

THE VEHBI KOÇ FOUNDATION CELEBRATES ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY

“AS TURKEY’S FIRST PRIVATE FOUNDATION, WE ARE PROUD OF OUR LEADING ROLE IN INSTITUTIONALISING CHARITABLE WORK,” DECLARES SEMAHAT ARSEL, VEHBI KOÇ FOUNDATION CHAIRMAN

The Vehbi Koç Foundation, established on January 17, 1969 by Vehbi Koç, whose sagacity drove Turkish industry, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, displaying great pride in all its work on behalf of Turkey and in its support given to thousands of students. The foundation has carried out various projects in education, healthcare, and culture and the arts, and from the first moment of its establishment has sought to create a developing, modern Turkey. In this regard, Semahat Arsel, the foundation’s chairwoman, said: “As the Vehbi Koç Foundation, the Koç family, and the Koç Group, we feel the comfort of having fulfilled our responsibilities. We will continue to follow the same path in future as well. We hope that many more volunteers and institutions make the same efforts with the same sense of responsibility.” Arsel emphasized that they will continue with their projects in their 40th year and pointed to the “Cultural Campus” project, which envisages enlarging the Sadberk Hanım Museum, and to the Medical Faculty and Training & Research Hospital to be established within Koç University, as the most significant projects.

On January 17, 1969, the Vehbi Koç Foundation, Turkey’s first private foundation, was established by Vehbi Koç, whose sagacity drove Turkish industry and who also founded the Koç Group. The foundation is now celebrating its 40th anniversary, proud of the work it has accomplished on behalf of Turkey in the areas of education, healthcare, and culture and the arts along with the educational support of thousands of students. Having founded 27 schools, six healthcare centres, and five cultural institutions as well as supporting hundreds of institutions, the Vehbi Koç Foundation has reached forty thousand students in forty years with scholarships given either directly to these students or through educational institutions.

It has pioneered institutionalizing charitable work in Turkey

Chairwoman of the Vehbi Koç Foundation and the eldest child of founder Vehbi Koç, Semahat Arsel stated on the occasion of the foundation’s 40th anniversary that as the Vehbi Koç Foundation, the Koç family, and the Koç Group, they feel the comfort of having fulfilled their responsibilities. Indicating that her father, Vehbi Koç, had made it a rule to live by high moral standards and had followed this rule until his last breath, Arsel stated, “He applied the same principles to both his family life and business life. Vehbi Koç acted with the desire of bringing innovation to his country, of contributing to the society in which he lived. In fact, his pioneering efforts in institutionalizing charitable work in Turkey by establishing the Vehbi Koç Foundation meaningfully exemplify this desire.”

He made his first large donation to *Türk Kuşu* and received a medal from Atatürk

Semahat Arsel stated that Vehbi Koç began achieving success in his business life early on as a young adult because of his principles and solemnity and that he also expressed his viewpoint in his maxim: ‘If my country exists, I exist’ through his social responsibility projects. She said, “As a matter of fact, he made his first large donation to *Türk Kuşu* and

received a diamond-studded medal from Atatürk. From that day on, he continued his donations, both small and large. However, at a certain point, he started to search for a way to institutionalize his efforts for the sake of continuity.”

His visit to the U.S. was the turning point

Semahat Arsel noted that Vehbi Koç’s greatest inspiration for the Vehbi Koç Foundation, officially established on January 17, 1969, as Turkey’s first private foundation, was the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, which he had learned about during his first visit to America in 1946: “Vehbi Koç had very strong observational skills and was very competent in in-depth analyses. In fact, as his business achievements gained momentum, he noticed that his random and unplanned charitable work was being wasted, and he felt uncomfortable about its possible demise. At that point, because of his first business trip to the U.S., he jumped at the opportunity to examine how the major American companies at that time had solved this problem.”

He wrestled with the structural legalities for 21 years

Following this visit, he became quite involved with his colleagues for 21 years in wrestling with the structural legalities required for an approach similar to Western counterparts, yet in keeping with his own ideas; he consulted with both public officials and lawmakers throughout these years.”

