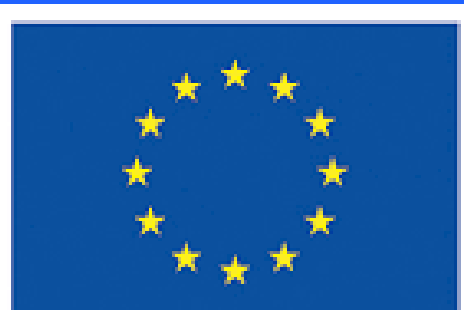


# Freedom of Information (Fol) in Türkiye: Challenges and strategic recommendations

Second quarterly report 2026



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# 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 ongoing project 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, a kick-off report based on one-on-one in-depth interviews with journalists and NGO representatives who made Fol requests was [published](#).

Afterwards, the [IPI Fol Platform](#) was established to assess how institutions respond to Fol 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.

As of June 2025, IPI also initiated a training series titled “Freedom of Information: A Powerful Tool for Transparency,” starting in Istanbul and continuing across different cities in Türkiye. These sessions equip journalists, CSOs, activists, and lawyers with practical strategies to exercise Fol effectively in their work. Training announcements can be followed [on our website](#).

In the [annual report](#) published on 31 March 2026, IPI analysed 427 Fol requests recorded by users on the IPI Fol Platform and examined how public institutions handled those requests. This report focuses on a subsequent three-month period covering April, May, and June 2026. It analyses 70 requests recorded on the platform during that period, identifies recurring implementation problems through one-on-one interviews with users, and provides an updated assessment together with recommendations.

IPI's mentorship programme, launched in April 2026, also made a significant contribution to the quality of the data collected during this reporting period. As part of the programme, journalists, working closely with their mentors, submitted several Fol requests in support of ongoing reporting projects and recorded these requests on the IPI Fol Platform. As a result, the platform now includes requests concerning current public-interest issues that formed a direct part of investigative reporting processes.

At the same time, the IPI Legal Advisory Board began its work in April 2026. Composed of lawyers Gökhan Tekşen and Selin Nakıpoğlu, the board provided legal guidance to journalists on issues arising throughout the Fol process. Particular support was provided to participants in the mentorship programme regarding the preparation of Fol requests, the management of appeal procedures, and the assessment of legal issues encountered during the application process. This support contributed both to the more effective use of Fol mechanisms and to the more systematic documentation of implementation challenges.

