

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF MOTORCYCLE  
DELIVERY WORKER ORGANIZATIONS IN TURKEY:

# REPORT ON IDENTIFIED PROBLEMS AND SOLUTION PROPOSALS RELATED TO DELIVERY WORK



# KURYE HAKLARI DERNEĐİ

## IMPRESSUM

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# FOREWORD

Although the history of motorcycle delivery services in Turkey dates back 30 years, it has gained prevalence especially in the last 4-5 years due to the emergence of new marketing strategies by online food delivery companies and the development of online shopping habits. With the pandemic, delivery services, especially in the food sector, have become an indispensable part of Daily life, extending to nearly every sector and business. The number of motorcycle delivery workers has reached historic highs, numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

As the Delivery Worker Rights Association, established to research, identify, report, and raise awareness about the problems faced by delivery workers, we conducted a field research to determine the profiles, institutional structures, and operations of organizations including associations, federations, unions and committees; to identify the issues delivery workers seek assistance for and whether there are support mechanisms available; and to determine the types of activities the organizations engage in. Within the scope of the research, we gathered information on how extensively the activities of delivery worker organizations reach workers, how the organizations establish relationships with workers and their problems, how they interpret workers' issues, which problems they perceive as more urgent, thoughts and suggestions regarding platform delivery work, experiences in collaborating with each other and relevant institutions, future plans, and solution proposals.

In Turkey, there are a total of 79 delivery worker organizations. 69 of them are in the form of associations, including 8 federations, 1 confederation, and 15 district-level associations. Additionally, there are 6 transportation and service unions, with 3 of them affiliated with union confederations. Furthermore, there are 3 organizations organized under the names of solidarity network and committee, and 1 Chamber of Tradesmen (an organization that recognizes platform delivery workers as tradesmen, not workers).

Taking into account factors such as their year of establishment, level of activity, membership numbers, and the cities and geographical regions they operate in, we selected a total of 25 associations, federations, confederations, unions, committees, and solidarity networks operating across 14 cities in Turkey, with a total population of 41,502,958 people. We conducted meetings with representatives of these organizations, with 20 held face-to-face and 5 online, each lasting approximately one hour.

# SECTION 1

## AN OVERVIEW OF MOTORCYCLE DELIVERY WORKER ORGANIZATIONS

Motorcycle delivery workers emerged in Turkey in the early 1990s. During those years, there were few delivery workers transporting documents between customs in Ankara and Istanbul. Subsequently, large pharmaceutical warehouses began employing delivery workers, especially for the urgent distribution of medicines. At that time, restaurants did not yet offer delivery services. In addition to major corporations, local and small-scale delivery companies also began operating. By 2020, with the pandemic, the number of delivery workers on online platforms and those employed in almost every sector as formal, informal, or part-time workers reached hundreds of thousands.

### ***Organizational Activities of Motorcycle Delivery Workers***

This report does not aim to narrate the history of delivery worker associations and organizations. Instead, our objective is to provide a brief overview of the historical trajectory of the formation of delivery worker associations and different organizational models, emphasizing the periods when organizational efforts intensified.

### ***Associations, Federations, Confederations***

While the initial organizational models for motorcycle delivery workers were associations, the first associations began to be established 15 years after the emergence of motorcycle couriership. The first motorcycle delivery worker association was established in Ankara in 2005 under the name "Motorcyclists and Couriers Association." In 2007, the Motorcycle Couriers Association was announced in Istanbul. These associations, established to foster unity and solidarity among motorcycle delivery workers, promote mutual assistance, engage in discussions with relevant authorities regarding delivery worker issues, and enhance the prestige of the motorcycle courier profession, emerged as the first associations established in Turkey. After the closure of the "Motorcyclists and Couriers Association," the "Ankara Couriers Association"

was founded in 2013 as its successor. Several years later, associations began to emerge in different cities. In 2016, the “Samsun Motorcycle and Couriers Association” was established, while the “Sakarya Motorcycle Delivery Workers Association” was also established in the same year. In 2018, the “Motorcycle Delivery Workers Mutual Aid, Solidarity, and Education Association” began its activities in Denizli. In 2019, motorcycle delivery worker associations were established successively in cities and districts, particularly in Ankara districts, as well as in cities such as Bursa and Adana. Soon after, delivery workers engaged in organizational efforts turned to establishing federations to coordinate their activities in cities and districts more effectively and to have a stronger presence with relevant authorities. The possibility of federation formation with the coming together of five associations also contributed to the acceleration of organizational efforts in 2019.

## **Unions**

The first union established under the name “Motorcycle Delivery Workers Union” was founded in Istanbul in November 2015. Furthermore, the Tourism, Leisure, and Service Workers Union (TEHİS) and the Restaurant and Hotel Workers Union (Resto-İş), established in 2021, also engage in organizational activities concerning motorcycle delivery workers as unions covering service workers. The establishment dates of transportation unions in Turkey date back to the 1950s. The All Transport Workers’ Union (TÜMTİS), affiliated with the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türk-İş), and the Trade Union of Revolutionary Land, Airway, and Railway Transportation Workers of Turkey (NAKLİYAT-İŞ), affiliated with the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK), carried out activities in the 1990s advocating for the rights of distribution workers in various cargo companies. The efforts of these unions regarding motorcycle delivery workers essentially began with the pandemic declared in 2020. The Trade Union for Transport Workers (Öz Taşıma-İş), established under the Hak-İş Confederation in 2012, also announced its intention to engage in activities concerning delivery workers in Istanbul in 2021, following a meeting with motorcycle delivery worker associations.

## **Committee, Solidarity Network, Chamber**

As the problems faced by motorcycle delivery worker increased and became more visible in the public eye, both the organization of delivery workers and their organizational models developed. In 2019, the Yemeksepeti Workers’ Committee was established, followed by the Motorcycle Delivery and Cargo Workers Union in 2021 and the Motorcycle Delivery Worker - Cargo Workers Solidarity Network in 2022, all of which began activities related to delivery

workers. Prior to 2019, the number of motorcycle delivery worker organizations was around 10-15, but between 2019 and 2023, dozens of delivery worker organizations were established.