“The foundation has been sincerely embraced not only by the family, but also by the directors and employees”

Established by Vehbi Koç, founder of the Koç Group, the highly visionary Vehbi Koç Foundation, the first to institutionalize Turkey’s charitable work, was wholeheartedly embraced both by Vehbi Koç and the Koç family from the foundation’s incipience as noted by Semahat Arsel when she remarked: “We hope that many more volunteers and institutions make the same efforts with the same sense of responsibility.” Semahat Arsel pointed to the fact that the social responsibility espoused by Vehbi Koç in establishing the Vehbi Koç Foundation has inspired other major industrialists: “We are incredibly happy to see that today’s many large and impressive private foundations have been established and developed in the footsteps of Vehbi Koç and the Vehbi Koç Foundation. This fact alone is the greatest source of pride for our family.”

“He entrusted the Foundation first to his family and directors, and then to the Turkish public.”

Semahat Arsel, Chairman of the Vehbi Koç Foundation, emphasized the satisfaction they have in seeing that the foundation’s support in education, culture, and healthcare is a predominant model for corporate social responsibility projects in the business world, reminding us that Vehbi Koç endowed eight percent of Koç Holding to the Vehbi Koç Foundation: “On the day Vehbi Koç established the foundation, he requested that his speech be recorded in the minutes, and, in the “Consignment” portion of his speech, he entrusted the foundation, for purposes of continuity, first to his family and directors, and then to the Turkish public.”

“Build, transfer, look after” model in education

In 1998, the Vehbi Koç Foundation built 13 primary schools in different regions of Turkey to support eight-year primary education, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Republic

of Turkey, and placed them under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education on September 28, 1999. Since then, each Koç Group company looks after a school in their region by supporting its special needs such as maintenance costs. Moreover, VKV Koç private elementary and high schools nurture these schools with regular seminars and development programs for teachers, guidance counsellors, and administrators in conjunction with the “13 Schools Hand in Hand” project, encouraging them to share their experiences and knowledge internally, then externally with neighbouring schools. In this regard, Semahat Arsel, Chairman of the Vehbi Koç Foundation, remarked: “We closely follow the projects we have carried out with a ‘build, transfer, and look after’ model. For public projects, even after we hand them over to the public, we monitor their compliance with the original goals and continue to support them. Thousands of students benefit from the educational institutions we have founded or built and donated to the government. And we are extremely pleased with this.”

New projects in the 40th year: Sadberk Hanım “Cultural Campus” Project

Vehbi Koç Foundation initiated the Vehbi Koç Award in 2002, aiming to recognize and encourage individuals or organizations that support the enhancement of Turkey’s quality of life, and each year the foundation recognizes the most successful individual or organization in one of three areas: education, healthcare, and culture and the arts. Having founded 27 schools, six healthcare centres, and five cultural institutions and having supported forty thousand students in forty years through scholarships, the Vehbi Koç Foundation is now involved in one of the most important projects of its 40th anniversary: enlargement of the Sadberk Hanım Museum while transferring it to a more convenient location. Semahat Arsel explained, “In fact, the original project covered only the existing museum. However, it has expanded into a “cultural campus” project. For content development and the scheduling of the project, we worked with a leading consulting firm in this area. After we find a convenient location, we want to work again with an international architectural firm so that we can give a very important museum to Istanbul and to our country.”

Medical Faculty and Training & Research Hospital Project

Another major project that the Vehbi Koç Foundation has included in its schedule for 2009 is the preparatory work for the Medical Faculty to be opened at Koç University. A Training & Research Hospital is also planned along with this faculty. Semahat Arsel reminded us that the Foundation has made the greatest material contribution to education in all these forty years and said, “However, we plan to celebrate our 40th anniversary by founding a Medical Faculty. As decided by the Board of Directors of the Vehbi Koç Foundation in 2008, the Medical Faculty and Training & Research Hospital within Koç University will be the foundation’s greatest and most significant initiative in healthcare.”