Equality approach in training and development

My name is Beyza Nur and I am 18 years old. I’m from İstanbul, born and raised. At the moment, I am a student of Industrial Engineering at METU. “Let’s Code, Girls” Project was an eight-week training program that Borusan launched in cooperation with KızCode, founded by Müjde Esin. The project was designed to teach coding and basic engineering skills to the daughters of Borusan employees. I was also among the participants in this project.

My father works as a security guard at Borusan Mannesmann. He saw the advertisement for the project and signed me up without asking me. I was a video game enthusiast, and my father obviously thought this training would be a good opportunity for me. At first, I was angry with my father for doing this. Because I was a shy kid, and I was afraid to attend coding training that I knew nothing about. But once I started training, my fear was quickly replaced by the joy of learning.

## Cooperative Learning

At the program, we had six trainers, including Müjde Esin. Two were men and four were women. I remember I liked it when I saw that the majority of trainers were women. Although many people believe that engineering and computers are men’s interests, the fact that the people who would teach engineering were women, encouraged me. When I saw that, I thought to myself “If there are women like this in this sector, I can be, too.”

There were about twenty people in our class. When we first started, everyone was as shy as I was, so the class was very quiet. Our trainers were talking about computers, technology, tools, and software that we had never heard of before. We mostly thought, “I don’t know anything, how am I going to do this?”

But as the weeks passed, we kept learning and even started to develop small projects where we applied what we had learned. We were writing a code on the computer, and the electronic device in front of us was moving as we instructed. To be able to do this



was exciting for all of us, and it boosted our confidence.

We were designing and implementing our projects in groups. In this method of study, we learned together by openly sharing each other’s shortcomings and mistakes. For example, if I wrote a code and made a mistake somewhere, I would ask my friend next to me, “Can you spot where I made a mistake?”. She would do the same if she made a mistake. In other words, there was a candid atmosphere where we could say what we didn’t know without hesitation, without thinking, “I made a mistake, I’d better hide it so they wouldn’t make fun of me.”

Our cooperative learning environment in the Let’s Code Girls Project was quite different from what we had at school. Compared to the school setting, I remember feeling more comfortable in an environment where only girls were present. I would never want to blame my male classmates, but this was the case for me because there was no one in this environment who would say things like, “I play games, so I know better than girls”. So, when I didn’t understand something, I could easily say, “I didn’t understand it”. But if I did that at school, they would tell me, of course, I wouldn’t understand it, because I was a girl who knew nothing about games and computers... Although they wouldn’t put it this clearly, I could see this was the way most of them felt. For example There is a memory from my middle school computer class that I can’t forget.

One day, I started leading the boys who were playing among themselves. One of them was very surprised and asked, “How do you know all that?”. He was surprised because he thought I couldn’t play games. Think about it, we were young children, but we had enormous prejudices against each other, even at that age. In my experience, kids that age tend to bully others more. And unfortunately, the bullying you are exposed to at that age could play a decisive role for the rest your life. The negative comments you hear have the potential to discourage you easily and they can cause you to give up on your dreams.

During the eight-week training program, we tried to find a problem in life and find a solution to this problem in groups. I think this is basically what engineering means. For example, one of the problems we found was that the windows got dirty when the blinds were lowered in rainy or sunny weather. To solve this problem, we designed a sensor mechanism that was sensitive to temperature and humidity. When the heat and humidity reached a certain degree, the blinds came down. A friend of mine also developed a project for animals. When the food decreased to a certain level in animal feed containers, the system refilled the container to the required level. We thought that using this project for street animals would be very functional. Usually, we would do small-scale projects like this. I think the hardest part of a project is finding the problem you are going to work on and coming up with a solution. After finding the solution, coding -if it is to be applied- is one of the easy stages of this process, I can say.

