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Freedom of Information (Fol) in Türkiye:

Challenges and strategic recommendations

July 2025 report



Funded by
the European Union

Freedom of Information (Fol) in Türkiye: Challenges and strategic recommendations

IPI REPORT

July 2025

We extend our sincere appreciation to all journalists, civil society organization representatives, legal professionals, academics, and activists who contributed to this report through their utilization of the *IPI Fol Platform*.

For comprehensive information regarding the Fol request process, application considerations, and appeal procedures to the Board of Review of Access to Information (BEDK), please refer to the *informative guide* developed by Elif Ince for P24 in 2020.

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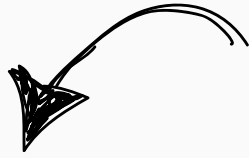
This report, published as part of IPI's project on Strengthening Capacity for Freedom of Information (Fol) and Data Activism in Türkiye's Civil Society, is supported by the European Union.

Freedom of Information (Fol) in Türkiye

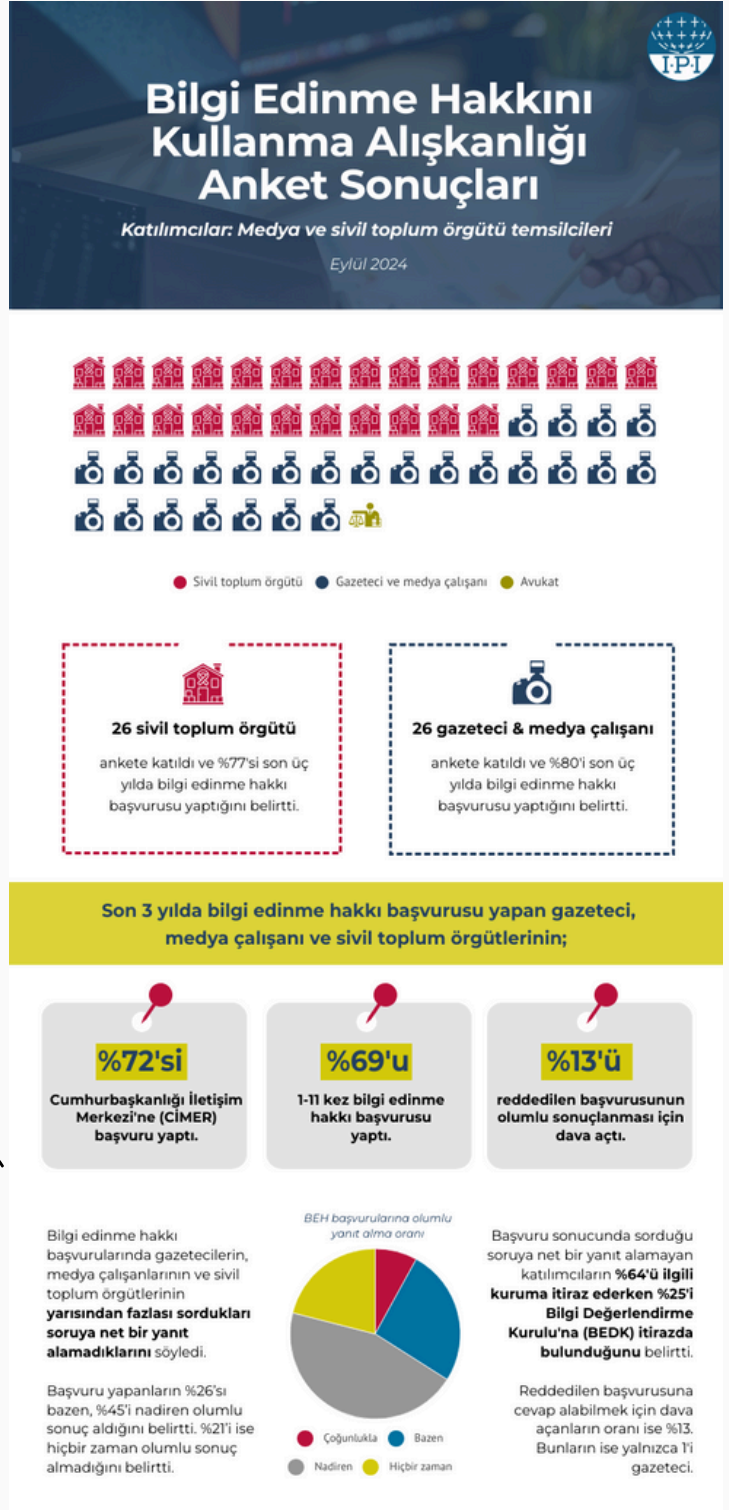
Introduction

The International Press Institute (IPI) continues its efforts to improve the transparency and accountability of institutions by investigating how the freedom of information (Fol) is implemented in Türkiye, as part of its project ongoing since April 2024.