## **Member Profile, Institutional Structure, and Operations**

While confederations and federations expressed their membership numbers in the thousands, associations, with few exceptions, reported membership numbers to be below or slightly above 100. It was observed that the membership numbers of unions and other organizations also remained below 100. The most frequently mentioned age group among the delivery workers participating in organizations was between 25-34 years old. However, it was also noted by representatives that delivery workers ranging from 18 to 60 years old are involved in the organizations.

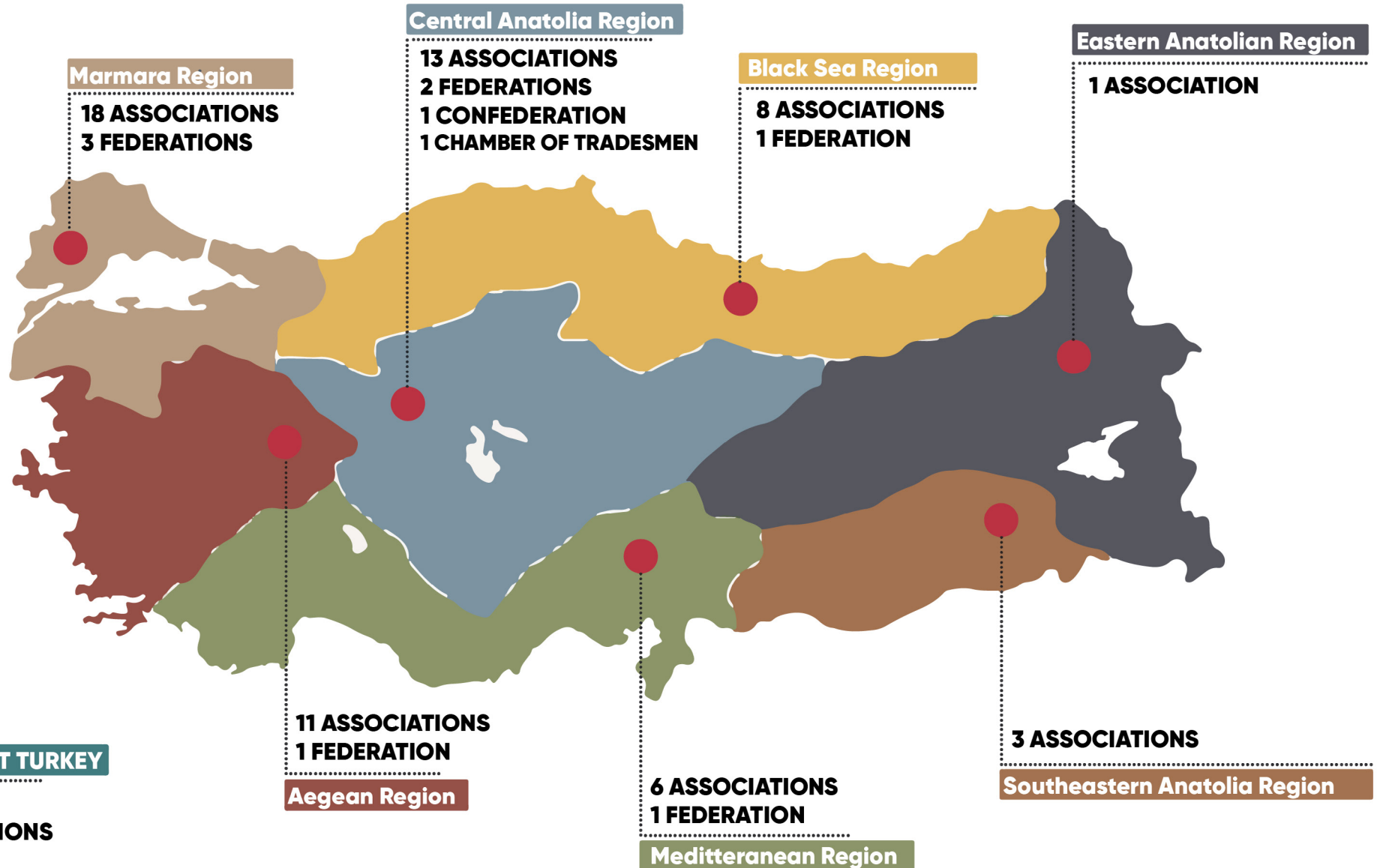
It was found that 99% of the delivery workers involved in the organizations are male; in some associations, there were no female delivery worker members, with only the president of the Mersin Motorized and Non-Motorized Couriers Solidarity Association being female. It is worth noting that Turkey’s first Women Delivery Workers Association, founded in Ankara on August 8, 2022, closed down after about a year due to insufficient interest and support.

Until recently, restaurant and document delivery workers formed a significant portion of the organizations, with salaried delivery workers predominating, but in recent years, there has been a significant increase in platform delivery workers. They mentioned that the distribution of members consists of 60% salaried and 40% platform delivery workers.

Nearly all of the 25 presidents and representatives we interviewed as part of the research expressed difficulties in terms of institutional structure and operations. Apart from a few examples, almost all representatives mentioned difficulties in paying rent and expenses for their premises. It was stated that the membership fee system is not fully operational, and expenses are attempted to be covered by the president and a few executives. Furthermore, while only a few institutions were regularly opened and operating, institutions were mainly open during meetings and on certain days of the week. It was also noted that the premises are physically small and lacking in equipment and facilities. “We make decisions at management meetings” was one of the most expressed phrases. While some institutions stated that they meet once a month, others said, “We hold meetings during times of pay increase and certain problems.” One prominent aspect of the operation of institutions was the fact that members did not regularly participate in activities.

# Delivery Worker Organizations by Regions

In Turkey, there are a total of 79 delivery worker organizations. 69 of them are in the form of associations, including 8 federations, 1 confederation, and 15 district-level associations. Additionally, there are 6 transportation and service unions, with 3 of them affiliated with union confederations. Furthermore, there are 3 organizations organized under the names of solidarity network and committee, and 1 Chamber of Tradesmen.



