

# WOMEN AND FAMILY CULTURE AND ARTS CENTRE



## AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



## CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
3. CULTURE AND EDUCATION
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUALITY, AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

DEVELOPMENT, CULTURAL, EMPOWERMENT, CAPACITY,  
GOVERNANCE, PARTICIPATION, TRAINING, ARTS,  
WOMAN/WOMEN, EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, GENDER

# 1. Context

Bağcılar is the 3rd most populated district of Istanbul, with 745.125 inhabitants. It is composed of migrants from all regions of Turkey, representing a melting pot of peoples that enrich its cultural diversity. One of Bağcılar's current challenges is to become a more equal city, by improving women's social and cultural situation and gaining financial freedom, since they are not equally represented in the workforce or the society and, usually, they cannot find an opportunity to enhance their cultural capacities. Moreover, the district mostly hosts low-income groups, that have difficulties accessing to cultural and economic opportunities.

## 2. Bağcılar and culture

Bağcılar Municipality included culture policies within its Strategic plans updated on 5-year periods. In addition to basic municipal services and, as part of the people-centered and social municipal approach, support policies for those who are unable to overcome social, personal, and socio-economic obstacles alone are prioritized. Vulnerable groups, such as women and children, are considered as the main target group within the framework of these policies. Thus, the Women and Family Culture and Art Centre were opened, which offers language, personal development and entrepreneurship courses, art and design workshops, and psychological support services. This centre has the aim of supporting gender equality, increase welfare, and improve the cultural capacities of disadvantaged groups, encouraging them to become active citizens. Also, it enables all women to see their capacities in social life with the motto of "Learning and Producing Women."

**WOMEN ARE NOT EQUALLY REPRESENTED IN THE WORKFORCE OR THE SOCIETY AND, USUALLY, THEY CANNOT FIND AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE THEIR CULTURAL CAPACITIES.**

The project was launched in 2011 and has a continuously developing structure in line with the varying needs of society and government policies. The project is aligned with the 11th Development Plan and New Economy Program prepared at the national level. Furthermore, it directly serves to the objective of "Growing productive and happy individuals that have thinking, perception and problem-solving skills as well as self-confidence, responsibility, entrepreneurship and innovation attributes by providing them with access to inclusive and qualified education and life-long learning opportunities", included in the city's development plan.

## 3. Goals and project implementation

### 3.1. Main aim and specific goals

The primary objective of the Project is to make women active citizens in society by offering them a platform for creative support within the framework of a gender-based cultural strategy. It also promotes women's development of social and cultural aspects and encourages them to achieve economic freedom to create a socio-economically stronger and equal city.

Therefore, the specific objectives of the project are to increase women's economic power, facilitate their participation in social life, offer them individual support through the psychological support unit, contribute to their personal development, give them a more active role in governance, contribute to their employment on the local level, as well as to offer them a space for active participation in art, creativity, and imagination as valuable elements. The project embraces the notion that culture-making is a fundamental human and societal experience. Additionally, "a society with a higher level of welfare means that women stronger from social, cultural and economic aspects". Disseminating this principle and breaking prejudices is another specific target.

## 3.2. Development of the project

### Main actions carried out

The Women and Family Culture and Art Centre offers 215 courses in the following 24 main fields:

- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Public Relations and Organization Services
- Information
- Technologies
- Law
- Office Administration and Secretariat
- Personal Development and Training
- Child Development and Training
- Accounting and Finance
- Religion
- Music and Visual Arts
- Entertainment Services
- Literacy
- Hand Crafts Technology
- Marketing and Retail
- Journalism
- Health
- Food Technology
- Art and Design
- Clothing Production Technology
- Ceramic and Glass Technology
- Graphics and Photography
- Foreign Language
- Beauty and Hair Care Services
- Catering Services

**THE CENTRE OFFERS LANGUAGE, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT, AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSES, ART AND DESIGN WORKSHOPS, AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT SERVICES. THESE EFFORTS INCREASE CULTURAL CAPACITIES OF PARTICIPANTS, ENCOURAGING THEM TO BE ACTIVE CITIZENS.**

The Centre has:

- Courses
- Day Care
- Psychological Consultancy Services,
- Sports Hall
- Stand
- Cafeteria
- Gözleme (Turkish Pastry) Food Court
- Conference and Exhibition Halls

