

Local Diplomacy Analysis of Marmara:

Global Connections of Local Governments





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LOCAL DIPLOMACY ANALYSIS OF MARMARA: GLOBAL CONNECTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALDA	European Association for Local Democracy
C40	C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group
CoM	EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy
ELDW	European Local Democracy Week
EU	European Union
EWWR	European Week for Waste Reduction
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
GWOPA	Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance
ICLEI	ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOPD	International Observatory on Participatory Democracy
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MMU	Marmara Municipalities Union
MARUF	Marmara Urban Forum
NALAS	Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TDBB	Union of Turkish World Municipalities
TİKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency
TÜBİTAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye
UCLG	World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

FOREWORD

Today, cities have become powerful actors not only within national borders but also on the global stage. As they are increasingly gaining significance on a global scale, cities are establishing sister city relationships, creating international city networks, and developing thematic collaborations and projects with numerous international stakeholders. In this ever evolving landscape, local diplomacy emerges as a critical tool, complementing traditional diplomacy and enabling cities to play a more active role in addressing global issues.

Since its establishment, Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) has been carrying out multifaceted efforts to promote a culture of local diplomacy among municipalities, support capacity development for foreign relations, and encourage the exchange of knowledge and experience among municipalities. In addition to supporting the dissemination of international best practices, ensuring coordination among municipalities, and providing a platform for creating collaborative networks, MMU also represents local governments at the international level. We work to ensure that the local diplomacy activities of municipalities are aligned with national policies and international agreements, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals, and are connected to the global agenda. At the same time, we strive to shape national and international norms and agendas to reflect the demands and needs of municipalities. Through MMU's Local Diplomacy Platform, which brings together representatives from the international relations departments of our member municipalities, we aim to promote collaboration, solidarity, and a culture of dialogue with international stakeholders. Furthermore, we encourage the use of local diplomacy as an effective tool for peacebuilding and reconciliation on a global scale and addressing global issues with local ramifications, such as climate change and migration.

To identify the institutional structures of municipalities' foreign relations, their local diplomacy activities, and the challenges they face in their international relations efforts, we conducted a comprehensive study involving representatives responsible for foreign relations and project development from 187 municipalities across the Marmara Region. The resulting report sheds light on the obstacles these municipalities encounter in their foreign relations work and offers policy recommendations and solutions, providing a mirror to the local landscape. Guided by the belief that solutions to global challenges will originate at the local level, this report titled "Local Diplomacy Analysis of Marmara: Global Connections of Local Governments" aspires to enable local governments to contribute to national policies and international norms while ensuring that these norms and policies are shaped according to the needs and demands of municipalities.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Prof. Birgül Demirtaş, Burcuhan Şener, Özge Sivrikaya, Merve Ağca, and Ayşe Göç Yalçınkaya, who devoted significant effort to the preparation of this study; to Marmara Municipalities Union's esteemed Executive Board Members, General Assembly Members, and Secretary General; and to the team of MMU's Data and Technology Center for their contributions to the report's data analysis and visualization processes. I hope that this report, developed based on the current situation and needs in the field and with a holistic perspective, will contribute to the development of a local diplomacy approach aligned with national policies and serve as an inspiration for concrete steps to strengthen local diplomacy activities.

Mustafa Bozbey

President of Marmara Municipalities Union

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

City administrations, shaped within the framework of today's political system and spanning different regions of the world, have been interacting with institutions beyond their national borders since the first half of the 20th century. Although cities have long been associated with central governments, they have stepped onto the international stage to conduct diplomatic activities for a range of reasons, including addressing global and local issues, fostering peace across borders, building solidarity and cooperation with institutions through cultural and historical ties, and contributing to the shaping of international policies. Today, in addition to the foreign policy activities of central governments, the significance, activities, and roles of city administrations in international relations are growing. Operating within the political, administrative, and legal boundaries of their countries, municipalities are emerging as vital players in shaping international relations.

Yet, the nature of cities' activities in foreign relations, the tools of local diplomacy they prioritize, the institutions they engage with, their needs in foreign relations, and the challenges they face in external interactions vary not just from one country to another but even among cities within the same nation. To understand the nature of efforts in foreign relations across the Marmara Region, identify differences among municipalities, address institutional, legal and financial challenges related to foreign relations, and propose actionable policies to overcome these issues, Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) conducted the "Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research" between December 2022 and January 2024. The findings and recommendations of this research are summarized in the report titled "Local Diplomacy Analysis of Marmara: Global Connections of Local Governments".

The field research included all MMU member municipalities from different scales across 11 provinces in the Marmara Region: Balıkesir, Bilecik, Bursa, Çanakkale, Edirne, İstanbul, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ, and Yalova. Feedback from municipal representatives was collected through a survey consisting of open-ended and multiple-choice questions conducted via face-to-face interviews, over the phone, and via email. The findings were analyzed under eight main titles. These categories include an examination of the institutional structures municipalities have in place for foreign relations under the heading "Institutional Structures of Municipalities Regarding Foreign Relations", an analysis of municipal staff evaluations and perceptions of foreign relations based on their personal experiences in "Opinions of Municipal Personnel on Foreign Relations", and an exploration of local governments' memberships in international city networks and the nature of their relationships under "Memberships of Municipalities in International Networks". They also encompass an assessment of municipalities' sister city relationships, including the reasons for establishing these partnerships and the challenges encountered, in "Sister City Relationships of Municipalities", as well as an evaluation of municipalities' access to international funds and grants and their involvement in international projects in "Municipalities' Participation in International Projects". Additionally, the research addresses collaborations municipalities engage in with foreign institutions and international organizations beyond sister city protocols under "International Cooperation Agreements of Municipalities", examines

their participation in international events and visits to Türkiye's foreign missions in "Municipalities' Participation in International Events", and highlights their awareness of and initiatives related to various global agendas (including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the Paris Agreement, the Global Compacts on Migration/for Refugees, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction) in "Municipalities' Awareness and Activities Regarding the Global Agendas".

Following the holistic evaluation of the research findings, analyzes were made broken down by municipality scale (metropolitan municipality, provincial municipality, metropolitan district municipality, provincial district municipality and town municipality) and by province. The prominent findings of the research are summarized below.

Institutional Structures of Municipalities Regarding Foreign Relations

- Only 29% of municipalities have a dedicated foreign relations unit. While all metropolitan municipalities possess such a unit, this figure drops to a mere 3% for town municipalities. Among provinces, Istanbul leads with the highest proportion of municipalities having foreign relations units (64%), followed by Kocaeli (38%) and Bursa (35%).
- Approximately 85% of municipalities reported that these units were established primarily to manage project-related activities. Whereas creating a foreign relations unit at the mayor's initiative was the least commonly cited reason, 67% of municipalities still selected this option, reflecting a relatively high proportion.
- Foreign relations units typically operate with a personnel of 1 to 5 people (76%), with most employees holding degrees in Political Science and/or International Relations (22%), Engineering (21%), or Political Science and/or Public Administration (20%).
- A total of 76% of municipalities employ personnel proficient in 1 to 5 foreign languages. English dominates as the most widely spoken language (99%), followed by German (18%), Arabic (10%), and French (9%).
- Consultations with mayors or deputy mayors regarding foreign relations occur in 83% of municipalities, with 33% of municipal representatives indicating that such consultations take place more than once a month.
- The most significant factor shaping foreign relations activities was identified as the direction provided by the mayor (81%).
- The primary expectation of municipal leadership from foreign relations units is the development of projects, cited by 79% of municipalities.
- Additionally, 53% of municipalities reported communicating with municipal associations in their foreign relations activities. The rate of communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is 47%.

Opinions of Municipal Personnel on Foreign Relations

- Among municipal personnel, 58% believe that national foreign policies influence their municipality's foreign relations, while 42% see no such impact.
- The majority of participants expressed that they think local diplomacy contributes to global peace. Specifically, 24% rated this contribution as very high, and 37% as somewhat high.
- An overwhelming 93% of municipal representatives agreed that municipalities should play a more active role in foreign relations. This highlights municipalities' desire for greater international visibility.
- A total of 88% of respondents emphasized the necessity of establishing a dedicated foreign relations unit. This result underscores the pressing need for specialized structures within the context of institutionalization.
- Regarding challenges, 69% of respondents identified budget constraints as the primary obstacle to conducting foreign relations activities, while 43% highlighted a lack of qualified staff with relevant educational backgrounds.
- Additionally, 85% of municipal representatives suggested that amendments to the Municipal Law or other relevant legislation are needed to improve the effectiveness of foreign relations activities. Key needs include improvements on permanent staffing regulations as well as staffing norms and standards for graduates of international relations-related disciplines.
- Finally, 83% of municipalities stressed the importance of employing graduates of Political Science and/or International Relations in their foreign relations units. Graduates of Translation and Interpreting Studies ranked second, at 63%, among the most sought-after personnel profiles.

Memberships of Municipalities in International Networks

- Only 36% of municipalities are members of at least one international city network. All provincial municipalities are affiliated with at least one network, whereas town municipalities have no membership in international city networks. Over half (53%) of municipalities that are not members cited a lack of information about these networks as the main reason for not joining.
- Among the participating municipalities, the "Union of Turkish World Municipalities (TDBB)" emerged as the most popular international city network.
- Of the municipalities affiliated with international networks, 52% engage in collaborations primarily focused on "climate change and the environment". This theme stands out as the most significant area of cooperation across most types of municipalities.
- Additionally, 58% of municipalities participating in international networks attend at least one event organized by their respective networks annually. Attendance rates are particularly high among metropolitan municipalities. In the provinces of Kırklareli and Çanakkale, all municipalities that are members of international networks participate in at least one event per year.

- 73% of member municipalities report that they participate in general assemblies organized by international networks they are a part of. This makes general assemblies the most attended event type among municipalities.
- Key contributions provided by international networks to their member municipalities include facilitating collaborations with other cities and institutions, offering platforms for knowledge and experience sharing, and disseminating best practices. These contributions were most prominently highlighted by member municipalities in the Marmara Region. However, 12% of representatives stated that membership in these networks provided no contributions to their municipality.
- Additionally, 85% of municipalities reported that they contribute to the networks they are part of, primarily through knowledge and experience sharing. This dynamic suggests a mutually beneficial relationship between city networks and their members, rather than a one-sided, assistance-based model.

Sister City Relationships of Municipalities

- Approximately 65% of municipalities participating in the research have at least one sister city abroad. Five out of six metropolitan municipalities and three out of five provincial municipalities in the Marmara Region reported having international sister cities. Across all types of municipalities, the proportion of those with international sister cities exceeds 50%. Examined by province, Istanbul leads in this regard, with 82% of its municipalities having at least one sister city abroad.
- Regarding the first establishment steps of sister city relationships, 81% of municipalities indicated that these relationships were initiated at the discretion of the mayor or deputy mayor. Leadership-level initiatives are the most frequently cited motivation for establishing such relationships across all types of municipalities. Examined by province, mayor's initiative is also the most commonly mentioned motivation in all provinces surveyed, except for Bursa and Edirne.
- Thematically, cultural affinity emerged as the leading reason for establishing sister city relationships, cited by 73% of municipalities. Religious affinity was the least significant motivator, with only 12% citing it as a reason. Cultural affinity was also the dominant factor across all types of municipalities except provincial municipalities and in all cities except Istanbul, Edirne, and Sakarya.
- In terms of activities municipalities conduct with their sister cities, hosting sister city representatives ranked first at 91%, followed by visiting sister cities at 90%. Reciprocal visits were the most frequently mentioned activities across all types of municipalities and provinces.
- 70% of municipalities reported variations in the frequency of communication and collaboration with their different sister cities. Such differences while conducting sister city relationships were noted in at least 67% of municipalities across all types. Notably, 60% of municipalities indicated having at least one sister city with which they have no communication at all.

- Budget constraints were the most commonly mentioned challenge municipalities faced both in establishing and maintaining sister city relations. This was followed by a lack of qualified personnel and language barriers. Cultural differences were the least reported issue in both processes. Budget constraints were cited as the primary challenge in most provinces in both processes.
- Among municipalities with sister cities, 22% reported having terminated relations with at least one of their sister cities. The majority (62%) attributed this to problems stemming from national foreign policy, while 38% cited the passive nature of the relationship as the reason for termination.
- Only 33% of municipalities with sister cities reported implementing original projects in collaboration with them. The number of municipalities carrying out original projects with their sister cities remains relatively low across provinces.

Municipalities' Participation in International Projects

- 45% percent of MMU member municipalities reported having completed or ongoing projects that included foreign institutions as partners or were funded by an international organization. All metropolitan municipalities participated in international projects, while the percentage decreased for other types of municipalities. In all provinces except Bilecik, at least one municipality reported involvement in an international project.
- The majority of these projects (53%) were financially supported through European Union grant programs, excluding “Erasmus”, “Horizon Europe”, the “Black Sea Cooperation”, and the “Town Twinning Grant Program between Türkiye and the European Union”. Erasmus, at 49%, stood out as another significant funding source. These funding sources were prominent across various municipality types and provinces.
- The theme of “climate change and environment” featured in at least one project for 61% of municipalities involved in international projects. This was the most commonly addressed theme across all types of municipalities, with at least one municipality in 10 provinces working on it.
- Municipalities most frequently participated in international projects as “partners” (78%) and “lead applicants” (65%).
- In terms of partnerships, foreign municipalities other than sister cities accounted for 65% of international project collaborations among MMU member municipalities. Other prominent partners included non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, and research centers in Türkiye (55%). Metropolitan municipalities demonstrated more diversity in the types of institutions they partnered with compared to other municipality types. Partnerships with ministries in Türkiye, international NGOs, and universities/research centers in Türkiye were observed in at least one municipality across nine provinces, making these partnerships the most geographically widespread.

- 45% percent of municipalities lacked a dedicated unit responsible for international projects. Instead, international projects are mostly being coordinated by multiple departments.
- The most frequently mentioned issue in international projects was unsuccessful application outcomes.

International Cooperation Agreements of Municipalities

- Only 24% of MMU member municipalities reported engaging in collaboration through formal agreements or protocols. This form of collaboration was less preferred compared to other models, such as sister city protocols, partnerships in international projects, or memberships in international city networks. While this model was commonly used by metropolitan municipalities, collaboration through protocols/agreements was significantly less prevalent among other types of municipalities. Collaboration through agreements was observed in all provinces except Çanakkale.
- “Culture” theme emerged as the most prominent focus of collaboration through agreements of municipalities, followed by “climate change and environment”, which also stood out in partnerships with international city networks and international projects. This theme was the most commonly addressed in collaborations across all types of municipalities. Moreover, “culture” and “climate change and the environment” were themes that were addressed in collaborations in most of the provinces.
- The most frequently observed issues in implementing partnerships through agreements and protocols were their tendency to remain on paper only/remain inactive and the lack of personnel proficient in foreign languages. Larger municipalities in terms of population highlighted the tendency to remain on paper only/remain inactive of agreements as the primary challenge, while smaller district and town municipalities prioritized human resource and personnel shortages as the key issue.

Municipalities’ Participation in International Events

- 56% percent of MMU member municipalities reported participating in international events. Participation rate in international events is highest among metropolitan municipalities.
- The main barriers to participation in international events were identified as “lack of sufficient financial resources” (67%), “lack of awareness about international events” (34%), “lack of personnel available to attend” (30%), and “language barriers” (27%).
- The international events most frequently attended by municipalities included: “events organized by their sister cities” (66%), “events related to international projects” (56%), “events organized by international networks they are members of”(47%), and “events held by international organizations” (44%).
- Regarding the types of events attended, “technical tours/study visits” ranked first (69%), followed by “conferences/symposiums/seminars” (57%), and “fairs/expos/exhibitions” (55%). Additionally, 41% of municipalities participated in training sessions, 38% in workshops, and 36% in events hosted by international organizations they are members of.

- While the frequency of participation in events varies among municipalities, approximately 73% of municipalities stated they attended at least one international event annually.
- Among 105 municipalities that participated in international events, 60% visited Türkiye's overseas diplomatic missions during their trips abroad. Of these, 83% visited embassies and consulates, 38% visited the Yunus Emre Institute, and 30% visited the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA).

Municipalities' Awareness and Activities Regarding the Global Agendas

- Among the six global agendas, the Paris Agreement was the most recognized, with 63% of municipal representatives stating they were aware of it. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction had the lowest awareness rate at 19%. In metropolitan municipalities, awareness of all global agendas except the New Urban Agenda exceeded 67%. However, awareness levels varied significantly among other types of municipalities depending on the agenda. Across all provinces, the Paris Agreement emerged as one of the most well-known global agendas.
- The most frequently addressed agenda among municipalities when it comes to going into action was the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 29% of municipalities reporting activities related to it. Despite being the most recognized agenda, only 14% of municipalities engaged in activities concerning the Paris Agreement. The level of activity on global agendas varied significantly based on the agenda itself and the type of municipality. In Balıkesir, Istanbul, and Tekirdağ, at least one municipality was found to be working on all six agendas included in the research.
- Raising public awareness emerged as the most common activity undertaken by municipalities regarding global agendas, with 41% prioritizing this approach. The least emphasized activity regarding global agendas was report preparation, at 11%.
- Regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the most common activity (21%) was highlighting these frameworks within international projects. Report writing and public awareness initiatives related to the 2030 Agenda were the least undertaken activities, with only 10% of municipalities engaging in such efforts.

LOCAL DIPLOMACY ACTIVITIES OF MARMARA MUNICIPALITIES UNION

In today's world, cities are not only the epicenters of many cross-border global challenges, such as climate change, migration, and conflict, but also the front lines where these issues hit hardest. In addition to confronting these large-scale challenges, cities also tackle region-specific problems, develop projects to improve the quality of life for residents, and work to preserve biodiversity and sustain natural ecosystems. In navigating initiatives that influence both global and local landscapes, city administrations rely heavily on "local diplomacy" as a key tool.

Recognizing its potential to build sustainable communities, Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU), led by its Directorate of International Affairs, carries out activities aimed at leveraging local diplomacy to address global and local challenges, promote global peace, and strengthen the culture of coexistence. Through its efforts, MMU supports the local diplomacy initiatives of municipalities across the Marmara Region while simultaneously enhancing its own institutional local diplomacy capacities.

Through the "Local Diplomacy Platform", composed of personnel from member municipalities specializing in foreign relations, MMU's Directorate of International Affairs maintains communication with its members regarding local diplomacy. This platform encourages municipalities to use the power of local diplomacy effectively in fostering collaboration, solidarity, and dialogue with international stakeholders; building a climate of international peace and reconciliation; and addressing global challenges such as climate change and forced displacement, issues that have local implications. MMU provides municipalities with support in various areas, including: raising awareness about international projects, funding sources, events, meetings, training sessions, awards, global agendas, and international networks and organizations; facilitating communication and cooperation with relevant foreign institutions, local governments, and Türkiye's diplomatic missions abroad; promoting the sharing of international best practices and experiences; and advocating for the interests of local governments as key actors of local diplomacy.

MMU's local diplomacy activities can be categorized under seven main headings:

- Raising Awareness
- Publishing
- Capacity Building
- Strengthening International Engagements
- Monitoring and Disseminating Best Practices
- International Representation and Advocacy
- Establishing International Coordination and Support Mechanisms

Raising Awareness: MMU emphasizes the instrumental role of local diplomacy in creating more livable cities and highlights local governments as significant actors in diplomacy. It works to raise awareness among local administrations and relevant organizations about local diplomacy and introduces municipalities to various tools such as sister city initiatives, town twinning, membership in city networks, and cooperation agreements. MMU also identifies challenges faced by municipalities in managing foreign relations and offers solutions to address these difficulties. To encourage municipalities to embrace global initiatives, MMU promotes periodical events tied to urban development, including but not limited to Urban October, World Habitat Day, World Metropolitan Day, World Cities Day, and European Mobility Week. It organizes activities to engage members in these practices and shares information about significant international events, awards, and programs such as the World Urban Forum and the Guangzhou International Urban Innovation Awards, encouraging participation and taking active roles in such programs. Additionally, MMU supports municipalities' international activities by organizing informational meetings about grant programs and international awards offered by global organizations and foreign missions. It ensures access to these resources through online platforms, thus supporting local government's activities on an international scale and helping to strengthen the institutional capacities of local governments.

MMU also works to ensure that municipalities' local diplomacy efforts align with both national policies and international agreements, with a particular focus on integrating these activities with global agendas such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Furthermore, it advocates for national and international norms and global agendas to be shaped in accordance with the demands and needs of municipalities. For instance, MMU was actively involved in the preparatory stages of global compacts for migration and on refugees adopted by the United Nations and engaged in advocacy to emphasize the role of local governments in these agreements effectively.

Publishing: MMU is dedicated to the production of knowledge and data in the field of local diplomacy through its periodic and non-periodic publications. These publications aim to disseminate best practices at the local level, document the efforts of local governments, and support awareness-raising initiatives in this domain. Notable examples include the *City & Society* magazine, published three times a year, which has featured issues focused on "Sustainable Development Goals", "Local Diplomacy", and "Global Agenda, Local Action". Additionally, the SDG Article Series published in *Urban* magazine highlights municipalities' contributions to the SDGs and successful related practices.

To enhance international understanding of Türkiye's local government experiences and contribute to global literature, some of MMU's local diplomacy publications are released in English. Notable examples include the book *Local Diplomacy: Policies, practices and tools* and the annually published *Urban* magazine, which features interviews with mayors and showcases best practices from Türkiye and abroad. Furthermore, reports addressing global issues such as the role of municipalities in migration governance and the localization of

SDGs are also published in English. These publications highlight how local governments in Türkiye operate on both international and local scales, promote Türkiye's experiences abroad, disseminate international best practices, provide up-to-date information on local diplomacy, and enhance municipalities' knowledge of local diplomacy and international developments. MMU publications document local governments' efforts regarding diplomacy and contribute to broader awareness-raising campaigns in this area.

Capacity Building: MMU strengthens the capacity of its member municipalities in foreign relations through various mechanisms. Under MMU's Local Government Academy, training programs and informative events are organized to support the work of local governments and strengthen their capacities. Discussions in these training programs and informative events include topics such as: local diplomacy and protocol rules, basic principles of foreign policy, public diplomacy, international awards and grant calls, participation in international meetings, sister city relations, engagement with international city networks and organizations, project writing and management. Another key capacity-building initiative by MMU is the Mentor Program, a personnel exchange and experience-sharing program among municipalities. This peer-to-peer learning program facilitates bilateral or multilateral meetings between MMU member municipalities and their counterparts in Türkiye or abroad, focusing on areas related to local diplomacy and any other subject.

MMU also acts as a bridge in localizing global agendas. For instance, it guides municipalities in implementing global goals like the SDGs at the local level, providing training and mentoring sessions to support their capacity development. These efforts enable local governments to track and implement global agendas within their jurisdictions effectively.

Strengthening International Relations: MMU actively works to enhance its member municipalities' international relations. By organizing sister city meetings and facilitating connections between municipalities, international organizations, and city networks, MMU aims to increase collaboration on a global scale. For instance, under the theme "Bosnia-Türkiye Sister City Meetings", online sessions brought together mayors from MMU member municipalities and their counterparts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These meetings helped revive and deepen previously stagnant relationships. Additionally, MMU connects member municipalities with international counterparts through the Mentor Program, enabling knowledge exchange and experience sharing. These mentoring sessions lay the groundwork for future collaborations between municipalities.

Lastly, as part of its events, MMU also brings member municipalities together with international organizations. For example, during the Marmara Urban Forum (MARUF) held biennially, MMU organized two networking events in 2023. These events facilitated interactions between municipalities, international city networks, and funding organizations. These events have not only increased contact with international institutions, but also paved the way for municipalities to participate in international projects and access funding opportunities. Such gatherings contribute to translating global policies and goals into concrete local pro-

jects and strategies. MARUF23, with over 120 partners, approximately one-third of whom were international stakeholders, hosted numerous events to strengthen the global connections and collaborations of local governments and relevant stakeholders.

Monitoring and Disseminating Best Practices: MMU conducts research to map municipalities' current efforts in local diplomacy, identify challenges, develop policy recommendations, and determine effective local diplomacy tools. "Local Governments and Sustainable Development Goals Research" and "City Networks Dataset Research" are key examples of its monitoring activities. These research are often published as reports in both Turkish and English to ensure the widespread dissemination of knowledge nationally and internationally. The findings from these reports guide efforts in local diplomacy and contribute to the development of new strategies. Besides its own reports, MMU also provides input for national and international organizations, ensuring the inclusion of member municipalities' activities in their publications.

MMU further disseminates exemplary local practices regarding different tools of local diplomacy through its publications and various events, especially the sessions organized within the scope of MARUF. Best practices are shared and disseminated through MMU's online bulletins about local diplomacy and datasets published on platforms like data.marmara.gov.tr. Notable datasets include: "International Good Practice Platforms in Local Governance and Urbanism Dataset" and "International COVID-19 Management Resources and Best Practices Dataset".

International Representation and Advocacy: MMU is a member of various international city networks to enhance the role of local governments in global platforms. These networks include important organizations such as: European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), Energy Cities, Global Water Operators' Partnerships Alliance (GWOPA), Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI), International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD), Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS), and United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section (UCLG-MEWA). These memberships allow MMU to engage in thematic collaborations related to local governments, participate in international projects, involve municipalities in these processes, and enhance municipalities' global visibility through these networks. Additionally, these networks help MMU in establishing essential platforms for encouraging knowledge and experience sharing among local governments. Through its international affiliations, MMU represents local governments, advocates for their greater inclusion in global discussions, and raises their profiles on a global scale. For instance, MMU's work in collaboration with NALAS as one of its members, and continued interactions during MMU's presidency period in NALAS contributed significantly to international partnerships in this field. Additionally, MMU played an active role in representing local governments' interests during the preparation of the United Nation's global compacts for migration and on refugees. MMU also supported the inclusion of local governments' activities in country reports with international recognition, further exemplifying its advocacy efforts.

Establishing International Coordination and Support Mechanisms: To coordinate international collaborations and provide guidance to local governments, MMU has developed several mechanisms. These efforts include ensuring coordination at national and international levels and guiding municipalities in their initiatives. For example, MMU serves as the National Coordinator for European Week for Waste Reduction (EWWR) and European Local Democracy Week (ELDW). MMU organizes events during these weeks and advises municipalities on how they can organize their own activities. Furthermore, MMU is the sole national supporter of the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (CoM) in Türkiye. MMU encourages its members to sign the Covenant and develop and implement Sustainable Climate and Energy Action Plans (SECAPs).





**THE ROLE OF LOCAL
DIPLOMACY IN CHANGING
INTERNATIONAL POLITICS**

THE ROLE OF LOCAL DIPLOMACY IN CHANGING INTERNATIONAL POLITICS*

Birgül Demirtaş

Over the past 35 years, the field of International Relations has been undergoing significant changes. The Cold War era's structure, which was centered around state actors and based on military power, has transformed. Although states remain important actors in global politics, international organizations, multinational corporations, non-governmental organizations, the media, and social movements are increasingly asserting their influence across different regions and dimensions. As a result, academic research in the field of International Relations has accordingly begun to focus more on the roles of non-state actors. Simultaneously, elements beyond military power, such as economic and cultural power, have also become subjects of intensive study. All books written on International Relations since the 1990s consistently emphasize these emerging actors and dimensions.

Yet, despite the growing involvement of local governments in international relations activities and their efforts to play global roles in all regions from east to west, north to south; cities remain largely overlooked by mainstream International Relations literature. Many major works that serve as primary references in the field fail to adequately address the influence of this increasingly prominent actor. Nonetheless, despite this underrepresentation in the literature, cities are engaging more actively with the world every day. By building connections globally, cities aim to improve their infrastructure and economic opportunities, collaborate on solutions to global issues such as climate change, refugee flows, and pandemics, assert themselves as actors on the international stage, and work to construct their own international image at the same time.

Moreover, our world is increasingly becoming a world of cities. According to the United Nations (UN) statistics, 57% of the global population currently lives in urban areas.¹ The number of people living in cities is expected to continue rising, reaching 68% by 2050.² This means that by the middle of this century, two-thirds of the global population will be urban dwellers. On top of this, cities generate 80% of the world's gross domestic product (GDP).³ With their growing demographic and economic power, cities are playing an increasingly significant role in shaping global agendas and influencing policy decisions. Despite this,

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¹ See United Nations Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: 2018 Revision*, World Bank Group, "Urban Population (% of Total Population)", accessed October 17, 2024, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS>.

² "68% of the World Population Projected to Live in Urban Areas by 2050, Says UN", United Nations, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html>.

³ "Inclusive Cities", World Bank Group, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/inclusive-cities#:~:text=Cities%20currently%20account%20for%20approximately,cities%20can%20derail%20development%20progress>.

the textbooks that are widely taught around the world and are highly influential in the field still fail to thoroughly address the emergence of local entities as international actors. However, particularly since the second half of the 1980s, there has been a gradual increase in studies focusing on the foreign relations activities of local entities in fields such as sociology, urban studies, international relations, and interdisciplinary studies.⁴ This shift has been driven by globalization and regionalization waves, alongside democratization dynamics and subnational units developing new global political and economic visions for themselves. As a result, although slow, this topic has started to gain attention in academic literature.

In Türkiye, local diplomacy has been on the rise, especially since the 2000s. An increasing number of municipalities have established departments dedicated to foreign relations, with a growing number of applications for international projects, particularly those tied to the European Union (EU) and membership in international organizations also on the rise. This rise in local diplomacy is also reflected in academic studies in Türkiye. Most notably, organizations and scholars focusing on Local Governance and International Relations have been conducting more research and publishing more works on this topic.⁵ However, significant gaps still remain in the literature on this subject.

Between December 2022 and January 2024, Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) made a significant contribution to the literature by conducting a comprehensive survey on local diplomacy among its member municipalities. The study, aimed to map the anatomy of municipalities' local diplomacy efforts comprehensively, was based on surveys conducted with 213 experts across 187 municipalities. The objectives of the study included understanding which departments and experts formulate municipalities' foreign relations, identifying their priorities in engaging with the global sphere, analyzing the topics of their international projects, and assessing how closely they follow the global agenda. This research by the MMU stands as the most comprehensive field study conducted in Türkiye to date. By offering an in-depth analysis of local diplomacy activities among municipalities in the Marmara Region, it will inspire numerous future studies in this area.

This article, which contributes to the study by drawing on international literature and practices, will analyze various dimensions of local diplomacy. It will examine the history of global relations of the local, explore the objectives and different aspects of local diplomacy, and delve into the transformations and challenges cities have faced in global relations in the 21st century.

⁴ John Friedmann, "The World City Hypothesis", *Development and Change* 17 (1986): 69-83; Chadwick F. Alger, "The World Relations of Cities: Closing the Gap between Social Science Paradigms and Everyday Human Experience", *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1990): 493-518; edited by Paul L. Knox and Peter J. Taylor. *World Cities in a World-System*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

⁵ To access the book published by Marmara Municipalities Union that discusses topics such as the place of local diplomacy within the discipline of international relations, cities' diplomatic activities, tools of local diplomacy, the role of cities in the global agenda and peacebuilding, the relationship between national foreign policy and local governments' diplomatic activities, international city networks, local governments' relations with international organizations, city twinning and sister city relationships, the significance of international projects and collaborations, and cities' efforts within the framework of international days, weeks, and awards, see *Local Diplomacy: Policies, Practices and Tools*, edited by M. Cemil Arslan and Burcuhan Şener, İstanbul: Marmara Municipalities Union Publications (2023), accessed November 29, 2024, <https://mbbkulturvayinlari.com/local-diplomacy-policies-practices-and-tools>

Understanding Local-Global Relations: A Conceptual Analysis

One of the defining features of the wave of globalization that re-emerged following the fall of the Berlin Wall has been the diminishing monopoly of states in international relations. World politics would no longer be driven solely by states and military concerns; entirely new actors and diverse issues would now shape the world politics. Although nation-states remained significant actors, they had to share their roles in global politics with others.⁶ While the International Relations literature in the post-Cold War era has focused primarily on conceptualizing “new actors”, particularly non-state actors, cities have also been influenced by globalization and have started to assert themselves more prominently in world politics as subnational actors. Not only the number of sister city agreements and international organizations established by or representing cities has risen, but also local governments have, at times, made their voices heard independently of central governments’ foreign policies. This chapter will discuss how we can conceptualize the growing presence of the local on the global stage.

James Rosenau, a pioneer of the International Relations discipline, highlighted in his article on 21st-century global politics that states are gradually losing their decisive roles and that global governance is increasingly shared among a diverse range of actors.⁷ Two key trends have played a particularly significant role in this shift: The first is transnational governance, which can be exemplified by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate across national borders. The second is subnational governance, which involves cities and regions becoming increasingly active in international relations. Local governments, especially when their perspectives differ from those of central authorities, are able to make their voices heard. According to Rosenau, it is evident that “cities and microregions are likely to be major control mechanisms in the world politics of the 21st-century”.⁸

Thus, by the 1990s, the leading scholars of the discipline had begun to analyze the “invisible gorilla”⁹ of global politics—namely, the local sphere. Here, an essential issue is the interaction between the local and the national, and global levels of analysis. Up to the present, various concepts have been used in the literature to understand how local governments engage with the world. The most frequently employed terms include local diplomacy, paradiplomacy, subnational foreign policy, local foreign policy, municipal foreign policy, city diplomacy, and micro-regionalism.

⁶ Peter Willetts, “Transnational Actors and International Organizations”, *The Globalization of World Politics*, edited by John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens, 6th ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, 320-336.

⁷ James N. Rosenau, “Governance in the Twenty-First Century”, *Global Governance* 1 (1995): 13-43.

⁸ Rosenau, *ibid.*, 27.

⁹ Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons, *The Invisible Gorilla: How Our Intuitions Deceive Us*, New York: Crown, 2010; Michele Acuto, *Global Cities, Governance and Diplomacy: The Urban Link*, Londra: Routledge, 2013, 1.

The concept of paradiplomacy is derived from the term “parallel diplomacy”. Paradiplomacy operates on the assumption that local governments run parallel to the central authority’s international relations, following the foreign policy of the central government through their own methods.¹⁰ To illustrate with an analogy, the international relations of the central government and the local governments are like two vehicles traveling on parallel roads. Both are headed toward the same destination. Local governments do not independently determine their foreign relations; instead, they shape their policies in alignment with the foreign policy set by the central government.