## THROUGHOUT TURKEY

6 TRADE UNIONS

3 SOLIDARITY NETWORKS - COMMITTEES



## **Activities, Social Media, Reach to Delivery Workers**

Several of the delivery worker organizations we spoke with expressed that their institutional structures were not fully established, that the initial participants withdrew, and that they themselves were unable to engage in activities due to long working hours. It can be said that the most prominent activity is the socialization practices with members and communicated delivery workers. Additionally, some association organizations, in particular, stated that they engaged in activities such as preparing and disseminating price tariff proposals during periods when minimum wage increases were announced, finding jobs for delivery workers, creating opportunities for cheap/discounted equipment and motorcycle maintenance, making discount agreements with towing companies, providing reflective vests at affordable prices, and negotiating with employers for delivery workers experiencing problems at workplaces.

It was mentioned that the Couriers Confederation, federations, and some associations sub-mitted reports to relevant institutions regarding the inclusion of motorcycle delivery work in the “High Hazardous Professions Status” and the issuance of the MYK (Vocational Qualification Authority) certificate by the state, conducted MYK exams and provided certificates to a certain number of delivery workers through their own initiatives, prepared solution proposals for professional problems and presented them to the relevant authorities, wrote to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) and Traffic Branch Directorate to try to identify delivery worker accidents and deaths, and responded to expert witness requests from courts, and participated in central professional seminars organized by relevant institutions.

The number of institutions making press statements about delivery worker accidents and deaths, mobbing, and long walking distances in gated communities, as well as the number of statements made in the last year, does not exceed the fingers of one hand. Especially institutions organized in a union, committee, or solidarity network style stated that they prepared and distributed announcements and brochures regarding the problems and demands of delivery workers, listened to workers, and held consultations with them through regular depot visits.

Some organizations stated that they participated in the actions of delivery workers - such as gathering in front of depots and company headquarters or organizing convoys for pay increase demands of workers working in platform companies such as Yemeksepeti, Trendyol, Getir, and Vigo, either by planning and organizing with workers or by providing support. However, it was among our findings that the level of participation of delivery worker associations in

mass delivery worker actions and protests remained extremely limited.

It was also mentioned that awareness videos were made and shared to draw attention to the problems of delivery workers and occupational safety and equipment usage; awareness posters were hung on billboards in collaboration with municipalities; “Advanced Riding Training” was provided to their members; worker rights and safety seminars were organized, relationships were developed with international delivery worker organizations and solidarity statements were made with them. However, these activities are not continuous and have only been carried out singularly by some delivery worker organizations.

Institutions mostly use their social media accounts to announce their own meetings and events. Some association pages also share job postings, stolen or for sale motorcycle advertisements. Most associations and some unions stated that they have their own WhatsApp and Telegram groups, where announcements and job postings, as well as motorcycle equipment sales, can be made.

Representatives of delivery worker organizations emphasize that although they do not provide precise numbers on how many delivery workers their activities reach, they can reach a mass far beyond their members. While the number of workers addressed one-on-one and face-to-face is expressed in tens in some cities and in hundreds in others, they state that their calls reach thousands of delivery workers through WhatsApp, Telegram, and social media accounts.

Organizations actively participating in Yemeksepeti and Trendyol actions explained that they had the opportunity to speak face-to-face with thousands of delivery workers through announcements and brochures they issued during that period. Nevertheless, representatives also added that they need more platforms and support to make their voices heard by delivery workers and the public.

## **Workers' Applications, Support Mechanisms**

In the recent period, the most common applications from delivery workers to associations have been related to work. After work, the most prominent application topic was accidents. Many association representatives stated that after receiving a notification of an accident, they went to the area, and if they couldn't reach there, they went to the hospital. Associations also mentioned

that they provided legal support upon request, and some associations collected donations and provided support for days when injured delivery workers couldn't work. The highest number of applications to unions and other organizations, on the other hand, was related to issues such as dismissal from work, mobbing, etc. All these organizations stated that they provide legal support to delivery workers regarding labor law.

The organizations stated that they made applications to relevant institutions regarding the problems they identified, but generally encountered indifference and could not find a responsible person. The prominent topics in the applications made to relevant institutions can be listed as follows: Providing the Vocational Qualification Certificate to delivery workers through exams and free of charge, inspecting companies employing delivery workers informally, increasing motorcycle-friendly barriers instead of killer barriers, removing the Special Consumption Tax (ÖTV) on motorcycle equipment, increasing measures against motorcycle theft, finding stolen motorcycles, banning motorcycles from traffic on snowy-stormy days, and considering these days as paid leave for delivery workers. Only 10 out of the 25 institutions we interviewed stated that they had made initiatives on these topics at least once since their establishment.

### **Common Activities and Collaboration**

The most prominent joint activity and collaboration work was the "Delivery Sector Social Dialogue Meeting" organized by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality on March 16, 2022. Delivery worker associations, federations, and unions participated in this meeting. Except for a few cities, we could not identify joint awareness campaigns between municipalities and delivery workers associations. Many organizations stated that they are in cooperation with law firms. Associations mentioned that they consult with "close" associations and determine a "common price policy" with associations in the same city. Unions also stated that they occasionally consult with other unions working in the same field regarding the problems and solution points of delivery workers.

### **Current Plans of Delivery Worker Organizations**

Many organizations try to maintain their work by the president and 3-5 people. Representatives of organizations, when asked about their current plans, mostly talked about organization and membership campaigns. Seven representatives stated that their primary goal is organization. One representative said they

planned to close the organization because they couldn't sustain their work, while another representative said they would discuss internally with workers to determine a roadmap.

After organization, the most mentioned activity titles were negotiations with authorities on including motorcycle delivery work in the "High Hazardous Professions Status" and making the Vocational Qualification Certificate mandatory for delivery workers, conducting awareness campaigns, and organizing earthquake preparedness and search and rescue training sessions. Some associations plan to provide "Advanced Riding Training" to workers, while some organizations consider organizing "worker health and safety training." Some organizations also stated that they will conduct awareness campaigns reminding all delivery workers, especially their members, about the importance of using equipment. Some representatives also mentioned the idea of collaborating with other associations to carry out activities to raise awareness among workers and the public.

Several organizations emphasized the goal of continuing the legal struggle to combat the consequences of misclassification of delivery workers within platform work. Representatives of organizations mentioned all these topics in their future plans, but the common point among all was that delivery workers should have humane working conditions and that their profession should gain respect.



