

Healthcare & Life Sciences - Turkey

New body established to manage healthcare industry

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On November 26 2014 a new autonomous administrative body to manage the Turkish healthcare industry was established under Law 6569 on the Establishment of the Presidency of Turkish Healthcare Institutes and the Amendment of Other Codes and Decree Laws, published in the *Official Gazette*.

Presidency of Turkish Healthcare Institutes

The Presidency of Turkish Healthcare Institutes aims to provide services in the healthcare science and technology sectors for the benefit of public health. To achieve these aims the law will:

- foster new technologies and innovations;
- create new products and improve existing products;
- ensure a conducive scientific environment for researchers;
- conduct scientific research through partnerships with legal entities;
- coordinate research conducted;
- contribute to research and development (R&D) activities;
- provide accreditation procedures; and
- be a leader in health improvement.

These goals constitute the body's main activities.

The body was established as an Istanbul-based public entity and a separate legal entity from the government. Further, the body will have an independent budget as well as administrative and scientific autonomy, although public resources will be transferred to the institute as a contribution to public health.

New R&D definition and scope

Law 6569 introduces a broader definition of R&D than Law 5746 on Supporting R&D Activities. Law 6569 defines 'R&D' as "all research and development in the healthcare science and technology sectors". In contrast, Law 5746 requires research activities to fulfil certain conditions and therefore includes more limited activities. It remains to be seen what impact the body's establishment will have on R&D activities and which activities will be accepted within the scope of R&D.

The body's primary mission is:

- to conduct R&D activities;
- to provide financial or scientific support for R&D;
- to coordinate R&D activities;
- to promote R&D activities; and
- to foster links with private institutions.

Further, the body not only supports R&D regarding improvements and innovations in the healthcare sector, but also R&D regarding the administration and dissemination of the results of these improvements and innovations, which could be of interest to pioneering companies. The body will establish R&D centres and units for researchers. It also has a duty to organise meetings, conferences or other educational scientific events in order to promote R&D.

The body is entitled to request information from higher education institutions that it considers

Authors

Ozge Atilgan Karakulak



Tuğçe Avcisert Geçgil



essential to its work. Following a request from the healthcare institute, higher education institutions must do their best to deliver the information required, provided that they retain their intellectual property rights.

Discussions and expectations

The Turkish Medical Association, which represents approximately 80% of Turkish doctors, has criticised the establishment of the body on the grounds that it lacks independence. The board of directors and the advisory board members are predominantly appointed by the ministry and are under government direction. Highlighting the issue of independence and problems with the quality of education in existing medical universities, the Turkish Medical Association is also concerned that the body will use public resources to favour private institutions rather than public institutions because its finances are limited and it is in need of private support for R&D activities.

Comment

It is not yet known whether the new body will accomplish its goals, but it will be expected to support R&D activities in the healthcare sector. Therefore, it is likely that researchers and innovators will find a more encouraging scientific and economic environment in Turkey. With secondary legislation expected to be published in the near future, the scope and conditions of the support that the institute will provide to researchers will become clearer.

For further information on this topic please contact [Özge Atılğan Karakulak](#) or [Tuğçe Avcisert Geçgil](#) at [Mehmet Gün & Partners](#) by telephone (+90 212 354 00 00), fax (+90 212 274 20 95) or email (ozge.atilgan@gun.av.tr or tugce.avcisert@gun.av.tr). The GUN + PARTNERS website can be accessed at www.gun.av.tr.

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