

Application Form

PART 1: BASIC DATA

Experience data (complete the information below in a clear and concise manner)

Title of the experience:		Mahalle Bizim / Neighborhood Is Ours
Name of the city or region:		Mersin
Inhabitants of the city or territory:		2.2 million
Country:		Turkey
Institution presenting the candidacy (name of the municipality, department, government, institution leading the candidate experience): Mersin Metropolitan Municipality		
Website of the experience or institution:		https://www.mersin.bel.tr/
Profiles in social networks of the experience or the institution: https://www.instagram.com/mersinbuyuksehirbelediyesi		
Start date of the experience:		26.04.2022
End date of the experience (if operational, indicate "ongoing"):		
Budget of the experience (indicate the budget of the experience or the resources mobilized for its development and implementation): 94.117,20 €		
Type of candidacy (Mark with an X in the right column)	New experience	X
	Innovation on an existing experience	
	Continuity of an experience	
Type of experience (Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)	Participatory budgeting	
	Participatory planning	
	Standing council	
	Workshop/meeting for diagnosis, monitoring, etc.	X

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	Public Hearing/Forum	X	
	Poll/referendum		
	Assemblies / Citizen juries / Deliberation spaces		
	E-government/Open government/Digital platforms		
	Citizen initiative		
	Other (specify):		
<p>Objective of the experience</p> <p>(Mark with an X in the right column) (you may choose more than one)</p>	To achieve higher levels of equality in terms of participation	X	
	Including diversity as a criterion for inclusion	X	
	Community empowerment	X	
	To empower non-organised citizens	X	
	To increase citizen's rights in terms of political participation	X	
	To connect different tools of participation within a participatory democracy "ecosystem"	X	
	To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the mechanisms of participatory democracy	X	
	To improve the quality of public decision-making through the mechanisms of participatory democracy		
	To improve the evaluation and accountability of the mechanisms of participatory democracy		
To improve any public policy through the active participation of the public	X		
<p>Territorial area</p> <p>(Mark with an X in the right column)</p>	All the territory	Local	X
		Regional	

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<i>(you may choose more than one)</i>	District	X
	Neighbourhood	X
Thematic area (Mark with an X in the right column) <i>(you may choose more than one)</i>	Governance	X
	Education	
	Transport	
	Urban management	
	Health	
	Security	
	Environment/Climate change and/or urban agriculture	
	Civic associations, grassroots and new social movements.	
	Culture	
	Housing	
	Job creation	
	Decentralization	
	Local development	
	Training/learning	
	Economy and/or finances	
	Legal regulations	
Social inclusion	X	
All		

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	Other (write the topic)	
<p>Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) associated with the practice</p> <p><i>Mark with an X in the right column (more than one option can be chosen)</i></p> <p><i>You can also add the specific target</i></p>	SDG 1 - No poverty	
	SDG 2 - Zero hunger	
	SDG 3 - Good health and well- being	
	SDG 4 - Quality education	
	SDG 5 - Gender equality	X
	SDG 6 - Clean water and sanitation	
	SDG 7 - Affordable and clean energy	
	SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth	
	SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	
	SDG 10 - Reduced inequality	X
	SDG 11 - Sustainable cities and communities	X
	SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production	
	SDG 13 - Climate action	
	SDG 14 - Life below water	
	SDG 15 - Life on land	
	SDG 16 - Peace, justice and strong institutions	X
	SDG 17 - Partnership for the goals	

PART 2: DESCRIPTION OF THE EXPERIENCE

Fill in the following fields clearly and concisely. You can add links if you consider it appropriate.

Context

In a **maximum of 300 words**, it presents the cultural, geographical, historical, institutional and socioeconomic context of the city, the territory in which the experience takes place.

Mersin is a port city located in the Mediterranean Region of Turkey. Maritime commerce, industry, agriculture and tourism are the developed fields of the city. Mersin called the “Pearl of the Mediterranean” has a very important commercial port which is one of the largest ports in the country. Moreover, the two organized industrial zones in the city are important industrial production hubs of the region and the country. The city has a population of an estimated 2.4 million, a rich cultural life with its religious, sectarian, ethnic and linguistic differences including a migrant community of approximately 400 thousand people who were displaced by the Syrian Civil War.

Precedents

Explain the precedents and origins of the experience: if it is the innovation of an existing experience, what are its origins, if it is a new experience, what are the antecedents in participation in your city/municipality/region. You can also indicate if you have been inspired by experiences in other cities/countries. (**maximum 300 words**)

Mersin Metropolitan Municipality has established a digital infrastructure that facilitates citizens' access to municipal services and enables them to convey their requests and complaints with the application "Teksin". Moreover, Teksin is enabling citizens to discover the city services with the city guide, learn information about the transportation services including bus hours and bus lines, easily reach ALO 185 support line and establishments of the municipality like cafes, restaurants and wedding halls. Citizens are also able to follow the news about the city and municipal services. “Mahalle Bizim” application, in line with the ongoing social inclusion and cohesion efforts, offers a new area of social communication and participation to immigrants, citizens, building managers and mukhtars by making use of the existing digital participation infrastructure and experience.

