

In Memory of Professor Yücel Candemir

12 April 1937 – 20 August 2026

There are people whose influence is difficult to capture through positions, publications or academic titles. Professor Yücel Candemir was one of them.

To many, he was a distinguished economist and transport scholar, a professor at Istanbul Technical University, a long-standing member of the WCTRS, and the driving force behind many important initiatives in transport research and education. To those of us who knew him closely, however, he was simply Yücel. And that meant much more.

Yücel had a rare kind of courage. He was never impressed by titles, hierarchy or authority when he believed something important had to be said. Once, for a symposium he had organised to debate transport policy, he managed to bring the serving Minister of Transport to the event. Then, in his opening speech, with the Minister sitting in front of him, he explained plainly why he believed the country's current transport investments were wrong.

This was also at the heart of the way he understood universities. Throughout his work, he constantly returned to the idea of the Triple Helix of University, Industry, Government. It is hard to find another person in Türkiye's transport field who can bring these three worlds together as successfully as he did. He was very much concerned about the future of our Planet Earth and started initiatives and organized events with Triple Helix participation for developing concepts for a sustainable growth path of the economy and the transport sector. His major aim was preparing the young generation to master the future challenges. One example is the organization of a pilot program of a WCTRS Distance Learning Course on Sustainable Logistics.

Yet if there was one thing that mattered to him even more, it was people, especially young people. Educating students, creating opportunities for them, and contributing to the welfare and happiness of future generations became perhaps the central purpose of the last thirty years of his life. Almost every initiative he undertook, every institution he supported, every person he introduced to another, somehow came back to this purpose.

He thought not only about his current students, but also about former students and students he had not yet met. He wanted to open doors for them. His efforts around WCTRS University were a perfect expression of this. Through remarkable personal determination, energy and persistence, he helped turn the idea into a pilot initiative in Türkiye.

The 2004 WCTRS conference in Istanbul, still remembered by many as one of the most remarkable gatherings in the Society's history, bore Yücel's unmistakable imprint. He challenged

conventions even in the smallest details. Famously, he resisted the expectation of a stereotypical entertainment programme for the gala dinner, despite strong disagreement within the organising committee, and instead created an extraordinary evening at Dolmabahçe Palace. Even former US President Bill Clinton was invited; although his schedule ultimately prevented him from attending, the ambition of the invitation itself said something about the scale at which Yücel thought.

It was classic Yücel: Think bigger, question the obvious choice, and refuse to do something merely because “this is how it is normally done.” For all the seriousness with which he engaged with ideas, he never lost his sense of humour. He was extraordinarily hard-working but for Yücel, working itself seemed to be a source of joy, while for us, the joy was working with him.

He was a powerful motivator for the young researchers for whom Dilay is signing below. And he was a deeply respected colleague, well integrated in the WCTR Society for which Rosario and Werner are signing below.

We need to pay our highest last respects to an outstanding personality and a good friend.

Dilay Celebi Rosário Macário Werner Rothengatter