# SECTION 2

## GENERAL PROBLEMS OF DELIVERY WORKERS

One of the most important sections of the interviews we conducted with the presidents and representatives of delivery worker organizations was undoubtedly the problems faced by workers. Many common answers were given to the question “What do you think are the general problems of motorcycle delivery workers?” as well as more specific issues were raised.

### ***Pressure for Speed, Lack of Regulation, and Resulting Deaths***

Onur Kocaoğlu, who has been involved in courier work since 2000 and serves as the president of the Central Anatolian Motorcycle Couriers Federation and the Couriers Confederation, states: “Actually, it’s somewhat due to people not following the rules. Why? Because while a person who follows the rules delivers, let’s say, 30 parcels a day, someone who doesn’t follow the rules becomes popular when he delivers 40 orders. However, the news of deaths of workers who deliver excessive packages has started to come one after another.”

### ***Notice the Motorcycles***

Erhan Güven, President of the Istanbul Couriers Federation, emphasizes the importance of motorcycles not being noticed in traffic and lack of supervision. “Due to reasons such as rising fuel prices, avoiding traffic, and insufficient hours for urban lifestyles, many people are now using motorcycles. In this intensity, when a car changes lanes without even looking in the mirror immediately after signaling, one of our motorcyclist friends - not just delivery workers - ends up dead.” Mehmet Şirin Yıldız, president of the Antalya Motorcycle Couriers Association, says: “If motorcycle delivery work is classified as a hazardous occupation group and if a qualification certificate becomes mandatory for this profession, maybe we can reduce the accident rate by 50%. As the death rate decreases, so does the accident rate.” Halil Özsoy, president of the Kayseri

Motorcycle Couriers Association, said: “Then they think we delivery workers are always slaloming in traffic. But in fact, we’re not slaloming. We’re trying to evade you.”

### ***Secure Jobs with Decent Working Conditions/Hours***

Kubilay Çelik, president of the Tourism, Leisure, and Service Workers Union (TEHİS), believes that demanding secure jobs and lives is the most critical issue in addressing all delivery worker problems. “The death of motorcycle delivery workers in work-related accidents is one of our biggest concerns.” “For example, those who follow Moto Courier News will know. A person we can call a child at the age of 15 lost his life two days ago. Some of the problems that cause work accidents are the point system and the pressure for speed. Workers are forced to deliver 3-4 parcels per hour. Secure working conditions should be implemented and supervised.” Kubilay Çelik also states that companies making changes to the industry in order to hinder the organization efforts of unions have pushed workers towards disorganization and insecure work.

Murat Küçükşahin, Secretary of Istanbul 1st Branch of The All Transport Workers’ Union (TÜMTİS), says, “We have no specified meal break rights, nor do we have rights to fall ill as we would in a proper job. When they have an accident, our colleagues end up having continue working sick and disabled.” Küçükşahin also points out that both platform workers in self-employed status and those on employee status face numerous problems, emphasizing disorganization alongside precarity, stating, “There is an incredible barrier to the organization of platform workers. Our friends cannot even become union members because they have opened their own companies and are in self-employed status.”

### ***Excessive Working Hours, Low Pay***

Representative of the Motorcycle Delivery and Cargo Workers Union, Doğan Aras, summarizes the problems of delivery workers as follows: “Job insecurity, working hours, mobbing, low wage increases, lack of a safe working environment.” “Working hours are very long. The reason for this is that workers have to work excessively to cover their expenses. Due to high fuel prices and taxes, they have to work more overtime. This situation results in the loss of lives of delivery workers,” says Aras, pointing out the interconnectedness of the problems. Abdullah Taşkan, President of the Ankara Couriers Association, who has been a delivery worker for 8 years, explains why delivery workers must work long hours: “Even the delivery worker who works less than 12



hours cannot earn. So, what is this person doing, he works 12 hours even for the smallest damage, 3 lira, 5 lira? In the so-called self-employed platform work, our friends work 14 hours.”

Cihan Burak, President of the Malatya Motorcycle Couriers Association, states: “The cost of fuel is skyrocketing, people travel long distances. Oil and fuel are basic needs. Since the prices of materials essential for the motorcycle have increased, the earnings we receive are insufficient.” Nail Koca, President of the Düzce Motorcycle Couriers Association, also summarizes some of the prominent problems of delivery workers as follows: “There are workers who work 14-15 hours. This is not fair, especially for platform workers. Throughout the day, they endure wind, traffic stress, work stress, constant worries about whether the package will arrive on time, whether it will be canceled, and if it is, will it be deducted from me, etc., which also has a psychological impact.”

### **Mobbing and Overwork are High, Respect and Equipment are Low**

Murat Tomris, President of the Couriers Federation, says, “Mobbing is one of our biggest problems,” and mentions that delivery workers are squeezed by both employers and customers: “Businesses put pressure on workers, rush them. On the other hand, there are many complaints from customers. Delivery workers are treated as third-class citizens when delivering orders. We are modern slaves. Delivery workers are not allowed to enter gated communities with motorcycles; they are forced to walk long distances. Those who try to make delivery workers do waiter jobs, those who pressure them to clean...”

Turgut Ay, President of the Motorcycle Couriers Federation, also explains the equipment problem: “From the wiper of the delivery workers to their raincoat, boots, gloves, and seasonal equipment, the company has to provide. We brought this up at a meeting at the Ministry of Labor, we put it in writing. At that time, platform workers in self-employed status were not as active. We raised it for delivery workers in employee status. Self-employed workers also have to buy their own equipment.” Ay says, “Actually, our biggest goal is this, our struggle is this, so that delivery workers don’t die.”

### **Delivery Work in Self-Employed Status: A Major Problem**

Ali Rıza Küçükosmanoğlu, President of the Trade Union of Revolutionary Land, Airway, and Railway Transportation Workers of Turkey (Nakliyat-İş), is one of those who believe that delivery work in self-employed status, as in platform delivery work, should be completely banned. Also serving as Vice President of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), Küçükosmanoğlu said, “We



plan to start legal action regarding platform delivery work by benefiting from other organizations around the world.”