As we approached the final weeks, each of us were now asked to present a bigger project. A teacher of mine said, “Let’s code elevators with you for this project”. I was very surprised when I heard this. The elevator was not a new idea, of course, but coding the elevator was a very new and intriguing thing to do for me. I really had a lot of fun when I started coding the elevator with my teacher When I pressed the button,





the elevator would go up, go down or stop. When I put it like that, I know it doesn't sound like anything special. This is how a normal elevator works, so it doesn't sound very impressive, but it was very exciting for me to be able to do it. It was really fun to set the background, assign tasks to the keys, and deal with the cables. Two months before that, I couldn't have even imagined doing such a project. When I saw that I succeeded, I thought, "I'm capable of more than I gave myself credit for. Who knows what else I think I can't do?" After that day, I wasn't afraid to try new things.

At the beginning and end of the training, our trainers asked us questions to assess our knowledge and thoughts on software.

One of the questions was, "What comes to your mind when you think of software?". "A black screen and running green text" I responded (Laughs). I don't remember how I answered that question at the end of the training, but if I were asked that question now, here's how I would respond: Just as we all speak a language and understand it when spoken to us in that language, computers and electronic devices should be spoken to in a software language. And you speak this language by following a series of steps: You have a problem, you find a solution to that problem, and you explain the computer how that solution works.

You use coding languages as the means. In a nutshell, I can describe software as a means of communication, a language, and I can say that Let's Code Girls taught me new languages.

#### **"Look around, try to find solutions to the problems around you!"**

It was very sad for me when our training program ended. I wanted to keep working in this field. We also had WhatsApp groups created at the time of the program, and we kept in touch with our teachers and friends through these groups. At that time, I was an eighth grader. One day at school, I saw the poster for the annual contest organized by Küçükçekmece Municipality, which was called "Küçükçekmece is Searching for Geniuses". I thought I could participate in this contest. I used to see the poster for this contest on the door of my school every year, but I had never thought that I was good enough to take part in it during the four years I was at that school. Every year I would notice the poster of the contest and just walk by, but that year, for the first time, I thought - I was able to think! - about participating. After I made my decision to participate in the competition, I called Müjde Hoca and "There is this contest I want to enter; would you help me?" I asked. She said she would and put me in contact with another mentor. And that was my teacher Deniz Gülbaharlı.

I met with Ms. Deniz to talk about my project idea. I didn't know what exactly I was going to do, but we followed the same logic again: Look around, try to find solutions to the problems around you! There is an Amir Khan movie called "Every Child is Special" which tells the story of a dyslexic child who faces many difficulties at school, and the teacher who changes his life. After watching that movie, I wanted to do something for dyslexic children who are old enough to learn to read and write. One of the difficulties dyslexic children experience when learning to read and

write would be that they mix up letters. Based on the idea that every child likes to play, I thought I could design a game that would help dyslexic children familiarize themselves with the letters of the alphabet. After I shared this idea with my teacher Deniz, we designed an online game together. With this game, I applied to the "Küçükçekmece Searching for Geniuses" contest and won second prize in the field of social issues.

The game I designed was something like this: An image is given and the player is expected to figure out the name of the image. Some letters in the name of the image are left blank and the player is asked to select among a number of options to fill in the blanks. I made sure that the options mostly consisted of letters that are generally mixed up by the children. For example, for the word "bell," if the letter "b" was left blank, the options would consist of letters such as b, d, or p.

#### **Changing the Course towards Yourself**

From day one, the Let's Code Girls training program gradually boosted my self-confidence. Learning about coding and computers changed my perspective on myself, and I started to think, "I don't have to define myself only by the subjects I study at school. I know other things now." In addition, as I mentioned earlier, by putting forward my knowledge on computers and games during our conversations with my male classmates, I was now able to challenge the gender stereotypes about girls. Moreover, thanks to this training, I was able to see what I could do in other fields, as well. I think this is also highly essential. With your self-confidence boosted, you are no longer afraid to challenge yourself in other areas. For example, after this training, I joined the basketball team when I was at the eighth grade.

