



Istanbul, February 17th, 2020

City of Beşiktaş's Pledge to the European Pillar of Social Rights

The deepening economic problems and financial difficulties prevent young people from equally benefiting from education, training and lifelong learning, which are their most fundamental rights. Beşiktaş Municipality strives to provide all citizens, in particular young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with the equal opportunity to access quality education, training and lifelong learning, which will help them to acquire skills for participating fully on the labour market and in society and have a high quality of life. Beşiktaş endorses its responsibility to act in accordance with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and undertakes all feasible actions to put its principles into practice.

Commitment to Principle 1: Education, Training and Lifelong Learning

Beşiktaş is a borough that has a population of 182.649 people. In addition, being a district that has the access roads of the bridges connecting the two sides of Istanbul, Beşiktaş welcomes an average of 2.5 million people daily. Within its borders, Beşiktaş includes nine universities, 44 primary schools, 43 high schools, and equivalent schools. Beşiktaş provides service to approximately 200.000 children and young people in education. In a nutshell, Beşiktaş is the heart of education in Istanbul.

In the 2020 - 2024 Strategic Plan of Beşiktaş Municipality, we commit to make education and training services for young people a priority with a specific focus on strengthening equal opportunities in education. To reach out and respond to the needs of all 200.000 of the youth in Beşiktaş, the Municipality will invest in opening a career centre, student residences, an educational centre, and study spaces. Creating e-learning programmes, encouraging the young people to participate to ongoing European Solidarity Corps projects and providing social scholarships for disadvantaged students have also been among this Strategic Plan.

Beşiktaş is committed to promote equal opportunities in education. That is why; in 2019 Municipality has opened an institution called **Beşiktaş Academy**, a supplementary education centre for socio-economically disadvantaged students who do not have access to mainstream education. Beşiktaş Academy aims to support disadvantaged students and adults up to 25 years old to prepare for the national exams. In Turkey, Ministry of National Education holds two exams nationwide annually; one is for high school entrance and the other is for universities. The budget allocated in the first step was 300.000€. Although the Academy opened in the middle of school term, currently 186 students in need are making use of this opportunity. With the new school term in September 2020, this number will increase up to 1500 students. In order to reach more students within the framework of the Strategic Plan, three other branches of the Academy will be established in 2021, primarily in disadvantaged neighbourhoods like Karanfilköy, Akatlar and Ortaköy with an estimated budget for 250.000€.

In addition to school education, Beşiktaş Academy aims to promote lifelong learning and adult learning by opening cultural courses such as violin, ballet, piano and language courses for citizens of all ages, from seven to 90. We aim to encourage lifelong learning at all ages and to tackle language barrier that is one of the main challenges to social inclusion today. Given the fact that most of the consulates in Istanbul are located in Beşiktaş, the Municipality is ready to work together with these consulates on some projects to tackle language barrier through formal and non-formal language learning that can boost social inclusion and social mixing in our district.

Beşiktaş Municipality believe that all the citizens have the right to reach their full potential in society. The goal is to offer the citizens equal opportunities for inclusive education, training and lifelong learning, thus preparing them to enter the labour market and improving their overall inclusion and participation in society. Beşiktaş Municipality aims to achieve equal living conditions based on education.

Rıza Akpolat
Mayor of Beşiktaş