IPI first published the results of a survey titled "Habits of Exercising the Right to Information" conducted in September 2024 with the participation of over 50 journalists, civil society organizations (CSOs), and lawyers. Subsequently, in November 2024, we published a kick-off report based on one-on-one in-depth interviews with journalists and NGO representatives who made Fol requests.



Click on the image or scan the QR code to see the complete infographic.



Freedom of Information (Fol) in Türkiye

Introduction

Afterwards, the IPI FoI Platform was established to assess how institutions respond to FoI requests submitted by journalists, CSOs, lawyers, academics, and activists. Through this platform, IPI works toward a more transparent and accountable governance by collecting and analyzing data on the responsiveness of public institutions to such requests.

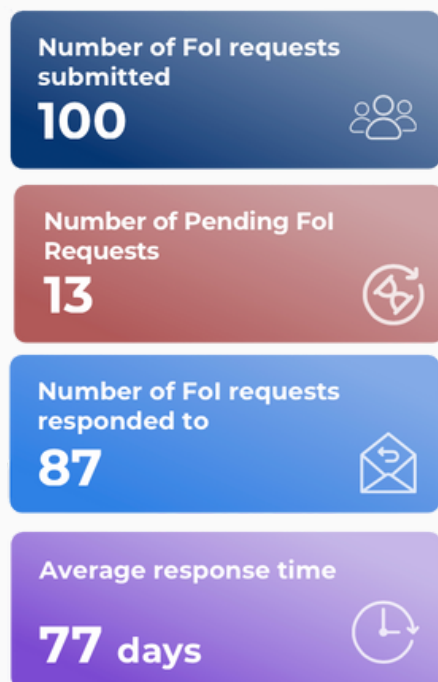
This report analyzes how FoI requests are responded to, using a sample derived from data submitted by users of the IPI FoI Platform. Additionally, feedback gathered through regular meetings with platform users helped further inform the findings. As a result, the report identifies key problems and proposes corresponding solutions.

Click on the image or scan the QR code to read the kick-off report.



Data collected through the *IPI Fol Platform*

Since its launch in January 2025, the IPI Fol Platform has recorded a total of 100 Fol requests submitted by 12 journalists, CSOs, lawyers, activists, and academics, including retrospective data provided by users. The requests were made between January 2021 and July 2025. Of these, 97 percent were submitted by journalists, while CSOs made up the remaining 3 percent.



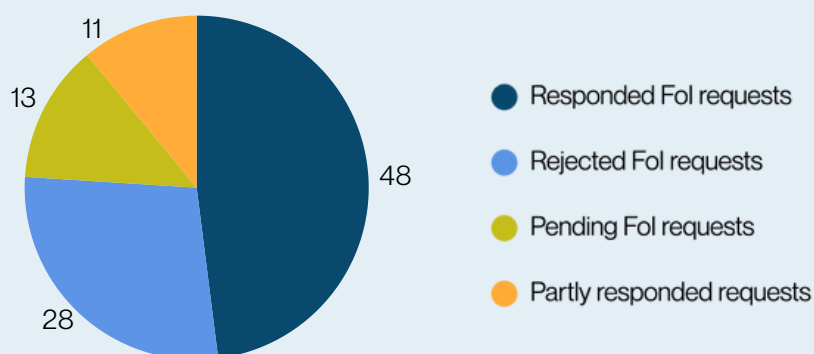
While 48 percent of the requests received positive responses, 28 percent were rejected, and 13 percent are still awaiting a response. Although the legal response time for Fol requests varies between 15 and 30 days (extended to 30 days when the request is forwarded to another institution), the average response time for all requests recorded on the platform was 77 days. The longest response time recorded was exactly 493 days.

The institutions that responded most frequently to requests submitted via the Presidency's Communication Center (CİMER) were the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, and Ministry of Health. Notably, none of the CSOs that recorded Fol requests on the platform received a positive response.



75 percent of applications went to **Presidency's Communication Centre (CİMER)**.