Müslüm Akyürek, representative of the Motorcycle Delivery Worker - Cargo Workers Solidarity Network, says, “The workers saw that platform delivery work brought long working conditions. They saw that it brought precarious working conditions. They saw that there were no annual leaves,” he says.

Akyürek says that employers try to convince delivery workers to become self-employed workers to get rid of their responsibilities: “One issue is that they cannot earn enough income for long-term work; the other important issue is the issue of worker health.” Kaan Gündeş from the Yemeksepeti Workers’ Committee says, “The main problem we are discussing in the sector right now is delivery work in self-employed status. We are discussing it both in the committee and in the union (TÜMTİS). He points out that demanding rights for workers in self-employed status instead of abolishing self-employed delivery work is contradictory.” Gündeş emphasizes that the lack of social rights in self-employed delivery work exacerbates the problems of precarious work and lack of unionization.

## **High Hazardous Occupation Status and Vocational Qualification Certificate**

Aydın Teke, President of the Ankara Motorcycle Couriers Association for Mutual Aid and Solidarity, who says, “Our profession should be classified as ‘High Hazardous Occupations’,” also believes that the “Vocational Qualification Certificate” should not be merely symbolic. “How should the vocational qualification certificate be obtained? First, you need to have a five-year driver’s license in your pocket. After five years, we don’t want a certificate given in half an hour at a vocational qualification training course. We want a comprehensive training, from first aid to how to deliver packages, how to use motorcycles, how to wear equipment, a training that may take days if necessary, and we want them to obtain a vocational qualification certificate,” he says.

Serkan Ayten, President of the Aegean Motorcycle Couriers Association, after mentioning delivery workers being forced to work for inadequate compensation, being compelled to work for minimum wage, and the lack of protective equipment, brings the discussion to the same point: “Our biggest problem is the absence of the ‘Vocational Qualification Certificate’.” Ayten also mentions that they have presented the issue of education and hazardous occupations to the relevant authorities: “We have also submitted this to the law. However, we are still waiting for a response; we have not received any response yet.”

Osman Akça, President of the Konya Motorcycle Couriers Association, is also among those who are concerned about anyone being able to become a delivery worker: “Anyone can become a delivery worker without a driver’s license. Misleading advertisements that suggest delivery workers earn a lot of money are causing everyone to get into delivery work. Currently, anyone who can ride a motorcycle, whether licensed or not, claims to be a delivery worker.

Mahir Gökbay Ersoy, President of the Bursa All Worker Motorcycle Couriers Association, highlights the endless problems faced by delivery workers, encompassing working conditions, low wages, informal employment without proper licensing, equipment issues, lack of employer support, and difficulties in organizing workers. He underscores the significance of education and raising awareness on these issues.

### **What is the Most Crucial Problem for Delivery Workers?**

We believed that expressing the most urgent problem identified by delivery worker organization representatives would pave the way for collaborative

efforts among organizations in the upcoming period, allowing for the identification of common demands and the development of strategic plans. With this aim, we also asked representatives from 25 organizations in 14 cities, “In your opinion, what is the most important and crucial problem for delivery workers?” While some presidents emphasized issues such as “Not Being Noticed in Traffic”, “Inability to Enter Gated Communities with Motorcycles,” and “Lack of Unity”, four presidents stated that “Long Working Hours” are the most significant problem for workers. Six institutional representatives said that the “Misclassification of Delivery Workers as Self-Employed” and the insecurity it brings are the most prominent problems for delivery workers today. Four of the presidents we spoke with mentioned that making the “Vocational Qualification Certificate” mandatory is the most important issue. Eight representatives stated that including motorcycle delivery work in the “Highly Hazardous Occupations Status” and making the “Vocational Qualification Certificate” mandatory are the most important and critical issues, expressing them together.

### **Thoughts and Recommendations on (Platform) Delivery Work in Self-Employed Status**

While the establishment of companies distributing online food, mobile groceries, and engaging in e-commerce in Turkey dates back to the early 2000s, it has significantly increased since 2015. The widespread use of these platforms occurred mainly after the declaration of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2019. To better understand the context of platform delivery work, we’d like to briefly discuss recent data on e-commerce and online shopping habits.

According to the Ministry of Commerce’s E-Commerce Information System (ETBİS) data, the e-commerce volume was announced as 136 billion TL in 2019. This figure increased to 226.2 billion TL in 2020, the year the pandemic began. The e-commerce volume reached 381.5 billion TL in 2021 and 800.7 billion TL in 2022, growing exponentially in a very short period. Economists predict that this growth trend will continue to increase. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), the number of people who bought goods and services online or placed orders reached 28.4 million in 2023, up from 26.4 million in 2022. This means that e-commerce gained 2 million new customers in 2023. According to the Household Information Technologies Usage Survey conducted by TÜİK, the percentage of people who shopped online at least once during the year, which was 46% in 2022, increased to 49.5% in 2023.

According to TÜİK data, the following findings stand out regarding products purchased online in the past year: “In the past year, the most purchased products online were clothing, shoes, and accessories. While 21,440,000 people bought these products online, 13,520,000 people ordered food from



restaurants and fast-food chains online. The number of people buying online food products was 10,535,000, while 9,145,000 people ordered cosmetics, and 8,810,000 people ordered cell phones, computers, and electronic products. The number of people buying cleaning supplies online was 8,180,000.”

### **Delivery Work in Self-Employed Status/ Misclassification of Platform Workers**

With millions of orders online, the responsibility of distributing them has fallen on delivery workers. The increasing prevalence of e-commerce and the growing trend of online ordering and shopping each year have heightened the demand for motorcycle delivery workers. Faced with this rising demand for delivery workers, employers have aimed to eliminate labor costs by signing contracts with numerous workers who established sole proprietorships. These workers are offered per-package fees to distribute the millions of orders to customers “as quickly as possible.” This arrangement has been marketed to workers as an opportunity to “become your own boss.”

“Delivery work in self-employed status” or “platform delivery work”, relatively new concepts in Turkey, has become one of the most discussed topics among delivery workers in recent years. While some representatives of organizations highlight the advantages of self-employed status for workers and propose regulations in certain areas, others characterize self-employed delivery work as “exploitative” and “insecure,” advocating for its abolition.



