

August 2020

Istanbul's Commitment to the Principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights on "Childcare and Support to Children"

We know that every child has a right to equal opportunities. Istanbul is home to nearly 4 million children, around 28% of whom live in poverty. To overcome this disparity, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is committed to building a fair and inclusive city and ensuring that "All of Istanbul's children have equal opportunities."

As a result of socioeconomic disparities, inequalities start early in life and deepen as children grow up. It is our duty to ensure a fair start in life for all children, regardless of their background. This is why we at Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality focus particularly on early childhood education and care services. In addition to a comprehensive childcare, child development and child protection services program to improve the well-being of children and their caregivers, we strive to focus on children's rights and well-being across all our fields of work.

To offer affordable and quality childhood education and care opportunities for low-income families throughout Istanbul, we have launched an initiative to build 150 day care centers across 150 districts by the end of 2024, with an allocated budget of 380 million TRY. We have partnered with Bogazici University and Mother Child Education Foundation (ACEV) in developing our early childhood education program and training our staff. We also mobilize Turkish businesses to raise funds for building our centers across Istanbul. As of today, 11 centers are ready to open their doors. While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to postpone opening our centers, we have quickly adapted to the circumstances and launched online play groups between April-August 2020. Also, thanks to the Regional Employment Offices in Istanbul, 5 of which we have already established and will total up to 11, we contribute to home economies by finding employment for the mothers of the children we educate and care for in day care centers, and we will bring our women into business life.

As part of our all-around approach to childcare and support to children, we initiated the "People's Milk" program to support children's nutrition. Since Fall 2019, we have weekly delivered milk to low-income families with children aged 3-6, all the while supporting local farmers producing milk. Families receive 8 liters of milk per month

for 3 years, which is the equivalent of a glass of milk per day for each child. So far, we have distributed over 5 million liters of milk to 115 thousand children. Recently, we made public transportation free for all mothers traveling with children aged 0-4. Our Family Support and Education Centers and Psychological Consultation Centers provide developmental screening services, psychological consultation services, education modules and workshops for children and their caregivers, free of charge.

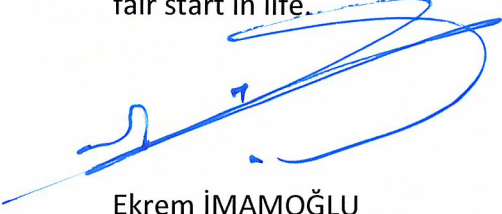
As a partner of the global Urban95 initiative, in collaboration with Bernard van Leer Foundation we are implementing the Istanbul95 program for children aged 0-5 and their caregivers. As part Istanbul 95, we have initiated a parent coaching program for parents with children aged 0- 3, developed and implemented in partnership with Bogazici University. The program comprises biweekly home visits to 1,300 families every year, starting in pregnancy and continuing until children turn 3. It also includes delivering maternity packages to all families.

As part of the Istanbul 95 program, we are also taking stock of all of Istanbul's parks, playgrounds and green spaces; improving all existing spaces and building brand new playgrounds that cater to the needs of young children and their caregivers. We aim to build new playgrounds within reach in neighborhoods that lack them. We have also initiated a mobile playground program, where we train our staff as play workers and organize temporary adventure playgrounds across Istanbul in collaboration with Istanbul Volunteers. Building upon this experience and recognizing playing as a fundamental children's right, we also began preparing Istanbul's Master Plan for Playgrounds.

While every child has the right "to engage in playing and recreational activities and participate freely in cultural life and arts" (Article 31, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child), very often children from disadvantaged backgrounds miss out on such opportunities that their more affluent peers easily access. Therefore, we make sure to enrich children's lives with numerous offerings of concerts, field trips, workshops, theater and dance performances, film screenings, and sports activities for over 200,000 children per year.

These are the initial steps to realize our vision to make Istanbul an inclusive, fair and child-friendly city—a city that respects children's rights and improves the well-being of all its children. This is definitely an ambitious goal in a city of 16 million, but our children deserve nothing less. We know this is a challenge we can conquer, and in

doing so, we will set a powerful example for our fellow local governments across Europe. As Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, we are proud to hereby commit to making further progress on principle 11 in our city, continuing our dedicated efforts to enhance children's well-being and ensuring that all of Istanbul's children have a fair start in life.



Ekrem İMAMOĐLU
Mayor of Istanbul