

E-CULTURE CENTRE, ATAŞEHİR (WHEN ART STOPS, LIFE STOPS)



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
3. CULTURE AND EDUCATION
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

COVID, ACCESS, DIGITAL, EDUCATION,
TRAINING, ARTS, YOUTH, CULTURAL RIGHTS,
MEMORY, GOVERNANCE.



1. Ataşehir and culture

Ataşehir is a district with a population of approximately 500,000 that is located in the Asian Side of Istanbul and in the group of the latest developed towns. Ataşehir has a predominantly young population. The social segregation between the favoured areas within the walls in the city centre and the low-income neighbourhoods located at the periphery of the city has gradually deepened.

The “artistic infrastructure model” covers a significant part of Ataşehir Municipality’s investment and activity area. Our cultural policy has developed with regards to the status of the artist, the participation of civil society, cultural expressions of minorities and neglected groups, and digitalization in culture during the pandemic. New art communities such as theatre ensembles, orchestras, dance groups, choirs, etc. have provided a platform of artistic expression for artists of all background, especially young musicians and actors.

However, the efforts to carry out a sustainable and participatory cultural policy, where all citizens could benefit equally, was interrupted because of the pandemic. Our E-Culture Centre project has been a tool to ensure the continuity of those cultural policies. E-Culture Centre project aims to create an interaction that goes beyond Ataşehir’s population and borders. The publication of the contents opens to the use of the entire world on digital platforms paved the way for the spread of the effect that started from Ataşehir to the universal.

**FREE ONLINE ART, CULTURE AND DESIGN TRAININGS AND WORKSHOPS
SECURED CITIZENS — ESPECIALLY CHILDREN AND YOUTH’S — ACCESS TO
CULTURAL EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC.**



2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The main purpose of the project is to diversify the environment that brings citizens and cultural producers together, and to provide support by opening up a space for art producers by using digital channels during the pandemic.

The sub-objectives that expand the range of the project can be summarised as follows:

- Providing access to culture for people living in the city.
- Protection of the local cultural ecosystem.
- Bringing local cultural elements first to the national level and then to the international level.

2.2. Project development

The E-Culture Centre was designed to strengthen social cohesion, intercultural dialogue and understanding, tolerance, mutual respect, gender equality, innovation, entrepreneurship, inclusivity, identity, and security by embracing differences in different neighborhoods and districts of Agtasehir. It also aimed to promote liveability and vibrant urban economy as well as the dignity of all people especially artists. In addition, it is our main motivation to take the steps towards establishing local institutional structures that promote pluralism and coexistence in our increasingly multicultural and heterogeneous societies. Creating local virtual memory by recording local values (and local artist) is handled within the scope of this purpose.

MAIN ACTIONS CARRIED OUT REVOLVE AROUND THE FOLLOWING ISSUES

Providing access to culture for the citizens: Within the framework of cultural rights, facilitating access to culture for every citizen living in the city, providing access to the cultural events through digital platforms with live broadcasts or recordings.



Protection of the local cultural eco-system: Supporting and protecting cultural workers, supporting and protecting cultural institutions, protecting and ensuring cultural expression and diversity, developing sustainable cultural policies.

Carrying local cultural elements to national level and then to international levels: Enhancing the recognition of artists and communities nation-wide and globally starting from the local, increasing the recognition of local cultural focus groups, promotion, and protection of local cultural heritage products (tangible or intangible).

THE E-CULTURE CENTRE CONVEYS THE CULTURAL AND ARTISTIC LIFE OF ISTANBUL TO THE PEOPLE OF THE DISTRICT, AND AT THE SAME TIME, CREATES A “PERSONAL DIGITAL MEMORY RECORD” THAT ARTISTS CAN USE BY STORING THEIR PRODUCTIONS IN DIGITAL MEDIA.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

One of the main working vectors of Ataşehir in the field of culture has been the digital channel. It was ensured that the cultural dynamics that emerged from Ataşehir were accessible to wider audiences.



Concerts, children’s theatres, workshops, conversations, seminars, and event videos broadcasted on different platforms, namely [Ataşehir Culture YouTube channel](#) and [Radio Ataşehir](#) reached 1.5 million viewers. More than 4,000 students have been reached in total with over 1000 hours of lectures on online education platforms.

Artists producing for the E-Culture Centre received a copy of their digitally shared products for their individual use. Thus, the project contributed to the copyright.

Projects that received support continued after the pandemic, and branding steps were taken and concluded together with physical projects. Thus, the meeting of the physical and the digital took place.

The creation of a network of artists who gained the identity of “Ataşehirli” facilitated the development of cultural planning and cultural policies with a participatory governance approach. Moreover, municipal administrative units moved to an accessible location for art producers.

3.2. Assessment

Evaluation phases during the development of the project included, among other actions:

- **Perceiving the Problem and Identifying the Need:** Generating solutions to ensure the continuation of cultural production and participation during the pandemic.
- **Producing a Solution to the Problem in Compliance with the Legislation:** To conduct the purchasing processes of the contents produced in accordance with the municipal law and public procurement legislation.



THE E-CULTURE CENTRE ALLOWED TO BE ACCESSED FROM ANYWHERE AND ANYTIME WITHOUT BARRIERS, EXTENDING THE BOUNDARIES OF INFLUENCE AND EXCEEDING THE BOUNDARIES OF DISTRICTS AND EVEN OF THE COUNTRY, CREATING A MEMORY BY OPENING A WINDOW TO ARTISTS AND ETHNIC AND SOCIAL GROUPS OF THE CITY.

3.3. Key factors

One of the main working vectors of Ataşehir in the field of culture has been the digital channel. It ensured that the cultural dynamics emerging from Ataşehir were accessible to wider audiences. Another key element of the project relies on partnerships and collaborations with universities, professional associations, independent private theatres, sister city partnerships, unions, cooperatives, museums and art galleries, based on a model that focuses on participation in the content planning, preparation, and development stages.

3.4. Continuity

The digital channel has become a major part of Ataşehir Municipality's cultural activity and trainings. Sure, digital media cannot replace face-to-face activity; however, it can ensure wider reach of local products and knowledge. The stages that will ensure the continuity of the project can be summarized as follows:

- Transferring physical (with audience) events to digital
- Increasing the qualifications of cultural programs on information production and archiving
- Diversification of international workshop programs.

In addition to the hybrid education system, ATABEM, the online education site of the E-Culture centre, will be developed and will provide access to education to individuals who do not have the opportunity to receive education physically.

4. Further information

Ataşehir was a candidate for the fifth "UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21" International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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