However, case studies examined in scientific research reveal that the foreign policies of cities and regions do not always align with those of central governments. In some instances, local policies complement central policies by filling in their gaps, while in others, they directly challenge them. For example, although the Canadian government does not officially recognize Palestine, local governments have supported Palestinian municipalities through cooperation, demonstrating a complementary role to central foreign policy.¹¹ Conversely, instances such as U.S. states opposing the Vietnam War or the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and Catalonia pursuing its own foreign relations in areas of disagreement with the Spanish government, illustrate challenges to central policies.¹² Similarly, in some countries, local governments have developed independent policies that oppose their central governments’ environmental or refugee policies. For instance, after the United States withdrew from negotiations for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration, cities like New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles declared their commitment to fulfilling the Compact’s obligations. This independent initiative by cities on such a critical issue stands out as noteworthy.¹³ Moreover, cities across different countries have adopted moderate policies toward migrants, stating that they will not fully cooperate with their central governments on migration issues. These cities are known as sanctuary cities. Examples such as San Francisco in the U.S., Sheffield in the U.K., and Palermo in Italy are among the various sanctuary cities. Similarly, when Donald Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement in 2017, 350 American mayors and local leaders opposed the decision, pledging that they would adhere to the Agreement’s commitments at the local level.¹⁴

¹⁰ Iñaki Aguirre, “Making Sense of Paradiplomacy? An Intertextual Enquiry About a Concept in Search of a Definition”, *Paradiplomacy in Action: The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments*, edited by Francisco Aldecoa and Michael Keating, Londra: Frank Cass, 1999, 185-209.

¹¹ Rogier van der Pluijm and Jan Melissen, *City Diplomacy: The Expanding Role of Cities in International Politics*, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Clingendael, 2007, p. 22.

¹² Tanja A. Börzel, “Restructuring or Reinforcing the ‘State’: The German Länder as Transnational Actors in Europe”, *Non-State Actors in International Relations: The Case of Germany*, edited by Anne-Marie Le Gloannec, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007, 125.

¹³ Janina Stürner-Siovit, *Curtain Up. Diplomacy in Global Migration Governance*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2022, p. 2.

¹⁴ Antonios M. Karvounis, *City Diplomacy: An Introduction*, New York, Routledge, 2024, p. 1.

Alternatively, the concept of subnational foreign policy encompasses the external relations of all local units under the central government. Depending on the constitutions and administrative structures of countries, these may include regions, states, cities, and even towns.¹⁵ Similarly, the term local foreign policy addresses the global connections of all units subordinate to the central government. Meanwhile, municipal foreign policy specifically refers to the interactions of local governments, particularly at the municipal level, with the outside world.¹⁶ The term city diplomacy denotes the relationships cities establish and the policies they implement to represent themselves globally and achieve their interests.¹⁷

In fact, city diplomacy has a long history. Before the Westphalian era, world history was predominantly the history of cities for centuries. The contributions of Ancient Greek cities to global history, as well as their theoretical and empirical influences on the fields of political science and international relations, should also be remembered in this context. Similarly, it is impossible to discuss the history of diplomacy without acknowledging the Italian city-states' initiation of permanent embassies to one another in the 14th century. Likewise, the period of Anatolian principalities provides examples of local diplomacy. In this context, the Hanseatic League, which is considered to be one of the first international organizations and existed for 500 years, was established in the 13th century to develop trade between the cities of Northern European countries.

This section also examines two other key terms: “world city” and “global city”. The “world city hypothesis” developed by Friedmann is a study inspired by Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory and adapted to cities.¹⁸ According to this approach, the social forces emerging during the development process of capitalism directly influence the evolution of cities. The network of relationships generated by the capitalist production system designates certain cities as its centers. These cities, serving as headquarters for multinational corporations and centers of production and finance, stand out with their demographic size and central roles in transportation. A key point here is that the primary factors influencing these developmental processes in cities are not internal elements but external dynamics centered around capitalism. Similar to Wallerstein’s core-periphery distinction, Friedmann categorizes cities into primary and secondary cities based on the roles they play in the global capitalist system.¹⁹ In other words, just as countries are hierarchically ranked according to their positions in the global economic system, cities are also similarly hierarchically ranked among themselves. According to this approach, for instance, London, Frankfurt, New York, Tokyo, and São Paulo are examples of primary cities, whereas Brussels, Milan, Houston, Sydney, Buenos Aires, and Manila can be considered secondary cities.²⁰

¹⁵ For a comprehensive analysis of the concept of subnational foreign policy, see Samuel Lucas Mcmillan, “Subnational Foreign Policy Actors: How and Why Governors Participate in US Foreign Policy”, *Foreign Policy Analysis*, Vol. 4, No 3, 2008, p. 232-237.

¹⁶ For detailed information on the explanations of the concepts, see Murat Daoudov, *Yerel Dış Politikanın Temelleri* (Foundations of Local Foreign Policy), Istanbul, Marmara Municipalities Union, 2013, p. 27-28.

¹⁷ Van der Pluijm and Melissen, *ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸ John Friedmann, “The World City Hypothesis”, *Development and Change* 17 (1986): 69-83; John Friedmann, “Where We Stand: A Decade of World City Research”, *World Cities in a World-System*, edited by Paul L. Knox and Peter J. Taylor, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 20-47.

¹⁹ Friedmann, *ibid.*, 72.

²⁰ Friedmann, *ibid.*, 72.

On the other hand, Sassen's book, *The Global City*, which focuses on New York, London, and Tokyo, argues that despite having different historical foundations and hosting diverse cultures, major cities experience similar transformative processes under the influence of globalization.²¹ Emphasizing that as economic globalization intensifies, the core functions of the economy begin to concentrate in a few centers, the article also underscores how this process leads to significant transformations in the social structures of these cities.

Both Friedmann and Sassen emphasize the likelihood for polarization between high-income groups and the poor within urban areas. While approaching the issue from different perspectives, both scholars have significantly contributed to the literature by highlighting the transformative role of the global economic system not only at the level of nation-states but also at the city level. However, studies on "world cities" and "global cities" have not escaped criticism for exaggerating the global system's influence on the local while neglecting the role of cities' internal dynamics.²²

As explained earlier, until the emergence of the Westphalian system, cities and regions were historically the defining elements of the global system. Considering that the principalities in German and Italian territories remained influential until their late unifications in the second half of the 19th century, it becomes evident that subnational units dominated until relatively modern times. Therefore, it might be more accurate to describe the process we have experienced since the late 20th century not as the emergence of city diplomacy in global politics but as the rebirth of local governance. In other words, city-local have been "reborn", or perhaps more fittingly, reconstructed. With the re-emergence of decentralization dynamics in global politics, local actors now find it easier to voice their perspectives, demands, and interests. While local governments in federal and confederal systems, where they enjoy greater legal rights, are more prominent on the global stage, it has been observed that also in countries like Türkiye, with a unitary structure and where the external powers of local administrations are legally tied to the central government, local governments are increasingly adopting a more proactive stance in foreign relations.

Following the discussion of key concepts related to local diplomacy, the next section will delve into the details of the fundamental dynamics, processes, and goals of local diplomacy.

²¹ Saskia Sassen, *The Global City, New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1991.

²² Şerife Geniş, "Globalization of Cities: Towards Conceptualizing A New Politics of Place-Making in a Transnational Era", *University of Gaziantep Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 6, No 1, 2007, p. 59-77.

Local-Global Interaction in the World: Goals, Tools, Processes

Alex Oliver, in his article published in *Foreign Affairs*, questions how much we still need embassies in a world increasingly interconnected through new technologies, where security threats have undergone significant transformations, and economic resources are dwindling.²³ The article highlights that over half of OECD member states have reduced their diplomatic missions in the past decade, citing Britain as a concrete example, which shut down 30 diplomatic missions between 2009 and 2015. This raises an important question: how will local governments' growing international perspective and the professionalization of their foreign relations impact traditional foreign policy institutions? This section will examine examples that may help answer this question by exploring the process of the local becoming universal.

Local governments only began intensifying their international engagements in the early 20th century, after nation-states started dominating global politics. Initially, local actors' efforts to assert themselves internationally stemmed from two primary motives: the economic needs created by globalization and preventing future wars. Yet these efforts were severely disrupted by the two world wars, and the following Cold War further hindered their global reach by confining their foreign relations largely to neighboring countries with shared political, economic, or ideological leanings, delaying their presence reaching international levels.

First, it is essential to highlight the structural factors that define how non-central state actors²⁴ establish relations with the world. The administrative structure and legal framework of each country are the primary determinants of the scope within which municipalities can operate in foreign relations.²⁵ While federal and confederal systems grant cities and regions greater autonomy to engage internationally, unitary systems, by contrast, require local governments to seek approval of the central government for most of their foreign affairs activities as in many other areas. Thus, the legal and administrative framework becomes the decisive factor in setting the boundaries of local actors' global reach.

In this regard, center-periphery dynamics in foreign policy can be categorized into three main approaches.²⁶ The first is systems dominated by liberal regimes. These systems allow local governments to act independently in shaping their foreign relations. The second approach is regulatory liberal regimes. Here, while

²³ Alex Oliver, "The Irrelevant Diplomat. Do We Need Embassies Any More?", *Foreign Affairs*, March 14, 2016, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/world/2016-03-14/irrelevant-diplomat>.

²⁴ The concept of "non-central state actor" encompasses all actors other than the central state, including public actors such as local units.

²⁵ One of the key factors in shaping the legal framework of central-local relations in a country is political culture. For insights into the influence of political culture on local engagement in international relations, see Rogier van der Pluijm and Jan Melissen, *City Diplomacy: The Expanding Role of Cities in International Politics*, Clingendael, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Nisan 2007, p.16, accessed October 17, 2024, https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/20070400_cdsp_paper_pluijm.pdf.

²⁶ For legal procedures regarding the establishment of sister city relationships in Türkiye, see the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye website, accessed October 17, 2024, https://www.tbb.gov.tr/tr/cerik_yasal-prosedur_101.

the central government imposes certain regulations, local actors still retain significant freedom of maneuver. The third approach is restrictive regimes. Under this approach, the central government significantly limits local actors' capacity to engage on the global stage. Türkiye falls into the third category, as its legal procedures require local governments to inform the central government of all foreign relations activities and seek its approval.²⁷

The second fundamental factor shaping the foreign relations of local actors is history. A city's or region's historical background, including its past roles in national or world history, as well as the wars fought or peace treaties signed, serves as a significant influence on its approach to external relations. For instance, the historical legacy of cities like Bursa and Edirne, both of which served as capitals in the past, continues to shape their perspectives on international relations in various ways. According to Recep Altepe, the former Mayor of Bursa, the city is a "capital of history" and will also be the "capital of the Turkish World".²⁸ Similarly, Recep Cürkan, the former Mayor of Edirne, states that "Edirne is a historic capital, an imperial capital", emphasizing "There are many capitals in the world, but imperial capitals are rare".²⁹ Another noteworthy example is the sister city relationship established between Çanakkale and Wellington, the capital of New Zealand, where the legacy of shared wartime history has been transformed into a commitment to lasting peace.³⁰

The third factor is geography. A city's geographical location, whether it is situated in a border region or its proximity to other nations, plays a significant role in shaping its foreign relations. Border cities, both in Türkiye and worldwide, tend to engage in more intensive collaboration with the other border cities of neighboring countries. Even if they are not directly located in border regions, cities' geographical closeness to specific countries also influences their foreign diplomatic relations. For instance, while Bursa's Nilüfer Municipality has established a sister city relationship with El Cerro Municipality in Cuba, its collaborations with Balkan cities, which are geographically closer, are much stronger. The geographical distance and higher cost of direct cooperation with Cuba, contrasted with the proximity and ease of access to the Balkans, contribute to this difference.³¹

²⁷ Murat Daoudov, *Yerel Dış Politikanın Temelleri (Foundations of Local Foreign Policy)*, İstanbul: Marmara Belediyeler Birliği, 2013, p. 111-114.

²⁸ "Başkan Altepe: 'Bursa Türk Dünyasının da Başkenti Olacak'" (Mayor Altepe: 'Bursa Will Be the Capital of the Turkic World As Well'), Bursa Metropolitan Municipality website, July 23, 2016, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.bursa.bel.tr/haber/baskan-altepe---bursa--turk-dunyasi-nin-da-baskenti-olacak-22240#:~:text=BURSA%20%E2%80%93%20B%C3%BCy%C3%BCk%C5%9Fehir%20Belediye%20Ba%C5%9Fkan%C4%B1%20Recep,n%C4%B1n%20da%20ba%C5%9Fkenti%20olaca%C4%9F%C4%B1n%C4%B1%20s%C3%B6yledi>

²⁹ "Tarihi Kentler Birliği Edirne'de Toplandı" (Union of Historical Cities Convened in Edirne). Edirne Municipality website, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.edirne.bel.tr/tarihikentler-birligi-edirne-de-toplandi/9991/>

³⁰ "Kardeş Kentimiz Wellington" (Our Sister City Wellington), Çanakkale Municipality website, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.canakkale.bel.tr/sayfa/1364-wellington-yeni-zelanda/4024-kardes-kentimiz-wellington>. Additionally, through the "sonic wells" project carried out among Çanakkale, Wellington, and Sydney, residents of the three cities were able to communicate audibly via the wells: Vedat Yücebaşı, "Yeni Zelanda ve Avustralya'ya 'kuyudan' seslenecekler" (They Will Call Out to Australia and New Zealand via the Well), Anadolu Agency, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/yeni-zelanda-ve-avustralyaya-kuyudan-seslenecekler/559441>.

³¹ Interview with officials from the Bursa Nilüfer Municipality's foreign relations unit, January 27, 2016.

The fourth factor is a city's demographic structure. The historical or present-day relationships between a city's population and other countries impact its potential for citizen diplomacy as well as the local administration's focus areas for international relations. For instance, if a city has a significant immigrant population, its international relations tend to concentrate on the countries where its people have historically emigrated. The fact that the relatives of emigrants often still live in these countries fosters humanitarian, economic, and cultural ties, influencing the direction of external relations. Bursa, with its large population of Balkan descent, prioritizes relations with cities in the Balkans, providing a prime example of this dynamic.

Another factor is the central government's understanding of global politics. Looking at examples across the globe, it becomes evident that where central or federal governments maintain multifaceted relationships with diverse regions, non-central administrative units also tend to engage actively with the global sphere, so long as legal frameworks permit.

As the sixth factor, the local financial capacity impacts the scale and direction of international relations.³² If a city or region has substantial financial means, it can allocate considerable resources to international activities. At this point, it is also worth noting the potential contributions of local business representatives to these efforts. Owners of capital may provide financial support for municipal initiatives, for reasons ranging from promoting their companies, engaging in corporate social responsibility, or, if they belong to an immigrant family, contributing to the development of their ancestral lands. Thus, local financial resources should be understood not only in terms of the municipal budget but also in relation to the region's economic activity and the contributions of its business sector to external relationships.

The seventh factor is the personal interest of the mayor or the governor/local administrator leading the relevant local unit in international relations. Just as leadership is critical in shaping central government foreign policy, it plays an equally significant role at the local level. A mayor's ability to speak foreign languages, overseas experience, prior education or expertise in international relations, and overall interest in foreign policy directly shape the international vision of a city.³³

After examining structural factors, another crucial consideration is how local entities perceive their "interests". What goals do local governments pursue when engaging with the world? In other words, for what reasons do they seek to establish connections with global actors? What benefits do they anticipate these international connections bringing to their city or region? How do they define their interests when engaging on a global stage? Based on these questions, the primary goals of local diplomacy can be categorized

³² Van der Pluijm and Melissen, *ibid.*, 16.

³³ For instance, in an interview conducted at a foreign relations unit of a municipality in the Marmara Region, a unit manager highlighted the impact of the mayor being a graduate of a foreign college and fluent in two foreign languages. In another municipality, it was emphasized that the mayor's previous experience as a member of parliament and service on the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye's Foreign Relations Commission significantly influenced the city's foreign relations (interviews conducted in municipalities in the Marmara Region on 26 and 27 January 2016).

under the following: economic goals, cultural goals, peacebuilding goals, humanitarian goals, contribution to the resolution of global issues, representation, and branding.

In today's globalizing world, cities, much like nation-states, are engaged in economic competition with one another. They aim to attract capital and create new employment opportunities for their residents. In this context, city diplomacy activities with an economic focus can be divided into two main categories. The first involves efforts to *pull* investments into the city from around the world, as previously mentioned. To achieve this, it is essential to improve infrastructure, investor-friendly conditions, develop services suitable for skilled individuals to settle in the city, and promote the city on international platforms.

Similarly, efforts to attract tourists can also be considered within this category,³⁴ as do endeavors to host events like the Olympic Games, major sports competitions, international summits, or conferences. For instance, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu has expressed his dedication to bringing the 2036 Olympic Games to Istanbul: "We will make significant investments to prepare Istanbul for the 2036 Olympics... We will be the ones bringing the Olympic Games to Istanbul. It is what the city has been longing for".³⁵ Furthermore, during the signing ceremony of the memorandum of understanding for the 2027 European Games to be held in Istanbul, İmamoğlu highlighted his ambition to invite international sports events to the city to build a global image for Istanbul: "Istanbul is not only ready for the Olympics and Paralympic Games but also for all major events you plan to organize in the future. Let's create many inspiring stories together, let's succeed together... When you come to visit Istanbul, you won't just watch sports; you'll have the chance to experience the best days of your life in the world's most exciting city. Let's meet in 2027 in Istanbul, a place where Europe's and the world's most vibrant cultures blend together. You're invited to Istanbul, which welcomes nearly 20 million visitors annually for unforgettable experiences".³⁶

Another type of economic activity involves encouraging the local business community to expand or *push* internationally. Cities may undertake this initiative independently or with the encouragement and guidance of central governments. If there are businesspeople within the city who wish to invest abroad, various forms of support can be provided. For instance, former Bursa Metropolitan Mayor Recep Altepe emphasized the logistical importance of Bursa for businesspeople planning to invest in the Balkans.³⁷ Research conducted in Europe also shows that cities that have signed sister city agreements experience a 50% increase in visitor numbers, cultural activities, and economic collaboration.³⁸

³⁴ Van der Pluijm and Melissen, *ibid.*, 25-27.

³⁵ "Olimpik Kent İstanbul İçin Tam Yol İleril!" (Full Speed Ahead for Olympic City Istanbul!), Ekrem İmamoğlu official website, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.ekremimamoglu.com/blog/olimpik-kent-istanbul-icin-tam-yol-ileril/>

³⁶ "2027 Avrupa Oyunları mutabakat zaptı Roma'da imzalandı" (The Memorandum of Understanding for the 2027 European Games Signed in Rome), Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Youth and Sports Directorate website, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://genclikspor.ibb.istanbul/2027-avrupa-oyunlari-mutabakat-zapti-romada-imzalandi/>

³⁷ "Balkan projeleri Bursa'ya bağlı" (Balkan Projects Depends on Bursa), Bursa Metropolitan Municipality website, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.bursa.bel.tr/haber/balkan-projeleri-bursaya-bagli-17838>

³⁸ Antonios M. Karvounis, *City Diplomacy: An Introduction*, New York, Routledge, 2024, p. 53.

The second type of activity centers on international relations that are culturally driven. Every city has the opportunity to present its unique cultural traditions to different parts of the world utilizing the tools provided by globalization. Sister city relationships or other collaboration initiatives play a key role in cultural promotion. Examples of cultural exchanges include Ramadan activities, national showcase nights and exhibitions organized both domestically and abroad by Turkish municipalities in collaboration with other countries. Historical nostalgia is another important aspect of local cultural diplomacy. Regions with significant migrant populations often maintain strong ties with the cities that their residents consider former homelands, where many still have relatives. For instance, Edirne and Bursa, which host large communities with Balkan roots, naturally prioritize this region in their international relationships. Municipalities in Türkiye appear to place a strong emphasis on cultural diplomacy.³⁹ It is hardly coincidental that the most prioritized regions are the former Ottoman territories.

At times, cultural diplomacy also plays a significant role in global examples. For instance, one of the key factors considered by the city of Amsterdam when selecting partner cities worldwide is the origins of its foreign-born population. These countries are prioritized in international collaboration projects.⁴⁰ Thus, cultural relations emphasize not only the importance of learning about other cultures but also promoting one's own culture, reviving or rebuilding historical ties. Additionally, it is interesting to note that in Türkiye, cities that have served as capitals at some point in history often see their local leaders keep this historical image alive in public consciousness and emphasize this historical legacy when building relationships internationally.⁴¹

Another important area of interest for cities is their ability to contribute to global peace. Cities' potential to promote peace, whether before, during, or after conflicts, is a key topic in Peace Studies literature. Galtung identifies three main motivations driving cities toward peacebuilding efforts.⁴² First, cities do not have armies and weapons. This is one of the most critical distinctions between cities and nation-states. The saying, "To a man with a hammer, everything looks like a nail", reflects how the possession of weapons can shape nation-states' tendencies in foreign policy. According to this view, cities, which lack weapons and armies, have a greater impetus to look at the world through a lens of peace. The second source of motivation is that the local is considered "less pathological" than the national.⁴³ While myths and traumas propagated by nation-states often lead societies to prioritize security, local entities, at least in most cases, remain less influenced by such narratives, enhancing their potential as actors of peace. The third motivation stems from the necessity of peace for the local to continue its existence. Wars disproportionately affect cities. In other

³⁹ This conclusion is based on findings from field research conducted in 2016, which included eight cities and interviews with 38 foreign relations unit employees. For comprehensive information, see *Diş İlişkilerinin Analizi: Merkez-Çevre Etkileşimini Yeniden Düşünmek* (Analysis of the Foreign Relations: Rethinking Center-Periphery Interaction), *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Vol. 13, No. 52, 2016, p. 151-173.

⁴⁰ International Cooperation of the City of Amsterdam since 2002, Amsterdam, International Relations Office, PowerPoint presentation.

⁴¹ See Demirtaş, *ibid.*, 151-173.

⁴² Johan Galtung, "Cities as Peace Factors/Actors/Workers", 22 October 2003, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.transcend.org/files/article111.html>.

⁴³ Galtung, *ibid.*

words, people at the local level are the most affected by wars and structural violence. In the case of a war, while national leaders can seek shelter in secure bunkers to protect themselves, the primary victims are individuals at the local level. As Galtung asserts, “The real struggle for peace, including peace with nature (environment) and against structural violence (maldevelopment) also has to be concrete, meaning local”.⁴⁴ Moreover, the tendency of nation-states to exaggerate their power in global politics, contrasted with local governments’ absence of such attitude, essentially their lack of a “superiority complex”, further underscores the peacebuilding potential of cities.⁴⁵

World history provides many examples of cities playing active roles in peacebuilding. One of the most prominent efforts is the international organization Mayors for Peace.⁴⁶ Founded in 1982 under the leadership of Takeshi Araki, the Mayor of Hiroshima, the main goal of the organization is to advocate for the abolition of nuclear weapons. However, it also engages in fighting global poverty, defending human rights, supporting refugees, and preserving world peace. As of July 2024, Mayors for Peace has 8,403 member cities from 166 countries and holds consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. From Türkiye, 29 local entities have joined this organization.⁴⁷

Local governments can contribute to peace by prioritizing local diplomacy before, during, or after conflicts. In situations when tensions are rising, local governments can take the lead through dialogue and mediation or protest the use of hard power by national governments. An example of this is the anti-war resolutions passed in some U.S. states in response to the 2003 U.S. intervention in Iraq. A good example in this regard is the US-based “Cities for Peace Initiative” which comprises 70 cities. Another example is the support of German cities in the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). A total of 137 German cities and municipalities signed the campaign advocating for a ban on nuclear weapons and called on the German federal government to sign the United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.⁴⁸ Furthermore, cities can also play a role in re-establishing dialogue between conflicting parties during post-conflict periods.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Galtung, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Galtung expresses this situation as follows: “Cities usually do not claim to be ‘über Alles’ in der Welt”, Galtung, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Mayors for Peace, accessed October 17, 2024, <http://www.mayorsforpeace.org/en/>.

⁴⁷ For the list of member municipalities from Türkiye, See “Asia”, Mayor for Peace, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.mayorsforpeace.org/en/members/list-members/asia/>.

⁴⁸ “Deutsche Städte fordern das Verbot von Atomwaffen”, *Frei Raum*, Vol. 14, No 4, 2019, p. 1; “ICAN-Städteappell und Bundesländerbeschlüsse”, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.icanw.de/ican-projekte/ican-staedteappell/>.

⁴⁹ Van der Pluijm and Melissen, *ibid.*

Another example is the collaboration between Turkish and Greek cities. In 2012, the mayors of various cities in Türkiye and Greece organized a meeting in İzmir titled “Developing Local Initiatives for Lasting Peace in the Aegean” (“Ege’de Kalıcı Barış İçin Yerel İnisiyatif Geliştirme Toplantısı” in Turkish). This meeting emphasized the importance of local initiatives in building peace. The officials who organized the event proposed that Turkish tourists wishing to visit Greek islands on day trips should be exempt from visa requirements. It is noteworthy that this proposal was implemented four years later.⁵⁰ The initiative taken by Turkish and Greek mayors is significant in demonstrating how central governments and local authorities can collaborate to foster peacebuilding. This shows that local diplomacy allows cities to unite, whether in countries with federal or centralized systems, and develop initiatives to address issues between nation-states.

In addition to supporting peace through central government cooperation or their own initiatives as mentioned, local governments can, in some cases, take a stand to advocate for peace, even if it means opposing their national governments. Various examples of such initiatives can be found worldwide. For instance, Ken Livingstone, the Labour Party mayor of London from 1981 to 1986, declared the city a nuclear-free zone, openly opposing the politics of the conservative government led by Margaret Thatcher.⁵¹ Similarly, during the Cold War, 4,222 local governments from 23 countries declared themselves nuclear-free zones to emphasize their opposition to nuclear weapons.⁵²

Sister city relationships formed during the Cold War era also played a role in promoting peace. The first sister city relationship was established in 1952 between cities in France and the United Kingdom in the aftermath of World War II. The sister city relationships between French and German cities also reinforced the rapprochement initiated at a higher level between Paris and Bonn.⁵³ Furthermore, the bipolar era did not only foster collaboration between cities in the same bloc; sister city relationships were also developed between cities belonging to the Eastern and Western Blocs.⁵⁴ This cooperation on the local level allowed subnational interactions to persist despite tensions at the central level. For instance, a conference organized by the Florence Municipality in 1955 on the contribution of cities to peace was attended not only by Western Bloc countries but also by representatives from socialist regimes like the Soviet Union and China.⁵⁵ Examining the extent to which these local-level engagements influenced the end of the bipolar system remains an important subject for further study.

⁵⁰ “Komşuda Vize Kolaylığı” (Visa Facilitation at the Neighbor), DHA, accessed October 15, 2016, http://www.dha.com.tr/komsuda-vize-kolayligi_317423.html.

⁵¹ Michele Acuto, *Global Cities, Governance and Diplomacy, The Urban Link*, London, Routledge, 2013, p. 76-77; Haroon Siddique, “Profile: Ken Livingstone”, *The Guardian*, 27 September 2007, accessed October 17, 2024, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2007/sep/27/london.london1>.

⁵² Chadwick F. Alger, “The World Relations of Cities: Closing the Gap between Social Science Paradigms and Everyday Human Experience”, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No 4, 1990, p. 511.

⁵³ Arnau Gutiérrez-Camps, “Local Efforts and Global Impacts: A City-Diplomacy Initiative on Decentralisation”, *Perspectives* 21, no. 2 (2013): 51. For a comprehensive study on this subject, see Thomas Grunert, *Langzeitwirkungen von Städte-Partnerschaften. Ein Beitrag zu europäischen Integration* (Strassburg: N.P. Engel Verlag, 1981).

⁵⁴ Sultan Gündüz and Sinan Özden, *Belediyeler İçin Uluslararası İşbirlikleri ve Kardeş Şehir Rehberi, Türkiye ve İspanya’daki Belediyeler Arasında İşbirliğinin Geliştirilmesi Projesi* (International Cooperation and Sister City Guide for Municipalities: Project for Developing Cooperation Between Municipalities in Turkey and Spain), 2011, p. 12.

⁵⁵ “The International Municipal Movement”, accessed October 17, 2024, https://issuu.com/uculgclu/docs/the_int_municipal_movement_complete.

The contributions of cities to post-war reconstruction efforts are also noteworthy. For instance, the Dutch municipality of Rheden played a crucial role in uniting Bosniak and Croat administrations in Fojnica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, following the war.⁵⁶ Likewise, the establishment of the Local Governments Association in Rwanda after the genocide was facilitated by the Association of Dutch Municipalities and the International Cooperation Agency. The transfer of this model to Rwanda was rooted in the belief that democracy could only be achieved in Rwanda through decentralization.⁵⁷

Another aspect of local diplomacy involves local governments forming complementary relationships with countries that the central government does not officially recognize or has strained relations with. In doing so, local governments can partially address the gaps created by the central government's inability or unwillingness to establish relations.⁵⁸ One example of this is the enduring partnership between the Turkish and Greek municipalities of Nicosia, which began in 1978. Started in 1978 with the aim of creating a joint sewage system, this cooperation expanded with the signing of a joint master plan in 1979. Despite the ups and downs of Cyprus negotiations, the two municipalities later worked together to construct the Haspolat Wastewater Treatment Plant with the support of the EU.⁵⁹ This demonstrates that even in post-conflict settings, where central governments do not recognize one another or face tensions, local governments may occasionally feel compelled to cooperate driven by "shared interests".

Moreover, municipalities may take a stand on democratic issues in other countries. For instance, Vedat Dalokay, a former mayor of Ankara, protested human rights violations in Spain in September 1975 by cutting off the water, electricity, and gas supply to the Spanish Embassy for seven days and refusing to collect its trash. Dalokay declared that the people of Ankara stood in solidarity with the Spanish people in their struggle for freedom.⁶⁰

Another aspect of municipal foreign policy is humanitarian aid. In the aftermath of natural disasters like earthquakes or accidents such as nuclear leaks, not only central governments but also local units can provide assistance. For instance, during the February 6 earthquakes centered in Kahramanmaraş, many international sister cities of municipalities affected by the disaster or from other regions of Türkiye sent messages of solidarity, and some provided in-kind or financial aid based on the needs of the local population.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Van der Pluijm and Melissen, *ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁷ Van der Pluijm and Melissen, *ibid.*, 21.

⁵⁸ Van der Pluijm and Melissen, *ibid.*, 22.

⁵⁹ Interview with Mehmet Harmanci, Mayor of Nicosia Turkish Municipality, and Foreign Relations Unit Experts Fatoş Arabacıoğlu Adalı and Zehra Bayar Zekai, Nicosia, 6 September 2016.

⁶⁰ Bülent Tanık, "Ben bu kentin anasıyım" (I Am the Mother of This City), *Gazete Duvar*, 22 March 2022, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/ben-bu-kentin-anasiyim-haber-1557567>; Yaşar Sökmensüer, "Kuğular da ağlar, parklar da ölür" (Swans Also Cry, Parks Also Die), *Serbestiyet*, 19 December 2021, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://serbestiyet.com/yazarlar/kuqular-da-aglar-parklar-da-olur-78426/>

⁶¹ The support from sister cities abroad was mentioned in the discussions held with the members of Marmara Municipalities Union to identify the efforts of its members following the earthquakes.

Aid sent to Gaziantep by its sister cities, such as Kotor, Duisburg, and Ludwigshafen, serve as examples of such support.⁶² Additionally, international city networks, such as Eurocities, in which municipalities are members, mobilized their members to contribute to emergency relief and reconstruction efforts following the earthquake.⁶³ Another example is the November 2019 earthquake in Albania, after which two experts from Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality's Fire Department were sent to Albania through Marmara Municipalities Union. These experts traveled to the affected areas to share their knowledge and experience with officials in the disaster-stricken cities.⁶⁴

An increasingly important aspect of foreign policies of cities today is their efforts to contribute to solving global problems. Whether dealing with pandemics, climate change, or waves of refugees, local governments have the potential to play significant roles in addressing these issues. The existing and potential contributions of cities to international contexts, especially regarding climate change and refugees, have been extensively discussed in the literature.⁶⁵ As Camagni states, cities are both problem areas and “islands of new opportunities”.⁶⁶ While cities are the primary sources of many global problems, they are also potential grounds or partners for solutions. Technological innovations and intellectual production often occur in cities. Additionally, municipalities, as the closest administrative units to the local population, municipalities are better positioned to assess situations and act quickly. During the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the entire world, many cities, despite lacking prior experience, swiftly took measures. They developed new practices to counter the pandemic's negative impacts on health, the economy, culture, and social life.⁶⁷ These practices were shared by local government representatives at online meetings held by international organizations and featured on the websites and publications of city networks.⁶⁸ Such practices shared on international platforms inspired other local governments and various institutions worldwide.

⁶² See “Kardeş şehirlerden Gaziantep'e nakdi ve aynı yardım desteği” (Financial and In-Kind Aid Support from Sister Cities to Gaziantep), Haber Gazetesi, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.haber342.com/haber/14075496/kardes-sehirlerden-gaziantep-nakdi-ve-ayni-yardim-destegi>.

⁶³ For Eurocities' study, see “İzmir's call for short and long-term quake relief”, Eurocities website, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://eurocities.eu/latest/izmir-call-for-short-and-long-term-quake-relief/>.

⁶⁴ For further details, see “MMU Dispatched Two Experts to Albania After the Earthquake”, Marmara Municipalities Union website, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.marmara.gov.tr/en/mmu-dispatched-two-experts-to-albania-after-the-earthquake>.

⁶⁵ World Mayors Council on Climate Change, Global Cities Covenant on Climate, and Carbon Cities Climate Registry are examples of local institutional responses to climate change. For contributions of local initiatives to the global climate change regime, see Michele Acuto, “City Leadership in Global Governance”, *Global Governance*, Vol. 19, No 3, 2013, p. 481-498.

⁶⁶ Roberto Camagni, Roberto Capello and Peter Nijkamp, “Managing Sustainable Urban Environments”. Edited by Ronan Paddison, *Handbook of Urban Studies*, London, Sage Publications, 2001, 129.

⁶⁷ See “Marmara Bölgesi Belediyeleri COVID-19 Pandemisi ile Mücadele Uygulamaları Veritabanı” (Database of COVID-19 Pandemic Response Practices by Municipalities in the Marmara Region), accessed October 17, 2024, <https://data.marmara.gov.tr/afet-vonetimi/covid-19> and “Belediyelerin Covid-19 Pandemisiyle Mücadelede Web Site Kullanımları | Marmara Bölgesi Analizi” (Web Site Uses of Municipalities in Combating Covid-19 Pandemic | Marmara Region Analysis), Marmara Municipalities Union Publications, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://mbbkulturvayinlari.com/belediyelerin-covid-19-pandemisiyle-mucadelede-web-site-kullanimlari-marmara-bolgesi-analizi>.

