

**Company:** HALKBANK, İstanbul, Umraniye

**Nomination Submitted by:** Business Awards Consulting

**Company Description:** Halkbank, established in 1938 with mission of supporting artisans and SMEs and accelerating sustainable economic development in Türkiye, has become one of the prominent, stable, pioneering, and reputable brands in the rising country. For 87 years, Halkbank has been leading the development of the Turkish banking sector.

**Nomination Category:** Achievement Categories

**Nomination Sub Category:** Achievement in Diversity & Inclusion

**Nomination Title:** Halkbank Supports Women Entrepreneurship

1. Which will you submit for your nomination in this category, a video of up to five (5) minutes in length about the achievements of the nominated organization since 1 January 2023, OR written answers to the questions for this category? (Choose one):

Written answers to the questions

2. If you are submitting a video of up to five (5) minutes in length, provide the URL of the nominated video here, OR attach it to your entry via the "Add Attachments, Videos, or Links to This Entry" link above, through which you may also upload a copy of your video.

3. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this first question: Briefly describe the nominated organization: its history and past performance (up to 200 words):

**Total 200 words used.**

Women's entrepreneurship remains one of Türkiye's most underutilized economic drivers. As of 2024, women's labor force participation was just **37.5%**, and female entrepreneurship stood at **18.2%**, far below global average of **34.7%**. Despite efforts across sectors, women in Türkiye face persistent barriers in access to capital, visibility, formal training, and scale-up opportunities.

In response to this structural gap, Halkbank launched a visionary initiative in **2021** by establishing country's **first and only Women's Entrepreneurship Banking Department**. Unlike traditional CSR projects or limited-scope credit lines, this department was created as a permanent institutional structure tasked with building full ecosystem to empower women entrepreneurs financially, socially, and professionally.

This move was both strategic and symbolic. Strategically, it allowed Halkbank to consolidate and scale a variety of support mechanisms under one dedicated umbrella. Symbolically, it positioned women's entrepreneurship not as a marginal issue but as a national development priority.

Over the past four years, department has evolved into a holistic platform offering tailored credit programs, educational tools, export facilitation, and youth-focused innovation. It is now a benchmark model, inspiring others to adopt gender-responsive frameworks. With institutional commitment and growing nationwide reach, Halkbank's women-focused ecosystem continues to shape Türkiye's inclusive growth agenda.

4. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this second question: Outline the organization's achievements since the beginning of 2023 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words):

**Total 250 words used.**

Since 2022, Halkbank has expanded its reach and relevance in Türkiye's entrepreneurship ecosystem through targeted programs, digital innovation, and evidence-based design. While the Bank continues to lead with its comprehensive loan offerings providing **96 billion TL** in credit to **250,000 women entrepreneurs**, its real transformation lies in **strategic shift from financing to capability building**.

Halkbank pioneered Türkiye's first full range of financial products tailored for women entrepreneurs, from credit cards to insurance, export loans to investment packages. But it didn't stop there. Recognizing that sustainable empowerment requires more than capital, the Bank shifted focus toward **long-term, knowledge-based interventions**.

In 2024, Halkbank published Türkiye's **first academic research report on women entrepreneurship**, in partnership with İstanbul University. The study diagnosed barriers across financing, formalization, and exports shaping new product designs, training content, and fund criteria.

In 2024, the Bank launched **BİGE- Science&Innovation with Girls**, a national initiative introducing STEM and entrepreneurship to high school girls. The program featured inspiration sessions in five cities, a hackathon with 20 teams, and an acceleration phase with mentoring, closing with a national demo day.

Simultaneously, the **Women's Export Footprint Program** was expanded to prepare women for global trade. Over **60 entrepreneurs** were trained, and Türkiye's first cooperative-led e-export transactions were completed through the ShopiVerse platform.

Halkbank also scaled the **Üreten Kadınlar Academy**, offering free training modules, reaching thousands of women with practical, industry-relevant content.

These integrated programs reflect Halkbank's evolving role not just as a lender, but as a **national architect of inclusive economic development**.