*Just as we all speak a language and understand it when spoken to us in that language, computers and electronic devices should be spoken to in a software language. And you speak this language by following a series of steps: You have a problem, you find a solution to that problem, and you explain the solution to the computer. You use coding languages as your tool. In a nutshell, I can define software as a communication tool, a language, and I can say that Let's Code Girls taught me new languages.*

I started ninth grade at Yaşar Acar Science High School. In the meantime, Ms. Müjde took me to other KızCode trainings. After I got to tenth grade, I joined my school's mechatronics team. I wonder if middle school Beyza would have joined the mechatronics team. I really doubt it. But when I saw the mechatronics club during the club promotion events in the first week of school, I didn't even think about whether I should join or not. I had to join! It was also thanks to the trainings I received that I was able to say this with such certitude.

The majority of the Mechatronics Club consisted of males. Let's say, in a group of thirty, there were twenty male and ten female students. But for example, the president was a female student who was also my best friend. I also did several collaborative projects with the mechatronics team. For example, we participated in small-scale competitions around the district. Have you ever heard about robots called

line follower robots and sumo robots? There are competitions where these robots compete against each other, and the first to fall loses. We also participated in these competitions with the robots we coded as the mechatronics club.

While working at the Mechatronics Club, I was also preparing for the TUBITAK computer olympiads. Once again, Ms. Müjde supported me throughout this process. TUBITAK computer olympiads involve taking a mathematics and computer-based exam. You are expected to take a test on math and coding. Your test result determines whether you move on to the next stage. At the end of the second stage, I was eliminated so I did not win a place.

When I got to the eleventh grade, I had to focus on my classes because I was going to take the university entrance exam soon. I was accepted to the Industrial Engineering department at METU, and I am currently in the preparatory class. The Let's Code Girls project and KızCode played a significant role in my decision to pursue engineering. This entire process (going through those trainings, keeping in touch with KızCode, and the contact I still maintain with Müjde) allowed me to discover myself and gave me a real-life goal. I had entered the world of games and wanted to stay there, but I also got the chance to familiarize myself with engineering during the Let's Code Girls project trainings.

#### **In my opinion, Let's Code Girls means...**

I am very happy and satisfied with where I am right now. I consider my father secretly signing me up for the Let's Code Girls training course to be one of the greatest blessings in my life.

This project is one of the turning points in my life, so it is difficult for me to summarize what it means to me in a sentence or two, but I can say this: By instilling self-confidence in a shy and timid girl, this project has allowed her to get into the university of her choice, and to study at the department she set her heart on. It has given her the power to say "This is what I want" in her future life choices, without being limited by the roles imposed on her by society.

I think it is very important that Borusan offers such an educational opportunity to girls, and that it does so free of charge. When we look at the gender distribution in engineering departments of universities, we see that men are the majority. I think we need interventions to turn this picture around. The supportive trainings offered to girls in the fields of technology and engineering are exactly what we need to drive that change. Because these trainings, encourage girls and empower them to discover their interests, and give them the opportunity to make their career choices more freely by ridding themselves of the prejudices that prevail in the society.

Borusan has not only guided me in making up my mind about the department I wanted to study at university, but also continues to support me in my education life. I

am one of the scholarship recipients of the Borusan Kocabiyyık. Foundation's scholarship program for university students this year, and this is something I am so happy about.

#### **In My Opinion, Gender Equality is...**

When someone says gender equality, for some reason, I always think of the bullies back in middle school. This is because we begin to see the negative effects of prevailing gender roles especially in middle school, and these roles seriously affect our lives. These ages are when we slowly begin to discover our interests and get to know ourselves. However, positive or negative remarks you hear during this period turn out to be immensely influential for the rest of your life. When a child is discouraged at this age, he or she can take a completely different path. In my opinion, parents have a great part to play in this regard. Parents should avoid imposing gender stereotypes on their children so that new generations can grow up to be more mindful and sensitive about this issue.

*The supportive trainings offered to girls in the fields of technology and engineering are exactly what we need to drive that change. Because these trainings, encourage girls and empower them to discover their interests, and give them the opportunity to make their career choices more freely by ridding themselves of the prejudices that prevail in the society.*

# Joy Factory: Ebru Şimşek, My Mom's Job is My Future Project

*Have you no respect for the past? (...) They knew less than we do. If we are not beyond them, we are unworthy of them; and unworthy of the children who must go beyond us.*

**Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland, 1915**



Equality approach in  
career management

I was born in 1989 in Erzurum. I have been in the workforce for about a decade. For the past six years, I have been working at Fırıntaş Public Bread Factory in Balıkesir Organized Industrial Zone (OIZ). I have been married for eight years and we have a five-year-old son.