# Data collected through the IPI Fol Platform

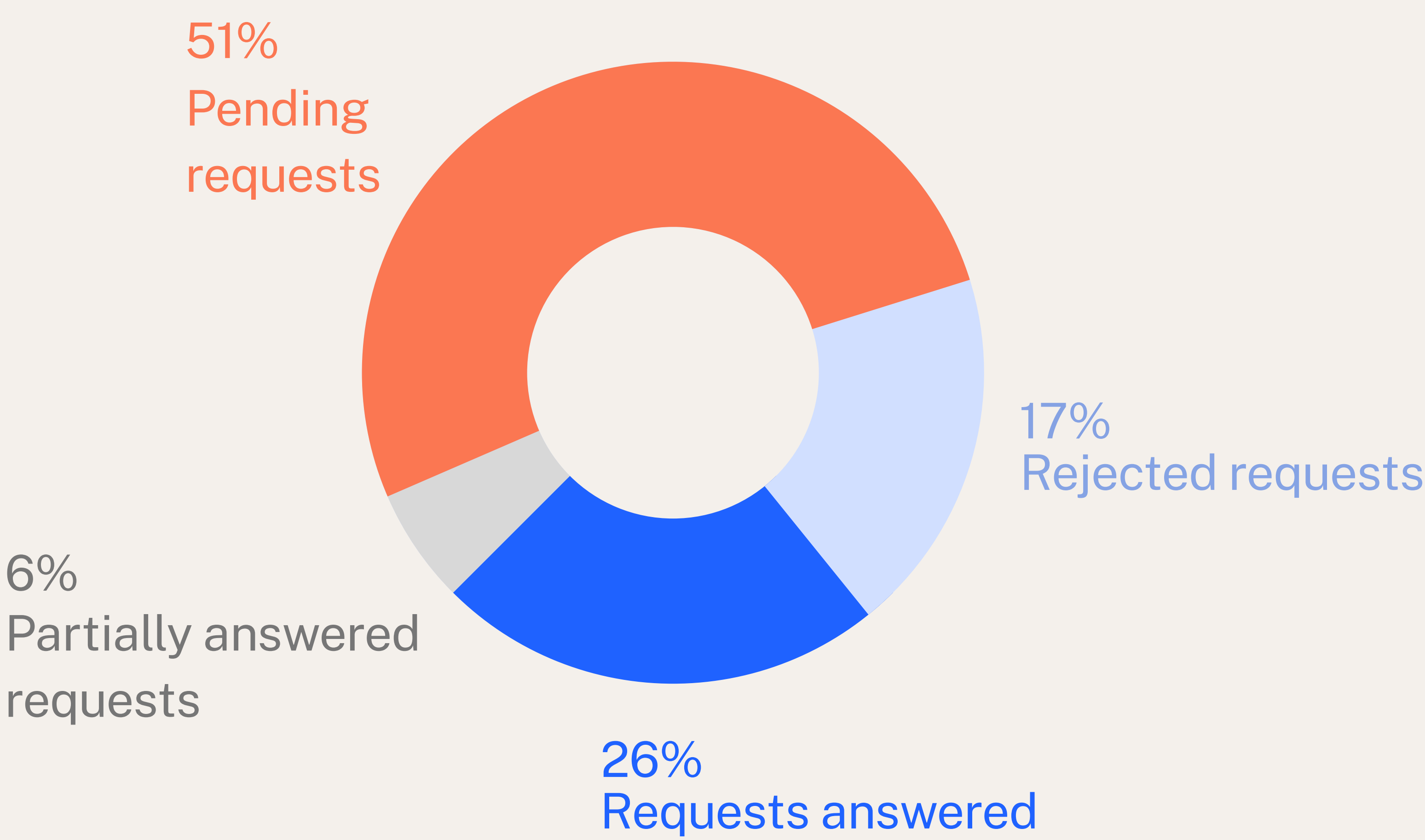
During the three-month period covering April, May, and June 2026, a total of 70 Freedom of Information requests were recorded on the IPI Fol Platform by journalists, CSO representatives, lawyers, activists, and academics. Journalists accounted for 93 percent of all recorded requests, while the remaining 7 percent were submitted by CSOs, lawyers, and activists.



93 percent of all requests were submitted by journalists.

Of the recorded requests, 22 received full or partial responses, 12 were rejected, and 36 remain pending. The institutions responding most frequently were the Ministry of Health and the Turkish Employment Agency (İŞKUR).

The most common topics of the requests were human rights, accountability and transparency, and children's rights.



The most frequently cited grounds for rejection were "published or publicly disclosed information and documents" (Article 8), "requests requiring separate or special work" (Article 7), and "practices not concerning the public" (Article 25).

Users also evaluated the quality of the responses they received. Although 73 percent of responses were technically classified as "answers" because they did not formally reject the request, they nonetheless failed to address the question submitted. A further 13 percent provided less than half of the requested information, while 8 percent supplied only around half of the information requested. Comprehensive responses containing most or all of the requested information accounted for just 6 percent of all replies.

# Current issues in the implementation of Fol rights

Common problems identified through interviews with platform users, IPI training sessions, and the Freedom of Information requests submitted by journalists participating in IPI's mentorship programme reveal persistent and systematic shortcomings in the exercise of Fol rights.

In particular, the requests submitted by journalists during the preparation of news stories demonstrate how technical and administrative deficiencies in the implementation of Fol have practical consequences. Their experiences indicate that the obstacles encountered during application and appeal procedures are not isolated administrative errors, but rather structural problems that directly affect the effective exercise of the right to information.

## Inability to exercise the right to appeal due to a technical error:

One journalist sought to appeal the response received to an Fol request before the Review Board of Access to Information (BEDK). When attempting to submit the appeal through the online system on the final day of the statutory appeal period, the system rejected the submission on the grounds that the deadline had already expired. Under the applicable rules for calculating the appeal period, however, the appeal should still have been accepted that day. The journalist was effectively prevented from exercising the statutory right to appeal. The case was reviewed by lawyers serving on the IPI Legal Advisory Board, who confirmed that the problem stemmed not from the legal framework but from a technical error in the system itself.

## Rejection notices citing missing information without specifying what information is missing:

Another journalist received a response stating that "your application could not be assessed because ..... was not specified in your request." Rather than identifying the allegedly missing information, the institution left the relevant section of the template blank and requested that the application be resubmitted.