⁶⁸ For a database containing significant international resources and practices compiled by Marmara Municipalities Union as part of efforts to combat COVID-19, see “Covid-19 Salgını ile Mücadelede Bölgesel ve Küresel Platformlar Veri Seti” (Database of Regional and Global Platforms in Combating Covid-19 Pandemic), Data Marmara, accessed November 21, 2024, <https://data.marmara.gov.tr/afet-vonetimi/covid-19-20>.

In addition to the discussed aspects, representation of the local in global institutions and branding efforts are becoming increasingly prominent activities in local diplomacy. In this context, some cities promote themselves as “green cities” emphasizing environmental aspects, while others highlight their cultural values or gastronomy. Here, one of the most interesting examples is the sister city relationship between Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch in Wales, the city with the longest name in Europe, and Ee in the Netherlands, the city with the shortest name. Both cities aim to increase their recognition by leveraging the contrasting characteristics of their names.⁶⁹

After discussing the main goals of cities in developing their foreign policies, it is important to briefly touch upon the types of local diplomacy. The most common forms identified in the literature are summarized as follows:

- 1) Cross-border regional micro-diplomacy: Focuses on cooperation between neighboring cities across borders.
- 2) Trans-regional micro-diplomacy: Involves connections between geographically non-bordering cities.
- 3) Regional micro-diplomacy: Centers on a city's relations with its nearby geography.
- 4) Global paradiplomacy: Involves local governments' engagement with global issues and interactions with distant nations.
- 5) Protodiplomacy: Refers to external relations networks established by regions housing culturally distinct populations to promote their identity and nation-building efforts.⁷⁰

Regardless of the nature of their relationship with central governments, the importance of cities in foreign policy is increasingly acknowledged by nation-states. A growing number of countries are striving to establish more institutionalized relationships with local governments, often through their Ministries of Foreign Affairs, for purposes of coordination, control, or both. One example of this is Türkiye's Ministry of Foreign Affairs expanding its representations to an increasing number of cities since the 2000s and enhancing its interactions with local actors. Additionally, protocols signed between the Ministry and the metropolitan municipalities of Istanbul and Antalya serve as examples of this trend.

⁶⁹ Gündüz and Özden, *ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁰ Inaki Aguirre, “Making Sense of Paradiplomacy? An Intertextual Inquiry about a Concept in Search of a Definition”, edited by Francisco Aldecoa and Michael Keating, *Paradiplomacy in Action. The Foreign Relations of Subnational Governments*, London, Frank Cass, 1999, p. 185-209.

A recent example of efforts by a central government's foreign policy institutions to increase interaction with local entities can be seen in the United States. In 2021, the U.S. House of Representatives passed legislation to establish a City and State Diplomacy unit within the Department of State.⁷¹ A Special Representative responsible for City and State Diplomacy was appointed to lead this unit. The unit's primary aim is to increase communication with local actors both in the United States and abroad. Its purpose is to simultaneously inform local governments about federal foreign policy while conveying local feedback back to the central government.⁷²

Here, another distinction in the context of the interactions within local diplomacy can be made between horizontal and vertical dimensions. The horizontal dimension refers to the interaction among local actors. Collaborations among local governments, private companies, NGOs, and schools can be considered horizontal interaction. On the other hand, when local actors collaborate with national, regional, or global actors, this is described as the vertical dimension or vertical interaction.⁷³

Cities and International Organizations

The first official global organization of local units dates back to the period before World War I. The International Congress of the Art of Building Cities and Organizing Community Life held in 1913 in Ghent, Belgium, with participants from 28 countries, holds historical significance. This congress led to the establishment of the International Municipal Movement (IMM), recognized as the first modern international organization concerning local governments. From its foundation, IMM was an institution focusing on addressing both technical and political matters. On one hand, it facilitated cooperation among cities on technical issues, and on the other, it emphasized international solidarity and collaboration for political goals. In 1928, the organization was renamed the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) and although its activities were interrupted by the two world wars, IULA played a significant role in fostering local cooperation and continues to be influential today.

The political and economic transformations of the 1990s were also transformative for the international activity of the IULA. During the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit), nine key groups were established to enable non-state actors' participation in UN activities. One of these groups were local governments. Following this development which marked local governments as emerging new actors in global governance; IULA, the World Federation of United Cities, and the World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis) came together in 2004 to form the organization named United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). With its headquarters situated in Barcelona, UCLG represents over 240,000 local governments and 175 local government associations from 140 countries and its primary objectives are focused on

⁷¹"City and Diplomacy Act", The Library of Congress, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.congress.gov/bills/117/congress/house-bill/4526#:~:text=This%20bill%20establishes%20within%20the,municipal%20governments%20with%20foreign%20governments>.

⁷²"Subnational Diplomacy Unit", U.S. Department of State, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/bureaus-offices/under-secretary-for-economic-growth-energy-and-the-environment/the-special-representative-for-subnational-diplomacy/>.

⁷³Stürner-Slovitz, *ibid.*, 18.

both economic and political issues. Beyond fostering development and innovation at the local level, it strives to amplify the voices of local and regional actors in global governance and contribute to world peace.⁷⁴

The United Nations increasingly emphasizes the importance of local governments. UCLG is also closely collaborating with the UN. UCLG has both played a vital role in organizing Habitat Summits and has been instrumental in the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities. Furthermore, UCLG has actively participated in implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the local level.

The United Nations highlights the crucial role of local governments in taking measures to address global challenges. The 11th goal of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals is specifically dedicated to cities, and titled "Sustainable Cities and Communities". This has become one of the most important steps for cities being recognized by international organizations. The Habitat summits are another example that showcases UN's focus on the topic. In 2023, during the 28th Conference of the Parties (COP28) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the first-ever Local Climate Action Summit was organized, providing an opportunity for city leaders to share their climate change policies with one another.⁷⁵ The UN Secretary-General also appointed a special representative responsible for cities and climate change. Moreover, the UN General Assembly designated October 31 as World Cities Day, aiming to raise awareness about the pressing challenges cities face. The UN has been making significant contributions to the role of cities in sustainable development and in finding solutions to global problems through both the summits it organizes and the reports it publishes.⁷⁷

One of the institutions that provides the most opportunities to local governments is the European Union (EU). The Union enables local governments to advocate for their interests and contribute to EU decision-making processes in three ways. Firstly, local units in member countries can open regional offices in Brussels, allowing them to directly advocate their own interests. This provides local governments with the opportunity to represent and campaign for their interests at the regional level. Secondly, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) gathers input from local governments across all member states on issues ranging from the environment to transportation, employment to energy, and ensures these voices are conveyed to the EU. Thirdly, through inter-regional or cross-regional institutions, local governments can ensure that their perspectives are communicated to the EU. The Assembly of European Regions (AER) has also been working to give stronger voices to the local since 1985.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ The World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments, accessed October 17, 2024, <http://www.uclg.org/en/organisation/about>.

⁷⁵ COP28 Local Climate Action Summit, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.cop28.com/en/lcas>. For reports summarizing the negotiations, main discussions, and key topics of COP27 and COP28, day by day, conducted by Marmara Municipalities Union, see COP27'den Notlar (Notes from COP27), Marmara Municipalities Union Publications, accessed October 17, 2024, https://www.marmara.gov.tr/uploads/old-site/2023/01/COP27-Raporu_web.pdf and COP28'den Notlar (Notes from COP28), Marmara Municipalities Union Publications, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.marmara.gov.tr/uploads/dijital-cop28den-notlar-1.pdf>.

⁷⁶ World Cities Day, United Nations, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/cities-day>.

⁷⁷ World Cities Report 2022: Envisaging the Future of Cities, UN-Habitat, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://unhabitat.org/wcr/>.

⁷⁸ Tanja A. Börzel, "Restructuring or Reinforcing the 'State': The German Länder as Transnational Actors in Europe", edited by Anne Marie le Gloanec, *Non-State Actors in International Relations. The Case of Germany*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007, p. 111-129.

In addition, major international organizations are also creating separate structures for cities. Examples include the Urban 20, established within the G20 to represent cities, and the Urban 7, created within the G7. Similarly, the Mayors Mechanism has been established within the Global Forum on Migration and Development.⁷⁹

International City Networks

One of the tools of local diplomacy for cities is the activities carried out through international city networks, such as UCLG and AER, as discussed in the previous section. Today, there are more than 300 international city networks,⁸⁰ bringing cities together in solidarity on issues such as the environment, climate, and peace. These networks allow cities to share their experiences and best practices with each other while contributing more to global governance.

Examples of these city networks include organizations such as C40, ICLEI, European Energy Cities (Energy Cities), and Eurocities. Cities that are members of C40 implemented more than 10,000 initiatives between 2011 and 2013 to combat climate change. Studies have shown that these initiatives positively impacted the lives of more than 8% of the world's population.⁸¹ Another concrete indicator is that cities that are members of ICLEI carried out between 3-36% more activities related to sustainable urban development than those that were not members.⁸² Furthermore, it is important to note that 44% of city networks have developed concrete common policies.⁸³ Through city networks, cities are able to emphasize their agency as actors more. They can bring up issues that are important on their agenda, share best practices with one another, and make their roles as active players known.

Some of these networks operate on a global scale, accepting members from all countries across the world. Meanwhile, there are also regional organizations for local collaboration, with cities in Türkiye actively participating in regional networks both within Europe and the Black Sea region. Among these, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) stands out as the first organization to represent local governments across Europe. Bringing together 60 local government associations from 40 countries, its primary goals include ensuring the representation of local entities in continental and international institutions, preserving and strengthening local autonomy, and supporting the eventual formation of a European federation in the future.⁸⁴ Türkiye is represented in the CEMR by the Union of Municipalities of Türkiye. An-

⁷⁹ For the role of cities as actors in migration, see Stürner-Siovit, *ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁰ "Can cities save the world? The impact of city networks and city-partnerships for peace and development", Metropolis, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.metropolis.org/agenda/can-cities-save-world-impact-city-networks-and-city-partnerships-peace-and-development>.

⁸¹ Antonios Karvounis, *City Diplomacy and the Europeanization of Local Government. The Prospects of Networking in the Greek Municipalities*, Cham, Palgrave, 2023, p. 4.

⁸² Karvounis, *ibid.*, 12-13.

⁸³ Karvounis, *ibid.*, 12-13.

⁸⁴ Council of European Municipalities and Regions, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://ccre-cemr.org/>.

other prominent organization bringing together local governments in Europe is the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Congress) under the Council of Europe. This organization not only emphasizes the importance of local democracy and governance but also works to implement the principles outlined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.⁸⁵

The Global Expansion of Local Diplomacy

As we approach the end of the first quarter of the 21st century, global politics is grappling with new challenges. On one hand, the war between Russia and Ukraine; on the other, the conflict between Israel and Hamas has heightened tensions and uncertainty worldwide. Structural violence continues to affect many countries, youth unemployment rates are climbing, inequalities are deepening, and issues regarding human security are becoming increasingly severe. The climate crisis, evidenced by rising temperatures on a global scale, stands as one of humanity's most pressing concerns for the future. As a consequence of the combined impact of wars, climate change, and systemic inequalities, naturally, there has been a surge in migration. Cities, as global actors, are increasingly stepping forward as active participants in international relations and assuming significant responsibilities in addressing these issues. Today, cities are legitimate actors in international relations.⁸⁶

For a long time, the literature on city diplomacy has focused predominantly on the foreign politics of Western democratic and developed nations. As noted earlier, local diplomacy in the West gained significant momentum, particularly in the post-World War II era. During the period following the war, fostering closer ties between communities was deemed crucial for rebuilding peace. As part of this effort, during this period, sister city agreements were signed, especially between cities in Western Europe. The intention was for the people of different cities to come together and strengthen the bonds between them.

In the following years, the importance of economic relations also increased. Cities seeking to attract more foreign investment and tourists intensified their efforts in pursuit of these goals. At the same time, local diplomacy provided cities with opportunities to collaborate and improve their infrastructure by learning from successful examples worldwide.

The wave of globalization that took up again following the Cold War significantly contributed to the expansion of local diplomacy worldwide. Consequently, subnational actors' foreign relations were no longer limited to Western countries but began to flourish across all regions, from Latin America to Africa and from

⁸⁵ There are 18 members from Türkiye in both the Congress's Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. For the national delegation list, see "National Delegation to the Congress: Türkiye", Council of Europe, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress/country?id=19>

⁸⁶ Sohaela Amiri and Efe Sevin, "Introduction", edited by Sohaela Amiri and Efe Sevin, *City Diplomacy: Current Trends and Future Prospects*, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 9.

Asia to the Black Sea. Cities across various nations, ranging from China to Russia and Iran to Brazil, have been strengthening their ties with the world in various fields. Regardless of their global standing, political systems, or stages of economic development, cities from different nations are striving to enhance their foreign relations. The dynamics of this widespread surge in global local diplomacy vary from city to city.

China serves as a notable example of a non-Western nation with an authoritarian regime that has rapidly advanced its local diplomacy. A key component of China's Belt and Road Initiative launched in 2013 is leveraging local networks and fostering collaborations between cities while partnering with countries across different continents. In fact, since the early 2000s, the number of international partnerships formed by Chinese cities has increased by 115%.⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier, today's world faces numerous challenges, ranging from pandemics and climate change to the refugee crisis and food insecurity. It is impossible for nation-states to tackle these issues alone without the contribution of cities. If governments aim to effectively combat global pandemics, they must collaborate with subnational entities such as municipalities. Moreover, the support of cities is indispensable in managing the growing influx of refugees. Similarly, climate change is a problem that cannot be resolved without the participation of cities. Municipalities can play a key role in combating climate change in various ways such as by supporting public transportation, preserving biodiversity, and raising public awareness. To address emerging issues of food security worldwide, local actors can develop policies aimed at enhancing self-sufficiency. This can be described as a transition from government to governance. While the concept of government denotes a hierarchical management approach, governance refers to a horizontal network of relationships where various actors interact with one another.⁸⁸

At the same time, nation-states may occasionally, for various reasons, choose not to adopt clear policies on certain issues or even neglect certain issues altogether. In such cases, cities can step in as proactive actors to fill the gap. As Kosovac et al. assert, "...many cities see a mandate for action in global policy domains often neglected by national governments".⁸⁹

OECD research reveals that 65% of the 169 targets outlined in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without the support of local governments.⁹⁰ Similarly, 70% of EU legislation is implemented by local and regional institutions.⁹¹ Since the 1970s, changes in the global economy have further amplified the importance of cities. According to Sassen, today's global cities possess three key characteristics. First, global

⁸⁷ Karvounis, *ibid.*, 101.

⁸⁸ Stürner-Siovtz, *ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁹ Anna Kosovac, Kris Hartley, Michele Acuto and Darcy Gunning, "City Leaders Go Abroad: A Survey of City Diplomacy in 47 Cities", *Urban Policy and Research*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 2021, p. 127-142

⁹⁰ "OECD Programme on A Territorial Approach to the SDGs", OECD website, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.oecd.org/en/about/programmes/oecd-programme-on-a-territorial-approach-to-the-sdgs.html>

⁹¹ The European Committee of the Regions, accessed October 17, 2024, <https://cor.europa.eu/en/about>.

cities serve as command centers for the global economy. Second, they act as hubs for banking and service industries. Finally, they produce a large percentage of industrial and technological goods.⁹²

Another crucial issue today is the relationship between city diplomacy and domestic political dynamics. Recent data from global democracy indices indicate a regression in democratization processes in many countries. From Hungary to India, authoritarian tendencies are increasingly getting prevalent across diverse regions.

In countries facing challenges in their democratization process within national politics, local diplomacy can exhibit distinct characteristics. On one hand, authoritarian governments use local diplomacy as a public relations tool and a soft power instrument to complement their foreign policies. On the other hand, opposition party mayors leverage city diplomacy to advance their alternative foreign policy agendas.

In conclusion, based on the perspectives outlined above, it can be stated that urban diplomacy encompasses multiple dimensions. From ensuring security and advancing economic interests to fostering alternative approaches to foreign policy, local governments are expanding their foreign relations across a broad spectrum. As the world continues to change and issues such as pandemics, energy insecurity, and food shortages continue to arise, city diplomacy can create new collaboration opportunities among local actors and offer innovative contributions.

Another important point to emphasize is that as the global system undergoes transformation, rising power states are beginning to play a more significant role in the global economy and politics. This global shift is also impacting local diplomacy. As mentioned earlier, for decades, city diplomacy was primarily a practice of Western countries. However, following the end of the bipolar world order, non-Western countries have also started to recognize the importance of local diplomacy. A significant portion of these countries, many governed by authoritarian regimes, have begun employing local diplomacy as a tool in both domestic and foreign policy.

What significant importance does fostering and promoting local diplomacy carry for authoritarian regimes like Russia, China, and Iran? In today's globalized world, foreign policies of cities hold different meanings for authoritarian regimes. The first notable aspect is economic interests. Among authoritarian countries, China stands out as one that encourages its cities to strengthen their foreign relations. A key reason for the central government in Beijing to facilitate the development of foreign relations for Chinese cities is tied to economic interests. Former Chinese President Hu Jintao stated that cities like Yunnan and Xinjiang play a pioneering role in the country's foreign policy. Moreover, China utilizes city diplomacy as a tool to enhance its national image. In addition to economic interests, in authoritarian states, the foreign relations of cities are also employed as means to protect "red lines". To continue with another example from China, we can

⁹²Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press, 1994, p. 4-7.

talk about the incident when Beijing's municipal government objected to the Paris City Council's proposal to grant honorary citizenship to the Dalai Lama.⁹³

A relevant example of local diplomacy in countries ruled by democracies that show signs of increasing authoritarianism due to rising nationalism can be India under the Modi administration. Prioritizing policies that are both populist and nationalist, the Modi government actively supports Indian cities' engagement with the world. The primary expectation of the Modi administration from local diplomacy of Indian cities is to advance economic interests.⁹⁴

These examples demonstrate that city diplomacy is no longer the exclusive domain of developed Western states. On the contrary, with the global economic center shifting from the West to the East, non-Western countries have also begun to adopt foreign policy instruments traditionally associated with Western powers. However, it is worth noting that the goals pursued by these nations in some cases differ from those of the West. While they share economic and cultural goals with the West, efforts to enhance the regime's image and safeguard its "red lines" stand out as distinct differences.

This section has examined the evolving meaning of city diplomacy in today's world. Today, amid the challenges we are facing such as pandemics, food crises, energy issues, and conflicts, cities are both a starting point of problems and key partners in finding solutions. The next section will analyze how major International Relations theories approach city diplomacy.

International Relations Theories and Local Diplomacy

International Relations theories are primarily developed to analyze the foreign policy behaviors of states as the main actors in global politics. They can also be useful in providing valuable insights into the foreign policies of cities.

To start with realism, widely considered the most dominant theory in the field, we can state the following: according to realism, states still remain the primary actors in international politics. From this perspective, city diplomacy is only meaningful insofar as it serves the interests of the nation-state.⁹⁵ In this framework, cities, provinces, and regions lack independent roles as autonomous actors. Instead, they are considered merely instruments of the state. As such, local diplomacy is expected to imitate or complement the central government's official policies. According to the realist approach, the foreign relations of subnational entities must remain entirely under the control of central governments.

⁹³Tianyang Liu ve Yao Song, "Chinese Paradiplomacy: A Theoretical Review," Sage Open 10, no. 1 (2020): 1-14; Dominik Mierzejewski, "Channeling Foreign Policy through Local Activities in China: City of Guangzhou Case Study," Malgorzata Pietrasiak ve diğerleri (der.), Paradiplomacy in Asia. Case Studies of China, India and Russia, Lodz, Lodz University Press, 2018, 95; Justyna Szczudlik, "China's lukewarm soft power in Poland," Ties Dams, Xiaoxue Martin ve Vera Kranenburg (der.), China's Soft Power in Europe. Falling on Hard Times, Report by the European Think-tank on China, 2021, 71.

⁹⁴Grzegorz Bywalec, "Paradiplomacy in India as Exemplified by the State of Gujarat," Malgorzata Pietrasiak ve diğerleri (der.), Paradiplomacy in Asia. Case Studies of China, India and Russia, Lodz, Lodz University Press, 2018, 62.

⁹⁵Tomasz Kaminski, "Paradiplomacy. Discourse Analysis and Research Conceptualization," Malgorzata Pietrasiak ve diğerleri (der.), Paradiplomacy in Asia. Case Studies of China, India and Russia, Lodz, Lodz University Press, 2018, 19-20.

From a realist perspective, it is entirely logical for authoritarian states to encourage the development of local diplomacy because by leveraging cities' foreign relations, these states gain the opportunity to implement their foreign policies at the local level.⁹⁶ In this context, realist theory provides a compelling explanation for why local diplomacy is flourishing in countries like China and Russia.

In contrast, liberalism offers a different interpretation of cities' global relations. According to liberal theory, states are not the only actors in international relations, other actors also play a role. In addition to international organizations, multinational corporations, and NGOs, cities are recognized as actors in global politics. The liberal approach argues that cities can develop their own foreign policies and play independent roles in international politics.⁹⁷ Cities have the ability to maneuver in establishing their global connections. Furthermore, liberal theory assumes that economics play a significant role in global politics. Within this framework, cities are seen as having economic interests and pursuing these interests by engaging with international actors. For instance, the goals that cities aim to achieve can include attracting foreign investment, drawing tourists, and establishing themselves as economic hubs.

On the other hand, if we analyze the constructivist approach, we can emphasize the importance of identities, norms, and values in city diplomacy. The constructivist approach argues that beyond states, other actors also play an essential role. In this context, cities and regions can also be treated as separate actors.⁹⁸ Through sister city relationships, city partnerships, the establishment of international organizations, or by becoming members of existing international organizations, they can acquire new identities or strengthen their existing identities. At the same time, they may focus on the cultural characteristics of their cities. Just as states build or reconstruct their identities through foreign policy, cities too can use global partnerships to highlight or acquire new identities.

Looking to the Future

Today, as humanity faces significant challenges, it is necessary to rethink and reformulate city diplomacy. As mentioned in previous sections, global issues such as instability and conflicts in the global system, migration waves caused by wars, and climate change are significant concerns for all countries, peoples, and cities alike. Alongside these challenges, there are also opportunities emerging in today's world. Perhaps the most remarkable of these opportunities is the rapid technological change.

In a world where both new problems and new opportunities are arising, what role should city diplomacy play? How should local governments interact with the world in order to contribute to solving these prob-

⁹⁶ Kaminski, *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹⁷ Kaminski, *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁹⁸ Kaminski, *ibid.*; Ario Bimo Utomo, "Reimagining City Identities in Globalisation: A Constructivist Study on City Paradiplomacy", *Global South Review* 1, no. 2 (2020): 33-48.

lems while also benefiting from technological opportunities? Of course, it is not possible to offer universal solutions to these questions. The history, geography, demographics, and regulations of each country play an important role in shaping their local foreign policies. However, we can draw some general conclusions.

First and foremost, the most important goal for city leaders should be to ensure that everyone in the city can live in peace, security, and prosperity. The right to a dignified life belongs to all people. Therefore, the goal of local diplomacy should also be to focus on people, ensuring that city residents live under better conditions. By learning from best practices through foreign policies and developing projects, cities should strive to improve infrastructure, attract new investments to the city, become a center of attraction for tourists, build smart cities by adopting smart technology applications, and achieve the principles of sustainable development locally. These should be among the main goals of cities.

In this context, one of the most significant challenges is ensuring that a city's foreign relations are not just limited to the international visits of the mayor and city council members, but go beyond this. How can the residents of a city become active participants in the city's foreign policies? How can local residents be integrated into subnational diplomacy? The new era of subnational diplomacy should seek to answer these questions.⁹⁹ Creating "sister school" projects between schools in sister cities, organizing cultural and sporting events that bring together local residents with the people of collaborating cities, and expanding city ambassador programs are some of the initiatives that come to mind. The residents of the city should be both integrated into and have an impact on the relationships established by the city government with the outside world.

In this context, the establishment of associations related to sister cities can be encouraged. For example, in Germany, associations that are dedicated to sister cities and relevant local communities are being formed. One example is the "Köln-Istanbul City Partnership Development Association". Founded after the establishment of the sister city relationship between Istanbul and Cologne in 1997, this association aims to keep the city partnership alive by organizing promotional meetings, seminars, and trips related to Istanbul.¹⁰⁰ These associations prevent city collaborations from being limited to just the formal ties between the city leaders. By involving local people in the process, these associations help build connections between the cities while ensuring interactions between their residents.

Another important issue to consider is whether multilevel diplomacy, which also includes subnational actors, leads to a hierarchical structure. It is important that cities like New York, Paris, London, Tokyo, and Bei-

⁹⁹As indicated from the interviews conducted by Kai Pfundheller with 41 experts from 8 municipalities in the North Rhine-Westphalia state regarding city partnerships, one of the success factors of local diplomacy is its spread across different areas and groups: Kai Pfundheller, *Städtepartnerschaften – alternative Außenpolitik der Kommunen*, Opladen, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2014, 210.

¹⁰⁰Verein zur Förderung der Städtepartnerschaft Köln-Istanbul e.V., accessed October 17, 2024, <https://www.koeln-istanbul.de/>.

jing, often referred to as megacities, world cities, or primary cities, establish their own role in global relations and voice their own agendas on international platforms, as this gives a voice to the local level. However, an important question arises: How will the interests, goals, and objectives of medium-sized cities, small cities, towns, and villages be defended in the international arena? Will megacities act as role models for smaller cities in their global interactions, or will they seek to hinder the representation of other cities on the world stage?

Research shows that there is a positive correlation between the size of cities and their presence in foreign relations.¹⁰¹ It is understandable that larger cities have more interactions with the world. However, smaller cities may have an advantage when it comes to addressing global challenges, such as pandemics. Small cities and towns, which offer more opportunities for people to connect with nature, may also be preferred more in the future. Given this, the hierarchy that emerges in terms of global interaction between megacities and other cities is a serious issue. It is important for all local actors to establish relationships with the world, influence the global agenda, and learn from the best practices around the world. To achieve this, it is crucial to make the necessary legal and practical frameworks at both national and international levels to ensure a fair local-global relationship.¹⁰²

CONCLUSION

In Türkiye, the main goal of local diplomacy should be to advance in the areas of human rights and democratization, as well as to transition into a life that respects human dignity.¹⁰³ We can envision civilized cities where the living conditions are peaceful, green spaces per person rival the best in the world, clean water flows from taps, and modern public transportation systems and bike lanes are the norm. Local diplomacy has the potential to play a key role in making such dreams of urban life a reality.

This paper, which not only provides an academic foundation for the comprehensive field research conducted by the MMU but also serves as a source of international literature and practices, attempts to outline an overall framework of local diplomacy. One of the key topics explored is the primary objectives for which cities develop foreign policies. The importance of economic, political, cultural, humanitarian goals, contributions to solving global issues, and efforts to build representation and branding has also been emphasized. Additionally, the factors that influence a city's foreign relations were analyzed. The study also explored how international relations theories can be applied to cities. Finally, it discussed how the changes in the global system are reflected in city diplomacy. This section serves as a guide for the field research in the following pages.

¹⁰¹ Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, *City Diplomacy*, Cham, Palgrave, 2020, 6.

¹⁰² Michele Acuto et. al., "What three decades of city networks tell us about city diplomacy's potential for climate action?", *Nature Cities* 1 (2024): 452.

¹⁰³ Interview with Mr. Selahattin Yıldırım, Marmara Municipalities Union former Secretary General, Istanbul, October 7, 2022.

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INTRODUCTION

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The practice of cities establishing connections, collaborating with, or uniting under a common framework with institutions beyond their borders has a long history, dating as far back as to Ancient Greece. While dominant political structures have evolved over time, cities have consistently maintained foreign relations within these shifting systems. The modern international political system, shaped largely by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, has historically centered on nation-states. Yet, even within this state-focused paradigm, cities have extended their reach beyond national borders to engage with other transnational actors. In earlier periods, these interactions were sporadic, and cities played a relatively limited role in the state-driven global governance of the time. However, especially in the late 20th century, several factors such as the rise of a neoliberal system where states regulated economic life less, the emergence of global issues like climate change that states struggle to address alone, advances in digital technology, and the increasing urban population contributed to the growing capacity, significance, and international connections of cities. Together, these developments have elevated cities to prominent actors on the international stage.¹

Beyond the economic, political, technical, and demographic developments, the proactive approach cities have adopted to assert their influence on the international stage has also made them more “visible” in this area. Despite obstacles to their inclusion in the international political system, such as the lack of representation in decision-making bodies of institutions like the United Nations (UN) and the absence of references to cities in international agreements, cities have carved out a presence on global platforms by establishing their own international networks, collaborating with global organizations, or engaging with the UN’s multilateral agendas.²

Today, while the importance of cities in global governance and their external relations has grown, the frequency, nature, purpose, and actors involved in these interactions vary from one city to another. This variation can be attributed to several factors. Key political factors that affect the foreign relations of cities include the position of the city’s nation within the international political system and its relationships with other countries, the legal regulations define the scope of the duties, responsibilities, and boundaries of city actors within that country,³ and the roles assigned to cities in the international political system. Economic factors also play a significant role, such as the institutional, financial, and human resource capacity of a city’s governing institutions, as well as the local and national economic conditions of both the city and the actor with which it interacts.

¹ Curtis Simon and Michele Acuto, “The Foreign Policy of Cities”, *The RUSI Journal* 163, no. 6 (2018): 817

² Chrystie Swiney, “The Urbanization of International Law and International Relations: The Rising Soft Power of Cities in Global Governance”, 41 *MICH. J. INT’L L.* 227 (2020).

³ For more information on the relationship between a country’s regime and city diplomacy, see Benjamin Leffel, “Principles of Modern City Diplomacy and the Expanding Role of Cities in Foreign Policy”, *Journal of International Affairs* 74, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2021): 179–200.

City diplomacy,⁴ which can broadly be defined as “transnational agreements, collaborations, and beyond that, institutional development resulting from mediated ‘international’⁵ relations among representatives of cities as legitimate governing entities”, can be carried out by various actors. Among these, local governments stand out as one of the most significant administrative and political institutions of cities. In the context of the modern nation-state system, the transnational interactions of local governments date back to the early 1900s.⁶ During this period, local diplomacy activities were largely shaped around international city networks, which are the actors of multilateral city diplomacy, and bilateral town-twinning agreements, also referred to as sister cities, both of which were beginning to take shape in their modern forms. Notably, the primary focus of city diplomacy during this era was conflict resolution and the establishing peace between nations.

Over time, the scope of local diplomacy has expanded, the range of actors involved has diversified, the topics underlying local diplomacy have multiplied, and new institutional structures dedicated to local diplomacy have emerged within local governments.⁷ Municipalities no longer limit international cooperation to actions under city networks or bilateral town-twinning relationships. Today, city governments collaborate with foreign institutions through non-binding agreements such as Memorandums of Understanding, partnerships, or goodwill agreements, often bypassing the need for formal sister city arrangements. They also participate in consortia for projects funded by international grant programs, establish connections with foreign missions in Türkiye, and take part as stakeholders, speakers, or participants in international events like the “World Urban Forum” or the “European Week of Regions and Cities”, organized by international organizations, central governments, or other cities. Furthermore, some cities are establishing their own offices abroad. Additionally, cities and city networks are increasingly influencing the content of agendas set under the frameworks of international organizations, which are often guided by central governments. In doing so, cities play a role in shaping future policies and actions of these organizations and they also integrate these agendas into their own work.

Alongside these developments, the range of foreign actors with whom cities engage has also diversified. Cities now collaborate not only with other cities or city networks but also with various international organizations and their subsidiary bodies, particularly the UN, as well as international financial institutions like the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), foreign private sector entities, non-governmental organizations, and academic institutions.

⁴ In this report, the terms “city diplomacy”, “local diplomacy”, “external contacts”, “international relations”, and “foreign relations” are used interchangeably to express the transnational relationships of city stakeholders, particularly local governments, and their interactions with organizations outside national borders for various reasons. Additionally, terms such as “paradiplomacy”, “local foreign policy” and “municipal foreign policy” are used in the literature to describe these relationships.

⁵ Curtis Simon and Michele Acuto, “The Foreign Policy of Cities”, *The RUSI Journal* 163, no. 6 (2018): 817; Dan Koon-hong Chan, “City Diplomacy and ‘Glocal’ Governance: Revitalizing Cosmopolitan Democracy”, *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 29, no. 2 (2016): p. 134–60; Michele Acuto, “City Diplomacy”, edited by Costas M Constantinou, Pauline Kerr, and Paul Sharp, *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy* (London: Sage, 2016).

⁶ Renato Balbim, “City Diplomacy: Global Agendas, Local Governments”, in *The Geopolitics of Cities*, 123–170 (2016).

⁷ Michele Acuto, Mika Morissette, and Agis Tsouros, “City Diplomacy: Towards More Strategic Networking? Learning with WHO Healthy Cities”, *Global Policy* 8, no. 1 (2016): 14–22.

This shift is also evident in the evolving focus areas of local diplomacy. While cities continue to play critical roles in fostering peace between nations, city administrations also use local diplomacy as a tool to address specific challenges they face, to tackle shared issues with other local actors, and to contribute to local, national, and international development. As a result, beyond peacebuilding, cities actively engage in local diplomacy across areas such as “...democracy and local governance, security and social conflict, minority rights, technical cooperation (including innovation, technologies, best practices, bilateral solutions), environmental issues like water and waste management, mobility and transportation, culture, and historical heritage...”.⁸

Finally, as cities have intensified their international activities, there have also been shifts in the departments or personnel responsible for these matters within municipalities. Municipalities have introduced institutional changes to address their organizational needs and to manage foreign relations activities in line with national and international policy requirements. In the early 1900s, when we saw the first examples of modern local diplomacy activities, mayors were the primary representatives of municipalities. Over time, however, in addition to mayors, specialized foreign relations departments or multiple units addressing different aspects of foreign relations have been established within municipalities, with staff from these units taking on the role of representing their municipalities on the international stage. Additionally, foreign relations have expanded beyond the scope of these specialized units, extending into other municipal departments through international projects. Today, depending on the subject of international projects, representatives from the relevant departments also engage in international interactions as part of project activities on behalf of their municipality.