### **How Should Platform Delivery Work Be Regulated?**

Erhan Güven, the president of the Istanbul Couriers Federation, suggests that delivery workers in self-employed status should have the same rights as those who are in employee status. Turgut Ay, the president of the Motorcycle Couriers Federation, states that initially they were opposed to self-employed status. However, upon investigation and with the state’s encouragement of self-employed delivery work, he claims that people began to perceive it as a lucrative opportunity, leading to its widespread adoption. He suggests establishing a Chamber of Tradesmen for self-employed delivery workers to advocate for their rights, emphasizing that associations alone may not be sufficient.

Murat Tomris, the president of the Couriers Federation, believes that self-employed delivery work isn’t inherently bad if conducted fairly and justly. However, he criticizes some platform companies for attempting to evade financial responsibilities. He suggests that if companies benefit from free advertising through self-employed delivery workers, they should at least provide equipment to workers free of charge. Abdullah Taşkan, the president of the Ankara Couriers Association, sees the establishment of the Chamber of Tradesmen for self-employed delivery workers as a potential avenue for improvement and gains for self-employed delivery workers. He believes that while self-employed delivery work has its challenges, it could be viable under proper regulations and conditions. Nail Koca, the president of the Düzce Motorcycle Couriers Association, sees self-employed delivery work as a double-edged sword, providing flexibility but also carrying risks. He believes that while self-employed delivery work offers some advantages, it needs proper regulation.

Berat Kundakçı, the president of the Bolu Motorcycle Couriers Association, criticizes self-employed status, describing it as a system built entirely on exploiting workers, and predicts its further proliferation across Turkey. Onur Kocaoğlu, the president of the Couriers Confederation, warns that without mutual agreements, delivery workers will always be the losers in the self-employed system. Aydın Teke, the president of the Capital Motorcycle Couriers Association, highlights the challenges of self-employed status, such as the lack of compensation rights in case of accidents, and stresses the need for attention to these difficulties. Bahar Lale, the president of the Mersin Motorized and Non-Motorized Couriers Solidarity Association, considers self-employed delivery work a significant burden on workers under current conditions and emphasizes the unfair distribution of expenses, particularly regarding equipment.

Cihan Burak, the president of the Malatya Motorcycle Couriers Association,



points out that in the self-employment model, all expenses fall on the worker, from maintenance and insurance to operating costs. He criticizes companies for benefiting while leaving delivery workers to fend for themselves. Mehmet Şirin Yıldız, the president of the Antalya Motorcycle Couriers Association, acknowledges that self-employed platform delivery workers may earn more money initially but emphasizes that serious accidents or fatalities nullify those gains, making self-employed delivery work a risky endeavor. Halil Özsoy, the president of the Kayseri Motorcycle Couriers Association, believes that the self-employed delivery system is entirely at the discretion of businesses and suggests that the Social Security Institution investigate how companies utilize this system.

### **Bogus Self-Employment in Delivery Work Should Be Abolished**

Ali Rıza Küçükosmanoğlu, the president of Nakliyat-İş, argues that self-employed platform delivery work imposes a system on workers that falls behind the rights the working class has fought for over centuries. He asserts that self-employed delivery work should be banned. Aslan Soylu, who heads both the Samsun Motorcycle and Couriers Association and the Resto-İş Union, dismisses the notion of being one's own boss as misleading and advocates for the immediate abolition of self-employed delivery work, emphasizing its lack of security and hindrance to unionization. Murat Küçükşahin, the secretary of TÜMTİS İstanbul Branch No. 1, sees platform delivery work as enabling entirely exploitative work conditions, likening it to modern-day slavery. He suggests that a draft law incorporating regulations based on feedback from workers' experiences should be prepared.

Doğan Aras, a representative of the Motorcycle Delivery and Cargo Workers Union, views self-employed platform delivery work as a significant obstacle to both security and unionization, deeming it a system that flexibilizes working conditions while deepening worker exploitation. Kubilay Çelik, president of TEHİS (the Tourism, Leisure, and Service Workers Union), insists that platform workers should be considered employees, with their insurance obligations fulfilled by the employer. He mentions that they have initiated a precedent-setting lawsuit on this matter. Müslüm Akyürek from the Motorcycle Delivery Worker - Cargo Workers Solidarity Network highlights that self-employed platform work undermines workers' rights and states that legal aspects and potential lawsuits regarding this issue are being explored by their legal team. Yalçın Parmak, president of the Adana Motorcycle Couriers Association, echoes the sentiments of many other representatives by expressing skepticism towards platform delivery work, citing its inherent risks for workers. Kaan



Gündeş from the Yemeksepeti Workers' Committee emphasizes that self-employed delivery work undermines 150 years of labor rights achievements, noting that similar debates are occurring worldwide and citing the example of its prohibition in Spain and other European countries despite lobbying efforts by companies like Uber.

Representatives of motorcycle delivery worker organizations generally converge on two main points regarding platform delivery work. Some argue that regulations should be implemented to make self-employed delivery work more favorable for workers, while others advocate for its complete abolition. The notion of granting employee status to self-employed workers is also supported. Such a move would effectively eradicate self-employed delivery work in its current form and thus lead to its practical abolition. The self-employed delivery work model, as many representatives have pointed out, is a working regime adopted by platform companies to shift their labor costs onto workers, paying them per delivery instead of a regular wage. Any improvement or change made in favor of workers regarding working conditions, such as occupational safety, health, guaranteed wages, or equipment support, would effectively dismantle the self-employed delivery system. Any improvement demanded by workers concerning working conditions would serve as a pressure mechanism reminding employers of the responsibilities they have shed onto workers.



# SECTION 3

## EXPECTATIONS FROM PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

“The challenges faced by delivery workers are endless. Those who have experienced them firsthand understand this reality all too well. Parents who bid farewell to their children and spouses each morning with prayers are intimately familiar with these challenges. We grapple with bosses at work, drivers in traffic, and customers on the phone. Nevertheless, we also encounter understanding bosses, considerate drivers, and appreciative customers along the way. However, their numbers are so few that we are surprised when we see them. Recently, the problems of delivery workers have been discussed more than before. There has been an increase in news coverage, and researchers have been studying delivery workers as well. However, our voices, which need to be heard by those who should regulate our working conditions, have not yet made it onto the agenda. Nonetheless, we will continue to work and raise our voices for our colleagues, ourselves, and to ensure that our loved ones do not mourn us.”