Objectives of the experience

What is the objective listed in Part 1 that you think is the most important, and indicate other outstanding objectives of the experience (**maximum 100 words**)

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Many of the listed objectives overlap with our experience and objectives. It is possible to state that the main focus here is community empowerment and social inclusion. Objectives such as participation, equality, diversity and development of different democratic participation tools are also part of the project and ultimately serve to increase social cohesion through democratic participation tools. The objective of the experience is to create a coordination mechanism between citizens and municipalities through mukhtars, which is a mechanism to encourage participation and raise awareness about public administration.

Methodology

Describe the methodology of the experience: phases of the process, participation channels (maximum 300 words)

The action is designed to provide opportunities for the active participation of citizens, enable and ensure coordination between municipality and mukhtars and offer guidance services to refugees in Mersin to municipal services so as to strengthen active participation in decision-making mechanisms over the application. The application is planned to increase citizens' attention to municipal services and make them express their opinions when a decision is taken regarding their neighbourhood. In order to achieve this objective, the project team organized meetings with mukhtars and building managers with broad participation and presented the mobile application during the meetings, provided brochures and posters, applying surveys following the meetings. 6 promotional meetings in different units of the Municipality including Social Cohesion Centre, Student Counselling Centre and Women's Health Centre are organized for the migrant community. Approximately 100 people will be reached in these 6 meetings.

Innovation

Explain what you consider most innovative in the practice. (In a maximum of 150 words)

The most innovative part of the practice is establishment of an online coordination mechanism, which is a mobile application, between the municipality and the mukhtars, building managers, citizens and migrants, thereby enabling digital participatory democracy for the improvement of the quality of municipality service provisions. Neighbours living in the same building can communicate with each other in a forum. In addition to similar digital infrastructures that enable citizen participation, "Mahalle Bizim" also provides a communication and cooperation platform between the different actors of urban life. While creating a structure suitable for various social groups via separate interfaces for each community, it offers an ecosystem where the municipality and city residents solve the problems together.

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Inclusion

*Point out the importance of including as many groups and diverse populations as possible and how you have achieved it. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

The application is designed as user-friendly and consists of four different interfaces; citizen (local community or refugee community), mukhtar, and building manager. When a person enters his/hers ID number the interface will automatically be in Turkish, Arabic or English. 10 interactive kiosks are placed in district centres of Mersin which are densely populated. These kiosks will be a tool for citizens who do not have smartphones or internet access. Through the application, both refugees and the local community will learn about municipality activities, responsibilities of the municipality and municipal services provided to them. Citizens will be able to enter their addresses and upload photos about their complaints, demands or recommendations. The building manager can see the demands, complaints or recommendations of residents. The mukhtar interface will collect demands, complaints and offers from the citizens of the neighbourhood. End-user survey tests will be sent to users over the application. The survey results will be collected and a detailed report which assesses and evaluates the efficiency of the application regarding democratic participation, application efficiency, and frequency of use will be prepared. Surveys will be sent via push notifications to the users various over the application. The topics will mainly include satisfaction surveys for municipal services, ratings for municipal services, surveys for possible changes in the neighbourhood, and surveys about citizens' opinions regarding their wishes for their neighbourhood.

Communication

*What has been the strategy and communication channels of the experience so that the population knows about it and gets involved. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

Visibility materials including leaflets and posters in Turkish, Arabic and English are designed and printed. These leaflets are distributed to building managers, mukhtars and municipal service buildings. Posters are hung on buildings and mukhtars' offices to encourage the target group to use the application and be informed about it. Visibility materials will be distributed to mukhtars and building managers during these promotional meetings. Approximately 15 mukhtars and 125 building managers will be visited every month in the central districts of Mersin. Posters in both languages will also be distributed to Social Cohesion Centre, Student Counselling Centre and Women's Health Counselling Centre. Digital platforms including social media and the municipality's website and outdoor advertisement areas such as billboards are used for the promotion of the project. Advertisements about the use of the application will also be diffused on municipality's busses. Outdoor advertisements are made in places where the pedestrian and vehicle circulation are the highest, which can be considered the central districts. The messages are sent to citizens and included information about the application and provided instructions on how to download and use it.