In Türkiye, the international engagements of municipalities and the first national-level legal regulations in this area date back to the 1960s.⁹ The first law governing municipalities’ international relations was the Law No. 1173 on the “Execution and Coordination of International Relations” in 1969. Article 6 of this law allows municipalities to establish relations with representatives of different countries and international institutions “in accordance with the rules of international law”, provided they inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹⁰

Over time, new national regulations have been adopted to shape the international relations practices of municipalities.¹¹ Today, there are many regulations providing legal basis for municipalities’ foreign relations ac-

⁸ Renato Balbim, “City Diplomacy: Global Agendas, Local Governments”, in *The Geopolitics of Cities*, 123–170 (2016).

⁹ Nisa Erdem, *Yerel Yönetimlerde Diplomasi Faaliyetleri ve Yerel Hizmetlere Yansımaları: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği* (Diplomatic Activities in Local Government and Their Reflection on Local Services: The Case of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality), Doctoral Dissertation, Karadeniz Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Public Administration, 2021.

¹⁰ Law on the Execution and Coordination of International Relations, Law No. 1173, accessed October 24, 2024, <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/151173.pdf>.

¹¹ For the complete list of regulations, see Nisa Erdem, *Yerel Yönetimlerde Diplomasi Faaliyetleri ve Yerel Hizmetlere Yansımaları: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği* (Diplomatic Activities in Local Government and Their Reflection on Local Services: The Case of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality), Doctoral Dissertation, Karadeniz Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Public Administration, 2021: p. 108

tivities. Among them, the most prominent is the Municipal Law No. 5393, adopted in 2005.¹² Article 74, titled “International Relations”, and Article 18, paragraph (p), titled “Duties and Powers of the Municipal Council”, directly address the realm of local diplomacy. These articles cover matters such as membership in international organizations, cooperation with international organizations and local governments abroad, joint activities and projects, and sister city relations. Article 60, titled “Municipality Expenditures”, includes expenses for joint services and projects with foreign public and private sectors, as well as civil society organizations as part of the municipality’s budget, allowing for expenditures in this context. The law also mandates that municipalities’ diplomatic activities must align with the national foreign policy and international agreements, and requires approval from the Turkish Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change.

In addition, the Public Financial Management and Control Law No. 5018, the Law No. 4749 on Regulating Public Finance and Debt Management, the Law on Metropolitan Municipalities No. 5216,¹³ and various circulars issued by central administrations, primarily the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, lay the groundwork for local diplomacy activities of municipalities in Türkiye, guide municipalities in carrying out these activities, and establish restrictions on their foreign relations. For example, the “Overseas Travel” Circular No. 2021/6, published by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change’s Directorate of Local Governments in 2021, is an example of the current guidelines for managing local governments’ foreign relations.¹⁴ Similarly, the Presidential Circular No. 2024/7,¹⁵ on “Austerity Measures”, imposes restrictions on expenses related to foreign relations for local governments, and the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change is authorized to oversee the implementation of this circular by local governments. The circular includes regulatory provisions on areas such as overseas assignments, international meetings, and membership in international organizations. Additionally, the Law No. 7521, published in 2024, titled “the Amendment of Certain Laws and Decree Laws”¹⁶ added provisions to the Public Financial Management and Control Law (No. 5018) regarding the monitoring of municipal expenses and activities’ compliance with austerity measures, identifying any violations, and the disciplinary actions to be applied. Thus, austerity measures related to the international relations of local governments have been addressed at the legislative level.

¹² Municipal Law No. 5393, Article 74 and Article 18, Paragraph (p), accessed October 24, 2024, <https://www.lawsturkey.com/law/municipality-law-5393#:~:text=The%20municipality%20law%20has%20been,procedures%20and%20principles%20of%20municipalities>

¹³ Although the Law on Metropolitan Municipalities does not contain a specific provision regarding the international relations of municipalities, Article 28 of the Law states that the relevant provisions of the Municipality Law and other laws may be applied to metropolitan and metropolitan district municipalities. Therefore, metropolitan and metropolitan district municipalities are also subject to the local diplomacy provisions under the Municipal Law No. 5393. See the Law on Metropolitan Municipalities No. 5216, Article 28, accessed October 24, 2024, <https://www.lawsturkey.com/law/law-on-metropolitan-municipalities-5216#:~:text=The%20law%20on%20metropolitan%20municipalities,effective%2C%20efficient%20and%20consistent%20manner>.

¹⁴ Directive on “Overseas Travel”, Circular No. 2021/6 of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change of Türkiye, Directorate General of Local Governments. Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, accessed October 23, 2024, <https://webdosya.csb.gov.tr/db/yerelyonetimler/icerikler/2021-6-20220309105720.pdf>

¹⁵ Presidential Circular No. 2024/7 on “Austerity Measures”, published in the Official Gazette No. 32549 on 17 May 2024, Official Gazette, accessed October 23, 2024, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/05/20240517-5.pdf>

¹⁶ Law No. 7521 on the “Amendment of Certain Laws and Decree Laws”, published in the Official Gazette No. 32613 on 26 July 2024, Official Gazette, accessed October 23, 2024, <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/07/20240726-2.htm>.

Apart from national laws and regulations, international agreements also play a role in shaping the foreign relations of municipalities in Türkiye. International documents such as the “European Charter of Local Self-Government”, which was adopted by the Council of Europe and ratified by Türkiye, and the “European Urban Charter” adopted by the Council of Europe’s Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, are among these international documents.¹⁷ Therefore, municipalities in Türkiye conduct their foreign relations based on the aforementioned national and international legal regulations, particularly the Municipality Law, and under the knowledge and approval of the central government.¹⁸

Municipalities in Türkiye began establishing their first foreign contacts in the late 1950s. Initially, the interactions were mostly made through sister city agreements. In 1958, Konya Metropolitan Municipality signed a sister city agreement with Torrance, a city in the United States, marking the first such agreement in Türkiye.¹⁹ By the mid-1980s, municipalities started to form connections with international networks.²⁰ Factors such as developments enabled by globalization, advancements in information and communication technologies, economic developments, and political changes such as Türkiye’s candidacy for EU membership and the start of negotiations for full membership led to busier and more active international relations for municipalities starting in the 2000s,²¹ diversifying local diplomacy activities. For example, during this period, EU funds were made available for municipalities in Türkiye, and municipalities became part of international consortia under grant programs. Furthermore, the period following the 2000s saw significant changes in the organizational structure of municipalities, including the establishment of dedicated units to foreign relations activities.²²

As the presence of municipalities on the international stage has increased, there has been a corresponding rise in academic studies on the topic, both nationally and internationally. In Türkiye, particularly since 2010, scholars and graduate students from various disciplines such as international relations, public adminis-

¹⁷ For a list of national and international regulations governing the foreign relations of municipalities in Türkiye, see Nisa Erdem, *Yerel Yönetimlerde Diplomasi Faaliyetleri ve Yerel Hizmetlere Yansımaları: İzmir Büyükşehir Belediyesi Örneği* (Diplomatic Activities in Local Government and Their Reflection on Local Services: The Case of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality), Doctoral Dissertation, Karadeniz Technical University, Institute of Social Sciences, Department of Public Administration, 2021 p. 108, Appendix-1.

¹⁸ Municipalities are required to submit the decision they make in their municipal councils regarding foreign relations activities (such as membership in international networks or establishing sister city relationships) to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change of Türkiye for approval. The Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change, in turn, seeks the opinion of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approval on the foreign relations of local governments.

¹⁹ Arda Bay, *Türkiye’nin Ulusal ve Uluslararası Ölçekteki Kardeş Şehir İlişkileri: Dönemsel, Mekansal, Kültürel, Fonksiyonel ve Politik Etkenlerin Analizi* (Türkiye’s Sister City Relations at National and International Levels: An Analysis of Temporal, Spatial, Cultural, Functional, and Political Factors), Doctoral Dissertation, 2021, p. 71.

²⁰ See the section on international networks in this report.

²¹ See Birgül Demirtaş, Türkiye’de Yerel Yönetimlerin Dış İlişkilerinin Analizi: Merkez-Çevre Etkileşimini Yeniden Düşünmek (Analyzing External Relations of Turkish Local Administrations: Rethinking the Interaction Between Core and Periphery), *Uluslararası İlişkiler*, Volume 13, no. 52 (2016): 151-173, p. 161.

²² Ibid. Demirtaş, 2016.

tration, political science, and geography have increasingly focused on the concept of local diplomacy.²³ A significant portion of these studies has either examined individual municipalities under the concept of “local diplomacy” or focused on specific aspects of local diplomacy, such as the topic of sister cities. However, there is no comprehensive study in Türkiye that considers the various dimensions of local diplomacy and presents a holistic view of the local diplomacy activities of municipalities on a national or regional scale. The “Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research” emerged to address this fundamental need.

MMU conducted the Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Field Research from December 2022 to January 2024, in response to the gaps in academic literature and available data. The study aimed to identify the local diplomacy activities, institutional capacities, challenges, and needs of MMU's member municipalities, as well as to develop recommendations to contribute to their work in this field. The research was carried out across all metropolitan, provincial, district, and town municipalities in 11 cities in the Marmara Region (Balıkesir, Bilecik, Bursa, Çanakkale, Edirne, İstanbul, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ, and Yalova). As part of the study, surveys were conducted with representatives from all 187 MMU member municipalities who are either directly involved in foreign relations activities or have knowledge of their municipality's work in this area.

This report aims to provide an overview of local diplomacy in the Marmara Region, beginning with an explanation of the scope and methodology of the field research. Following the general framework of the study, the research findings are presented under eight main headings based on the field research. In the final section, policy recommendations are developed based on the existing data, aiming to improve the identified gaps and issues in the field. Given that local diplomacy plays a key role in resolving local, national, and international issues, the report discusses which areas local governments, the central government, and international organizations should focus on, as well as potential improvements for enhancing these efforts. The report is intended to serve as a guide for municipal representatives, researchers, experts, central government officials, and international organization representatives working on or seeking to deepen their understanding of local diplomacy.

²³ The earliest thesis on local diplomacy in the Council of Higher Education's thesis database dates back to 2011. See “Thesis Center”, Council of Higher Education, accessed October 24, 2024, <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/UlusalTezMerkezi/giris.jsp>





RESEARCH METHOD AND SCOPE

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RESEARCH METHOD

The Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research aims to reveal the international relations activities of Marmara Municipalities Union (MMU) member municipalities, all of which are located within the Marmara Region, to identify the challenges they encounter in managing foreign engagements, and to develop solutions for these challenges. Following official notifications to the municipalities about the research, surveys were conducted face-to-face, over the phone, and via email between December 2022 and January 2024. The survey method was determined based on the preferences and availability of municipal representatives, and the municipalities' distance from MMU's headquarters in Istanbul. Through these surveys, municipalities were asked open-ended and multiple-choice questions about their local diplomacy activities.

A total of 187 municipalities responded to the survey. Surveys were completed by representatives from units that either managed or were closely involved in foreign relations activities.²⁴ There are notable differences among municipalities in the Marmara Region regarding how they manage foreign relations processes and activities. Thus, the units of municipal representatives who responded to the survey were varied. According to Table 1,²⁵ which lists the six most frequent units that completed the survey, representatives from the Directorate of Registry completed all or part of the survey in 68 municipalities. This was followed by 29 munic-

Table 1: Units of Municipal Representatives Who Completed the Survey

Unit Name	Number of Municipalities
Directorate of Registry	68
Foreign Relations Department/Division/Unit/Office	29
Strategy Development Department/Office	19
Office of the Private Secretary	18
Directorate of Cultural and Social Affairs/Directorate of Cultural Affairs/Directorate of Social Affairs	17
Mayor's Office	16

²⁴ In some municipalities, the responsibilities for foreign relations activities are divided within the unit. For example, different individuals may be responsible for managing sister city relationships and coordinating international projects within the same municipality. Similarly, in some municipalities, responsibility for foreign relations is shared between different units. For instance, one unit may be in charge of international events, while another unit handles international collaborations. In cases of such task-sharing, multiple representatives from a single municipality may have been interviewed, and their respective sections of the survey were asked separately.

²⁵ When reading Table 1, two important factors must be considered. Firstly, in some municipalities, the foreign relations unit falls under different departments. In these cases, the foreign relations unit itself has been considered rather than the department it belongs to. For example, if the foreign relations unit is under the Strategy Development Department, it has been counted under the "Foreign Relations Department/Division/Unit/Office" category, but not under the Strategy Development Department category. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, in municipalities where multiple units provide representatives, each unit filling out different parts of the survey form is counted as a separate unit. For example, if both the Strategy Development Department and the Directorate Cultural and Social Affairs of a municipality fill out the survey, both categories are separately counted.

ipalities with departments, divisions, units, or offices specializing in foreign relations and 19 municipalities with a Directorate/Division of Strategy Development unit.²⁶

Similarly, the level of authority of representatives involved in foreign relations also varies among municipalities. Reflecting this, in some municipalities, the survey was answered by senior executives such as mayors or deputy mayors, while in others, it was completed by specialists. A total of 213 municipal representatives contributed to completing the survey forms as part of the research.²⁷ The majority of respondents were senior to mid-level managers, including department heads, directors, acting directors, unit supervisors, chiefs, coordinators, or administrators.

Table 2: Distribution of Municipal Representatives Who Completed the Survey

Title	Number of Municipalities
Mayor/Deputy Mayor/Acting Mayor	16
Advisor to the Mayor	1
Head of Department/Director/Acting Director/Unit Supervisor/Chief/Coordinators/Administrator	130
Specialist	66

In the report, the survey questions for the research are evaluated under eight subheadings. These subheadings are as follows: “Institutional Structures of Municipalities Regarding Foreign Relations”, “Opinions of Municipal Personnel on Foreign Relations”, “Memberships of Municipalities in International Networks”, “Sister City Relationships of Municipalities”, “Municipalities’ Participation in International Projects”, “International Cooperation Agreements of Municipalities”, “Municipalities’ Participation in International Events”, and “Municipalities’ Awareness and Activities Regarding the Global Agenda”.

Under the section “Institutional Structures of Municipalities Regarding Foreign Relations”, the institutionalization of municipalities in the field of international relations, human resources, communication with internal and external actors, and institutional decision-making processes related to foreign relations were examined. In the section “Opinions of Municipal Personnel on Foreign Relations”, the perspectives of municipal staff participating in the survey on municipalities’ international relations activities were discussed. This section also included the challenges municipalities face in this area and the personal opinions of municipal representatives

²⁶ In addition to the units listed in Table 1, the following departments were represented by the respondents: Directorate of Support Services, Communication Coordination, Survey and Projects Department, Directorate/Office/Unit of R&D, Directorate of Innovation and Technology, Directorate of Media, Publications and Public Relations/ Directorate of Public Relations, Directorate of Environment Protection and Control, Directorate of Financial Services, Directorate of Technical Works, Smart City and Digital Transformation Unit, Climate Change and Zero Waste Department, Project Management and Corporate Relations Unit, and Collection Services Unit.

²⁷ When multiple representatives from the same municipality filled out the survey, each representative was individually added to the dataset. For this reason, the total number of municipalities represented in the table (213) exceeds the number of municipalities participating in the study (187).

on how local diplomacy activities can be better conducted. The section “Memberships of Municipalities in International Networks” analyzed the connections that local governments have established with international urban networks, highlighting which networks are more prominent in the region. It also focused on the areas of collaboration between municipalities and these networks, their participation in network activities, the contributions they receive from the networks, and the support they provide to the networks. The topic of “sister cities”, which is the most widely focused subject in local diplomacy by both municipalities and academia, was explored in the section titled “Sister City Relationships of Municipalities”. This section delved into the dynamics of sister city relationships established by municipalities with cities abroad and assessed the challenges faced in this field. Topics such as the reasons municipalities establish sister city relationships, the activities carried out with sister cities, and the communication established between the cities were also addressed.

In the section “Municipalities’ Participation in International Projects”, prominent grant and funding sources for municipalities in the Marmara Region were identified. The focus was placed on international projects implemented with financial support from overseas institutions or involving foreign partners. Stakeholder relations in these projects, the collaborating institutions, key themes, the units managing the projects, the process from grant application to project completion, and challenges encountered during this period were evaluated. The section “International Cooperation Agreements of Municipalities” examined agreements and protocols made by municipalities with entities other than their sister cities abroad, including international organizations, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, and private sector entities. These agreements may aim to implement projects or establish broader partnerships, and the analysis focused on the areas where such agreements are concentrated. In the section “Municipalities’ Participation in International Events”, the participation of municipalities in international events held abroad or in Türkiye, as well as their visits to institutions representing Türkiye abroad, were discussed. Finally, local governments conduct activities to contribute to the achievement of goals set by international institutions or agreements. The research’s final section, titled “Municipalities’ Awareness and Activities Regarding the Global Agenda”, evaluated the awareness and initiatives of MMU member municipalities regarding prominent international agendas adopted by organizations such as the EU and UN, including the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

MUNICIPALITIES PARTICIPATING IN THE RESEARCH

The research area was defined as the 11 provinces in the Marmara Region: Balıkesir, Bilecik, Bolu, Bursa, Çanakkale, Edirne, İstanbul, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ, and Yalova. All MMU member municipalities in these provinces participated in the study.²⁸ Accordingly, a total of 187 municipalities, encompassing five different types—metropolitan municipalities, provincial municipalities, metropolitan district municipalities, provincial district municipalities, and town municipalities—were included in the research. Nearly all participating municipalities responded to the majority of the survey questions. Only a small number of municipalities left certain questions or sections unanswered due to a lack of relevant information.

²⁸As of the start of the research (December 2022), MMU has 187 member municipalities.

Table 3: Municipalities Participating in the Research**Metropolitan Municipalities**

Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality
 Bursa Metropolitan Municipality
 İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality
 Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality
 Sakarya Metropolitan Municipality
 Tekirdağ Metropolitan Municipality

Provincial Municipalities

Bilecik Municipality
 Çanakkale Municipality
 Edirne Municipality
 Kırklareli Municipality
 Yalova Municipality

Metropolitan District Mun.

Adalar Municipality
 Adapazarı Municipality
 Akyazı Municipality
 Altıeylül Municipality
 Arifiye Municipality
 Arnavutköy Municipality
 Ataşehir Municipality
 Avcılar Municipality
 Ayvalık Municipality
 Bağcılar Municipality
 Bahçelievler Municipality
 Balya Municipality
 Bandırma Municipality
 Başakşehir Municipality
 Başiskele Municipality
 Bayrampaşa Municipality
 Beşiktaş Municipality
 Beykoz Municipality
 Beylikdüzü Municipality

Beyoğlu Municipality
 Büyükçekmece Municipality
 Büyükorhan Municipality
 Çatalca Municipality
 Çayırova Municipality
 Çekmeköy Municipality
 Çerkezköy Municipality
 Çorlu Municipality
 Darıca Municipality
 Derince Municipality
 Dilovası Municipality
 Dursunbey Municipality
 Edremit Municipality
 Erdek Municipality
 Erenler Municipality
 Ergene Municipality
 Esenler Municipality
 Esenyurt Municipality
 Eyüpsultan Municipality
 Fatih Municipality
 Ferizli Municipality
 Gaziosmanpaşa Municipality
 Gebze Municipality
 Gemlik Municipality
 Geyve Municipality
 Gölcük Municipality
 Gömeç Municipality
 Gönen Municipality
 Güngören Municipality
 Gürsu Municipality
 Harmancık Municipality
 Havran Municipality
 Hayrabolu Municipality
 İnegöl Municipality
 İvrindi Municipality

İzmit Municipality
 İznik Municipality
 Kadıköy Municipality
 Kağıthane Municipality
 Kandıra Municipality
 Kapaklı Municipality
 Karacabey Municipality
 Karamürsel Municipality
 Karapürçek Municipality
 Karasu Municipality
 Karesi Municipality
 Kartal Municipality
 Kartepe Municipality
 Kaynarca Municipality
 Keles Municipality
 Kepsut Municipality
 Kestel Municipality
 Kocaeli Municipality
 Körfez Municipality
 Küçükçekmece Municipality
 Malkara Municipality
 Maltepe Municipality
 Manyas Municipality
 Marmara Adalar Municipality
 Marmaraeğlisi Municipality
 Mudanya Municipality
 Mustafakemalpaşa Municipality
 Nilüfer Municipality
 Orhaneli Municipality
 Osmangazi Municipality
 Pamukova Municipality
 Pendik Municipality
 Sancaktepe Municipality
 Sapanca Municipality
 Saray Municipality

Table 3: Municipalities Participating in the Research**Metropolitan District Mun.**

Sarıyer Municipality

Savaştepe Municipality

Serdivan Municipality

Sındırgı Municipality

Silivri Municipality

Söğütlü Municipality

Sultanbeyli Municipality

Sultangazi Municipality

Susurluk Municipality

Süleymanpaşa Municipality

Şarköy Municipality

Şile Municipality

Şişli Municipality

Taraklı Municipality

Tuzla Municipality

Ümraniye Municipality

Üsküdar Municipality

Yenişehir Municipality

Yıldırım Municipality

Zeytinburnu Municipality

Provincial District Municipalities

Altınova Municipality

Armutlu Municipality

Ayvacık Municipality

Babaeski Municipality

Biga Municipality

Bozcaada Municipality

Bozüyük Municipality

Çınarcık Municipality

Çiftlikköy Municipality

Demirköy Municipality

Eceabat Municipality

Enez Municipality

Ezine Municipality

Gelibolu Municipality

Gökçeada Municipality

Gölpazarı Municipality

Havsa Municipality

İnhisar Municipality

İpsala Municipality

Kofçaz Municipality

Lalapaşa Municipality

Lapseki Municipality

Lüleburgaz Municipality

Meriç Municipality

Osmaneli Municipality

Pazaryeri Municipality

Pehlivan köy Municipality

Pınarhisar Municipality

Söğüt Municipality

Süloğlu Municipality

Termal Municipality

Uzunköprü Municipality

Vize Municipality

Yenice Municipality

Yenipazar Municipality

Town Municipalities

Ahmetbey Municipality

Bayırköy Municipality

Beğendik Municipality

Büyükkarıştıran Municipality

Büyükmandıra Municipality

Çakıllı Municipality

Çardak Municipality

Dodurga Municipality

Esenköy Municipality

Evrensekiz Municipality

Gümüşçay Municipality

İğneada Municipality

İncece Municipality

Kadıköy Municipality

Kalkım Municipality

Karabiga Municipality

Karahalil Municipality

Kavakköy Municipality

Kavaklı Municipality

Kaynarca Municipality

Kaytazdere Municipality

Kircasalih Municipality

Kıyıköy Municipality

Küçük kuyu Municipality

Subaşı Municipality

Terzialan Municipality

Teşvikiye Municipality

Umurbey Municipality

Üsküp Municipality

Vezirhan Municipality

Yenikarpuzlu Municipality

Yenimuhacir Municipality







RESEARCH FINDINGS

1. Institutional Structures of Municipalities Regarding Foreign Relations

1. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES OF MUNICIPALITIES REGARDING FOREIGN RELATIONS

Global interactions of local governments are gaining increasing importance. Municipalities are developing new institutional mechanisms or assigning foreign relations responsibilities to existing structures, engaging in activities to enhance the knowledge levels of their staff on this subject, allocating budgets for foreign relations activities, and collaborating with other public institutions in carrying out these activities. The first section of the research, focusing on institutional structures, aims to examine how the institutional structures of municipalities in the Marmara Region are organized and what functions they serve in terms of foreign relations. Questions addressing a range of issues, from the existence of dedicated units handling international relations to their organizational positions, give insight into the capacities of local governments in this area. Additionally, details such as the qualifications, foreign language proficiency, and educational backgrounds of the personnel working in these units are evaluated. Through this analysis, the research aims to provide comprehensive findings on the institutional capacities of local governments in international cooperation and diplomacy activities. The “Institutional Structures of Municipalities Regarding Foreign Relations” section of the survey posed 19 questions to the municipalities. All 187 participating municipalities responded to the relevant questions in this section.²⁹ The section comprises multiple-choice questions with single or multiple answers, yes/no questions, and open-ended questions.

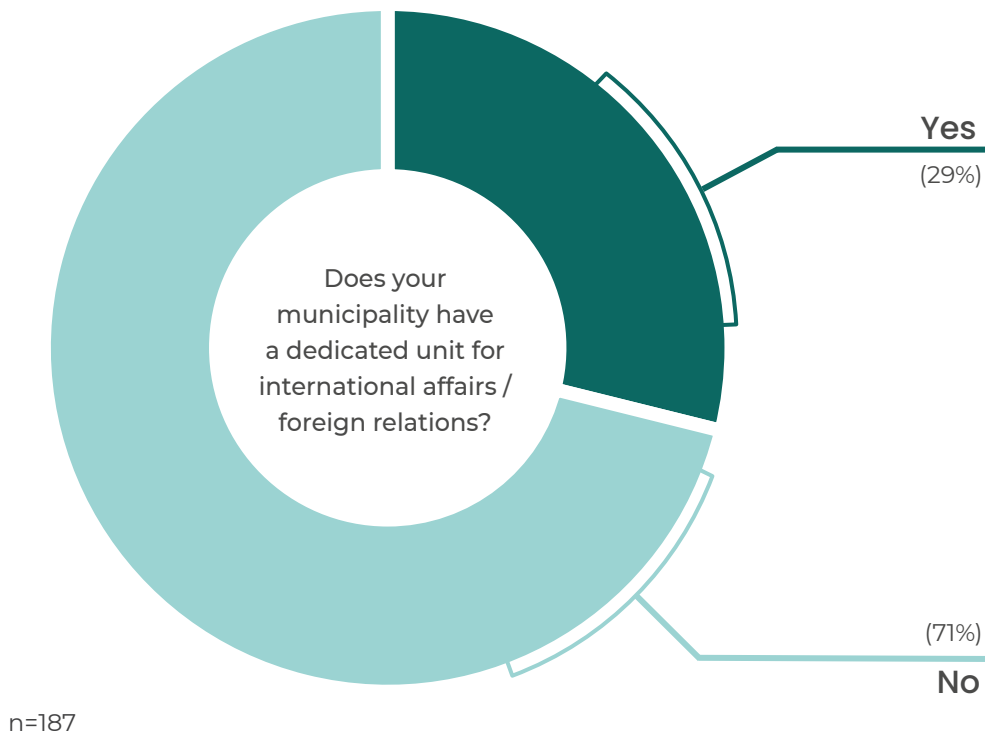
The section on institutional structures was examined thematically under three subgroups: (1) Foreign relations units in municipalities, (2) Personnel and institutional structure of the foreign relations units (or the units conducting the work), and (3) Relations with external stakeholders. Findings gathered under these three subgroups, analyzed in the context of municipal scale and provincial breakdowns, provide detailed information about the institutional structures, personnel capacities, and activities carried out by 187 municipalities in the Marmara Region. In cases where municipalities selected the “other” option for multiple-choice questions because the given choices did not fit their responses, these selections were elaborated on, and detailed answers were shared anonymously where significant.

²⁹ Some questions were directed only to municipalities actively engaged in the respective field of work. If a municipality was not involved in that area, the municipal representative did not respond to those questions.

Foreign Relations Units in Municipalities

Not all municipalities have a dedicated unit responsible for conducting foreign relations activities. In such cases, it becomes necessary that these activities are carried out under different units or shared among various units. For this reason, municipalities were first asked whether they had a specific unit focused on foreign relations activities. The findings show that only 29% of municipalities have a dedicated unit operating in the field of foreign relations.

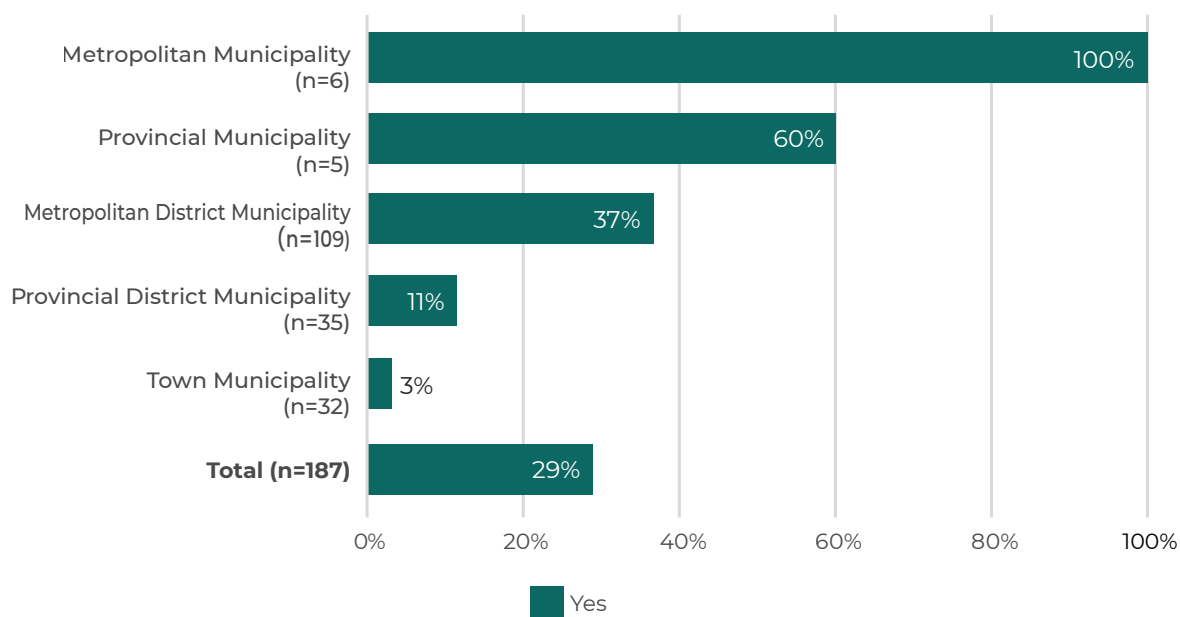
Figure 1: Ratio of Municipalities with a Foreign Relations Unit



When examined by municipality type, all metropolitan municipalities are found to have a dedicated foreign relations unit. Among the five provincial municipalities, three have such units. The smaller the scale of the municipality—from metropolitan to provincial, metropolitan district, provincial district, and town—the lower the proportion of municipalities with a dedicated foreign relations unit. In town municipalities, this rate is as low as 3%. Among the total of 32 town municipalities, only one has a dedicated foreign relations unit, and a similar pattern is observed in provincial district municipalities as well. Of the 35 provincial district municipalities that responded to the survey, only 4 (11%) reported having a separate unit. However, the institutional structures of district municipalities in provinces and those in metropolitan areas differ significantly. Among the 109 metropolitan district municipalities that responded, the proportion with foreign relations units is 37%. Thus, it can be concluded that the scale of a municipality significantly influences the development of institutional structures related to foreign relations.

Figure 2: Municipalities' Foreign Relations Units by Type of Municipality

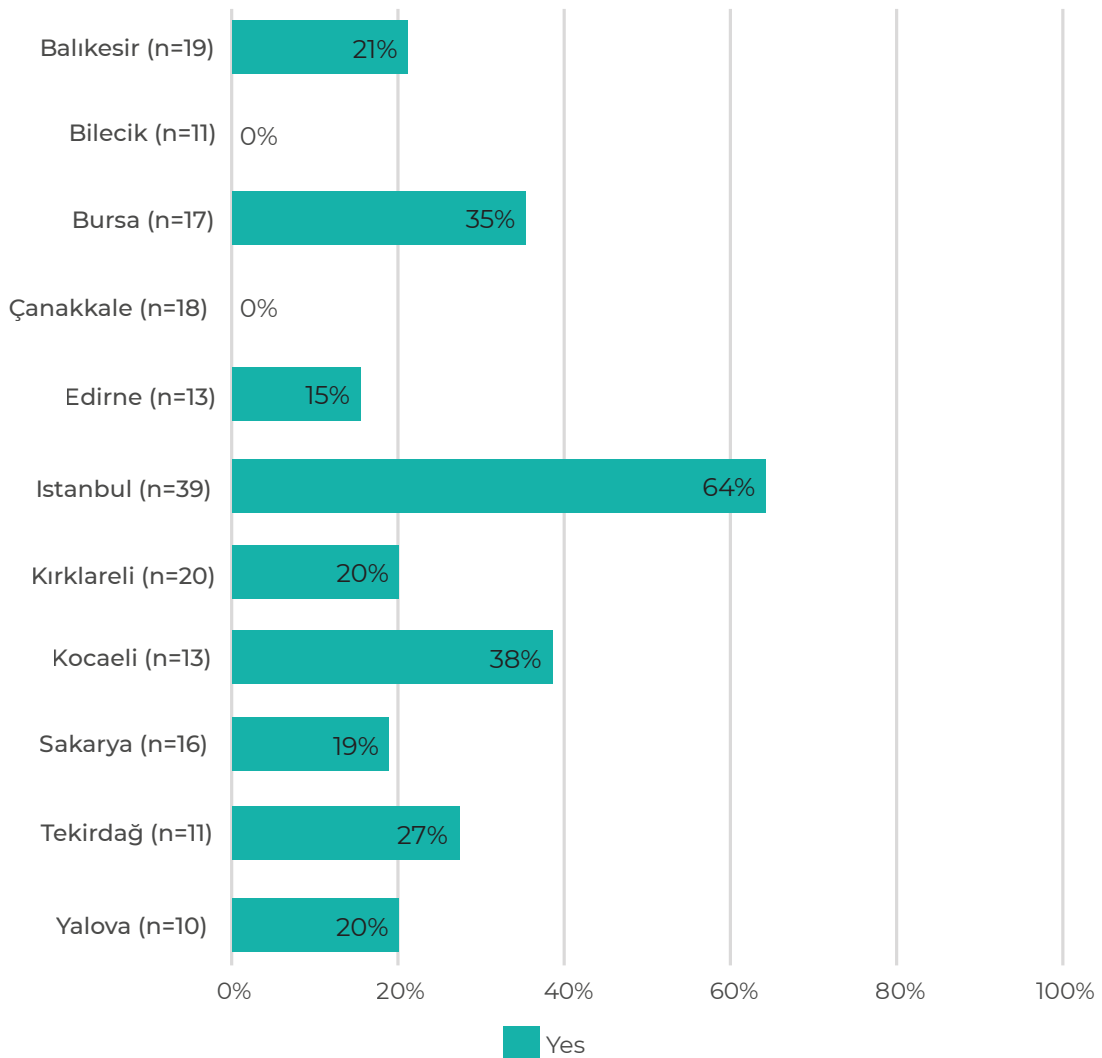
Does your municipality have a dedicated unit for international affairs /foreign relations?



