

Company: HALKBANK, Istanbul, 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: Management Categories

Nomination Sub Category: Excellence in Diversity Management

Nomination Title: Halkbank Supports Women Entrepreneurship

1. If you are providing a written essay for this nomination, submit in this space an essay of up to 650 words describing the nominee's achievements in this category since 1 January 2023:

Total 650 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.

Over the past four years, the 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.

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, Halkbank shifted focus toward **long-term, knowledge-based interventions**.

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

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

The Bank 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**.

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**. Halkbank 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 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 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.

2. In bullet-list form (up to 150 words), provide a brief summary of up to ten (10) of the nominee's achievements in this category since 1 January 2023:

Total 97 words used.

- 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.

3. Which will you submit for this nomination, a video of up to five (5) minutes in length or a written essay of up to 650 words? Choose one:

Essay of up to 650 words

4. 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:

Attachments/Videos/Links:

[Halkbank Supports Women Entrepreneurship](#)

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