

Business and Innovation Award



Bahar Taşkın Öztürk

Istanbul Bilgi University and University of London,
LSE EMFSS Programme

Bahar Taşkın Öztürk is a visionary leader dedicated to fostering diversity and inclusion within corporate success. She champions sustainable change through personal development and transformative corporate dynamics. As the founder of INAN and CGO at Twiser, she leads initiatives that benefit civil society and organisations.

Bahar has held significant roles, including Country Manager for the MENA region at Tupperware and Sales and Marketing Director for Turkey. She earned an Executive MBA from Koç University and holds a bachelor's degree in Economics and Management from the University of London, having studied through its International Programme in collaboration with Bilgi University. Through this programme, she took courses from the London School of Economics (LSE), gaining a globally recognised education that shaped her strategic thinking and leadership approach.

Recognised by InStyle magazine as one of the 40 Pioneering Women prioritising social benefit, she collaborates with Harvard Business Review to host prominent figures, further amplifying her impact in corporate and social transformation. dynamic landscape of the health industries.



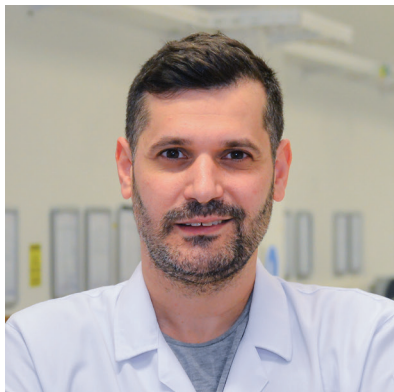
Gaurav Henry

University of Westminster

Gaurav Henry is a serial entrepreneur and Co-founder of ReelCraft.ai, a storytelling platform that transforms ideas into immersive animated stories. He previously helped scale AdCreative AI - recognized by G2 (2023–2024) as the world's 3rd fastest-growing startup - and continues to champion community-driven innovation in everything he builds. Beyond technology, he and his wife founded Hindistan Dukkan in Turkey, supplying hand-beaded bridal fabrics to leading bridal manufacturers across the region.

An alumnus of the University of Westminster, Gaurav emphasizes hands-on, real-world applications in product development, assembling global teams to deliver cutting-edge AI solutions. From empowering educators to create engaging lessons to helping artists produce AI-driven videos, he's on a mission to democratize creativity and reshape digital storytelling.

Science and Sustainability Award



Özgür Atalay
University of Manchester

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Özgür Atalay is one of the leading experts in smart textiles, renowned for his pioneering work in textile-based wearable electronics and soft robotics. He has received numerous awards, including the prestigious ERC Grant, for his ground breaking innovations, such as a knitted robotic glove designed for individuals with disabilities. At Istanbul Technical University, he co-founded a cutting-edge laboratory dedicated to soft robotics and wearable technology. Dr. Atalay also leads several major EU-funded projects, fostering collaborations with esteemed partners across Europe.

Özgür Atalay gained significant experience working in an interdisciplinary environment focused on sensor integration in textiles. The university's collaborative and international atmosphere expanded his research perspective. This experience allowed him to enhance his technical skills and strengthened his passion for innovation in wearable electronics.

Özgür Atalay is committed to advancing fundamental science in both his home country and across Europe, with the aim of improving people's lives.



Sema Dumanlı Otkar
University of Bristol

Sema Dumanlı is the founder of Boğaziçi University's Antennas and Propagation Laboratory. She invented in-body wireless monitoring at the molecular level through genetically modified cells, a technology with the potential to revolutionize healthcare by enabling real-time detection of viruses and bacteria. This globally patented innovation was featured on the cover of IEEE Antennas and Propagation Magazine and showcased in numerous international conference talks.

The UK's unique academic environment encouraged Sema to pursue ambitious research goals while addressing societal needs. Her experiences at the University of Bristol shaped her commitment to equitable healthcare, diversity, and inclusion.

Sema now inspires Turkey's youth to pursue engineering, advancing research on critical global challenges like antimicrobial resistance and HIV.



Ozan Bahcivan

University of the West of England, Bristol
University of Central Lancashire

Dr. Ozan is a clinical and health psychologist specializing in psycho-oncology. He is the founding president of the Turkish Psycho-Oncological Association (Psiko-Onkologlar Derneği) and serves as the European Director for the International Psycho-Oncology Society (IPOS). Additionally, he is the founding head of the Health Psychology Division of the Turkish Psychological Association (Türk Psikologlar Derneği). Dr. Ozan is dedicated to improving the mental well-being of cancer patients, advancing professional standards, and raising awareness through initiatives such as World Psycho-Oncology Day. His leadership has made a significant impact on both the medical and psychological communities in Turkey and beyond.

Dr Ozan gained hands-on experience through supervised psychology work placements, allowing him to apply his learning in real-world settings.

Dr. Ozan Bahcivan aims to further advance psycho-oncology in Europe, strengthen international collaborations, and support the integration of mental health care in cancer treatment.