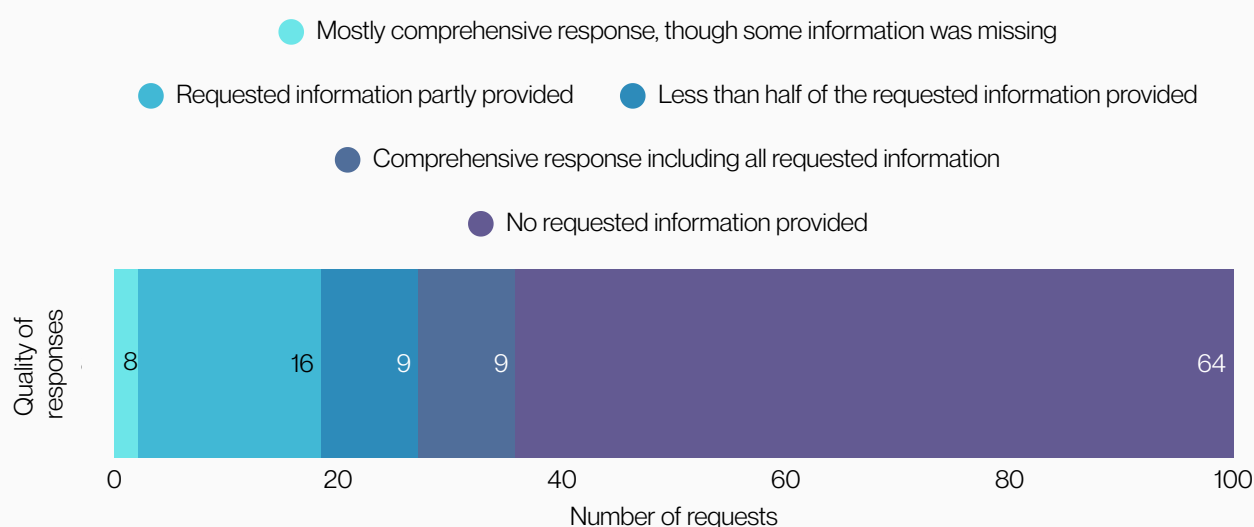
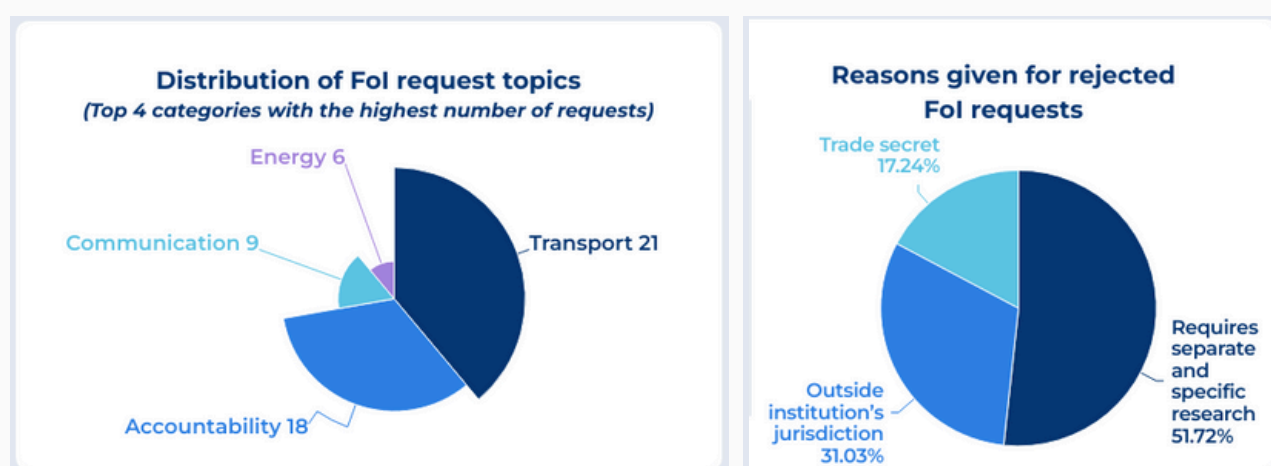
Interior Ministry provided most responses overall.



Data collected through the IPI FoI Platform

The most common subjects requested were transportation, accountability/transparency, communication, and energy.

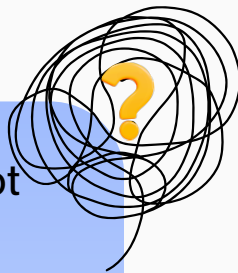
The most common justifications for rejected applications included claims that the requests required separate or special work, fell outside the institution's jurisdiction, or involved commercial secrecy. Users also evaluated the content of the responses they received. Although 67 percent of the responses were technically classified as “answers”, since they were not formally rejected, they failed to address the question posed or provide any relevant information. Additionally, 15 percent of the responses provided only partial information. The rate of comprehensive responses providing all the requested information was only 8 percent.



Current issues in the implementation of FoI rights

Common problems that emerged during interviews with platform users clearly demonstrated systematic failures in the implementation of freedom of information rights. Users shared their own experiences, often supporting these issues with concrete examples.

Responses that do not provide information



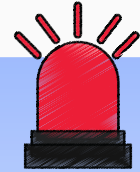
Users and researchers consistently stated that although institutions often respond to FoI requests, the responses frequently fail to address the actual questions posed. Analysis of requests and responses recorded on the platform indicates that institutions tend to use brief and uninformative statements such as "the institution does not have such information" in order to avoid statistically rejecting the request. While these replies are technically classified as positive responses, they typically do not provide the requested information in any meaningful way.