Our son has been going to the Borusan Joy Factory nursery for about two years now. Since the day the Joy Factory came into our lives, we have been happier than ever as a family (Smiles).

## The Nursery School of Our Hearts' Desire

The first time I heard about the Joy Factory was when they visited the factory where I worked. Later, I found out that some of my co-workers had been sending their children to the Joy Factory and they were all very happy with it. Hearing that everyone was so pleased, I also decided to send my child to the Joy Factory.

When my child was about three and a half years old, we started looking for a nursery school. It is really not easy to land on the "right" nursery where you would be leaving your child all day long, at such a young age. There is a milliard of criteria that need to be considered. One of the key criteria for us was the nursery's proximity to my workplace. Since OIZ was outside the city, we had a hard time finding a nursery school close to my workplace. Besides, many of them were way beyond our budget. In addition, we would always hear something negative about the quality of the education or the teachers of every nursery school we went to see. The only nursery we didn't hear anything negative about was the Joy Factory.

When we went to see Joy Factory, the moment I stepped into its garden, I felt that I was in the right place. The modest and cute facade of the building put me at ease. Looking through the eyes of a child, the building seemed welcoming and reassuring. As leave your child there in the morning, it looked like a place that would help you give your child the message "Don't be afraid, I'm leaving you in this sweet building



with your friends and teachers", instead of "I'm leaving you in this huge, cold place". I think it is very important for a nursery school to be associated with such a message. Because, beginning nursery school is a child's first experience of being away from his/her family and home for an extended period, where he/she needs to feel safe. In order for the child to get used to this separation, the architectural structure of the nursery school also needs to help you with that.

In addition to the external appearance of Joy Factory, its physical conditions were designed in a way that put the child in the center. For example, you had to climb only one step to get into the building. During that period, I visited a lot of nursery schools, some of which had three-story buildings. If I were to leave my child in a three-story building, I would probably go crazy all day wondering if he fell, because I am the kind of mother who constantly watches out for him, even when we are at home. In addition, the school had a beautiful garden and well-organized playgrounds both in the garden and inside the building. Most nurseries were just flats or stores that are not designed to be a nursery. In short, every detail in the architecture of the Joy Factory was well-planned and designed to make a child feel happy and comfortable.

At our first interview, I was also really impressed by the nursery staff, in addition to the wonderful physical conditions. During the interview, we met the headmaster and one teacher. Both were very friendly and very competent in their fields. They explained to us in detail their understanding of education and the kind of activities they carried out at school. In this meeting, I was convinced that my son would receive a good education and that his self-care needs would be meticulously taken care of.

This was definitely a nursery where I would leave my child with peace of mind, and the price was much more affordable than most of the nurseries we previously interviewed with. With all these features, Joy Factory was the nursery school we dreamed of for our child.

Since the nursery has a limited capacity, after your first meeting, they put you on a waiting list and call you when there is an opening. Since it was a popular school, I never thought we would get a call back so soon. One day while I was at work, they called me to tell that our child had been accepted. I greeted the news with a whoop of delight. Believe me, there is no greater happiness for a mother than finding a nursery where she can leave her little child with peace of mind. That is why, I think providing a nursery is one of the greatest support a working mother could get. Following our admission to the Joy Factory, the biggest problem of our life at the time was solved.

## The Difference Joy Factory Makes

Before our son started nursery school, his grandmother was babysitting him, and he loved her. That's why he didn't want to go to nursery school. If I were in his shoes, I would refuse to go, too. I wouldn't want my rule at home to come to an end for no reason (Smiles).

In the early days when I gave him a ride to the nursery, he would cry so much that I would also start crying when I got back to the car. But his teacher managed this process



wonderfully for all of us. She told us that we had to leave him even when he cried and that it would take some time for him to get used to it. Later in the day, she would send me pictures of my kid playing happily, with the note “Don’t worry, he’s doing great”.

