

## BUSINESS AND INNOVATION AWARD



### **Mehmet Mücahit Arvas** **Bournemouth University**

Mehmet Mücahit Arvas is a lawyer with 17 years of public sector experience and the founder of Marvas Legal. During his public service career, Mehmet established the infrastructure that would enable thousands of businesses to access financing through reforms and remove barriers to e-commerce.

Mehmet states that Bournemouth University provided him with a common law perspective helped him understand the importance of digitalisation.

Mehmet continues his mission with Marvas Legal focusing on bureaucracy and international organisations, in the areas of digitalisation and legal reform, EU digital regulations, investment, and commercial arbitration.



### **Mesut Can Sefizade** **University of Sussex**

Mesut Şefizade, an MSc International Marketing graduate from the University of Sussex, applied the "Blue Ocean Strategy" mindset he learned in the UK to find an untapped opportunity in Turkey. Instead of competing in crowded ad spaces, he founded D-Dat Consultancy to utilize WhatsApp for direct engagement. Through bulk messaging and interactive Q&A flows, Mesut enables brands to enrich first-party data and segment audiences. This practical application of theory has helped over 40 clients achieve 4x ROAS by simply asking the right questions.

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## Serhat Aydin King's College London

Serhat works on the green transition and, in the most literal sense of the word, is a sustainability advocate: a seasoned transactional lawyer focusing on M&A and Project Finance, and an independent board member steering renewable infrastructure investments. He leads the Turkish private sector—rooted in a strong industrial and export tradition—in adapting to the twin transformation by delivering structural and contractual solutions in PPA and/or EPC contexts that enable his well-established client base to secure organizational-level energy supply security and price predictability, transition to renewable energy sources, and achieve carbon reduction.

## CULTURE, CREATIVITY AND SPORT AWARD



## Bala Gürcan Madra University College London

Bala Gürcan Madra is an arts and culture columnist for Cumhuriyet Pazar and host of a contemporary arts series on Cumhuriyet TV, reaching thousands of Turkish viewers monthly. As a curator and critic, her work makes contemporary art accessible to audiences unfamiliar with the arts, breaking down barriers in Turkey's often exclusive cultural sector. Bala's UCL education taught her to look beyond the surface: to see how art connects to the bigger picture of society and human experience. This approach now shapes everything she does, from writing exhibition reviews to curating shows, influencing how people in Turkey engage with contemporary culture.



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## Aysegül Altın Middlesex University

Aysegül Altın is a TV journalist in Turkey specializing in education and health reporting at the national TV news channel. She covers issues related to schools and hospitals, conveying the concerns of students, teachers, parents, patients, and healthcare professionals to authorities in the public interest. She was nominated for the 2024 Sedat Simavi Best News Award by the Turkish Journalists Association for her three-part investigative series "A Gifted State Property."

## SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY AWARD



### **Aćelya Yılmazer Aktuna** University College London

Aćelya Yılmazer Aktuna is an internationally recognised nanomedicine researcher. Since returning to Türkiye, she has built one of the country's leading biomedical research laboratories, secured over €2 million in competitive funding, and pioneered novel cancer and antiviral nanotechnologies with global impact. Her work has contributed to advances in cancer therapy and pandemic preparedness, while training the next generation of scientists. Her UK education at the University of Nottingham and University College London shaped her scientific philosophy, leadership style, and commitment to ethical, collaborative and socially responsible research that now benefits her profession, community, and country.

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## Oğuzhan Gündüz University College London

Dr Oguzhan Gunduz is a UK-trained academic and research leader who has played a key role in transferring the values of UK higher education to Türkiye. After completing studies at University College London (UCL), He has led pioneering projects in innovative nanotechnology and biotechnology for healthcare, producing over 350 scientific publications and translating research into industry-oriented, product-focused collaborations. Through innovative projects with more than 25 international partners, He has become a leading figure in facilitating master's and PhD student exchanges. As the founder and director of Center for Nanotechnology and Biomaterials Application and Research (NBUAM), He continues to train and mentor hundreds of early-career academics and R&D professionals, while strengthening UK–Türkiye collaboration through initiatives such as the British Council-supported 3DI: 3D Printing and Digital Innovation project. Today, He is leading joint, product-focused projects in close collaboration with Turkish industrial partners.

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## Recep Zan University of Manchester

Prof. Recep Zan is a pioneering materials physicist whose work advances graphene and 2D materials research. He established a nanotechnology research laboratory that contributes to national priorities in energy, defence, and sustainability. Alongside mentoring more than 30 early-career scientists, he has received multiple prestigious scientific awards in recognition of his contributions.

His formative PhD at the University of Manchester, conducted alongside Nobel Laureate Prof. Sir Konstantin Novoselov, instilled a world-class ethos of interdisciplinary, translational science. With the aim of enhancing environmental sustainability and clean energy technologies, particularly through advanced 2D materials, Prof. Zan is applying his knowledge and experience gained in the UK to shape the next generation of researchers, transforming his laboratory into a globally resonant hub of excellence.

As a Vice Dean for Research at the Niğde Ömer Halisdemir University, Prof. Zan now aims to further expand UK-style collaborative research models in Türkiye and to translate fundamental science into technologies with lasting societal impact.

## **SOCIAL ACTION AWARD**



### **Selçuk Topal** **University of Oxford**

Selçuk Topal began his UK academic journey in 2009 through a Turkish Ministry of National Education overseas doctoral scholarship, completing English language training in Bournemouth, the UK. Despite holding doctoral offers from Utrecht and Groningen universities, he was selected for the DPhil programme in Astrophysics at the University of Oxford after a highly competitive interview and began his studies in 2010. His doctoral research focused on millimetre-wavelength molecular gas observations and galaxy evolution, an underexplored field in his home country. The first publication from his thesis received an honourable mention from the Association of British Turkish Academics. He is a member of the Royal Astronomical Society, the International Astronomical Union, and Christ Church College, Oxford.

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## Duygu Çavdar Yağan University of Bristol

Dr Duygu Çavdar Yağan is an Education Specialist at the Ministry of National Education in Ankara and a researcher in Educational Psychology. She coordinates the 1416 PDR Team, which provides online psychosocial support to Turkish postgraduate students studying abroad. She has participated in various international projects aimed at strengthening psychosocial support services for earthquake survivors and promoting students' wellbeing across Turkey.

Duygu is now applying her skills and expertise to improve the psychological wellbeing and adaptation of Turkish students studying abroad.

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## **Mavera Yücel** **University of Warwick**

Mavera Yücel is a social development professional working at the intersection of humanitarian practice, social innovation, and public policy in Türkiye. Her work has been instrumental in designing and leading participatory, community-based programmes that strengthened women's leadership and improved child wellbeing in eastern regions of Türkiye, and in translating innovative programme models into policy-aligned social assistance and partnership frameworks nationwide.

Mavera is now applying her expertise to strengthen innovative, evidence-based social assistance and protection systems across Türkiye, contributing to national policy frameworks through her role at the Ministry of Family and Social Services.