5. If you are providing written answers for your submission, you must provide an answer to this third question: Explain why the achievements you have highlighted are unique or significant. If possible compare the achievements to the performance of other players in your industry and/or to the organization's past performance (up to 250 words):

**Total 246 words used.**

What sets Halkbank apart is its ecosystem approach. Rather than supporting women entrepreneurs through fragmented initiatives, the Bank has built a **multi-layered, permanent, and replicable model** backed by institutional structure, scientific data, and real-time market feedback.

This model begins with financial inclusion, offering diverse credit and insurance tools exclusively designed for women. But it doesn't stop there. Women also receive support to formalize, brand, digitize, and scale their businesses through trainings, digital infrastructure, and market access programs. Visibility is amplified through national contests, media platforms, and public recognition.

Crucially, this ecosystem is **data-driven**. The Bank didn't just guess what women needed, it researched, measured, piloted, and adjusted. The academic report serves as a national benchmark, guiding both public and private action.

According to the Turkish Banks Association's Women Entrepreneur Loans Report 2024:

**-40% of all financial loans** to women entrepreneurs in Türkiye came from Halkbank.

**-70% of women entrepreneurs with ongoing loans** obtained them from Halkbank.

At the end of 2021, when Halkbank's Women Entrepreneur Department was founded, the female entrepreneurship rate in Türkiye was **11%**. By late 2024, it had risen to **18.2%**, a **7.2-point increase** while the global rate rose only 4 points (from 30% to 34%). Türkiye's increase is **1.8 times higher than the global average**, and given Halkbank's 70% share, its contribution is undeniable.

Even amid inflation and macroeconomic challenges, **16.25% of women entrepreneurs who received loans reported increased turnover** demonstrating not only inclusion, but true business growth.

6. You have the option to answer this final question: Reference any attachments of supporting materials throughout this nomination and how they provide evidence of the claims you have made in this nomination (up to 250 words):

**Total 242 words used.**

Halkbank's commitment to inclusive growth goes beyond financial services, it is embedded in its governance, workforce, procurement policies, and global affiliations.

On **September 22, 2023**, Halkbank's General Manager **Osman Arslan signed the UN Women's Empowerment Principles(WEPs)**, pledging to promote women's participation at all levels of the economy, ensure equal rights, and foster a safe and supportive work environment.

In 2024, Halkbank became the **first bank in Türkiye** to be included in the **Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index(GEI)**, a global benchmark recognizing transparency and performance in gender-related data reporting. This recognition validates Halkbank's institutional progress in building a diverse and equitable workplace.

Internally, **46.6% of Halkbank's employees are women**, surpassing Türkiye's national average of **30%**, and **22% of its Management Board** are women—one of the highest ratios in the banking sector.

To extend its impact beyond the institution, Halkbank applies **positive discrimination** in procurement. Women entrepreneurs, cooperatives, and women-owned SMEs are prioritized in vendor selection processes. This policy ensures visibility, market access, and long-term sustainability for women-led businesses.

**Apx1: Halkbank Women Empowerment Impact Report 2025**

**Apx2: Video-Women Entrepreneurs Testimonials**

<https://youtu.be/gJorrjCXpXQ>

**Apx3: Video-BİGE Project**

[https://youtu.be/\\_zXDNqNU6X8](https://youtu.be/_zXDNqNU6X8)

**Apx4: Video-Halkbank Women Entrepreneurship Commercial including Testimonials**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZKLtTC1kDc>

**Apx5: Video-Producing Women Competition 2024**

<https://youtu.be/F7Pfu9iUZVg>

**Apx6: Report-Halkbank 2024 Summarized Annual Report on Entrepreneurship, SME and Artisan Banking**

**Apx7: Video-Halkbank Women Card Commercial**

<https://youtu.be/jUUbOVihil>

**Apx8: Video-Vision Meetings for Women Entrepreneurs**

<https://youtu.be/UpE6cspN4q8>

**Apx9: Video-Masterclass Brand Training**

<https://youtu.be/e8BIP7DrEY4>

**Attachments/Videos/Links:**

<https://youtu.be/gJorrjCXpXQ>

[REDACTED FOR PUBLICATION]