There are no words to describe how precious this candid relationship I had with my son’s teacher was to me. In addition to taking a close interest in my child’s education, she also supported me throughout this process. Thanks to his teacher’s attitude, our son quickly got used to the nursery school and now loves it there. The way the teachers and administrators communicate not only with the children but also with us, the parents, is remarkable in every respect. I’ve never had any doubt as to whether they would tell me if there was a problem at school. I rest assured that, whatever happens, they would let me know openly but without causing me to panic. If there is something they need to tell me, they first send me the message

“There is something we want to talk to you about, but don’t worry, there is nothing to be afraid of”, before they give me a call so that I wouldn’t panic when I see them calling. I can’t stress enough what an important form of communication this is. I am telling you this because I see how my friends whose children are in other nurseries get a call. They receive a phone call and with that call, they freak out in the middle of the day. In addition, they do a great job of ensuring children’s personal hygiene. I leave my son in the morning with clean clothes, and that is how I take him back in the evening. It’s pleasing to see him changed into the spare clothes I put in his bag. I hear some of my friends complaining that they send their children to school in clean

clothes and they come home all dirty.

The teachers in our school really take care of our children as if they were their own. I don’t have to worry about things like, “How is my child doing during the day? Did he eat? Did he fall?”. This is the children we are talking about. Of course, they could fall or something bad could happen to them, but these things can happen when they are with us, too. What matters is the way these situations are handled. This is something about which I am totally at ease. I am confident that his teachers would do the right thing and handle every situation properly. Right now, our child is getting a great education at the nursery. I see that the nursery is also doing a good job instilling the values which I am delighted and proud to see in my child. For example, sharing is something my son does much better since he started school. He used to never share his toys with anyone, but now he is happy to share them with his friends. He learned how to play with others and act in solidarity at the nursery. He is also learning to love animals and nature, and that every living thing in the world deserves to be treated equally and valued. It gives me so much pleasure to see that he does not differentiate between girls and boys as his friends. I think it is safe to say that, inspired by all these values, he has learned to be egalitarian. I am really happy to see them learn that everyone in the school is entitled to equal rights and opportunities, regardless of who they are. In addition, my son teaches me what he has learned at school, so I can say that, in a way, the nursery also “educates” me, too. (Smiles) For example, one day he said to me, “Mom, I’m going to be the school president tomorrow”. In response, “How do you know you’re going to be president

tomorrow?” I asked. “You know the kite ... it says so in there”, he said. They probably made a bulletin board in the shape of a kite, where there was a list of the students. Looking at this board, they keep track of who would be the president the next day. I can’t stress how important this is for me. First, they don’t have a permanent president, someone else gets to be the president every day. Second, everyone can see on the board when it would be their turn. This is a great activity for them to understand and internalize that everyone is equal, and that none of them is privileged or excluded.

I am thrilled and proud to see the change my child has been going through before my eyes. He has turned into someone who knows his responsibilities, takes good care of his personal hygiene, likes to share, follows the rules, and loves to learn. When I look at him, I say, “What more could we expect from a five-year-old?”.

#### In my opinion, Joy Factory means...

The Joy Factory is a place where I can entrust my child with peace of mind. I can say that it is a second home where I drop him off.

If a nursery school gives you the reassurance that you never have to wonder if your child ate, felt cold when he/she slept, or spent quality time, and if he/she is happy to go in and out every day, what else could you expect? The Joy Factory certainly lives up to its name. The joy they create at school makes its way into our homes and every member of our family. We cannot thank Borusan and all the staff at our school enough for what they do.

*He is also learning to love animals and nature, and that every living thing in the world deserves to be treated equally and valued. It gives me so much pleasure to see that he does not differentiate between girls and boys as his friends. I think it is safe to say that, inspired by all these values, he has learned to be an egalitarian. I am really happy to see them learn that everyone in the school is entitled to equal rights and opportunities, regardless of who they are.*

© Borusan Holding, 2023