When analyzed by provincial breakdown, Istanbul stands out with the highest proportion of municipalities having a dedicated foreign relations unit, at 64%. Following Istanbul, there is a sharp decline, with Kocaeli (38%) and Bursa (35%) ranking next.

Figure 3: Municipalities' Foreign Relations Units by Province

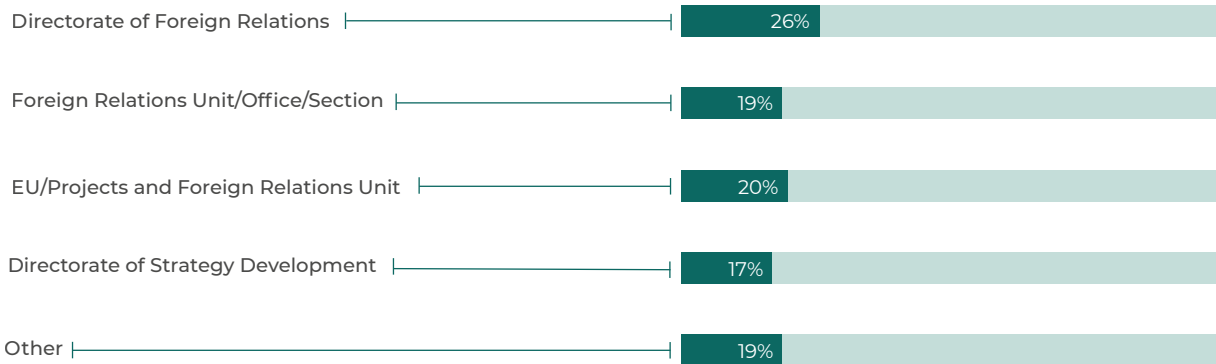
Does your municipality have a dedicated unit for international affairs /foreign relations?



In municipalities with dedicated foreign relations units, the names of these units vary. Among the 54 municipalities that reported having a separate foreign relations unit, only 14 named it “Directorate of Foreign Relations”. The foreign relations unit of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, established in 1984, is the oldest unit among those surveyed. Following this, it can be observed that directorates began to be established in various municipalities in 2004 and 2005, with a notable increase in activity during the 2010s. The local government reform initiated in Türkiye in 2004 is likely to have contributed to the institutionalization of foreign relations in municipalities. In municipalities without a “Directorate of Foreign Relations”, activities are carried out under titles such as “Foreign Relations Unit/Office/Section”. Additionally, as seen in Figure 4, some units operate under the umbrella of the EU, Projects or Strategy Development Departments.

Figure 4: Names of Foreign Relations Units in Municipalities

What is the name of the unit dedicated to foreign relations in your municipality?



n = 54

In municipalities without dedicated foreign relations units, the departments most frequently mentioned as handling foreign relations activities are the “Directorate of Registry” and the “Office of the Private Secretary”. According to responses, these units are primarily responsible for correspondence and procedural matters, often working in collaboration with relevant departments as needed. Moreover, the “Directorate of Technical Works” for its work on environmental projects and collaborations, and the “Directorate of Cultural and Social Affairs” for its work on cultural collaborations, such as sister city programs, are cited as the primary executors in foreign relations. Thus, in municipalities without dedicated foreign relations units, responsibilities are sometimes shared between the primary responsible unit and relevant thematic units, or activities are directly referred to the thematic unit in charge.

When asked which unit supports the primary unit responsible for foreign relations within the municipality, the most common responses were the “Office of the Private Secretary” (16 municipalities) and the “Directorate of Cultural and Social Affairs” (7 municipalities). Other responses included the “Directorate of Strategy Development” and the “Directorate of Technical Works”.

Table 4: Units Conducting Foreign Relations Activities in Municipalities without a Specific Foreign Relations Unit

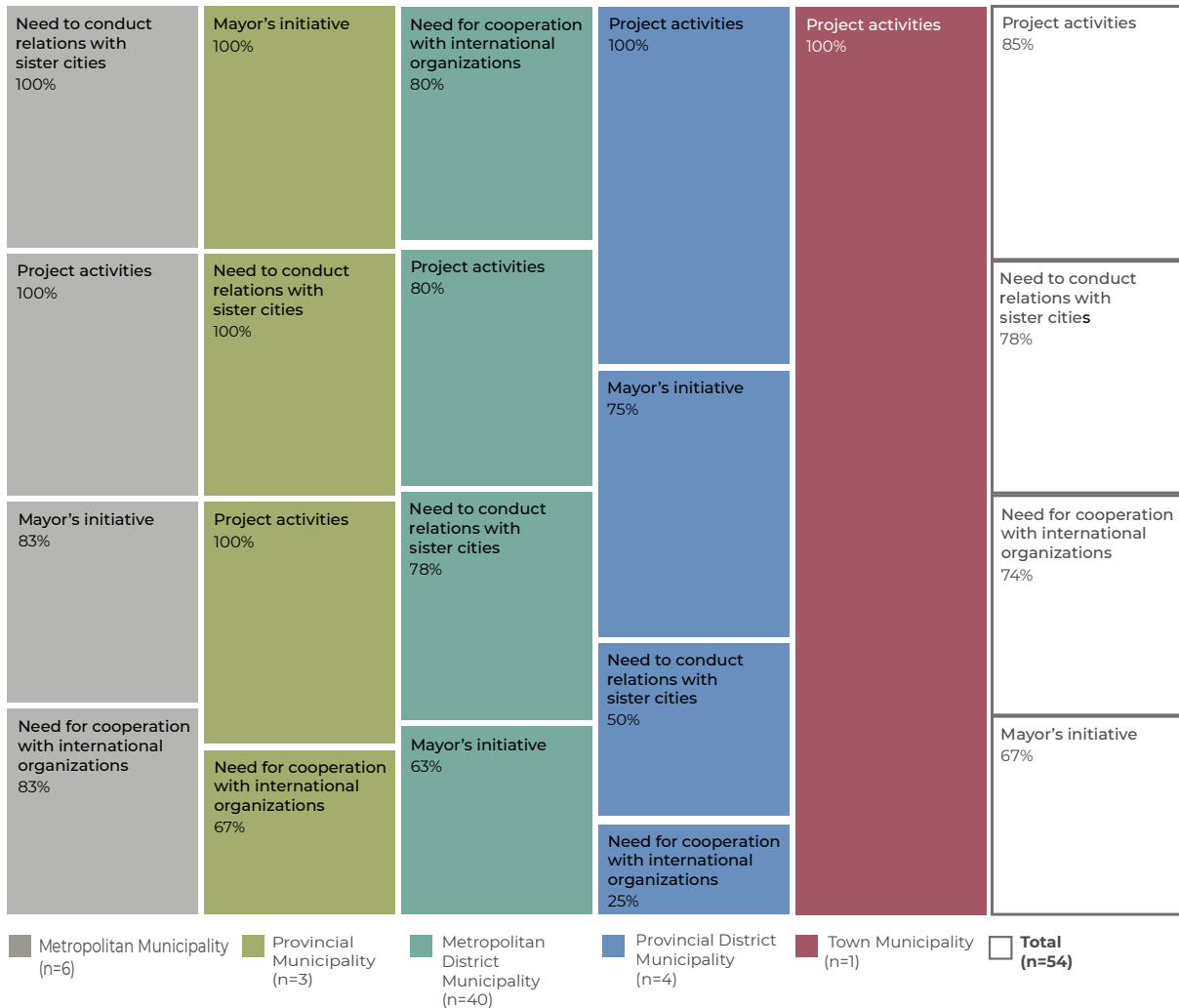
Name of the Unit Conducting Foreign Relations	Number of Municipalities
Directorate of Registry	27
Office of the Private Secretary	24
Directorate of Cultural and Social Affairs	18
Directorate of Strategy Development	7
Directorate of Technical Works	8
Directorate of Media, Publications and Public Relations	10
Mayor/Deputy Mayor	9
Directorate of Public Relations	6
Other	25

In the question regarding the reasons for establishing a foreign relations unit within municipalities, respondents were allowed to select multiple options. Looking at the overall results, the most frequently selected reason was “project activities” at 85%, while the least selected was “mayor’s initiative” at 67%. Sixteen municipalities that selected the “other” option mentioned reasons such as the EU alignment process, being a border region with the EU, activities with unions, and relationships with consulates.

The mayor’s initiative option was most commonly selected at the level of provincial municipalities. Both the “sister city relationships” and “project activities” options were selected by all metropolitan and provincial municipalities. Since town and provincial district municipalities with a foreign relation unit were very few in number, it would not be accurate to make generalizations about them on this matter. Looking at town municipalities, which face the greatest challenges in terms of capacity and personnel and represent the smallest municipal scale, it is seen that only one municipality has a foreign relations unit, and this municipality selected “project activities” for this question. Among the four provincial district municipalities that responded to the question, although the distribution of responses was not entirely balanced, “project activities” was selected by all of them.

Figure 5: Reasons for Establishing Foreign Relations Units in Municipalities by Type of Municipality

What is the reason for establishing the foreign relations unit within your municipality?



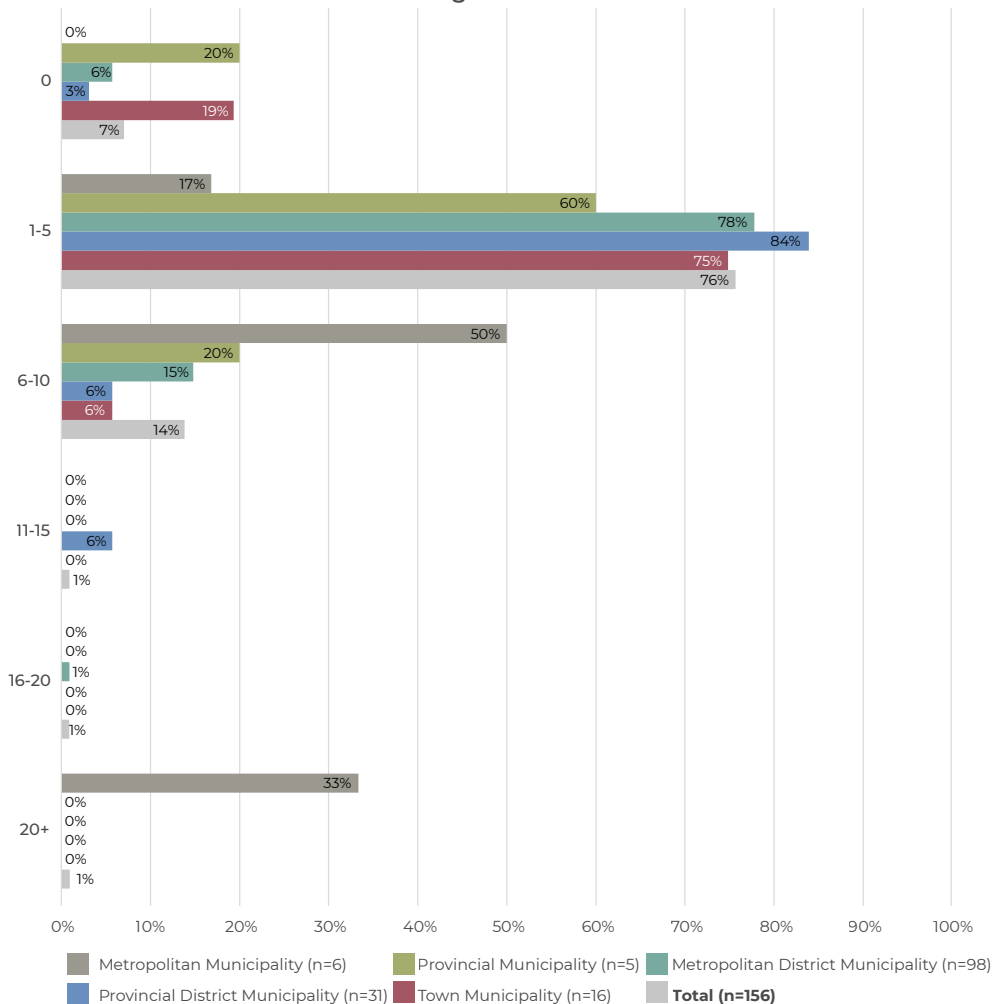
When examining the reasons for establishing a foreign relations unit by province, the distribution of responses is more balanced, ranging from 33% to 100%. In all 9 provinces with foreign relations units, every option was selected at least once, with “project activities” being the most frequently selected. In Istanbul municipalities, which have the highest number and proportion of foreign relations units, all four reasons were selected within a range of 64% to 88%, showing a balanced distribution.

Personnel and Institutional Structure of Units Conducting Foreign Relations Activities in Municipalities

One of the most important factors for carrying out foreign relations activities, such as project activities, sister city relationships, participation in international events and networks, is personnel capacity. The number of personnel specialized in foreign relations or primarily working in this field, as well as their educational background and foreign language proficiency, are crucial for being effective in foreign relations. Therefore, questions regarding the human resources of municipalities were asked in the survey. It was found that the personnel working in foreign relations units within municipalities generally work in very small teams.

Figure 7: Number of Personnel Conducting Foreign Relations Activities in Municipalities by Type of Municipality

If your municipality has a foreign relations unit, how many personnel does it consist of? / If your municipality does not have a foreign relations unit, how many employees in the relevant unit handle foreign relations activities?

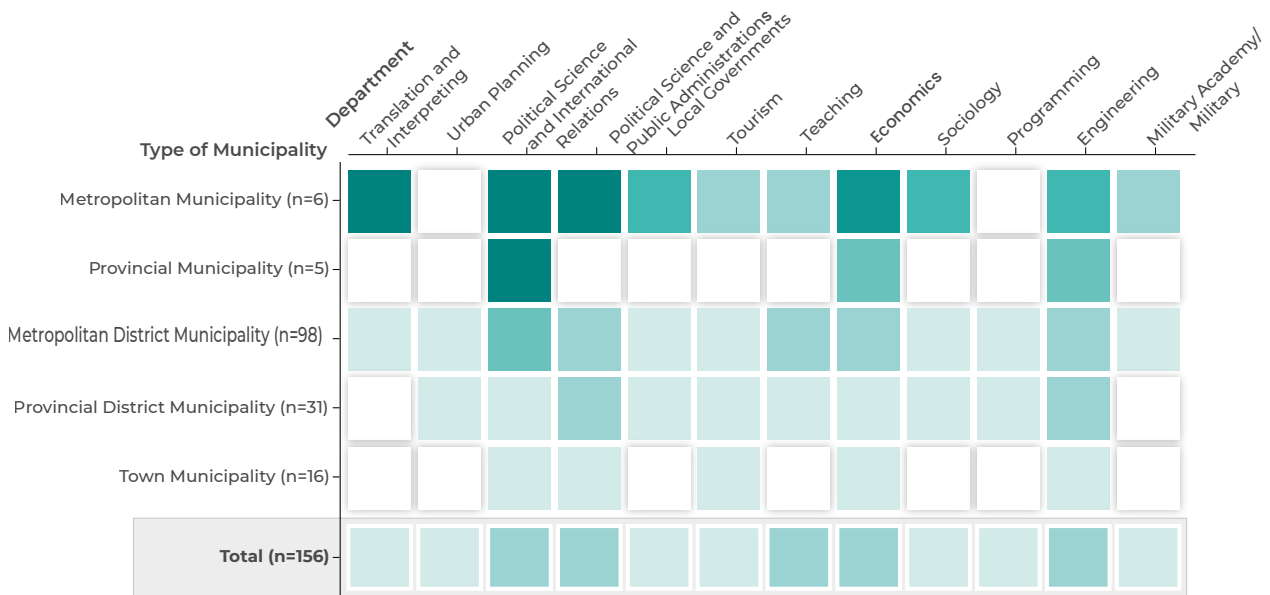


Of the 156 municipalities, 76% have between 1 and 5 personnel and 14% of municipalities employ between 6 and 10 personnel, while only two metropolitan municipalities have more than 20 personnel working in the foreign relations units. As might be expected when considering the human resources available, the highest number of personnel is in metropolitan municipalities, and the lowest is in town municipalities. There was no significant difference between district municipalities in metropolitan and provincial areas in terms of staff numbers.

Looking at the provincial averages, it can be seen that more than half of the municipalities in all provinces employ between 1 and 5 staff. Istanbul and Bursa are the only cities where the option for 20+ staff was selected, at 3% and 6% respectively, while this rate was zero in all other provinces.

Figure 8: Educational Backgrounds of Personnel Conducting Foreign Relations Activities in Municipalities

Which departments have the personnel involved in foreign relations activities within your municipality graduated from?



When examining the academic backgrounds of personnel working in foreign relations, the highest proportions are in Political Science and/or International Relations (22%), followed by Engineering (21%) and Political Science and/or Public Administration (20%).³⁰ These are followed by the fields of Economics and Teaching. The percentage of personnel with education specifically in the department of Local Governments is the lowest, at 6%. Among the 116 municipalities that selected the “Other” option, the most frequently mentioned fields are Business, Labor Economics, Law, and Public Relations.

³⁰ One potential reason for the high representation of the Engineering Department may be personnel working on project-based tasks.

In metropolitan municipalities, the highest percentages of graduates are from Translation and Interpreting Studies (67%), Political Science and/or International Relations, and Political Science and/or Public Administration. Sociology graduates also make up a significant 33% of the workforce in metropolitan areas. In district and town municipalities, Engineering graduates stand out at around 20%, indicating a demand for technical knowledge in smaller municipalities. For provincial municipalities, the most prominent detail is that around 60% of staff are graduates of Political Science and/or Public Administration. On one hand, in all types of municipalities, graduates in Programming, Urban Planning, and Military Academies/Military are the least represented in foreign relations, ranging from 0% to 5% and stand out as the academic backgrounds least related to foreign relations. However, Military Academy/Army graduates are more commonly employed in metropolitan municipalities, where they represent 17% of the staff, while in other municipalities this figure ranges from 0% to 5%.

When examining the data by province, Istanbul stands out with 49% of personnel holding degrees in Political Science and/or International Relations, followed by 32% in Economics and 27% in Political Science and/or Public Administration. In Edirne, Engineering graduates make up 44%, while graduates from other departments range from 0% to 11%. With a similar ratio, Teaching graduates take the lead with 36% in Tekirdağ. Kocaeli's municipalities show a preference with 23% of staff with degrees in Political Science and/or International Relations, while also employing 15% from Economics and Engineering fields. In general, Programming, Tourism, and Military Academy/Army graduates are underrepresented in the provincial context or not employed at all.

When asked whether municipal personnel involved in foreign relations activities received training in diplomacy, etiquette, protocol, and other related topics, 62% of municipal representatives stated that they had not received any training, while 33% reported having received training. Only 3% marked the "other" option, indicating they received training outside the municipality on their own.

Metropolitan municipalities had the highest rate of training, with 67% of them reporting "yes" to receiving training. Also answering "yes", provincial municipalities followed with 40%, metropolitan district municipalities at 37%, and provincial district municipalities at 29%. The lowest percentage of training was found in town municipalities, at just 6%. Looking at the provincial breakdown, the highest percentages of "yes" responses came from Sakarya (50%), Istanbul (46%), and Tekirdağ (45%) municipalities.

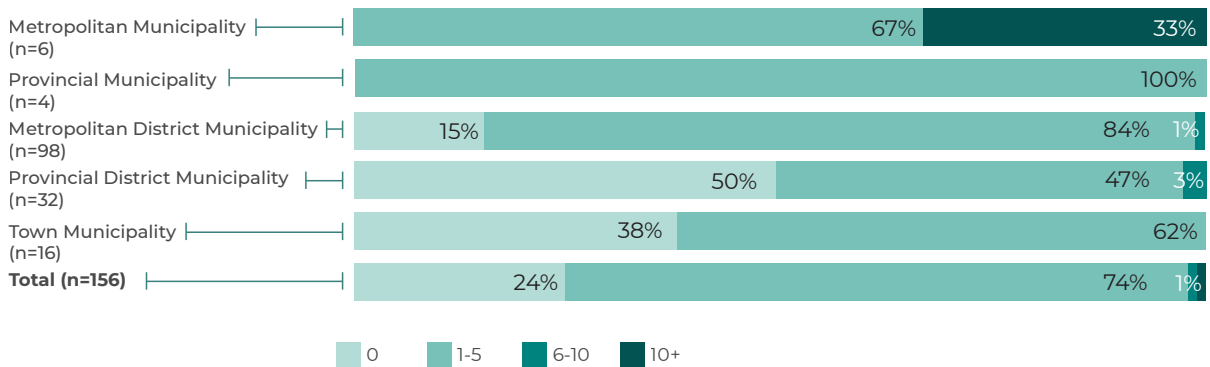
Regarding the number of staff with foreign language skills, 74% of municipalities reported having between 1-5 foreign language-speaking employees, while 24% had no employees with foreign language skills. Given that proficiency in foreign languages is imperative for carrying out any international activities, it is clear that these municipalities urgently need personnel who can communicate in foreign languages.

When analyzed by type of municipality, metropolitan municipalities were the only ones with more than 10 employees speaking foreign languages. A significant difference between metropolitan and provincial district municipalities emerged in this aspect as well, with 84% of metropolitan district municipalities reporting 1-5 foreign language speakers, while this figure dropped to 47% in provincial district municipalities.

Additionally, municipalities without any foreign language-speaking staff were most frequently found in provincial district municipalities (50%), followed by town municipalities (38%) and metropolitan district municipalities (15%). There were no municipalities in metropolitan or provincial areas reporting a complete lack of foreign language-speaking staff. This aligns with the expected institutional capacities of larger municipalities namely provincial and metropolitan municipalities.

Figure 9: Number of Foreign-Language-Speaking Personnel in Units Conducting Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality

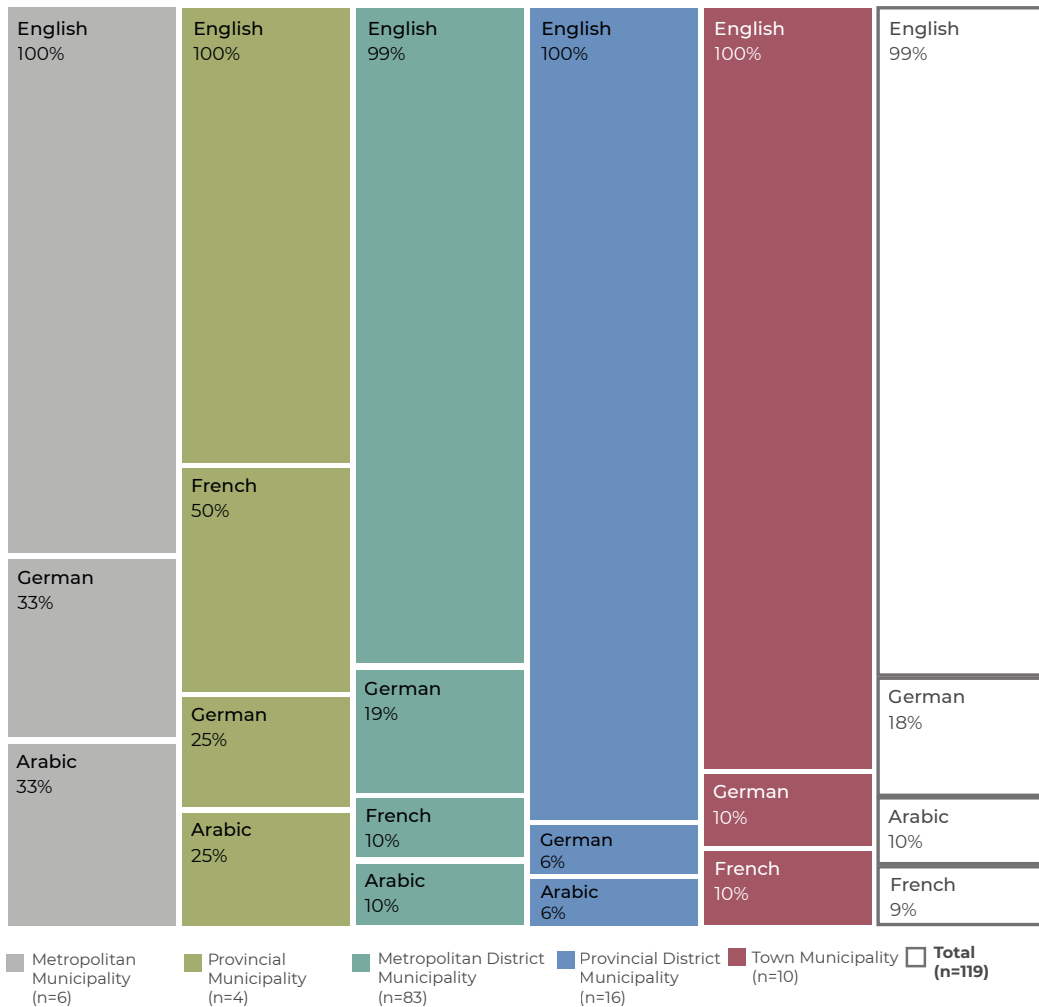
If your municipality has a foreign relations unit, how many personnel in this unit are proficient in foreign languages? / If your municipality does not have a foreign relations unit, how many personnel conducting foreign relations activities are proficient in foreign languages?



When examining by province, the two provinces with the highest number of municipalities with more than 10 foreign language-speaking staff were Bursa and Istanbul. In Bursa, 6% of municipalities reported having more than 10 staff who speak foreign languages, while Istanbul followed with 3%. Overall, the distribution of responses across the provincial breakdown shows that the majority of municipalities fell within the “0” and “1-5” categories. The provinces with the highest percentage of municipalities reporting “0” foreign language speakers were Çanakkale (60%) and Bilecik (57%), while Istanbul had the lowest percentage of “0” responses, at 11%.

Figure 10: Languages Known by Municipality Personnel Conducting Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality

If the personnel involved in foreign relations activities within your municipality are proficient in foreign languages, which languages do they speak?

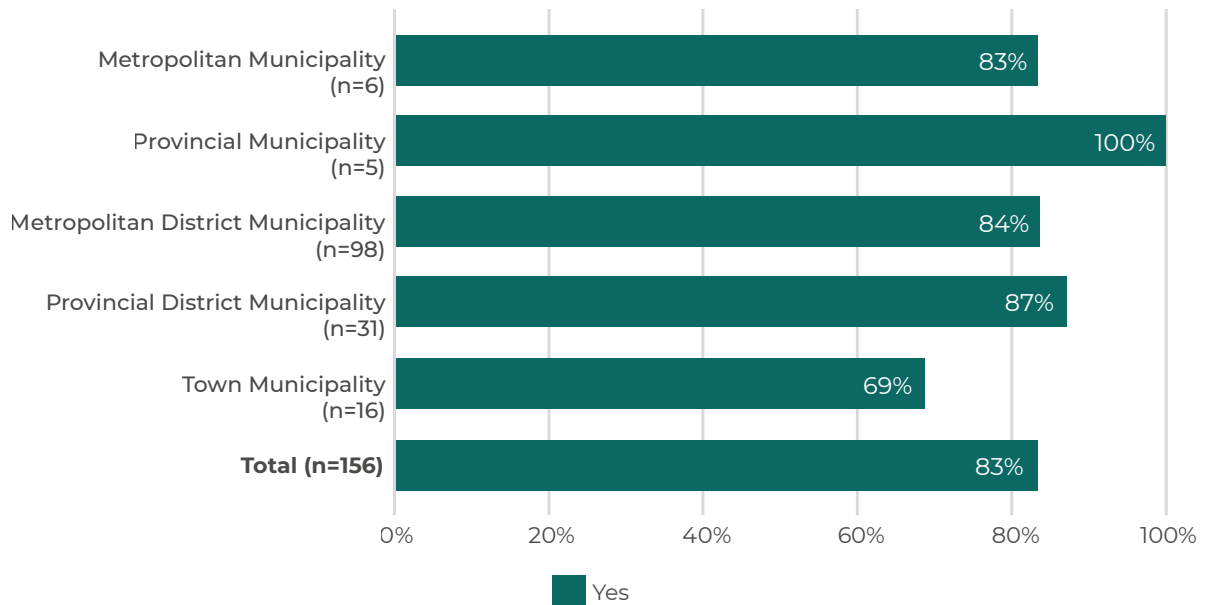


Among the 119 municipalities that reported having personnel who speak foreign languages, the most commonly spoken language was English, with 99% of municipalities indicating proficiency. This was followed by German (18%), Arabic (10%), and French (9%). The most frequently mentioned language under the “other” category was Bulgarian, which was noted by 9 municipalities. Russian, Spanish, and Italian were also mentioned. The percentage of municipalities with English-speaking staff was 100% for both metropolitan and provincial municipalities. As with other questions, there was a decrease in the proportion of municipalities reporting foreign language proficiency as we moved from metropolitan district municipalities to provincial district municipalities.

When municipal representatives were asked whether there is consultation with the mayor and/or deputy mayors regarding foreign relations and international collaborations within the municipality, 83% of the total respondents answered “yes”. Provincial municipalities were the only ones with 100% “yes” responses, while town municipalities were at the bottom with 69% regarding consultation with senior management.

Figure 11: Rate of Consultation between Municipality Personnel and Senior Management Regarding Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality

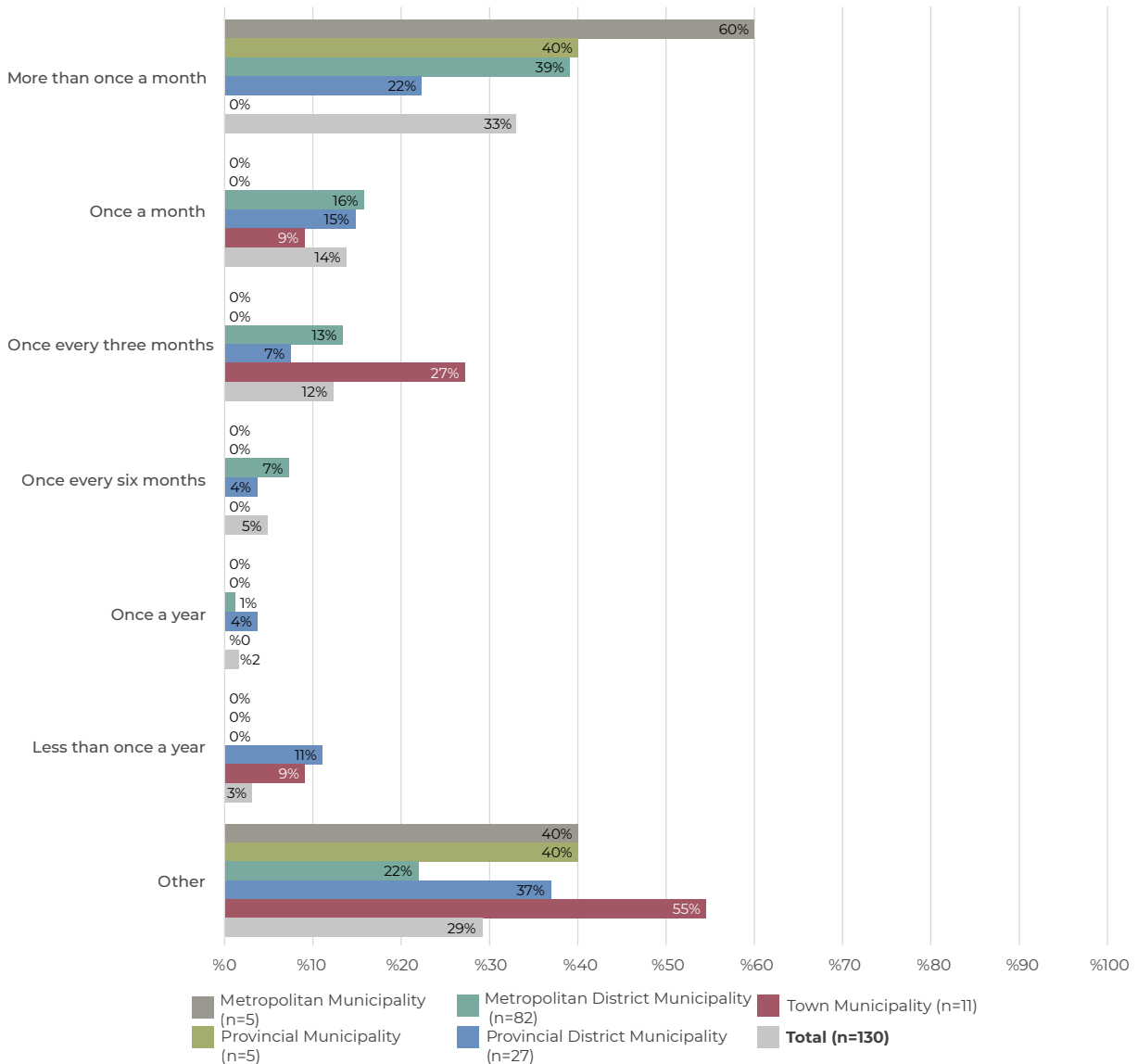
Do you consult with the mayor and/or deputy mayors regarding activities related to foreign relations and international cooperation?



A balanced distribution was observed when looking at the type of municipalities. Over 60% of municipalities in all provinces indicated that they engage in consultations with senior management on foreign relations. The percentage of municipalities that reported such consultations ranged from 62% in Kocaeli, which had the lowest percentage, to 94% in Bursa and Kirklareli, which had the highest.

Figure 12: Frequency of Consultation between Municipality Personnel and Senior Management Regarding Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality

How often do you meet with the mayor and/or deputy mayors for consultations?



In the question about the frequency of consultations with the mayor or deputy mayor, 130 municipalities provided answers regarding their consultation habits. An option to select “other” was included in order for municipalities that do not consult periodically to submit an open-ended response. The most frequently selected responses were “more than once a month” (33%) and “other” (29%). A smaller percentage of municipalities reported consulting once a month (14%), and fewer municipalities reported consulting less than once every six

months, once a year, or less frequently, with responses ranging from 2-5%. This indicates that, overall, there is a relatively high frequency of consultation with senior management in the field of international relations. The “other” responses indicated that consultations occur as needed, such as when a project arises, when requests are made, when issues related to foreign relations come up in the agenda, or whenever necessary.

In terms of the type of municipality, “more than once a month” was most frequently selected by metropolitan municipalities, with the frequency decreasing as the municipality size got smaller, reaching zero for town municipalities. The highest frequency of “once a month” responses was from metropolitan district municipalities (16%) and provincial district municipalities (15%). The option for “once every three months” was most commonly selected by town municipalities, at 27%.