The Project's staff is composed of 1 coordinator, 3 psychologists, 2 Sports Trainers, 1 Kindergarten Teacher, 1 Technical Personnel, 2 Office Personnel and 3 Janitors employed at the Centre, and it has the following units:

- Psychological Consultancy unit
- Day Care unit for children of trainees participating in courses
- Courses

## 4. Impacts

### 4.1. Direct impacts

#### Impacts on the local government

The Centre has been an exemplary model for many local governments since 2011. For example, "Every Home is a Kindergarten" (2011) has been revised considering the dynamics of the society in 2015 and repeated using its own funds. The project was also invited to the "Supporting Pre-School Child Development International Symposium" held in Germany's Hamm Municipality, increasing the visibility of both the Centre and Bağcılar. The project also included women in the active decision-making process in the local government through Women Councils and representatives.

#### Impact on culture and on local cultural actors

Bağcılar has a multi-cultural cosmopolitan fabric, which has played a significant role in increasing cultural diversity and living together in harmony with the immigrants from inside and outside the country. Established in 1992, Bağcılar Municipality adopted the concept of social municipal works that reach citizens in addition to basic municipal services. Various culture centres, sports halls, nostalgia gardens, information houses, youth centres, the Women and Family Culture and Art Centre and the Palace for Handicapped Individuals were established, contributing to the culture from all parts of the society with a more inclusive approach.

**ENSURING A SOCIO-ECONOMIC BALANCE, PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENHANCE THE CULTURAL CAPACITIES OF WOMEN AND MINIMIZING THE GENDER GAP ARE THE KEY ASPECTS OF THE PROJECT.**

#### Impact on the territory and population

The project has contributed to decreasing gender inequality by raising the number of women establishing their own business and enhancing their cultural and social development. Also, they are increasingly included in activities carried out by the local government as a target group since this project began.

Women play a significant role in the family due to the demographic profile of the community. Therefore, any effort addressing them will be important for future generations. The best example in that matter is "Every Home is a Kindergarten". As part of the project scope, 8 weeks of pre-school training was given to mothers and mother candidates to relieve their anxiety.

Moreover, Bağcılar Community Training Centre, opened up at Women and Family Culture and Art Centre, served 25.520 people with 1.102 courses between 2011-2020. 6.936 people received services from the psychological consultancy unit, 47.152 people participated in social events, and 428 people were served on a daily basis. After the training, 264 women reported establishing their own business or being employed elsewhere.

## 4.2. Evaluation

The project is monitored and assessed in line with the objectives identified in performance programs annually according to 5-year strategic plans using performance indicators. Activities are evaluated both on quarterly periods and collectively at the end of the year via monitoring and assessment reports. One of the most significant indicators is the increase in the number of registrations to Women and Family Culture and Art Centre. In addition, trainees who completed the courses are awarded with Turkish Ministry of Education certification.

## 4.3. Key factors

Supporting the active citizenship of women, promoting learning-producing women to ensure socio-economic balance, providing an opportunity to enhance the cultural capacities of women and minimizing the gender gap are the key aspects of the project. Therefore, the Women and Family Culture and Arts Centre is expected to change the mindset in Bağcılar, as well as to initiate an overall paradigm shift in the cultural policies of the municipality towards a more equal and sustainable district.

## 4.4. Continuity

A project's benefit to the community is measured by its continuity since municipalities are non-profit organizations, therefore profit-loss aspects are not considered. On the other hand, sources are obtained from funded projects to sustain both continuity and the effect of projects such as Women and Family Culture and Art Centre. In conclusion, sources and efforts expended for the project are well worth the outcomes achieved for the community. Also, the target group took over project ownership, resulting in the continuity of the Project since 2011.

# 5. Further information

Bağcılar was a candidate for the fourth "UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award" (November 2019 – May 2020). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June of 2020, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

**This article was written by Kemal Akdoğan, Culture and Social Affairs Directorate, Bağcılar, Turkey.**

Contact: [Kemal.akdogan@bagcilar.bel.tr](mailto:Kemal.akdogan@bagcilar.bel.tr)

Websiteweb: <http://www.bagcilar.bel.tr/>