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Articulation with other actors

*It explains how the experience was articulated with different actors and simultaneous or pre-existing processes. What roles did these participants assume? Explain the degree of success of this joint. (In a **maximum of 150 words**)*

Mersin Metropolitan Municipality has been conducting projects to provide social harmony in the city and to offer certain services for refugees. These services include Social Cohesion Centre, Student Counselling Centre and Women's Health Consultation Centre. This application guides refugees to these centres where they can benefit from municipal services. Social Cohesion Centre is established with International Organization for Migration (IOM) and provides psychological support, translation support, job and vocational counselling, education counselling and health counselling services for immigrants and particularly vulnerable groups. Student Counselling Centre is a previous project successfully conducted within the Qudra 2 Programme. Children from both the host community and migrant community received psychological and social support from this centre and were guided to education. Women's Health Consultation Centre is established in cooperation with the IOM as well. Seminars especially designed for women's health including menopause school, and seminars about pregnancy and obesity are organized.

Evaluation:

*What evaluation mechanisms have been implemented? Develop whether citizenship has participated in the evaluation of the practice (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

An admin panel which serves as a dashboard is implemented. The admin panel keeps the record of the following inputs: number of people who registered for application, frequency of use, number of participants who filled the surveys, the number of complaints, demands and offers, and the number of answered complaints by the municipality. The data obtained from the application is transferred to the municipality and necessary actions are taken. A separate evaluation survey will be sent to different user groups including mukhtars, building managers, refugees and users from the local community once in two months. Further improvements will be made according to the survey data.

Impacts and results

*Describe the impacts and results of the process. How many people have participated, and which are their profiles. What have been the impacts on public policies, on the functioning of the administration and on citizens. (In a **maximum of 300 words**)*

It is planned to enhance citizen participation in public policies, and establish online channels which enable interaction between citizens and the municipality. Within the framework of the project, residents of the city, building managers, and mukhtars as neighbourhood representatives are encouraged to coordinate between each other and with the municipality. It is estimated that 5560 residents will directly participate and 22.240 residents will benefit indirectly.

PART 3: EXPERIENCE SUMMARY

*A summary of the experience: origin, objectives, operation, results, monitoring and evaluation (Do not hesitate to repeat aspects that have already been written before, this summary is the one that will be shared on the digital platform for open evaluation and in the publication of the award). (In a **maximum of 500 words**)*

Mersin Metropolitan Municipality has established a digital infrastructure that facilitates citizens' access to municipal services and enables them to convey their requests and complaints with the application "Teksin". "Mahalle Bizim" project's objective is the establishment of an online coordination mechanism between the municipality and the mukhtars, building managers and citizens and thereby enabling digital participatory democracy for the improvement of the quality of municipality service provisions. The application is planned to increase citizens' attention to municipal services and make them express their opinions when a decision is taken regarding their neighbourhood. In order to achieve this objective, the project team organized meetings with mukhtars and building managers with broad participation and presented the mobile application during the meetings, provided brochures and posters, applying surveys following the meetings. The most innovative part of the application is that neighbours can communicate with each other via the chatting and forum section, which is also linked with "Teksin". Mersin Metropolitan Municipality has established a digital infrastructure that facilitates citizens' access to municipal services and enables them to convey their requests and complaints with the application "Teksin". Moreover, Teksin is enabling citizens to discover the city services with the city guide, learn information about the transportation services including bus hours and bus lines, easily reach ALO 185 support line and establishments of the municipality like cafes, restaurants and wedding halls. Citizens are also able to follow the news about the city and municipal services. "Mahalle Bizim" application, in line with the ongoing social inclusion and cohesion efforts, offers a new area of social communication and participation to immigrants, citizens, building managers and mukhtars by making use of the existing digital participation infrastructure and experience. The application is designed as user-friendly and consists of four different interfaces; citizen (local or migrant), mukhtar, and building manager. When a person enters his/hers ID number the interface will automatically be in Turkish, Arabic or English. 10 interactive kiosks are placed in district centres of Mersin which are densely populated. These kiosks will be a tool for citizens who do not have smartphones or internet access. End-user survey tests will be sent to users over the application. The survey results will be collected and a detailed report which assesses and evaluates the efficiency of the application regarding democratic participation, application efficiency, and frequency of use will be prepared. Surveys will be sent via push notifications to the users over the application. Visibility materials will be distributed to mukhtars and building managers during these promotional meetings. In conclusion, in addition to the digital services and governance infrastructure established with "Teksin", "Neighborhood is Ours" offers a communication and coordination platform that prioritizes social inclusion and brings city residents, building managers, mukhtars and the municipality together.



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We invite you to share annexes that allow you to better illustrate your experience: videos, photographs, documents... They can be sent through a heavy document delivery system such as WeTransfer, Dropbox or Google Drive