Because no explanation was provided regarding what information was considered missing, the applicant was unable to remedy the alleged deficiency in practice. Such careless and inadequately reasoned responses are incompatible with the administration's obligation to assess requests diligently and provide clear justifications. They also hinder applicants from effectively exercising their right to information.

The response sent by the Ministry of Health – Department of Migrant Health stated:

*"Your application submitted through the Presidency's Communication Centre (CİMER) has been reviewed; however, it could not be assessed because ..... was not specified in your application. If you resubmit your application including the missing information referred to above, it will be taken into consideration."*

**Offering to provide information by telephone instead of issuing a written response:**

Following an FoI request submitted by a journalist to the Ministry of Health, institutional officials contacted the applicant by telephone and stated that they were willing to provide the requested information orally but would not issue a written response.

This practice prevents requests for information from being answered through an official, documented administrative response. The absence of a written reply also deprives applicants of documentary evidence that could later be relied upon in administrative appeals or judicial proceedings. As a result, the principles of transparency, accountability, and reviewability that underpin the right to information are weakened.

**Failure to respond to requests:**

The experiences of journalists participating in the mentorship programme indicate that failure to respond to FoI requests remains a widespread problem. A significant proportion of requests submitted during the preparation of news reports received no response within the statutory deadlines. In some cases, requests remained unanswered even after the legal response period had expired.

Compliance with statutory response deadlines is one of the fundamental safeguards of the right to information. When institutions fail to respond within the prescribed time limits, journalists are prevented from obtaining information of public interest in a timely manner. Particularly in the context of news reporting, delays in accessing information may significantly reduce its public value, even if a response is eventually provided. Such practices weaken the effective exercise of the right to information and diminish the accountability of public institutions.

# Strategic recommendations for strengthening FoI rights

In light of the implementation challenges identified above, IPI proposes the following measures to strengthen the effective exercise of the right to information. These recommendations cover improvements at both the institutional and legislative levels.

**Ensure compliance with statutory response deadlines:**

Failure to respond to FoI requests effectively deprives applicants of their right to information. Compliance with statutory response deadlines should be monitored on a regular basis, and effective administrative accountability mechanisms should be introduced for institutions that fail to respond within the prescribed time limits. Institutional performance regarding response times should also be reported publicly in order to strengthen accountability.

**Improve the technical functioning of the Review Board of Access to Information's (BEDK) system:**

Technical failures in electronic application systems may prevent applicants from exercising their legal rights. The calculation of statutory deadlines should fully comply with the applicable legislation, and safeguards should be introduced to prevent applicants from losing their rights because of system errors.

Alternative submission channels and remedial mechanisms should also be established for cases involving technical failures. Furthermore, where applicants miss statutory application or appeal deadlines due to system-related problems, the legal framework should explicitly provide for additional time or the opportunity to resubmit the application.

**Establish standards for reasoned and high-quality responses:**

Responding to FoI requests with standardised template texts, incomplete forms, or statements that fail to address the substance of the request weakens the administration's obligation to provide reasoned decisions.

Each request should receive a response specifically tailored to its content, providing clear explanations and adequate reasoning. Where information is considered missing, institutions should explicitly identify the missing element. Internal guidance documents should be developed, and staff training should be expanded to improve the overall quality of responses.

**Reinforce the obligation to provide written responses:**

Providing information by phone or in person instead of issuing written responses prevents the creation of official administrative records and weakens both oversight and appeal mechanisms.

All responses to FoI requests should therefore be provided in writing and properly documented. Where oral explanations are also given, they should complement the formal written response.

**Establish clear rules governing the use of artificial intelligence:**

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools should not be used as the final decision-maker in preparing administrative responses. If AI tools are used, they should serve only as supporting instruments. All AI-generated content should be verified by authorised personnel, and final responsibility for the response should remain with the competent public official.

Public institutions should also develop transparent and accountable policies governing the use of artificial intelligence in the preparation of FoI responses.

**Promote proactive disclosure of information:**

Frequently requested information that serves the public interest should be published on a regular basis. By embracing open-data principles and proactive disclosure practices, public institutions should make statistics, reports, and other information of public interest readily accessible. This would both improve transparency and reduce the volume of repetitive information requests.

# Conclusion

[IPI FoI Platform](#) will continue to collect and analyse 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 FoI 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 FoI 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 the country 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.

In parallel, IPI's in-person training encourages journalists, CSOs, lawyers, and activists to file more effective requests, appeal unanswered or rejected applications, and integrate these requests into their reporting and research.

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.

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## Second quarterly report 2026

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