Looking at the provincial breakdown, the provinces where municipalities reported meeting more than once a month with the mayor or deputy mayor were Istanbul (52%), Edirne (50%), and Kocaeli (50%). Similar to the overall response, the provincial distribution showed a concentration in the “more than once a month” and “other” options. The remaining frequencies were more evenly distributed among the options of “more than once a month”, “once a month” and “once every three months”.

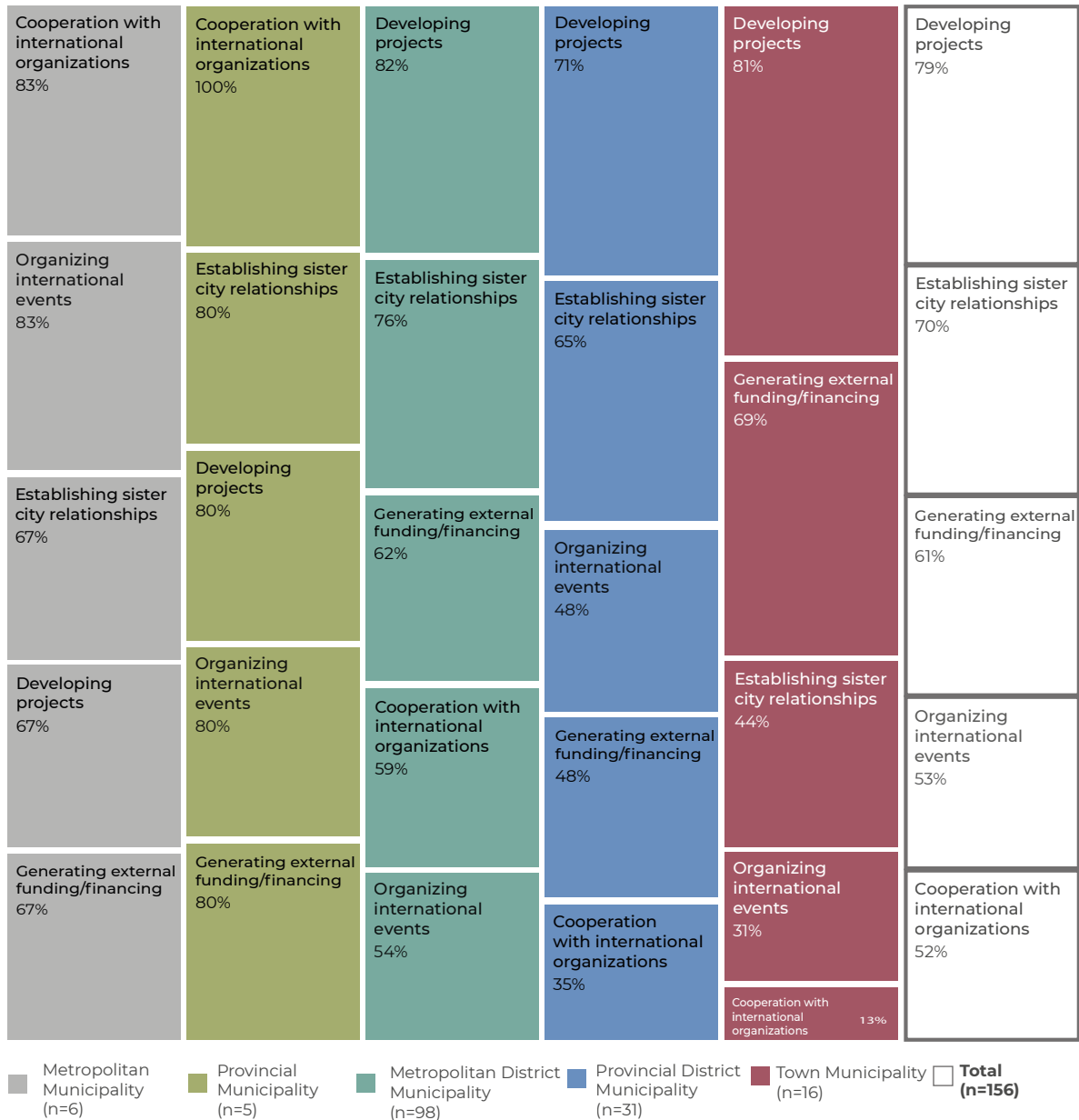
Following the topic of consultation with senior management, the next question focused on the expectations of mayors or deputy mayors from the units responsible for foreign relations activities. The general results revealed that the highest expectation was on project development with 79%. This was followed by establishing sister city relationships (70%) and generating external funding/financing (61%).

The survey allowed multiple selections for this question and although cooperation with international organizations (52%) and organizing international events (53%) were the least selected responses, they still represented relatively high expectations with over 50% of respondents indicating these options. Additionally, 17 municipalities selected the “other” option. Elaborating on their response, some municipalities noted that there were no specific expectations from the department, while others mentioned expectations such as legal monitoring, translation support, and promoting the municipality.

By type of municipality, the highest expectations in metropolitan municipalities were for cooperation with international organizations and organizing international events, both at 83%. In provincial municipalities, cooperation with international organizations was the top expectation, with all other responses at 80%. Metropolitan district municipalities and provincial district municipalities saw the highest expectations for project development, at 82% and 71%, respectively. Town municipalities had the highest expectations for project development (81%), while the least expected activity was cooperation with international organizations (13%). Considering the generally lower financial capacity of smaller municipalities, it is not surprising that they would naturally prioritize project development.

Figure 13: Expectations of Senior Management from Units Conducting Foreign Relations Activities in Municipalities by Type of Municipality

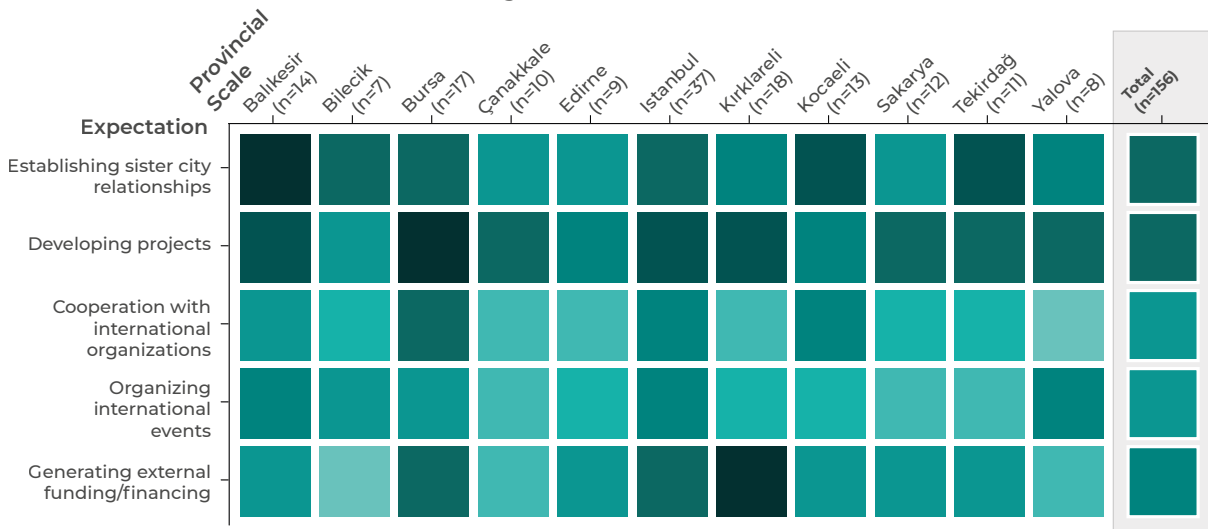
What are the expectations of the mayor and/or deputy mayors from the unit responsible for foreign relations activities?



By province, the highest expectations included sister city relationships in Balıkesir (over 90%), project development in Bursa (over 90%), and generating external funding/financing in Kırklareli (over 90%). The least preferred expectations were cooperation with international organizations in Yalova (25%) and generating external funding/financing in Bilecik (29%).

Figure 14: Expectations of Senior Management from Units Conducting Foreign Relations Activities in Municipalities by Province

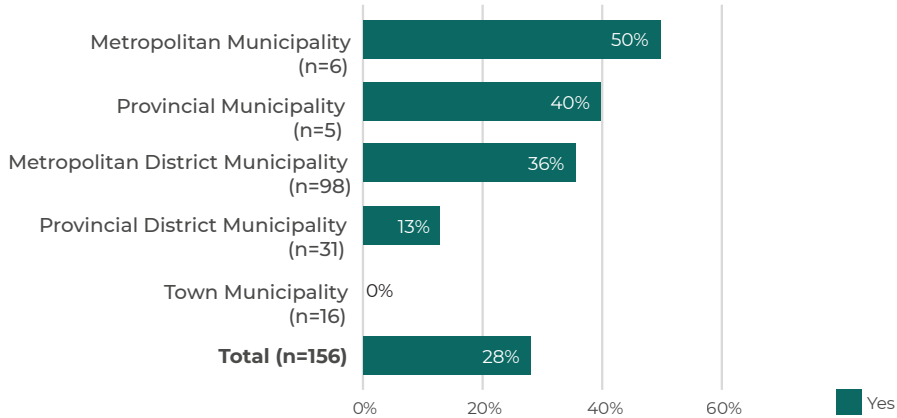
What are the expectations of the mayor and/or deputy mayors from the unit responsible for foreign relations activities?



As seen in Figure 15, in response to the question about finding out whether there is a strategically defined plan or roadmap for foreign relations, only 44 out of 156 municipalities (28%) that reported conducting foreign relations activities answered “yes”. By the type of municipality, 50% of metropolitan municipalities reported having a strategy, whereas no town municipalities had a strategic plan in place. Additionally, 14 municipalities that answered “yes” noted that their strategic plans included specific goals and indicators for foreign relations activities. Another frequently mentioned point was that international events and festivals held periodically by municipalities were influential in shaping their foreign relations roadmaps, indicating that some municipalities adopted event-based strategies for their international relations.

Figure 15: Ratio of Municipalities with an Institutional Strategy for Foreign Relations by Type of Municipality

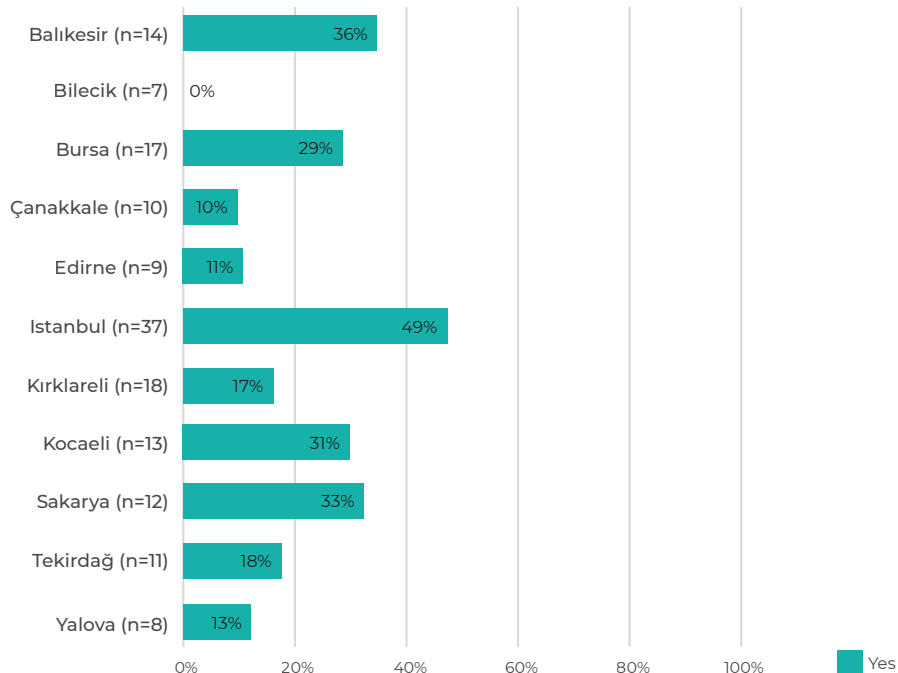
Do you have an institutionally established strategy/roadmap for foreign relations?



By provincial breakdown, Istanbul ranked first with 49%, while Bilecik ranked last with 0%. Balıkesir, Bursa, Kocaeli, and Sakarya had values around 30%.

Figure 16: Ratio of Municipalities with an Institutional Strategy for Foreign Relations by Province

Do you have an institutionally established strategy/roadmap for foreign relations?



Participants could select multiple answers regarding how municipalities determine their foreign relations activities. The most commonly chosen response was direction from the mayor or deputy mayor (81%), while the least selected response was demand from the public (21%).

Figure 17: Methods of Municipalities for Determining Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality



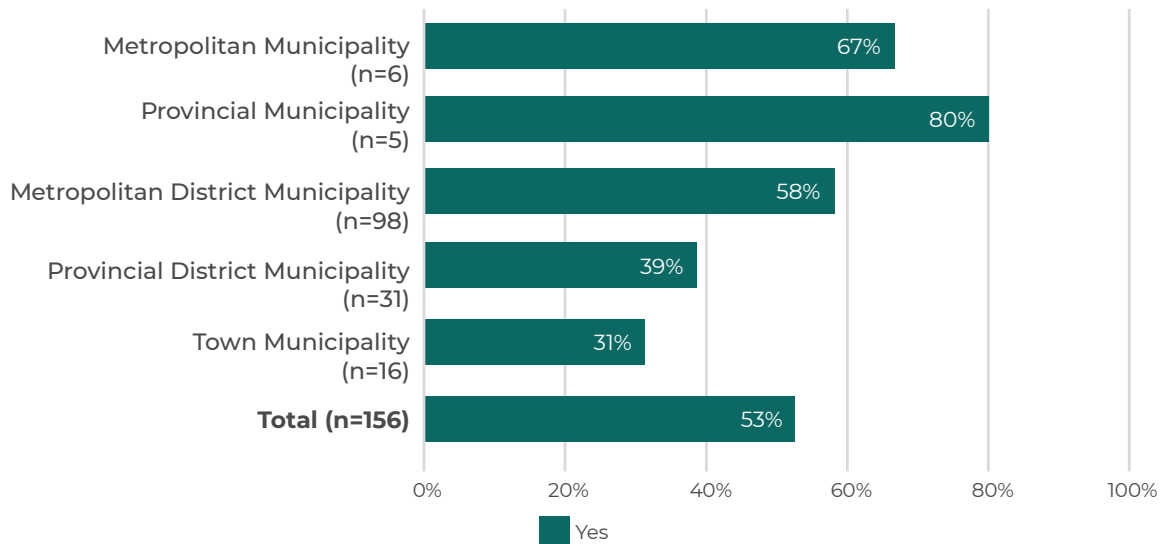
The responses, regardless of the type of municipality, generally indicate that foreign relations activities are predominantly initiated by the mayor. In metropolitan municipalities, options such as requests/directions from international organizations, requests from sister cities, and international agendas/agreements/goals were marked at the same rate as the mayor’s initiative (83%). In provincial municipalities, responses other than the mayor’s initiative ranged between 20% and 40%. Metropolitan district municipalities exhibited a similar distribution to provincial municipalities, while in provincial district municipalities, the direction of sister cities (39%) and the central government (32%) took precedence. In town municipalities, responses other than the mayor’s initiative ranged between 0% and 19%. Similar to the type of municipality, responses in provincial breakdowns also concentrated on the mayor’s or deputy mayor’s direction, with the least favored option being demand from the public once again.

Stakeholder Relations of Units Conducting Foreign Relations Activities in Municipalities

Foreign stakeholder relations are crucial for the effectiveness of foreign relations activities. Maintaining communication with relevant ministries strengthens the local government-central government relationship, improving the efficiency of the activities. Relationships with local government associations can provide opportunities to stay informed about international networks, projects, events, and global agendas, as well as create opportunities for partnerships with foreign municipalities and institutions, contributing to the municipalities' capacity development. Therefore, two questions were asked in the research to measure the municipalities' relationships with external stakeholders.

Figure 18: Communication between Municipalities and Local Government Associations Regarding Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality

Do you communicate with local government associations while conducting foreign relations?

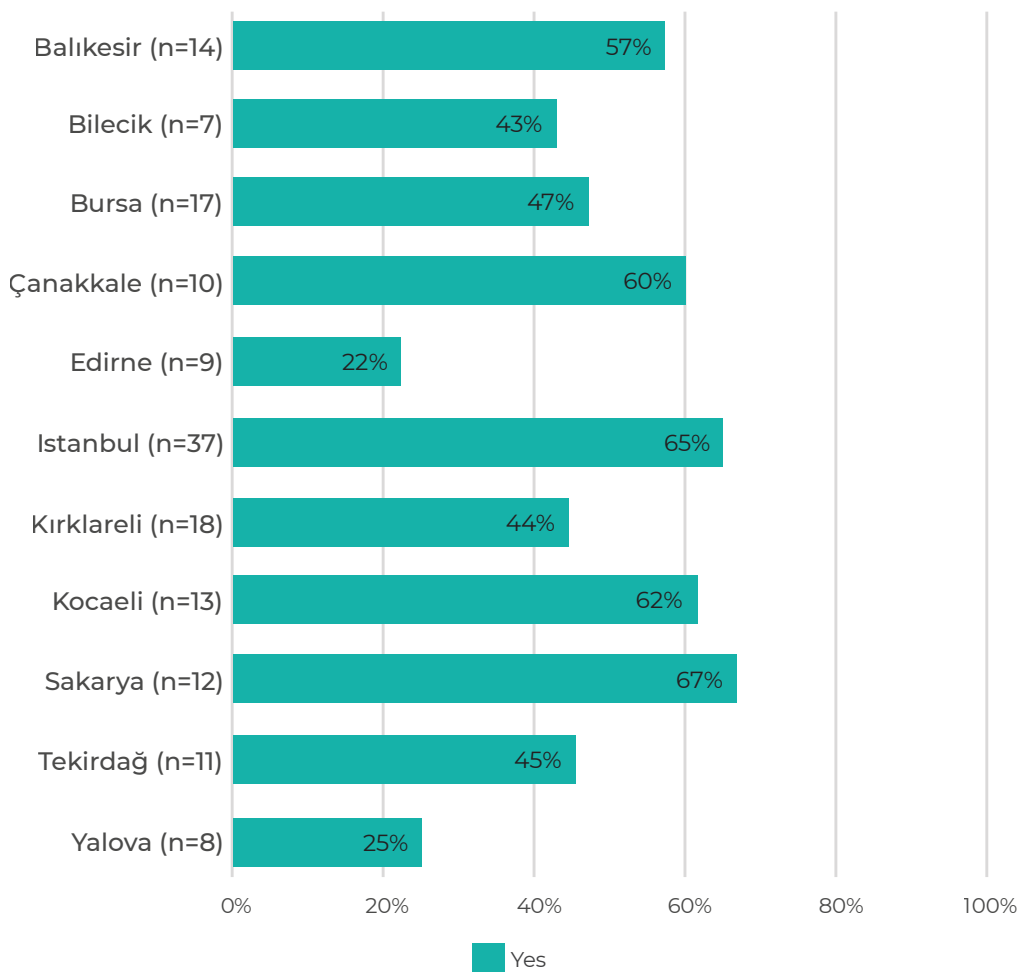


53% of municipalities reported that they communicate with local government associations while carrying out foreign relations activities. The highest communication rate was observed in provincial municipalities at 80%, while the lowest rate was observed in town municipalities at 31%.

When examining the provincial breakdown, Sakarya municipalities had the highest communication rate with local government associations at 67%. On the other hand, municipalities in Edirne and Yalova had the lowest communication rates, both at around 20%.

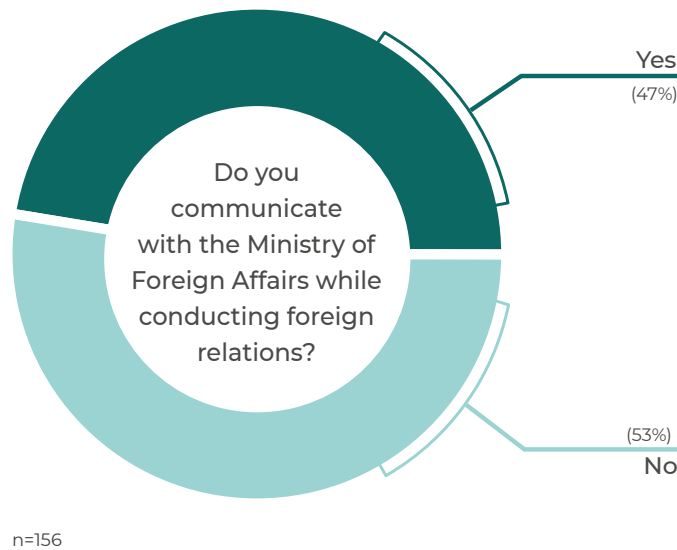
Figure 19: Communication between Municipalities and Local Government Associations Regarding Foreign Relations Activities by Province

Do you communicate with local government associations while conducting foreign relations?



Regarding the final question on institutional structure, municipalities were asked whether they communicate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while carrying out their foreign relations activities.³¹ Almost a half of the municipalities (47%) stated that they maintain communication with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Figure 20: Communication between Municipalities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Regarding Foreign Relations Activities**



The communication between municipalities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs typically involves issues such as official permit processes, reporting of foreign relations activities, approval processes for sister cities, informing about mayoral visits, necessary topics in international projects, and appointment requests for diplomatic missions. As seen in Figure 21, the municipality scale with the highest communication rate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was metropolitan municipalities, with a rate of 83%. Following them, provincial municipalities reported a 60% communication rate, while other scales reported slightly lower, but similar communication rates.

When looking at the provincial breakdown, the highest communication rate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was observed in Çanakkale municipalities at 80%. They were followed by Istanbul at 62% and Kırklareli at 56%. On the other hand, municipalities in Bilecik reported that they do not communicate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see Figure 22).

³¹ While municipalities in Türkiye manage their foreign relations, they also maintain communication with other ministries, primarily with the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change. Although this research focused on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as the most relevant ministry for foreign relations, a comprehensive understanding of central-local government communication in this context would require examining interactions with other ministries as well.

Figure 21: Communication between Municipalities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regarding Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality

Do you communicate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while conducting foreign relations?

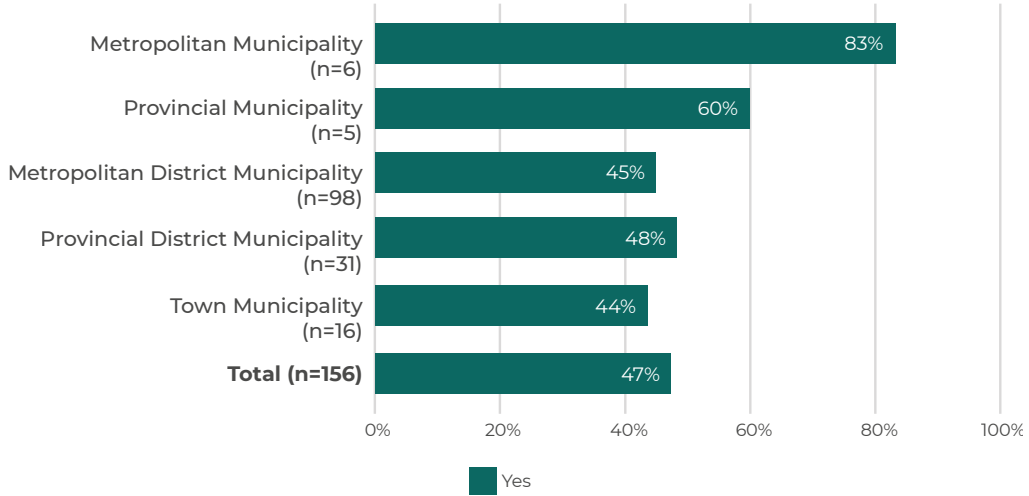
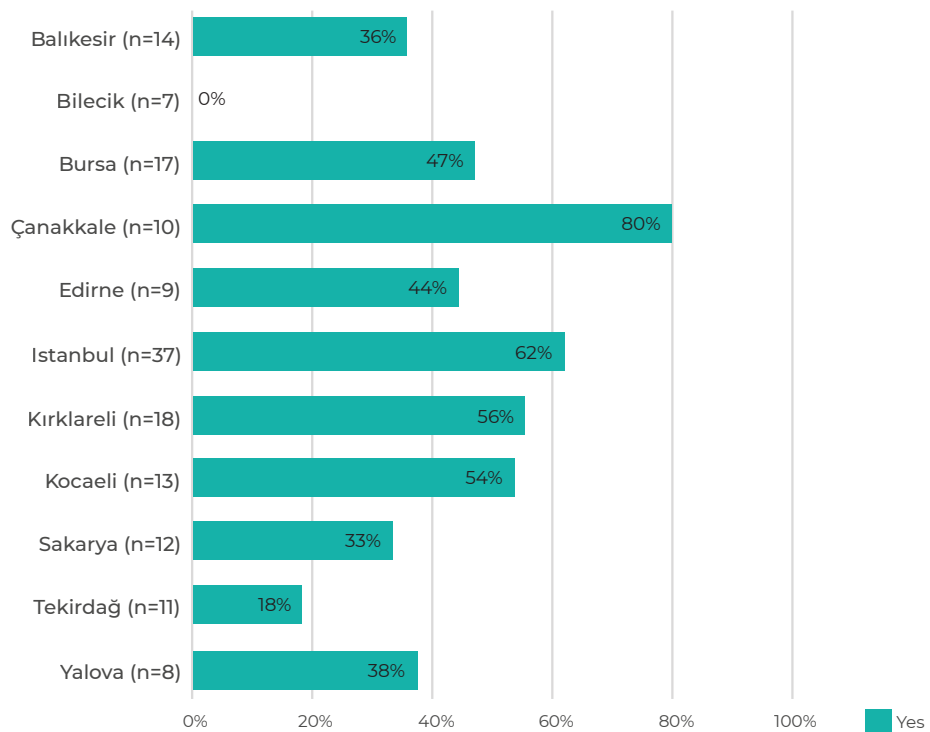


Figure 22: Communication between Municipalities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Regarding Foreign Relations Activities by Province

Do you communicate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while conducting foreign relations?







RESEARCH FINDINGS

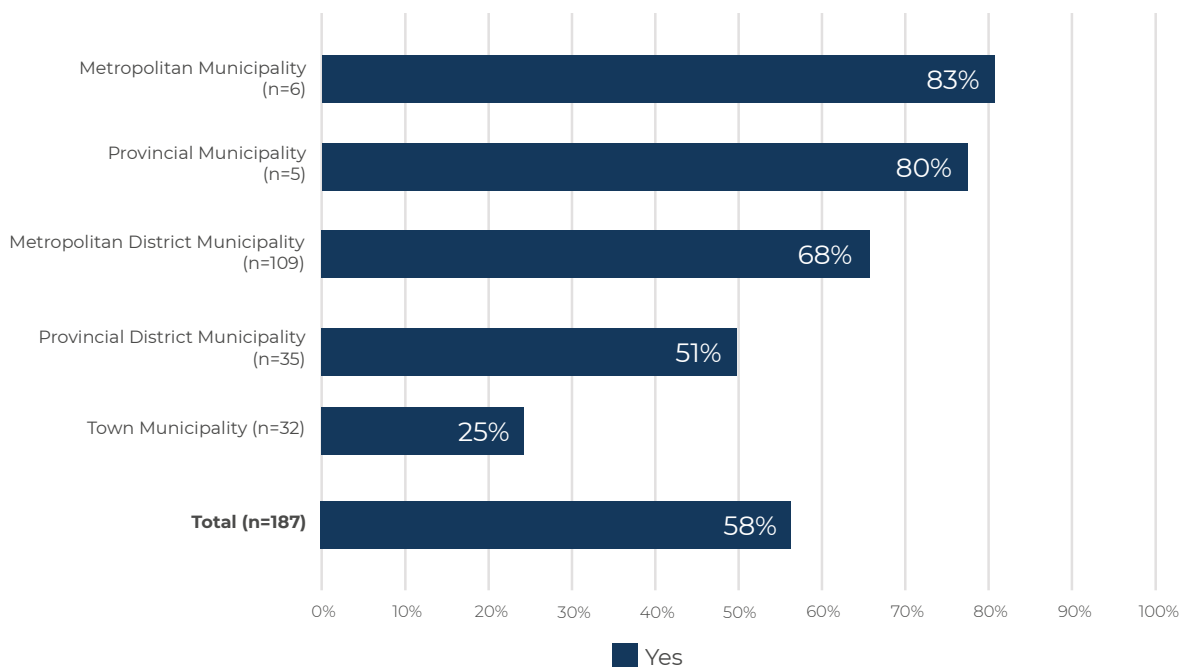
2. Opinions of Municipal Personnel on Foreign Relations

2. OPINIONS OF MUNICIPAL PERSONNEL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The second section of the research delves into the perspectives of municipal personnel on local diplomacy and institutional structures. It is essential to remember that the opinions shared by the personnel are subjective and do not necessarily represent their municipality's official position. Comprising nine questions, the survey included yes/no, multiple-choice, and open-ended formats, with 187 municipalities responding. The first question asked whether the national foreign policies of Türkiye influence the foreign relations of municipalities. In response, 58% of municipalities answered "yes", while 42% said "no".

Figure 23: Impact of National Foreign Policies on Municipal Foreign Relations by Type of Municipality

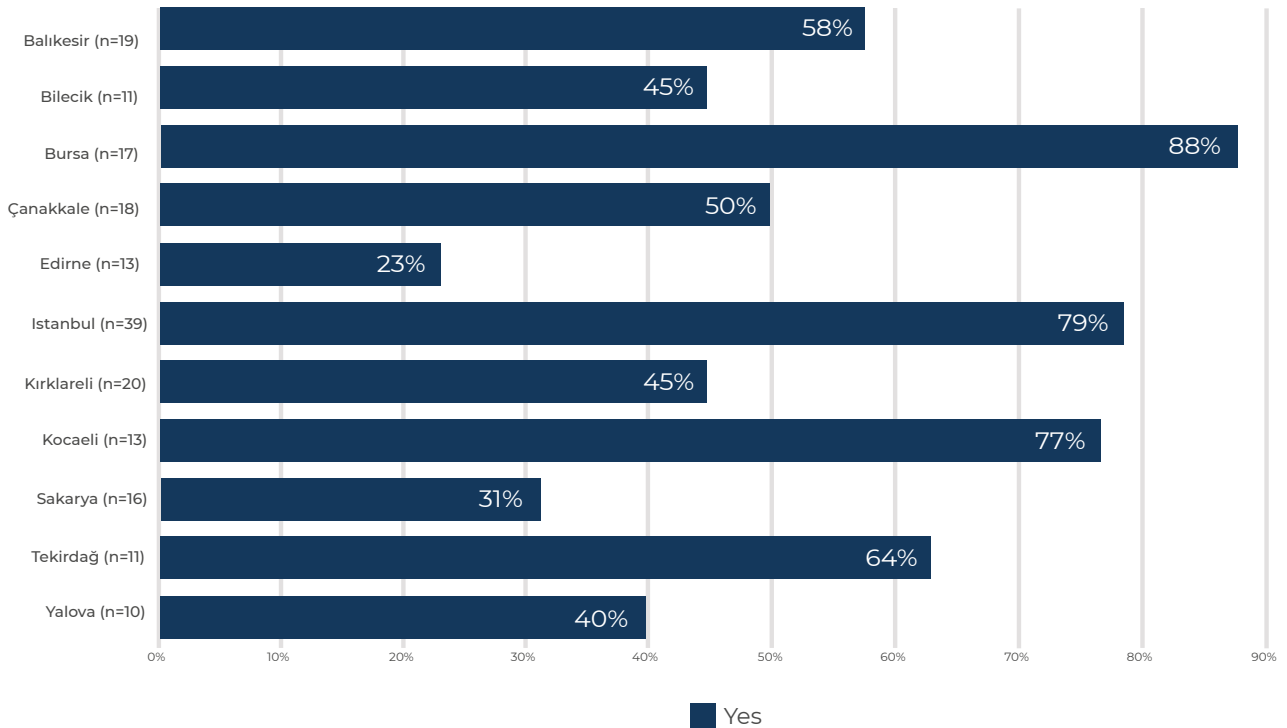
Do you think Türkiye's national foreign policy affects the foreign relations of your municipality?



Looking at the responses by type of municipality, metropolitan municipalities and provincial municipalities emerged as the groups most likely to state that national foreign policy affects their foreign relations, with 83% and 80% respectively. On the other hand, 75% of town municipalities stated that national foreign policies do not impact their foreign relations. Open-ended responses about how national foreign policy influences municipal foreign relations highlighted several key themes. Some municipalities pointed to the positive or negative impact of changes in EU relations on their EU projects, while others mentioned the weakening or strengthening of sister city relationships due to national bilateral relations. Additionally, some municipalities reported that they developed relationships with institutions in countries where national foreign policy encouraged closer ties. Many municipalities also mentioned facing visa issues while conducting foreign relations activities.

Figure 24: Impact of National Foreign Policies on Municipal Foreign Relations by Province

Do you think Türkiye's national foreign policy affects the foreign relations of your municipality?



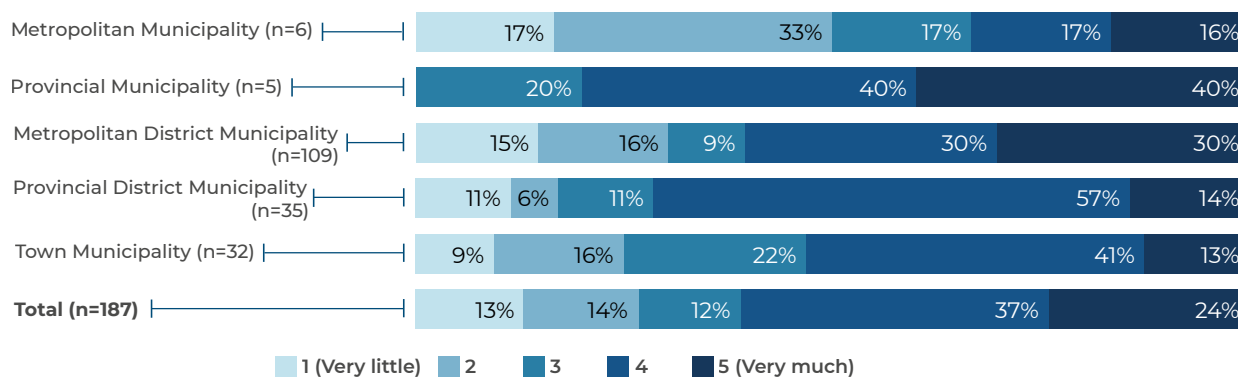
When analyzed by province, municipalities in Bursa, Istanbul, and Balıkesir stood out as the most likely to respond “yes”. In contrast, Edirne and Sakarya were the provinces with municipalities giving the highest “no” responses by a significant margin.

