

An interview with Tankut Centel

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Prof. Dr. Tankut Centel, who has started his duty at Koç University as the Dean of the School of Law, told us about his plans for the new term.

"We are planning to strengthen the permanent staff of the Koç University Faculty of Law. We are also planning a major overhaul of our resources at the university library which is to be completed as soon as possible and we hope to include all nationwide and international publications." "Next year, we are planning to offer graduate programs in law at Koç University."

Koç University School of Law produced its first graduates last year. What do you think of the faculty's performance up until now?

Koç University is a very young university compared to the other established state universities. I believe that creating the Law School at a university that has left 15 successful years behind was a very appropriate decision. Some private universities do not have law schools, but in contrast, Koç University has demonstrated the importance it places on the study of law. Despite being new, Koç University Law School is in a good standing among other law schools. Besides, it's not possible to be in a bad one. Koç University's policy is to give back to the students more than it takes in tuition and to make a much larger investment in their future compared to other schools. This philosophy is equally valid for the Law School. During the university entrance exams students who receive the highest grades prefer Koç Law School; the results of the university entrance exams are clear in demonstrating this point. Moreover, the Koç Faculty of Law, has successfully completed 5 years of instruction during which important improvements were accomplished. The graduates of Koç Law School are now in a respectful positions in the contemporary law quarters.

What are your goals and plans and for the following term as the Dean?

As the problem of faculty is one of the biggest issues for private universities, we are planning to strengthen the permanent faculty at Koç University Law School. Having a cycle of guest or temporary teaching staff invited from outside our campus is very difficult. In the following term, increasing the number of permanent teaching staff and gradually reaching a sufficient number of existing qualified teachers are among our major goals. I am considering measuring the quality of the law faculty by their devotion to the university, fellow faculty members and the students, number of publications and love for the sciences.

As dean, I will work to increase the number law publications by Koç University Law School and to make up for any previous lack as much as possible. I believe that this is one of the major problems private universities encounter in offering students the library services that will create the necessary atmosphere for meaningful research and study. As the universities are quite young, their disadvantage is that they don't have the older publications in their libraries. We will do all we can to complete the acquisition of major legal periodical resources

at the Koç University library in the following term. Meanwhile, all nationwide or international publications will be followed and kept up-to-date. Next year, we are planning to start graduate programs in law at Koç University and the enrichment of the library has significant importance with respect to these programs. Our graduate students therefore will not be dependent on the libraries of other universities and will have access to the resources they need for their studies in their own library.

There is a special importance placed on Labor Law at Koç University. What would you like to say about this?

Koç University is not a university of economics but as the interest in commercial law has increased over time, we now give special focus to this. This year, we have invited Prof. Dr. Ömer Teoman who is the Chairman of Istanbul University Law School, Division of Commercial Law, to offer classes. Prof. Teoman will give lectures on both the general principles of commercial law and securities law, as well as corporate law. Thanks to his exceptional knowledge and experience, I am confident that Koç University will advance considerably. Furthermore, we have Prof. Dr. Tuğrul Ansay who is teaching International Commercial Law. We also have a few competition law classes.

You have accepted the position of dean at Koç University after working at a state university as a professor and a director for years. What do you think about the difference between state and private universities?

Even though I have just started, I don't think there will be any issues about adaptation. Because I am a professor of Labor Law, I am interested in the world of employment; I know how the private sector functions by legal means. Moreover, I have previously taught labor law classes as a guest professor for two years at Koç University Law School. There are differences between state and private universities, but I don't think there will be a huge difference. The financial resources and research-study facilities of state universities are limited. There are several mandatory steps that you have to go through if you want an activity carried to completion. As for private universities, the bureaucratic operations are minimized and the financial resources are abundant. The important thing is to make certain that the resources collected are available to the students. In this matter, we see that Koç University is in a very good place. When your resources are strong, you can establish an impressive library and you are in a better position to invite superior teaching staff. Private universities are a recent establishment in Turkey. Overcoming the difficulties this poses and establishing institutionalization are very important. Financial resources are crucial for both the organization of activities and creation of the necessary physical spaces.

What do you think of international organizations? How will the cooperation between Koç University and other universities be?

As we are dependent on Continental European legal systems, in legal terms, we mostly have relations with Germany, France and Switzerland. Since our laws are taken from these countries, the implementation and doctrines of these laws require close observation of the developments in these countries. On the other hand, there is the American model. In the present day, all the Continental European legal systems are influenced by American law. This is why inviting as many teaching staff as possible, making them give conferences, and cohosting seminars and summer schools are among the activities that will be organized by Koç University Law School. I have been a member of the International Labor Organization since 1995 in the Turkish Delegation. I know very crucial actors related to the labor world there. As an example, inviting them and introducing our students to the structure of the international labor world will be one of my contributions. International law has a gradually increasing importance. Such issues as respecting syndical liberties at a workplace, making sure there isn't any child labor used to manufacture the products one purchases, and ensuring that everything is made or produced according to legal standards determined by international norms are a few such examples. Global Compact symbolizes this and Koç University is one of the rare institutions that has recently joined it in Turkey. I believe these are useful things to be aware of.

Lastly, what is your message for your students?

First of all, I believe that the rule of law should be interiorized and turned into the philosophy of life starting from the early school years. The rule of law principle shouldn't just stay on paper as a constitutional requirement but should be put into practice in all fields. On the other hand, I am concerned that international experience is important on various dimensions such as academic life, social life, the development of students' personalities, etc. I think that living abroad for a semester or two within the framework of Erasmus programs or collaboration agreements with other universities will open new horizons for students and be very useful in allowing them to follow international law very closely. Being abroad is very useful to develop knowledge and experience. Certain codes of conduct can only be learnt by living in a particular country. Staying only in Turkey and getting a legal education here will not be sufficient in the global world. One should change her location, open her horizons. Hence, I advice students to go abroad for one or two semesters and to finish their studies here afterwards.

Who is Prof. Dr. Tankut Centel?

He was born in 1951. He graduated from Istanbul University following his studies at Istanbul German High School. He started his duties as a research assistant in the field of labor law at Istanbul University in 1976. He became a professor in 1993. He worked as the Dean of Istanbul University Law School, professor of labor and social security law from 1999 until August of 2008. He has been on duty as the Dean of Koç University Law School since September 1, 2008.