The words of one of the institution representatives we interviewed actually summarize the purpose of our writing this report as well. Throughout our discussions, we once again heard that the problems of delivery workers are endless; from labor laws to traffic regulations; from monitoring businesses that disregard workers’ rights to restricting working hours; from ensuring social security rights to ensuring worker safety and health; from eliminating inhumane working conditions to placing motorcycle delivery in the ‘Highly Hazardous Occupations Status’ and making the ‘Vocational Qualification Certificate’ mandatory, numerous regulations are needed.

We will compile all the views and suggestions expressed by delivery worker organization representatives regarding the responsibilities of public institutions and employers for all of these issues. We believe it is important to share their views and suggestions on responsibilities regardless of how many representatives voiced them.

## What Should Public Institutions Do for Delivery Workers?

### Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM)

- TBMM should establish a commission to investigate the challenges faced by motorcycle delivery workers. This commission should include representatives from all political parties and operate transparently. It should not be a one-time effort but rather convene regularly to gather input from delivery worker organizations.
- Utilizing the “Condominium Law,” the TBMM should enact regulations to lift the restriction on motorcycles entering gated communities, which currently forces workers to transport heavy orders over long distances on foot.
- Members of Parliament should engage with delivery worker organizations within their constituencies, seeking their input and regularly submitting questions and proposals to address worker concerns in parliamentary discussions.

### Ministry of Labor and Social Security

- The Ministry of Labor and Social Security should reclassify motorcycle delivery work from the “Low Hazardous” category to the “Highly Hazardous” category in the “Workplace Hazard Classes List.”
- It should also mandate the Vocational Qualification Certificate for motorcycle delivery work through the Vocational Qualification Institution under its jurisdiction and provide these certificates to workers free of charge.
- Social Security Inspectors and Social Security Inspectors General under the Ministry of Labor and Social Security should conduct inspections on delivery workers who work informally, and strict penalties should be imposed on businesses violating labor laws.
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Security should conduct audits to ensure that self-employed delivery workers have paid their social insurance premiums and authenticate their invoices. Additionally, it should broadcast public service announcements emphasizing the significance of insured work for motorcycle delivery workers.
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Security should take necessary measures to ensure the social security of self-employed delivery workers, ensuring they are not subjected to unilateral contracts drafted by the companies they work for. Some representatives propose that companies should cover the social insurance premiums for self-employed workers. However, as mentioned in Section II, some other representatives advocate for the abolition or prohibition of bogus self-employed delivery work.

- The Ministry of Labor and Social Security should closely monitor delivery platform companies that advertise based on daily 12-hour work shifts, thus violating the “Regulation on Working Hours that Cannot be Divided into Weekly Working Days” dated 2004, with the aim of preventing mandatory or voluntary long working hours.
- The Ministry of Labor and Social Security should also establish necessary regulations to grant delivery workers unable to work in adverse weather conditions paid leave.
- Moreover, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security should heed the demands of unions regarding the unionization of delivery workers and should support unions and workers against fraudulent changes in business sectors by employers.

### **Other Ministries**

- The Revenue Administration Presidency, which falls under the Ministry of Treasury and Finance, should refrain from levying Special Consumption Tax on motorcycle equipment categorizing them as luxury goods, considering that these are essential for the safety and health of motorcycle delivery workers.
- Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, under the responsibility of the General Directorate of Highways, should prioritize converting barriers into motorcycle-friendly ones in collaboration with local governments, based on accident statistics and risk analysis data from the Traffic Department.
- Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure and the General Directorate of Highways should establish dedicated lanes for motorcycle delivery workers (and motorcycle users) on roads where conditions permit.
- The Ministry of the Interior, through the Police Department/Traffic Department, should intensify inspections of motorcyclists who ride without helmets and licenses to prevent informal work. Additionally, measures should be implemented to prevent illegal modifications to motorcycles aimed at increasing cylinder capacity for delivery work.
- Governorates under the Ministry of Interior should not wait until the last minute to prohibit motorcycle delivery workers from operating on the streets during conditions such as snowfall, storms, and heavy rainfall. They should take proactive measures based on warnings from the General Directorate of Meteorology and announce them in advance.
- The Ministry of Justice and relevant ministries should enact regulations to prevent motorcycle delivery worker deaths from being treated as ordinary traffic accidents, and to ensure that perpetrators are not prosecuted with lenient penalties.

### **Municipalities**

- Municipalities should pay close attention to the required signage and signposts during road construction, and they should establish an additional inspection mechanism to prevent neglect regarding environmental safety and lighting. Moreover, municipalities should replace old, worn-out street and road signs and carry out necessary updates and renovations regarding residential and commercial property numbers. All institutions responsible for addressing the demands of delivery workers should consistently raise awareness of their concerns to the entire community through awareness videos and posters.

### **What Are Delivery Workers Expecting from Employers?**

Some representatives from the delivery worker organizations we interviewed expressed the view that under the conditions of capitalism, employers are unlikely to voluntarily grant concessions to workers, and any rights gained by workers thus far has been the result of hard-fought battles. They emphasized that workers can continue to make gains by collectively organizing and advocating for their rights. Additionally, some representatives noted that the rights and obligations of both workers and employers are outlined in the constitution, relevant laws, and regulations, and it is the responsibility of employers to abide by these laws, while relevant institutions should fulfill their supervisory duties to ensure that laws are enforced in favor of workers. Furthermore, some representatives highlighted that ensuring the rights of delivery workers through unionization and collective bargaining agreements could serve as a deterrent against employer negligence.

In addition to these points, expectations from employers can be outlined as follows:

- Employers must adhere strictly to labor laws and refrain from exploiting workers' rights.
- It's crucial to recognize that motorcycle delivery work is a profession, and delivery workers are human beings.
- Delivery workers should not be hired informally. Employers should not be allowed to employ informal workers to work longer hours for less pay.
- Informal hiring of delivery workers should be prohibited. Employers shouldn't exploit informal workers by making them work longer hours for less pay.
- Payments to delivery workers should be made promptly and in full.