It can be said that the foreign relations activities of local governments undeniably play a role in influencing diplomatic relations between countries and fostering global peace.³² In this regard, understanding municipal personnel's views on the impact of local diplomacy on global diplomacy is crucial. This is why the second question inquired to what extent local diplomacy contributes to global peace.

³² For an explanation on the impact of local governments on global peace, see Arne Musch et al., *City Diplomacy*, VNG International, 2008, accessed October 28, 2024, https://www.uclg.org/sites/default/files/City_Diplomacy_research_book_English_01.pdf

Figure 25: Contribution of Local Diplomacy to Global Peace by Type of Municipality

To what extent do you think local diplomacy contributes to global peace?



In the question, participants were asked to select one of five options, where “1” represented “very little” and “5” represented “very much”. Among the municipal representatives, 37% evaluated the contribution of local diplomacy to global peace as “4” out of 5, while 24% rated it as “5”. Based on the type of municipality, the lowest rate of “1” responses was observed at 0% in provincial municipalities, while the highest was 17% in metropolitan municipalities. Similarly, for the “2” category, the lowest rate was again 0% in provincial municipalities, with the highest at 33% in metropolitan municipalities.

For the response of “3”, the lowest rate of 9% was observed in metropolitan district municipalities, whereas the highest rate of 22% was recorded in town municipalities. For the option of “4”, the lowest rate was 17% in metropolitan municipalities, while the highest rate of 57% was found in provincial district municipalities. Finally, regarding those who believed that local diplomacy contributes greatly to global peace, the lowest rate of selecting the option “5” was 13% in town municipalities, with the highest rate of 40% in provincial municipalities.

The “1” and “3” options were generally selected at low rates and were not chosen at all in some provinces. Notable gaps were observed in the distribution of these two options. The “4” and “5” options, which indicate a higher perception of local diplomacy’s contribution to peace, were more frequently selected on a provincial basis and were more dominant in the overall distribution. Specifically, “4” emerged as the most prominent response in many provinces. No distinct trend was observed among provinces in the distribution of responses.

As seen in Figure 27, there is a consistent view among municipal representatives regarding the necessity of municipalities actively engaging in foreign relations. Overall, 93% of municipalities answered “yes” to this question. When examined by type of municipality, the percentage of “yes” responses ranged from 83% to 100%. Provincial district municipalities recorded the lowest percentage of “yes” responses at 83%.

Figure 26: Contribution of Local Diplomacy to Global Peace by Province

To what extent do you think local diplomacy contributes to global peace?

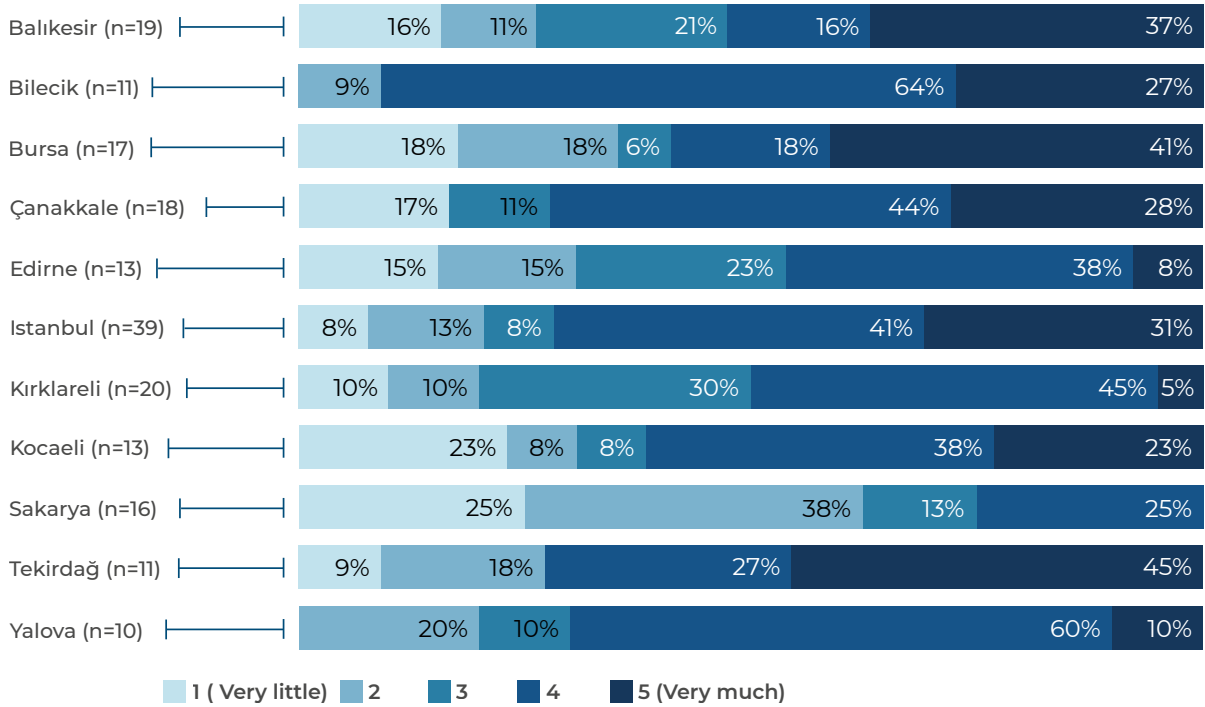
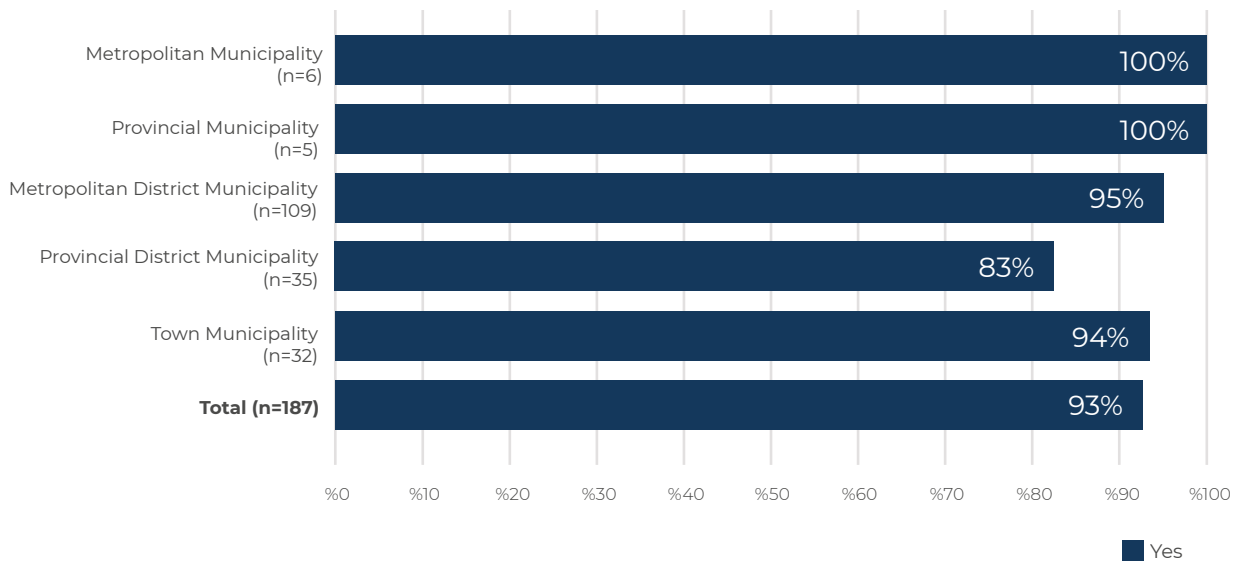


Figure 27: Necessity of Municipalities' Foreign Relations Activities by Type of Municipality

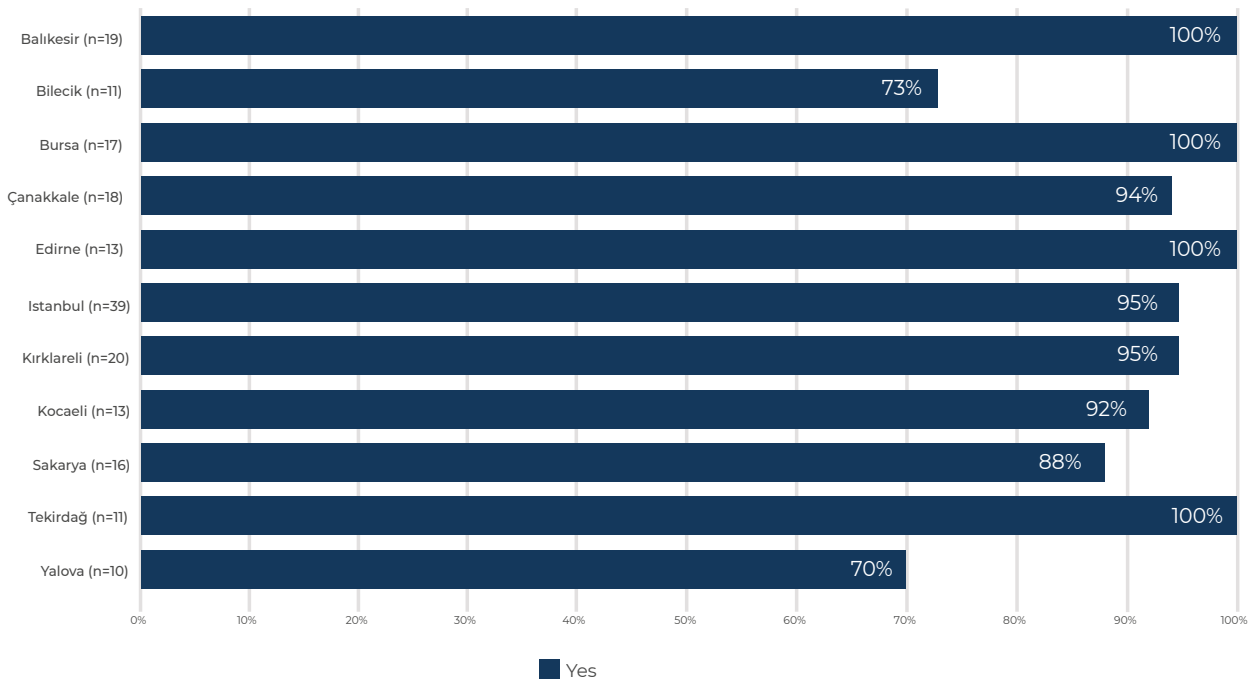
Do you think municipalities should actively engage in international relations/foreign relations?



A similar distribution is observed at the provincial level. In Balıkesir and Edirne, all municipal representatives argued that municipalities should actively engage in foreign relations. Even in provinces like Bilecik and Yalova, where the “Yes” response was the lowest, over 70% of municipal representatives expressed that municipalities should be active in international relations. In response to the open-ended question about the importance of active engagement, certain common themes emerged. The most frequently mentioned points by municipalities included establishing connections with international municipalities to learn about best practices and develop innovative ideas, contributing to global peace by fostering intercultural exchange, and enhancing the national foreign policy image. Regarding the contributions of engaging in foreign relations to municipalities, the most highlighted responses, aligning with the previous question, were sharing best practices and capacity building. Additionally, municipal representatives emphasized increasing the municipality’s visibility, staying informed about international developments, and contributing to tourism.

Figure 28: Necessity of Municipalities’ Foreign Relations Activities by Province

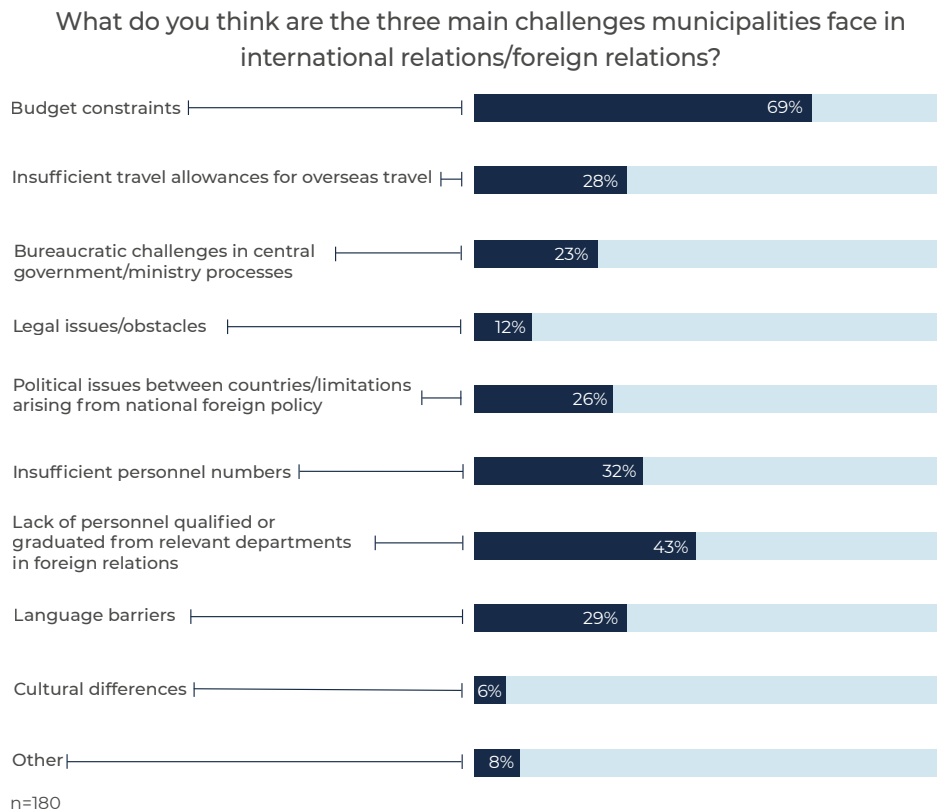
Do you think municipalities should actively engage in international relations/foreign relations?



In another question, municipalities were asked to identify the three primary challenges they face while conducting foreign relations activities. From a list that included budget constraints (both the unit’s budget and the allocation for foreign relations activities), insufficient travel allowances for overseas travel, bureaucratic challenges

with central authorities/ministries, legal issues/obstacles, political conflicts between countries/national foreign policy restrictions, insufficient personnel numbers, a lack of qualified or appropriately trained staff in foreign relations, language barriers, and cultural differences, representatives were allowed to select only three options.

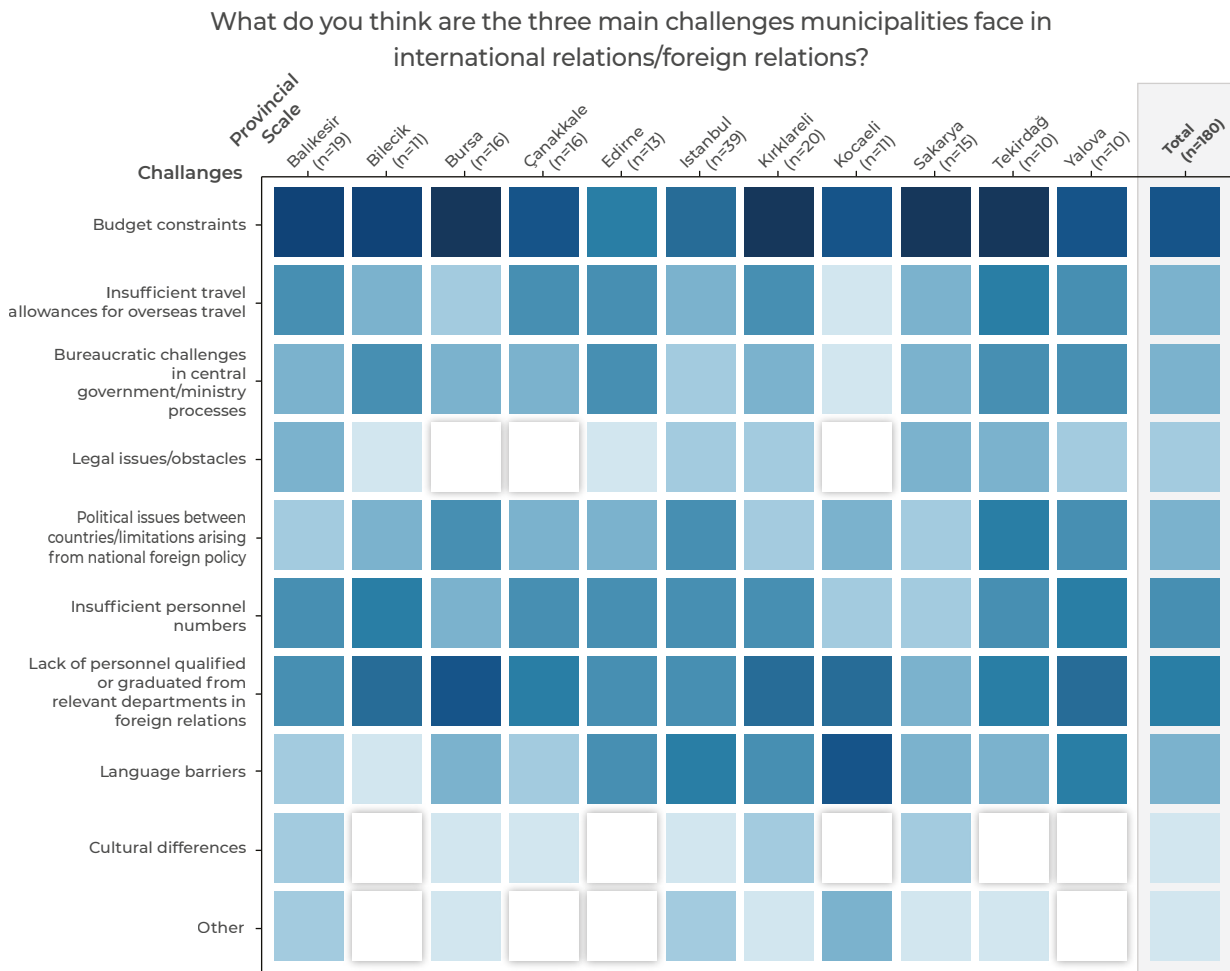
Figure 29: Top Three Challenges Faced by Municipalities in Foreign Relations Activities



Looking at the overall results, the most significant challenge in conducting foreign relations activities was identified as budget constraints, with 69% of respondents highlighting this issue. The second most common challenge, chosen by 43% of respondents, was the lack of qualified or appropriately trained staff in foreign relations. Budget constraints were the most frequently selected response across all types of municipalities except for metropolitan and provincial municipalities. Given that metropolitan and provincial municipalities generally have larger budgets than smaller municipalities, this result is not surprising. Only 20% of metropolitan municipalities cited budget constraints as an issue. Instead, the most frequently selected responses for this type of municipality were legal issues/obstacles and political conflicts between countries/national foreign policy restrictions, each chosen by 60% of respondents. Among provincial municipalities, the most commonly selected response was bureaucratic challenges with central authorities/ministries, marked by 80% of respondents.

Similarly, it was noted that the most significant challenge in each province is budget constraints. In Kocaeli, responses for budget constraints and language barrier were marked equally, both at 64%. Apart from budget constraints, the most frequently selected and clustered responses were the lack of personnel qualified or graduated from relevant departments in foreign relations and the language barrier.

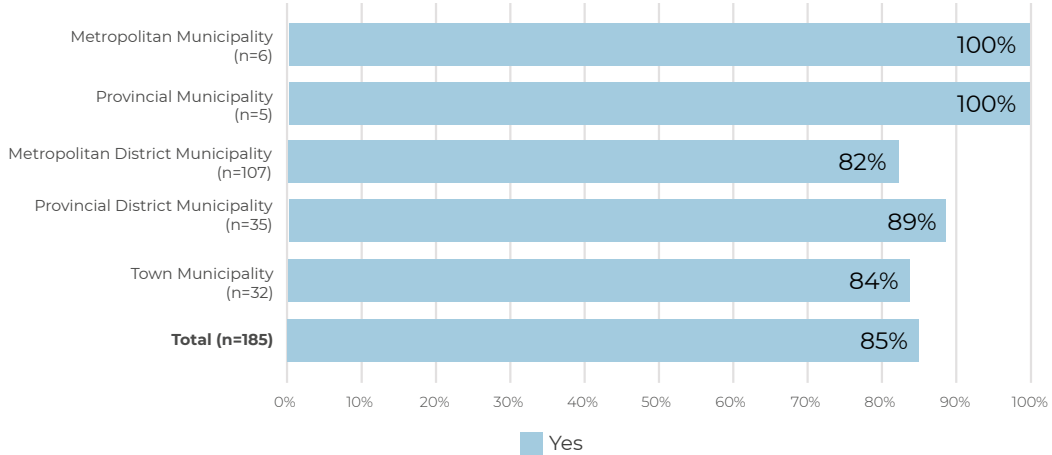
Figure 30: Top Three Challenges Faced by Municipalities in Foreign Relations Activities by Province



Municipal representatives were also asked to share their perspectives on the Municipal Law and related regulations. Regarding whether amendments to the Municipal Law or other legislation are needed to better manage municipalities' foreign relations activities, 85% of the representatives across all municipalities stated that such changes are necessary.

Figure 31: Necessity of Legislative Changes by Type of Municipality

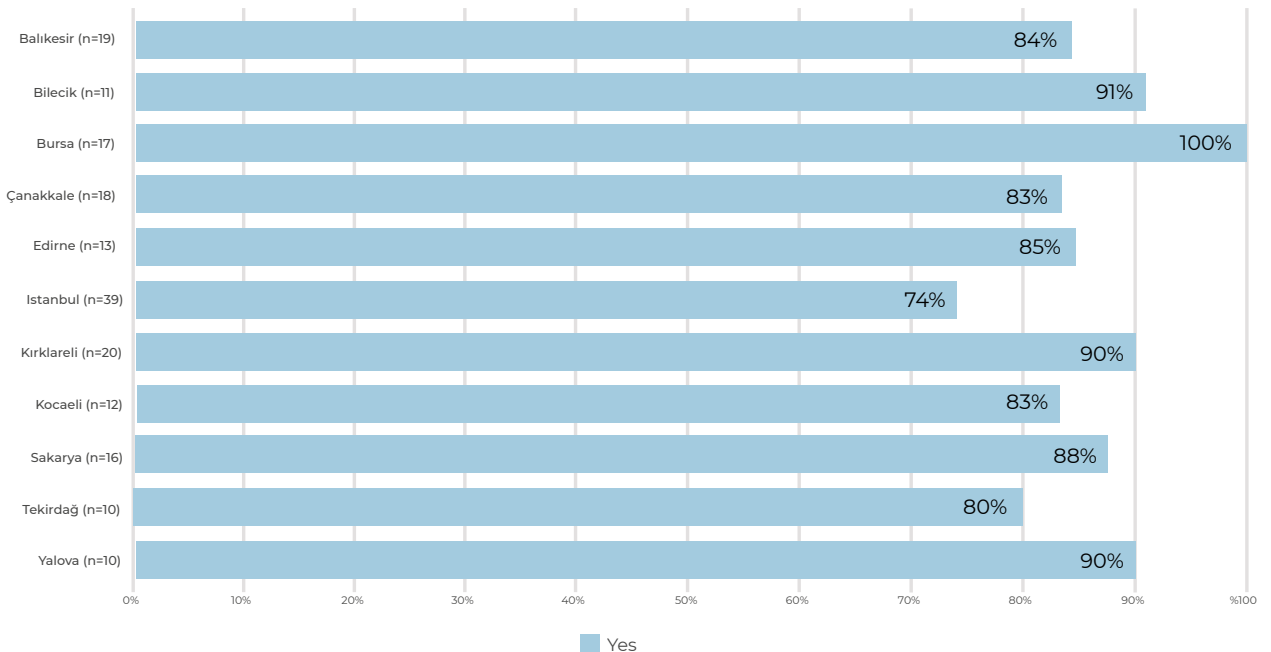
Do you think amendments should be made in the Municipal Law and/or other regulations to help municipalities better manage their international relations/foreign relations activities?



All metropolitan and provincial municipalities advocated for the necessity of legislative changes. The scale with the lowest “yes” responses was metropolitan district municipalities, with 82%. At the provincial level, the municipalities least considering legal changes necessary were Istanbul (74%) and Tekirdağ (80%).

Figure 32: Necessity of Legislative Changes by Province

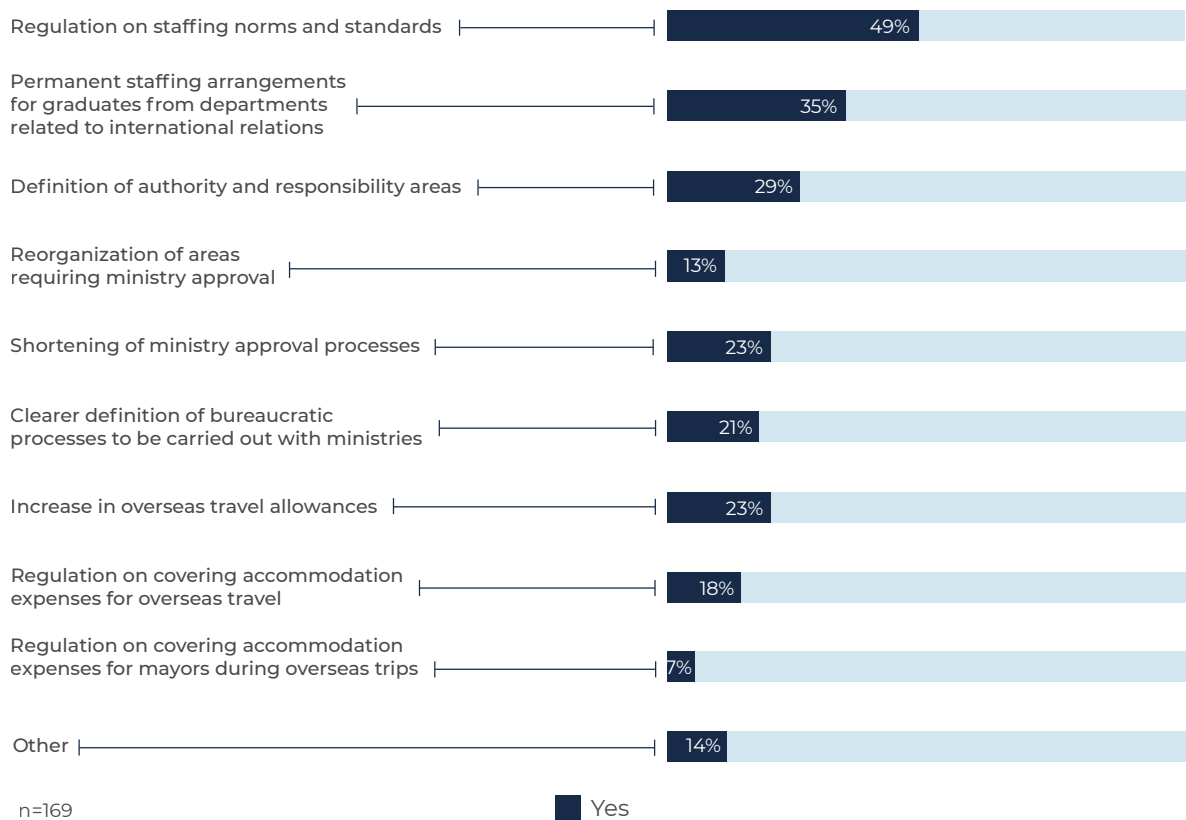
Do you think amendments should be made in the Municipal Law and/or other regulations to help municipalities better manage their international relations/foreign relations activities?



Later, municipal representatives were asked which amendments they would find beneficial, with the option to select three choices.³³ Overall, the two most frequently selected responses were regulation on staffing norms and standards (49%) and permanent staffing arrangements for individuals graduating from departments related to international relations (35%).

Figure 33: Areas Requiring Legislative Changes

What areas should be amended in the Municipal Law and/or other regulations to better manage the foreign relations/foreign affairs activities of municipalities?



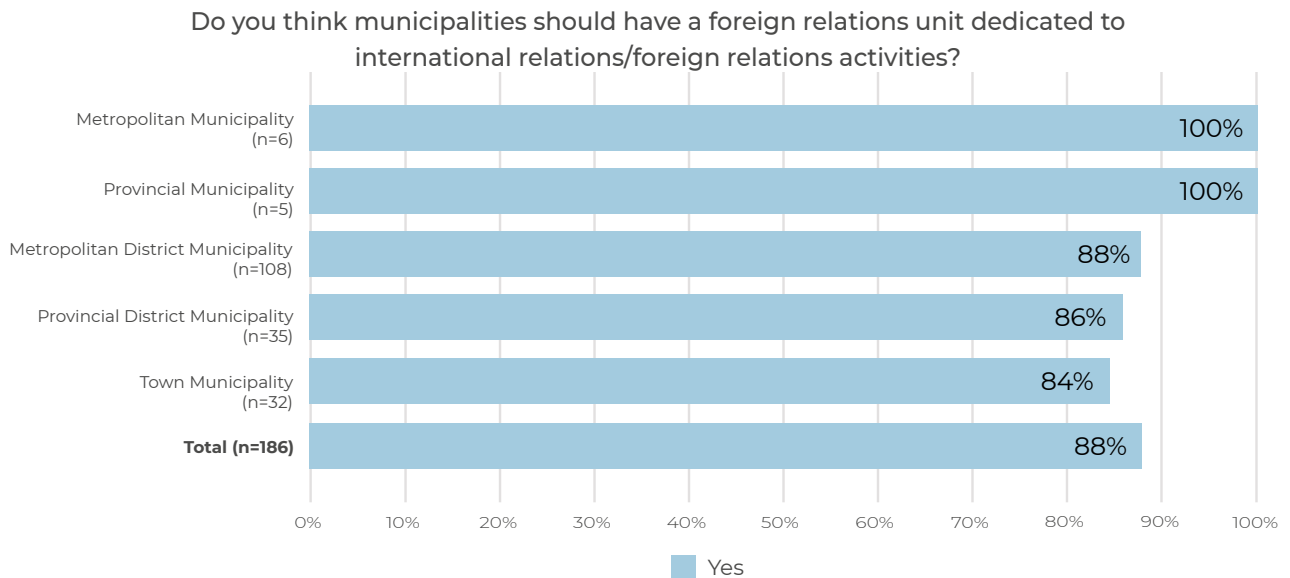
By municipality type, the top three responses for metropolitan municipalities were permanent staffing arrangements for graduates from departments related to international relations (50%), reorganization of areas requiring ministry approval (50%), and shortening the ministry approval processes (50%). For provincial municipalities, in addition to the two most selected responses overall, the necessity of defining authority

³³ “While 157 municipalities answered “yes” to the question “Should legislation be amended?”, 169 municipalities responded to the question “In which areas should amendments be made?”. Therefore, it can be observed that the 12 individuals who did not consider legislative amendments necessary still responded to the second question regarding areas for amendments. These responses have been included in the analysis, as they provide meaningful insights.

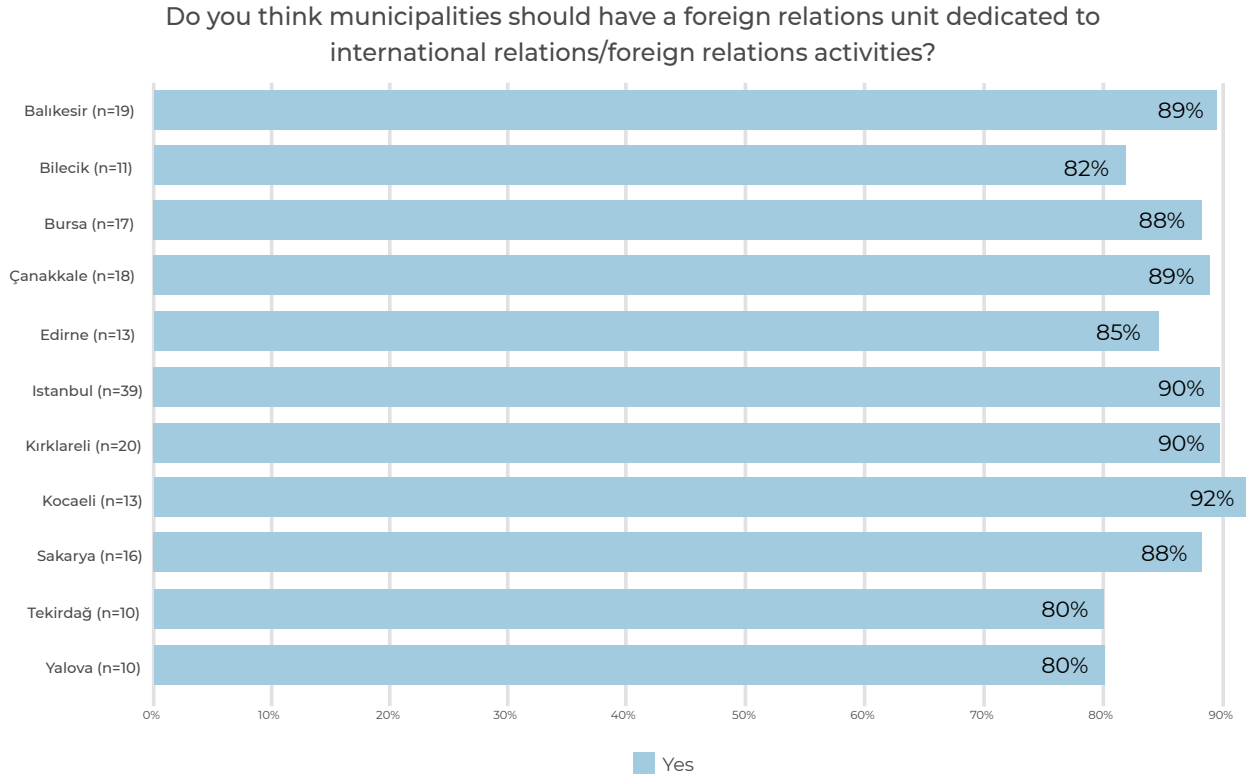
and responsibility areas (60%) was highlighted. The top three responses from metropolitan district municipalities mirrored those of provincial municipalities. Among provincial district and town municipalities, the two most selected options aligned with the overall results, while the third most chosen response was shortening ministry approval processes, at 25%.

The vast majority of municipal personnel (88%) stated that a dedicated foreign relations unit is essential within municipalities. This percentage, which is consistently high across all types of municipalities, is comparatively lowest at 84% in town municipalities.

