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# IZMIR CULTURE PLA+FORM INITIATIVE



SUSTAINABILITY  
**CULTURAL LEADERSHIP**  
DEVELOPMENT **SOCIAL**  
MAPPING KNOWLEDGE  
**PARTICIPATION**  
EXCHANGE OF  
EXPERIENCES

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## 1. Background

Izmir is the third largest city of Turkey, located near the Mediterranean-Black Sea passage, opened to the Balkans, Europe and to the Middle East through Anatolia. Since the 1930s, the city, which has a rich and diverse cultural heritage, has been connected to the world economy through its international fair. The city, which enjoys a liberal and secular atmosphere, ranks above the national average in terms of urbanization and literacy rates, gross domestic product per capita.

In a global context where the culture industries grow rapidly and tend to form the basis of the economy, the major part of the contemporary artistic and cultural production is supported by private sector and corporate bodies, is highly concentrated in Istanbul. Izmir, which for a long time lacked the necessary attention from public and private cultural investors, has over the past years, started to gain more economic and cultural attention.

## 2. Objectives

Reinforcing the grounds of communication, cooperation and solidarity among Izmir's art and culture practitioners; indexing and mapping of the said practitioners, dissemination of the compiled information throughout the urban surface; formation of a roof structure that will enable Izmir's art and culture practitioners to establish national and international connections.

### 3. Origins of the Project

The project was launched in the lack of an inventory study on the identity, areas of activity and geographical locations of the local art and culture practitioners in Izmir. Due to this lack, appropriate channels had not emerged for Izmir's culture practitioners to get acquainted and communicate with each other. This was an obstacle of the visibility and recognition of the culture and art practitioners of Izmir.

The project mainly aimed and focused on the need to compile and disseminate information about art and culture practitioners. The main challenge envisaged was how to access this information. The project was initiated by the Izmir Mediterranean Academy of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality.

**THIS PROJECT IS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF ITS KIND IN IZMIR, AND OPERATES THROUGH A PARTICIPATORY PROCESS.**

### 4. Content and Development

The main characteristic of the project is that it enables art and culture producers living in Izmir to communicate with each other, to access each other's information and to spread this information throughout the city. It is the most comprehensive study of its kind in Izmir and operates through a participatory process. Since 2014, art and culture producers of Izmir have been invited to IKPG's (Izmir Culture Pla+form Initiative) communication meetings to introduce themselves and present their works. These meetings were recorded in video and audio, and the participants' details were publicized in IKPG's journal *Pla+form*, while extensive transcriptions of the recordings were published in the IKPG Annuals. Persons, initiatives or organizations attending to these meetings are referred to as IKPG's components.

The number of IKPG components has increased every year and has approached 300. In the first three years of the IKPG, Izmir Cultural Communication meetings were held. In the first day of each meeting, art and culture producers of Izmir introduced themselves and in the second day, national and international guest speakers made presentations of their works, proposing models for Izmir.

IKPG also concentrated on the Pla+forum series, which consisted of forums that discussed problems and collective solutions in certain fields of art and culture. Specific fields of discussion included theatre, cinema, independent publishing, and new approaches in education. These discussions have led to publications. The mapping study, the results of which were published by IKPG, demonstrates through statistical analysis the distribution throughout Izmir of cultural and artistic spaces and the of art and culture practitioners. In the last two years, Izmir Culture Platform Initiative Summer School has been organized with 75 participants in the first year and 110 participants in the second year.

Summer schools, the participants of which emerged in response to open calls to the IKPG components, brought together the creative persons of Izmir in an intensive art and culture agenda, provided them with an opportunity to get acquainted with each other more closely, thus preparing the grounds for the cooperation of Izmir's art and culture producers in designing collective activities. The third Summer School will be held in 2019.

### 5. Main actors

The main partner of the project is, Izmir Mediterranean Academy of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. Izmir Mediterranean Academy undertakes the entire financial burden of IKPG. The IKPG core team, which consists of approximately twenty art and culture employees, supported logistically and financially by Izmir Mediterranean Academy, is responsible for the creation of the content, organization of activities, the preparation of the *Pla+form* journal and the *Annual IKPG* journal, along with various practical duties.



## 6. Evaluation

The main impact of the project was to reinforce the communication among Izmir's art and culture producers, and to ensure their visibility and cooperation in production of collective works.

The formation of an environment of dialogue, cooperation and solidarity between art and culture producers brought dynamism to city's cultural life. We can observe the weakness of this art and culture community in terms of communication and cooperation at national and international levels.

**THE GOAL IS TO REINFORCE THE GROUNDS OF COMMUNICATION, COOPERATION AND SOLIDARITY AMONG IZMIR'S ART AND CULTURE PRACTITIONERS; TO INDEX AND MAP THE SAID PRACTITIONERS, TO DISSEMINATE THE COMPILED INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE URBAN SURFACE AND TO FORM A ROOF STRUCTURE THAT WILL ENABLE IZMIR'S ART AND CULTURE PRACTITIONERS TO ESTABLISH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONNEXIONS.**

## 7. Recommendations

In order to strengthen the national and international connections, more intensive work in some areas is required. To this end, the IKPG has developed a new project entitled Izmir Cultural Support Platform, which aims to improve the quality of artistic and cultural production in the city through better international communication.

This project, which includes an artists' residency program, will be implemented from 2020 onwards. We recommend that the city, which considers reproducing the Project, increase international communication by incorporating an artist residency program into the project after one year of initial work.

## 8. Further Information

This article was written by Şervan Alpşen and Hale Eryılmaz, respectively Coordinator of the Project and Member of core team of Izmir Culture Platform, Izmir Mediterranean Academy of Izmir Metropolitan Municipality, Izmir, Turkey.

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