- Platform companies employing delivery workers should establish a standardized pricing system by updating minimum wages and covering expenses.
- Pressure for speed should be minimized, and advertisements promoting excessively fast deliveries should be discontinued.
- Employers hiring delivery workers as employees should distribute workload evenly among workers instead of overburdening a few with numerous packages.
- Training on occupational safety and health should be prioritized, and measures outlined in laws and regulations must be fully implemented. Compliance with labor laws is imperative; working hours exceeding 12-14 hours should not be permitted.
- Break time is a constitutional right; the time spent by deliver workers waiting for packages should not be considered as break time, and thus their rights to breaks should not be infringed upon.
- Waiting areas equipped with amenities to shield delivery workers from extreme weather conditions should be provided, ensuring their comfort and well-being.
- Motorcycle delivery workers should be assigned only delivery-related tasks. Additional responsibilities such as dishwashing, serving, stocking shelves, or cleaning tables should not be imposed on them.
- Adequate protective equipment should be supplied to workers according to seasonal requirements, and regular maintenance of motorcycles should be prioritized.
- Delivery schedules should be established through collaboration with workers, considering factors like kitchen packaging capacity, the number of delivery staff, and traffic conditions in the area.
- Delivery workers should not be compelled to walk to deliver orders in gated communities where motorcycle entry is prohibited and distances are long. Instead, a consensus should be reached through consultation with site management and customers to find a mutual solution.
- Delivery services should be suspended during adverse weather conditions to ensure the safety of workers.
- The Vocational Qualification Certificate (MYK) is not only beneficial for delivery workers but also for employers. Advocating for the mandatory requirement of the MYK certificate ensures that employers hire knowledgeable and skilled delivery workers.



# AFTERWORD



While preparing this report, we observed that there is no comprehensive documentation, review, or research on motorcycle delivery worker organizations, which have almost twenty years of history in Turkey. None of the delivery worker organizations we interviewed or contacted have a complete list of active associations, unions, or federations in this sector. Additionally, there is no established network of communication, such as email or WhatsApp groups, among all delivery worker organizations. Consequently, a knowledge pool regarding the activities, experiences, development, and challenges of delivery worker organizations could not be established.

As evident from the activities section, various activities are being conducted, albeit in a fragmented and diverse manner. The absence of a communication network addressing professional issues across all organizations prevents delivery worker organizations from acting collectively on multiple fronts with a unified agenda and demand simultaneously. This limitation hampers their ability to amplify their voices effectively.

In order for delivery worker organizations' problems to be resolved and for expectations from public institutions and employers to be met, it is evident that there is a need for enhance the effectiveness and expand the organizational capacity of these organizations. Moreover, there is a necessity to increase representation levels among institutions, employers, and the public. Additionally, establishing trust relationships is crucial for fostering collaborations among delivery worker organizations and facilitating the sharing of organizational experiences, insights, and opportunities.

We believe that the establishment of platforms where organizations with shared problem definitions and solution proposals can collaborate will unleash significant energy in addressing the challenges faced by delivery workers. We hope that this report has made a modest contribution to such a collective effort.

## Institutions We Interviewed:

Kuryeler Konfederasyonu (The Couriers Confederation)  
 İstanbul Kuryeler Federasyonu (The Istanbul Couriers Federation)  
 Motosikletli Kuryeler Federasyonu (The Motorcycle Couriers Federation)  
 Kuryeler Federasyonu (The Couriers Federation)

Adana Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Adana Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Ankara Kuryeler Derneği (The Ankara Couriers Association)  
 Başkent Motosikletli Kuryeler Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği (The Ankara Motorcycle Couriers Association for Mutual Aid and Solidarity)  
 Antalya Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Antalya Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Bursa Tüm Emekçi Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Bursa All Worker Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Bolu Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Bolu Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Düzce Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Düzce Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Ege Motorlu Kuryeler Derneği (The Aegean Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 İzmir Motorcular ve Kuryeler Derneği (The İzmir Motorcyclists and Couriers Association)  
 Kayseri Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Kayseri Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Konya Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Konya Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Malatya Motosikletli Kuryeler Derneği (The Malatya Motorcycle Couriers Association)  
 Mersin Motorlu Motorsuz Kuryeler Dayanışma Derneği (The Mersin Motorized and Non-Motorized Couriers Solidarity Association)  
 Samsun Motosiklet ve Kuryeler Derneği (The Samsun Motorcycle and Couriers Association)

TÜMTİS - Tüm Taşıma İşçileri Sendikası (The All Transport Workers' Union)  
 Nakliyat-İş - Türkiye Devrimci Kara, Hava, Demiryolu İşçileri Sendikası (The Trade Union of Revolutionary Land, Airway, and Railway Transportation Workers of Turkey)  
 Resto-İş - Restaurant ve Otel İşçileri Sendikası (The Restaurant and Hotel Workers Union)  
 TEHİS - Turizm Eğlence Ve Hizmet İşçileri Sendikası (The Tourism, Leisure, and Service Workers Union)

Moto Kurye - Kargo Emekçileri Dayanışma Ağı (Motorcycle Delivery Worker - Cargo Workers Solidarity Network)  
 Moto Kurye Kargo Çalışanları Birliği (The Motorcycle Delivery and Cargo Workers Union)  
 Yemeksepeti İşçi Komitesi (Yemeksepeti Workers' Committee)



As the Delivery Worker Rights Association, established to research, identify, report, and raise awareness about the problems faced by delivery workers, we conducted a field research to determine the profiles, institutional structures, and operations of organizations including associations, federations, unions and committees; to identify the issues delivery workers seek assistance for and whether there are support mechanisms available; and to determine the types of activities the organizations engage in.

Within the scope of the research, we gathered information on how extensively the activities of delivery worker organizations reach workers, how the organizations establish relationships with workers and their problems, how they interpret workers' issues, which problems they perceive as more urgent, thoughts and suggestions regarding platform delivery work, experiences in collaborating with each other and relevant institutions, future plans, and solution proposals.

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