Social Action Award



Merve Yıldırım
University of Sussex

Dr. Merve Yıldırım is an assistant professor in computer engineering, with seven years of academic experience. She holds both a MSc in Advanced Computer Engineering and a PhD in Informatics from the University of Sussex. Her research focuses on information security and computer networks, incorporating multidisciplinary perspectives such as human-computer interaction, psychology, and user behavior. Dr. Yıldırım has successfully mentored students in international competitions, achieving significant recognition in the field. In 2024, she was honored as an Outstanding Instructor.

Dr. Yıldırım credits her education at the University of Sussex for enhancing her leadership, critical thinking, and collaboration skills

Her work continues to shape the next generation of engineers through research, teaching, and leadership in academia.



Hande Soğancılar
University of Manchester

Hande Soğancılar, an expert in economic empowerment and poverty reduction with more than 12 years of experience in civil society. She has supported 10,000+ refugees and 400 women entrepreneurs and cooperatives through livelihood programmes and entrepreneurship support. During the Kahramanmaraş Earthquake, she helped young women gain employability and launched Türkiye's first online B2B social procurement platform for rebuilding their lives.

Studying at the University of Manchester shaped Hande Soğancılar's approach to human rights through development studies, activism, exposure to UK's strong civil society and global perspectives.

Hande Sogancilar hopes to bring together all the expertise she gathered during her professional experiences to advocate for enhancing economic situation of disadvantaged women and combatting poverty of vulnerable populations by influencing social policies around the issues she tries to tackle through her publications and program leadership.



Prof. Dr. Barış Alpaslan
University of Manchester

Dr. Baris Alpaslan is a Professor of Economics at the Department of Economics, Social Sciences University of Ankara. In addition to his professorial duties, Prof. Alpaslan holds several administrative positions at different levels within the same university. He is also affiliated with multiple renowned research centres in the UK, Australia, and Japan. Prof. Alpaslan earned his MSc (with distinction) and subsequently a PhD in Economics from the University of Manchester. His research interests primarily focus on the macroeconomics of growth, inequality, and development.

He currently serves as a Vice President of the Committee of Experts on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals at the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO. Additionally, Prof. Alpaslan has provided consultancy services for several international organisations, including the World Bank, African Development Bank, and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development. Recently, he was appointed Chief Advisor to the Chairman of the Executive Board at IC Holding.

Prof. Alpaslan was a finalist in the Science and Sustainability Award category at the 2023-24 British Council Study UK Alumni Awards. His contributions to research have been acknowledged with numerous prestigious research and incentive awards. His studies at the University of Manchester significantly enriched his understanding of development economics and equipped him with a unique blend of skills that have greatly contributed to his current academic success. Prof. Alpaslan is now extending his expertise to international organisations and centres for international development globally, where he advises governments on development policies.

Culture and Creativity Award



Elif Bereketli
SOAS University of London

Elif Bereketli is a Germany-born, Turkish bilingual journalist with nearly two decades of media experience. Passionate about the intersections of creativity, society, and politics, she has worked as a presenter, executive producer, editor-in-chief, writer, and translator across TV, print, documentaries, podcasts, and newspapers.

Currently a presenter at TRT World, Elif is known for her critical approach to storytelling, uncovering cultural narratives globally. She founded and served as editor-in-chief of SabitFikir, a contemporary literature magazine focused on accessible cultural criticism.

Beyond journalism, she has hosted international events on humanitarian issues, technology, culture, and tourism, collaborating with organizations like the UN, Web Summit, and British Council.

She holds a master's in Cultural Studies from SOAS, University of London, and has been recognized by Vogue Turkey and Elle Turkey as a leading figure in arts and culture.



Gözde Mimiko Türkkkan
University of the Arts, London

Gözde Mimiko Türkkkan is an artist exhibiting internationally whose performative and video works challenge global narratives on gender identities and climate crises. Her art engages the body as both a site of conflict and resistance, disrupting societal norms and fostering dialogue.

Studying at Central Saint Martins refined her critical approach, encouraging experimentation and interdisciplinary thinking. This experience helped her push boundaries and establish her own distinctive approach.

Her work, which has so far aimed to inspire individuals, now seeks to expand its impact by exploring ways to engage and empower collective structures through movement, image, and performance.

Special Award for Humanitarian Relief



Kadriye İpek Misciođlu

London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE)

K. İpek Misciođlu worked at UNHCR Türkiye Operation for seven years, serving in two emergency situations including the Earthquake Situation. Her work was instrumental in facilitating thousands of refugees' access to services and protection of persons with vulnerabilities, such as unaccompanied and separated children and people at risk of and survivors of violence, both in urban areas and the earthquake zone, particularly the most affected provinces Hatay, Malatya, Adiyaman, and Kahramanmaraş.

İpek observes that LSE provided her with qualities to identify needs and means to meet needs in human rights area in general and migration in particular. Academic excellence on global and Türkiye-specific human rights and migration law and mechanisms, critical analysis, and awareness on complex nature of global migration were key in this regard. İpek is now taking her skills and expertise to policy development in Türkiye, focusing on migration and border management.