Grounds for rejection



Users stated that their applications were frequently rejected with the same justifications when institutions did not want to share data they clearly possessed. In some instances, users requested only information related to existing legislation or regulations, yet still faced rejection, with institutions citing grounds such as "separate or special study" (Article 7), "published or publicly disclosed information and documents" (Article 8), "practices not concerning the public" (Article 25), and "internal institutional practices" (Article 26).

Current issues in the implementation of Fol rights



Threats following Fol requests

Journalists also shared that they were threatened following their Fol requests. In one case, a journalist reported being threatened by executives of a company after requesting publicly available information about the company through CİMER. It later became clear that the journalist's personal data had been shared with the company, violating their personal data protection rights. A similar incident happened to a CSO, which stated that they were threatened by a municipality following a Fol request. These cases raise serious concerns about institutional transparency regarding the processing of personal data.



Training for personnel responding to requests

Users stated that while staff responding to Fol requests at some institutions were well-trained and provided comprehensive answers, at other institutions, employees were not sufficiently informed on this matter, causing processes to move slowly and inefficiently.



Daily application limit

Journalists and CSOs criticized CİMER's restriction allowing only one application per day. Especially researchers and CSOs that prepare regular reports emphasized that this restriction hinders their ability to collect necessary data for their work. CSOs that need to submit multiple requests shared that this situation forces them to apply by mail, limiting their annual application capacity.

Strategic Recommendations for Strengthening Fol Rights

In light of the problems identified in the implementation of freedom of information rights, IPI has developed the following recommendations. These suggestions encompass improvements that can be made both at the institutional level and within the legal framework.

Clarification of justifications for rejected requests



The reasons for rejecting Fol requests should be articulated more clearly and in greater detail. Rather than merely referencing the exception clauses in the law, institutions should explain why and how these provisions apply to each specific case. Additionally, appeal mechanisms against rejection decisions should be strengthened and the transparency of these processes should be increased.

Protection of personal data



Stricter safeguards must be implemented to ensure the confidentiality of personal data in Fol requests. Protocols should be developed to prevent the unauthorized sharing of applicants' identity information with third parties. Legal sanctions in this area should be strengthened and effective investigative mechanisms should be put in place to address violations.

Improving response quality



Institutions should conduct periodic evaluations to measure the quality of their responses to Fol requests and share best practices with their staff. Where responses are found to be inadequate, detailed information about appeal mechanisms should be provided to requesters.

Strategic Recommendations for Strengthening Fol Rights



Enhancing staff training

Regular training programs should be implemented for personnel working in Fol units. These can cover key topics such as the importance of the Fol right, legal framework, and effective communication with requesters. Additionally, inter-institutional platforms can be established to enable freedom of information units from different institutions to share experiences with each other.



Reassessment of request limits

CIMER's daily request limit should be increased, particularly considering researchers and CSOs that need regular access to public information. Alternatively, a special user category can be introduced for users meeting certain criteria, allowing them to submit a higher number of requests per day.

Encouraging proactive information sharing

Institutions should identify frequently asked freedom of information topics and proactively publish this information on their websites. This approach not only reduces the workload of institutions but also improves public access to information faster. Additionally, institutions can enhance transparency by making datasets publicly available through open data portals.



Updating the legal framework

The Freedom of Information Act and related regulations should be reviewed for updates in line with current needs and international standards. Particular attention should be given to refining and clarifying exception clauses.



Freedom of Information (Fol) in Türkiye

Conclusion



IPI Fol Platform will continue to collect and analyze data to promote the effective use of the freedom of information in Türkiye and to increase the transparency of institutions. This long-term monitoring effort aims to systematically document issues in the Fol processes and support the development of concrete solutions.



The platform will maintain regular updates to its statistical data and enrich its findings through qualitative insights gathered from user interviews. These data are intended to be valuable resources both for informing the public and influencing policy makers.



The success of this initiative depends on the active use of the platform. Therefore, we invite all journalists, CSOs, lawyers, activists, and academics to make Fol requests and record these requests on our platform. Even when requests receive no response, this absence itself generates valuable data and plays a critical role in documenting systematic problems in the implementation of the right to information.



The long-term goal of the platform is to contribute to strengthening the freedom of information in Türkiye and to facilitate citizens' access to information about public institutions. For this purpose, regular reports will be published and shared with the public in line with the data obtained.



Freedom of information is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society. The effective use of this right is essential for establishing accountability and transparency in governance. IPI remains committed with determination to strengthen this fundamental right.