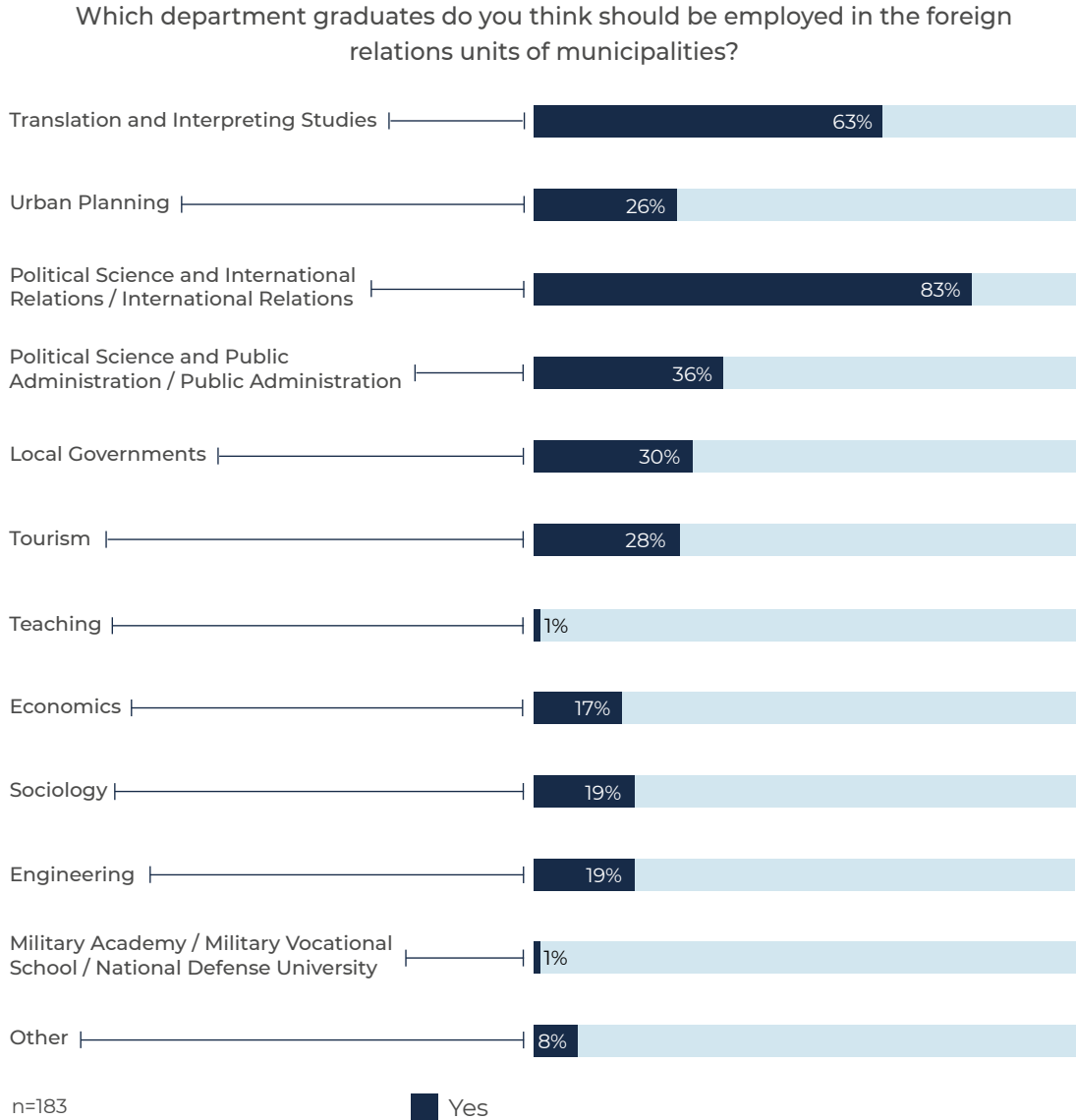
Figure 34: Necessity of Foreign Relations Units by Type of Municipality



Similarly, when assessed by province, the responses indicating the need for a dedicated foreign relations unit ranged from 80% in Tekirdağ to 92% in Kocaeli. These results align with the previously expressed need for regulation on staffing norms and standards in the context of legislative changes, highlighting the importance municipal employees place on having specialized foreign relations units.

Figure 35: Necessity of Foreign Relations Units by Province

In the final question of the section seeking municipal employees' opinions, respondents were asked about the educational backgrounds of individuals who they think should be employed in external relations units. As seen in Figure 36, the highest response, at 83%, was Political Science and/or International Relations graduates. This was followed by graduates of Translation and Interpretation Studies at 63%. These answers correlate with those of the previous question about the challenges regarding foreign relations in stating that the most important challenges are the lack of personnel qualified or graduated from relevant departments in foreign relations and the language barrier. Consequently, the most critical qualifications for municipal staff handling foreign relations are education in the relevant field and foreign language proficiency.

Figure 36: Undergraduate Disciplines Needed for Recruitment in Foreign Relations Units in Municipalities

In addition to the two most common responses overall, other disciplines emerged as significant based on municipality type. For metropolitan municipalities, Tourism was prominent (67%). In provincial municipalities, Economics was the leading choice (80%). In metropolitan district municipalities, Political Science and/or Public Administration stood out (86%). For provincial district municipalities, Local Governments (34%) and Tourism (34%) were equally prioritized. Meanwhile, in town municipalities, Urban Planning took the lead with 47%.





RESEARCH FINDINGS

3. Memberships of Municipalities in International Networks

3. MEMBERSHIPS OF MUNICIPALITIES IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

Beyond international networks established between states at the central government level, municipalities have increasingly joined multilateral networks that cross national boundaries. Known as international city networks,³⁴ these platforms play a pivotal role in shaping the global connections and influence of local governments. Emerging in the early 1900s,³⁵ these networks vary in their membership composition. Some networks consist exclusively of local governments, while others bring together diverse institutions such as civil society organizations and academia alongside municipalities. At their core, these networks provide avenues for municipalities to make collaborations with international counterparts or cross-sectoral institutions; advocate for cities' interests on the global stage and spotlight their capacity to address worldwide challenges; facilitate knowledge production and exchange regarding urban and local practice; contribute to the realization of global agenda objectives set by international organizations; support capacity-building efforts for improved municipal services; and help local governments access funding opportunities from international donors.³⁶ Moreover, although these networks lack the coercive power to enforce specific policies or actions, they foster the dissemination of similar strategies among members through softer mechanisms like promoting shared learning experiences.³⁷

Considering these objectives of the networks, municipalities voluntarily join international networks.³⁸ When selecting which networks to join, municipalities take into account certain criteria and limitations. One of these criteria is the geographic scope of the network. International city networks can operate at either a regional or global level. Examples of regional networks include the Eurocities and Energy Cities, which are prominent in Europe. On the other hand, some networks, such as the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy (IOPD) and the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), do not impose regional restrictions and accept members from all countries. Secondly, while some networks address a broad range of issues concerning cities, others focus on specific themes, such as C40, ICLEI, and Integrating Cities. Municipalities can thus decide on their membership based on areas of interest. Additionally, there are international networks tailored to specific types of municipalities. For instance, the Metropolis and European Metropolitan Authorities (EMA) networks are exclusively for metropolitan municipalities, whereas Eurotowns

³⁴ Some sources refer to international city networks as "transnational municipal networks". According to Kern and Bulkeley's 2009 article, these networks can be defined based on three characteristics: voluntary membership, being a form of self-governance due to their "non-hierarchical", "horizontal", or "multi-centered" structures, and decisions made within the network being directly implemented by its members. See Kristine Kern and Harriet Bulkeley, "Cities, Europeanization and Multi-Level Governance: Governing Climate Change through Transnational Municipal Networks", *Journal of Common Market Studies* 47, no. 2 (2009): pp. 309-310.

³⁵ Lorenzo Kihlgren Grandi, *City Diplomacy*, Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020, p. 12.

³⁶ Özge Sivrikaya, "The Collective Voice of the Cities in Evolving Diplomacy: International City Networks", in *Local Diplomacy: Policies, practices and tools*, edited by M. Cemil Arslan and Burcuhan Şener, Istanbul: Marmara Municipalities Union Publications, 2023: p. 167-183.

³⁷ Lukas Hakelberg, *Governing Climate Change by Diffusion: Transnational Municipal Networks as Catalysts of Policy Spread*, Berlin, Germany: Freie Universität Berlin, 2011.

³⁸ "Uluslararası Kent Ağları Veri Seti 2022" (International City Networks Dataset 2022), Marmara Municipalities Union, accessed October 24, 2024, <https://data.marmara.gov.tr/yerel-diplomasi/uluslararasi-kent-aglari-2022>.

accepts smaller municipalities with populations ranging between 50,000 and 250,000. Another factor influencing municipalities' choice of networks is membership fees. While some networks, like IOPD, GWOPA, and the Global Alliance for Care, are free to join, others, such as UCLG, Metropolis, and Eurocities, require an annual membership fee.

Municipalities in Türkiye can become members of international organizations operating in their field of work under Article 74 of the Municipal Law No. 5393.³⁹ In the “Memberships in International Network” section of the Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research, eight questions were posed to understand how many municipalities in the Marmara Region are members of at least one international urban network, which networks they belong to, the areas of collaboration they develop with these networks, the types and frequency of events they participate in, the contributions these networks provide to the municipalities, and the contributions municipalities offer to the networks. The research also investigated the reasons for non-membership among municipalities that do not belong to any networks. All 187 municipalities participating in the study completed this section. The responses to the questions posed in this section are analyzed in seven subsections.

Municipalities' Memberships in International Networks

The first question posed to MMU members regarding membership in international networks asked whether they were part of any international city network. While 35% of the municipalities stated that they were members of at least one network, 65% indicated that they were not part of any network.

Figure 37: Municipalities' Memberships in International Networks



³⁹ For detailed information, see Municipal Law No. 5393, accessed October 24, 2024, <http://www.lawsturkey.com/law/municipality-law-5393#:~:text=The%20municipality%20law%20has%20been,procedures%20and%20principles%20of%20municipalities>.

Figure 38: Municipalities' Memberships in International Networks by Type of Municipality

Is your municipality a member of any international city networks?

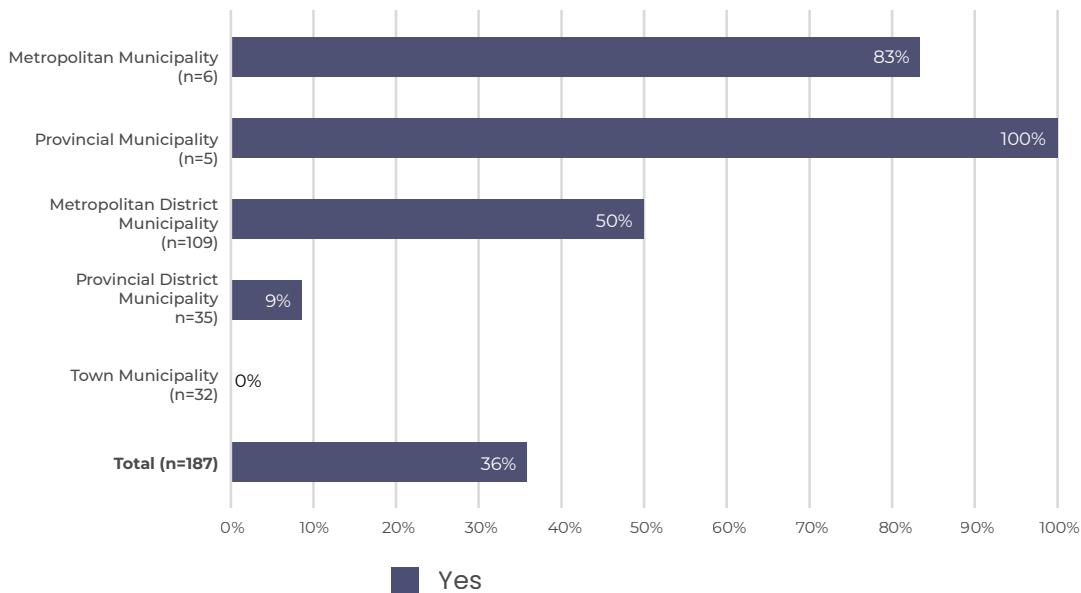
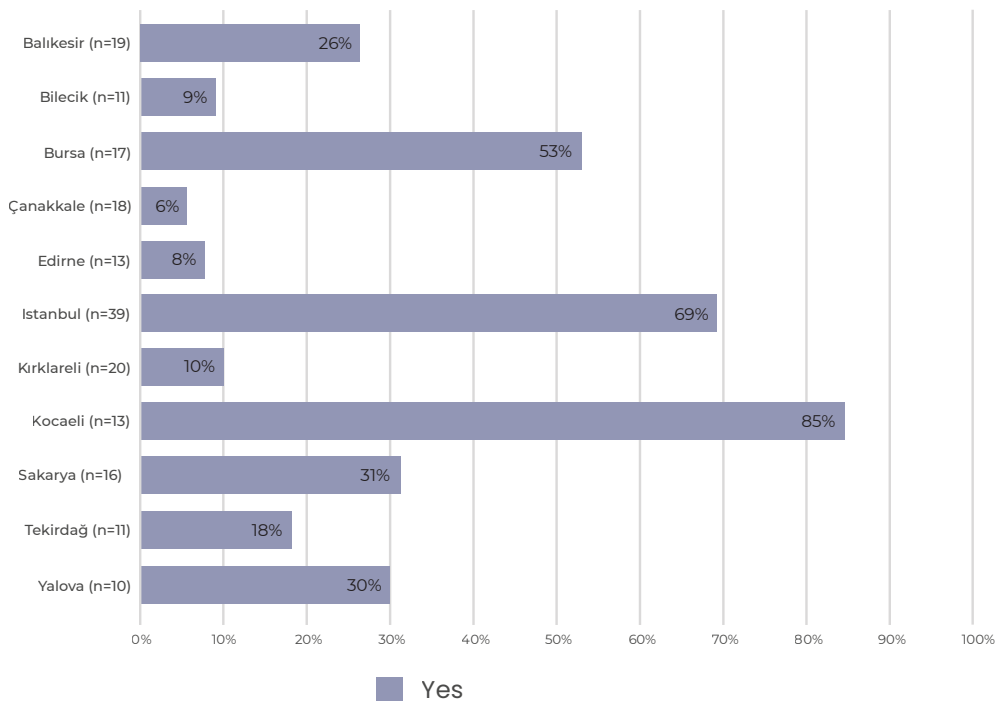


Figure 39: Municipalities' Memberships in International Networks by Province

Is your municipality a member of any international city networks?



When examined by type of municipality, all provincial municipalities reported membership in at least one international network. Among metropolitan municipalities, 83% stated they were members, followed by 49% of metropolitan district municipalities and 9% of provincial district municipalities. None of the town municipalities reported membership in international networks (see Figure 38).

Looking at memberships by province, at least one municipality in each province is a member of an international network, as seen in Figure 39. However, the proportion of municipalities that are members varies significantly by province. Provinces with metropolitan municipalities generally show higher membership rates compared to others. The three provinces with the highest proportion of municipalities belonging to at least one network are Kocaeli (85%), Istanbul (69%), and Bursa (53%). Conversely, the provinces with the lowest proportions are Çanakkale (6%), Edirne (8%), and Bilecik (9%).

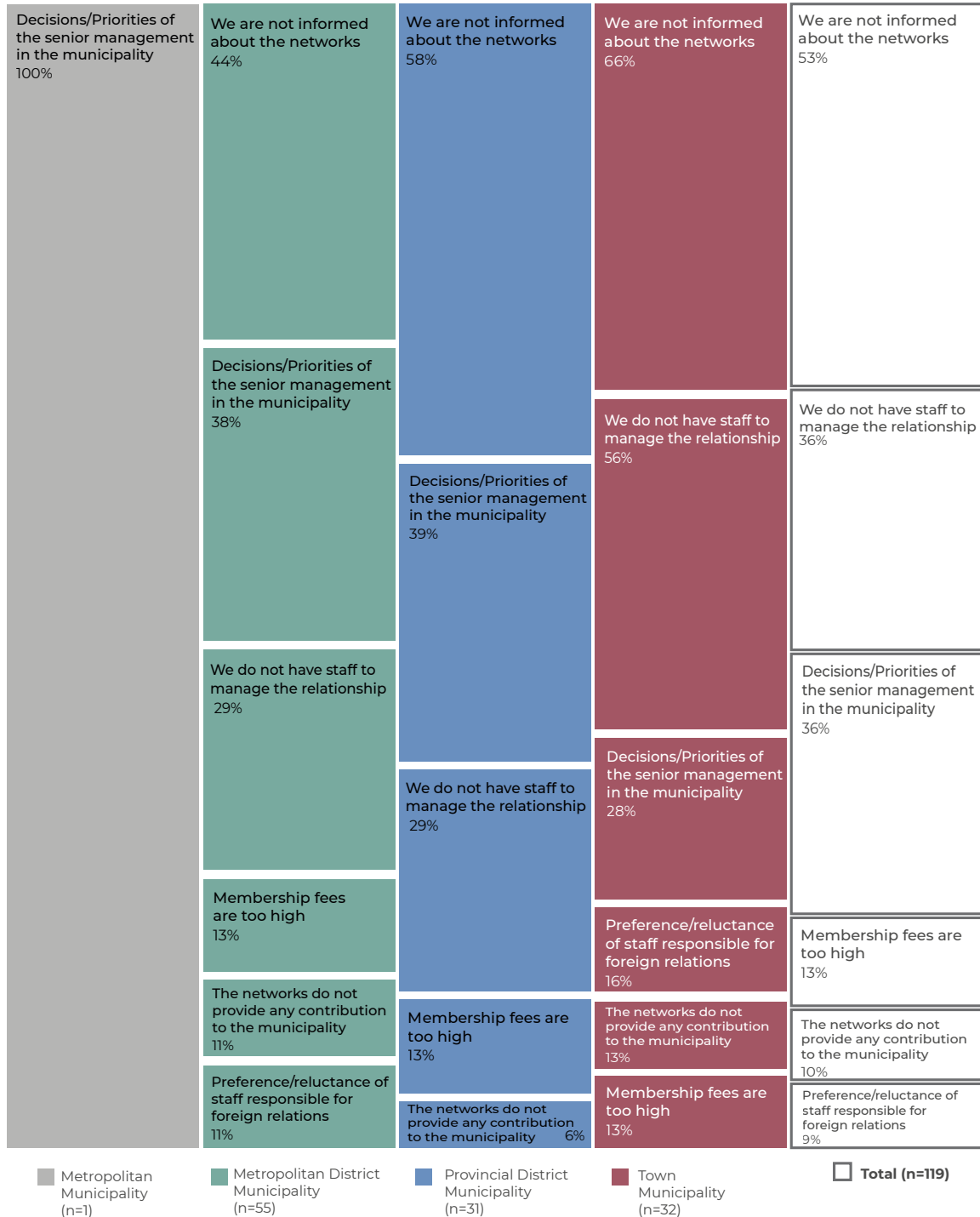
Reasons for Municipalities Not Joining International Networks

A significant portion (64%) of the municipalities participating in the research indicated that they were not members of any city networks. These municipalities were asked about their reasons for non-membership.⁴⁰ A total of 119 municipalities responded to this question, responding by selecting from multiple options. The most common reason, cited by 53% of the municipalities, was the “lack of knowledge about the networks”. The next most frequent responses were “decisions/priorities of the senior management in the municipality” (36%) and “lack of staff to manage the relationship” (36%). “Preference/reluctance of staff responsible for foreign relations” (9%) was stated as a non-membership reason by a small number of municipalities. Other least cited reasons included “no benefit from the networks” (10%) and “high membership fees” (13%). Additionally, nine municipalities selected the “other” option, indicating reasons beyond those listed. These included “no need for international networks”, “small size of the municipality limiting its capacity”, “absence of designated staff with defined duties and responsibilities”, “inability to focus on this area due to heavy workloads”, “insufficient institutional capacity in terms of budget and staff”, and “lack of sufficient financial resources to participate in events if a relationship is established”. One provincial district municipality emphasized that such relationships are typically managed by higher-level institutions, such as metropolitan municipalities, with district-level contributions being indirect.

⁴⁰ The reasons presented to municipalities in the survey options may include situations that influence or cause each other. For instance, one reason influencing a municipality’s decision or priorities might be the lack of knowledge regarding networks. This report does not examine the relationships between the reasons nor investigate the root causes among the options.

Figure 40: Reasons for Not Becoming Members of International Networks by Type of Municipality

If you are not a member of any international city network, what is the reason?



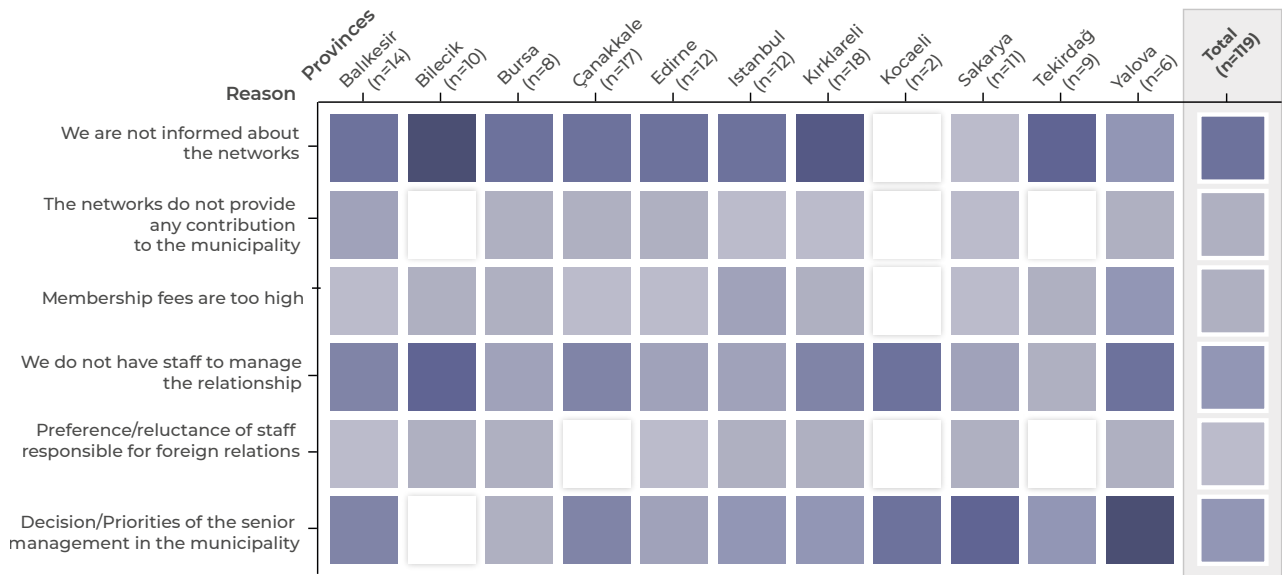
The responses were also evaluated based on the type of municipality. For the sole metropolitan municipality not affiliated with any networks, the reason cited was the municipality's priorities. Among metropolitan district municipalities, the most common reasons were the lack of knowledge about the networks (44%), decisions/priorities of the senior management in the municipality (38%), and lack of staff to manage relationships (29%). Only 11% of these municipalities attributed non-membership to the preference/reluctance of staff or the lack of benefits from the networks.

Similarly, provincial district municipalities cited the lack of knowledge about the networks (58%), decisions/priorities of the senior management in the municipality (39%), and lack of staff to manage relationships (29%) as the primary reasons. None of these municipalities cited staff preference or reluctance as a barrier to membership.

Lastly, for town municipalities, the lack of knowledge about the networks was the leading reason at 66%. Unlike metropolitan district municipalities and provincial district municipalities, town municipalities most frequently cited lack of staff to manage relationships as the second most common reason (56%). Beside these two options, the rates for other options decrease significantly. Other reasons, such as "no benefit from the networks" and "high membership fees", were selected by only 13% of town municipalities.

Figure 41: Reasons for Not Becoming Members of International Networks by Province

If you are not a member of any international city network, what is the reason?



As seen in Figure 41, the responses were also analyzed at the provincial level to provide further insights. Each reason for non-membership was cited by at least one municipality in 8 to 10 provinces. Notably, in Balıkesir, Bursa, Edirne, İstanbul, Kırklareli, Sakarya, and Yalova, every listed reason was cited by at least one municipality.

Conversely, in Bilecik, Çanakkale, Kocaeli, and Tekirdağ, at least one reason was not selected by any municipality. Although the responses show similarities in geographical distribution, there are provincial differences. For example, in 8 provinces, more than half of the municipalities cited the lack of knowledge about the networks as a reason for non-membership. On the other hand, the preference or reluctance of staff responsible for foreign relations was cited by less than 20% of municipalities in all provinces.

International Networks Municipalities Are Members of

The municipalities that stated they are members of city networks were asked which networks they belong to.⁴¹ In addition to the 14 prominent networks that accept members from Türkiye, the “other” option was also included among the choices.⁴² A total of 67 municipalities responded to the question, where they were allowed to select multiple options.⁴³ Approximately 57% of these municipalities are members of the Union of Turkish World Municipalities (TDBB). With this proportion, TDBB has become the international network with the most members in the Marmara Region. TDBB is followed by the United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia (UCLG-MEWA) with 39% and the Covenant of Mayors (CoM) with 18%. The networks with the fewest members in the region are the European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA), Intercultural Cities, and the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40), each with 2%.⁴⁴ Additionally, 26 municipalities indicated that they are members of other networks by selecting the “other” option. The prominent networks in this category are the International Union of Agricultural Cities (Agricities) with 5 municipalities, the WHO Healthy Cities Network with 4 municipalities, the Making Cities Resilient 2030 Network (MCR2030) with 2 municipalities, the UCLG’s network for metropolitan cities (Metropolis), the European Institute of Innovation and Technology Urban Mobility (EIT Urban Mobility), and the Asian Mayors Forum (AMF).

⁴¹ Municipalities’ memberships up to December 2, 2022, when the research began, are listed. Memberships initiated after this date are not included.

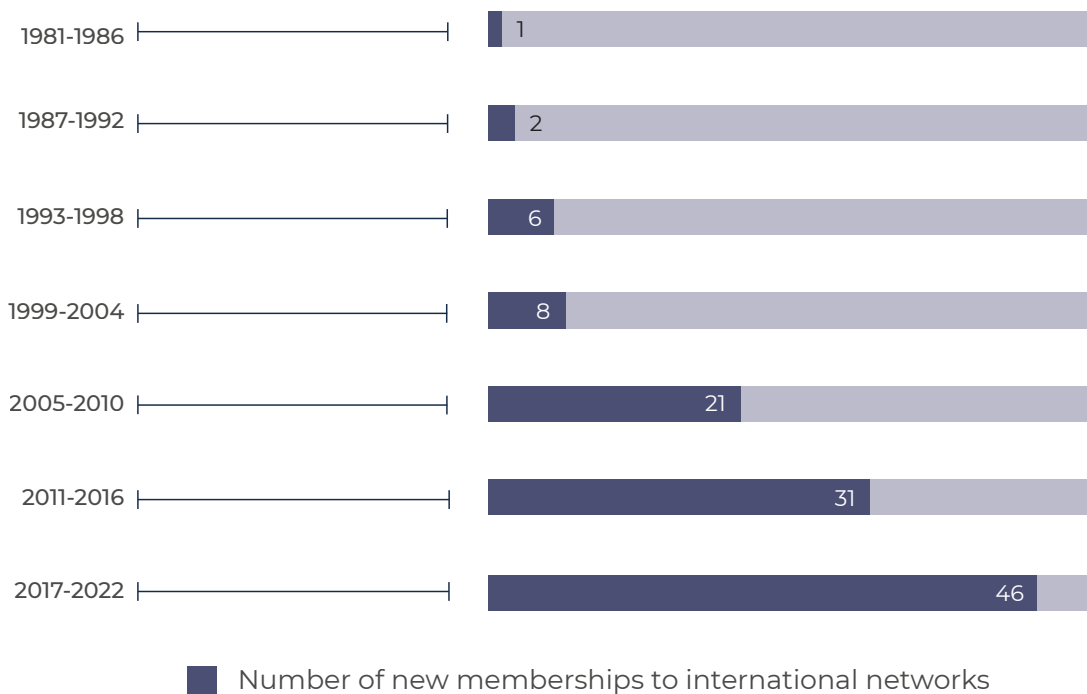
⁴² According to the MMU’s International City Networks Dataset, it can be stated that there are more than 70 city networks.

⁴³ For the list of international city networks to which the responding municipalities belong, see Appendix - 1: List of International City Networks.

⁴⁴ Some city networks mentioned here accept members from Türkiye but have population limitations. For example, while large cities can join C40, cities with smaller populations can apply for Cittaslow. As a result, the number of members in these networks may be fewer compared to the networks that accept every municipality without population restrictions.

To track the changes in the municipalities' membership in networks over the years, municipalities were given a space to indicate when they became members of these networks.⁴⁵ According to the information shared by the municipalities, Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality was the first in the region to join an international network. The municipality became a member of the Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC) in 1984. When looking at the general trend of municipalities' network memberships in five-year intervals, a rapid increase in membership in international networks is evident over the years.⁴⁶

Figure 42: Changes Over Time in Municipalities' Memberships in International Networks



⁴⁵ While some municipalities provide information about when they became members of their networks, others have not filled in this information. Therefore, there are missing data in the inference regarding membership dates.

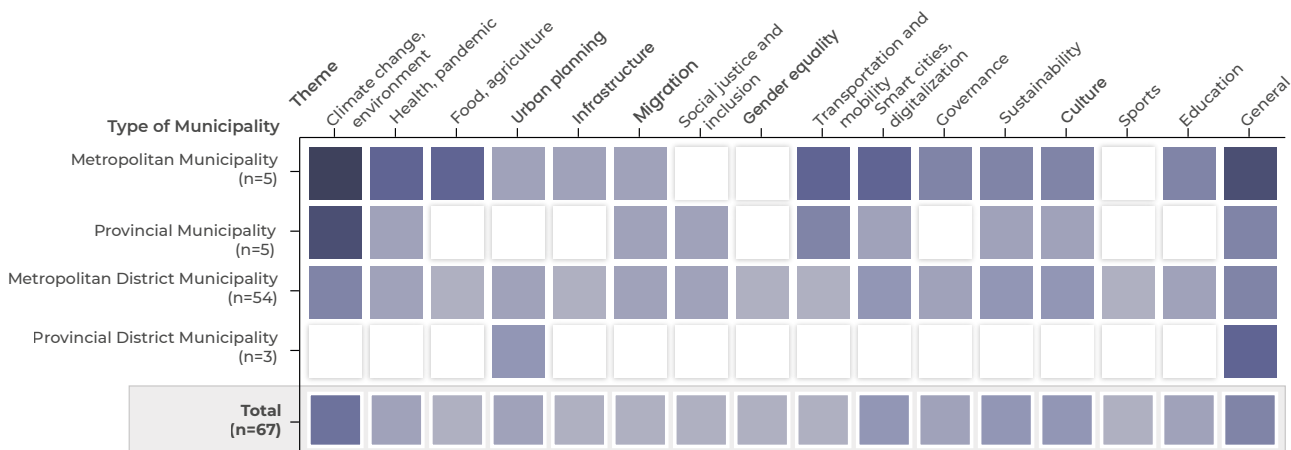
⁴⁶ This increase may have several causes. These could include Türkiye's national foreign policies, advances in information and communication technology facilitating international contact, and the rise in the number of such networks (Sivrikaya, *ibid.*, 2023).

Areas of Cooperation Between Municipalities and International Networks

Municipalities collaborate with the international city networks they are members of in various areas. While most collaborations align with the specific focus of each network, some also span other important themes.⁴⁷ In this context, municipalities were asked about the areas of cooperation they have developed with the international networks they belong to. The most preferred areas of cooperation were climate change and the environment (51%), culture (36%), and smart cities and digitalization (33%), while the least preferred were infrastructure and sports (10%), gender equality (15%), and transportation and mobility (16%). Additionally, 49% of the municipalities indicated that they focus on multiple themes for cooperation, choosing the “general” option instead of one specific theme. Four municipalities selected the “other” option, indicating cooperation on themes such as resilient cities, civil society, participation, biodiversity, and urban design.

Figure 43: Areas of Cooperation Between Municipalities and International Networks by Type of Municipality

In which areas does your municipality develop cooperation with the international networks you are member of?



All metropolitan municipalities collaborate with the networks they belong to on climate change and the environment. Health and pandemic, food and agriculture, transportation and mobility, and smart cities and digitalization are also significant areas of cooperation. According to metropolitan municipalities' responses, there has been no focused cooperation with international networks on social justice, inclusion, gender equality, or sports.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ A project focused on the environment may also touch upon urban mobility. For example, a project that designs a public transport system not reliant on fossil fuels.

⁴⁸ The five metropolitan municipalities marked the “general” option as well. Although some municipalities did not select specific individual themes listed in the options, the cooperation areas they considered under the “general” category may still encompass one of the themes mentioned in the options.

For provincial municipalities, climate change and the environment also stand out, with 80% reporting cooperation in this area. Transportation and mobility come in second place, with 40%. However, themes like food, urban planning, infrastructure, gender equality, governance, sports, and education are not areas of focus for these municipalities' international cooperation.

Among metropolitan district municipalities, the prominent areas of cooperation with international networks are climate change and the environment (47%), culture (40%), sustainability (32%), and smart cities and digitalization (32%). Unlike other municipality types, at least one metropolitan district municipality has selected one of these themes. Infrastructure, along with transportation and mobility, are the least cooperated areas, with only 11% participation.

In provincial district municipalities, only one area, urban planning, is selected (33%). Other themes are not chosen by the provincial district municipalities that are members of international networks. These municipalities tended to provide a "general" response rather than focusing on one theme.

When examining the areas of cooperation developed with international networks by municipalities based on provinces, some areas are seen to cover a broad area, while others are more limited. The most commonly chosen theme, climate change and the environment, was the most widespread across provinces, with cooperation occurring in all provinces except for Bilecik.⁴⁹ Health and pandemic,⁵⁰ following climate change and the environment, is the second most common theme across provinces.⁵¹ Cooperation on sports and infrastructure, however, occurred in only three provinces.

Notably, there were also significant variations in the preference for themes across provinces. For example, all municipalities in Çanakkale, Edirne, and Tekirdağ indicated that they cooperated with their international networks on climate change and the environment, while Bilecik reported no such cooperation, and in Kocaeli, only 36% of municipalities reported such cooperation.

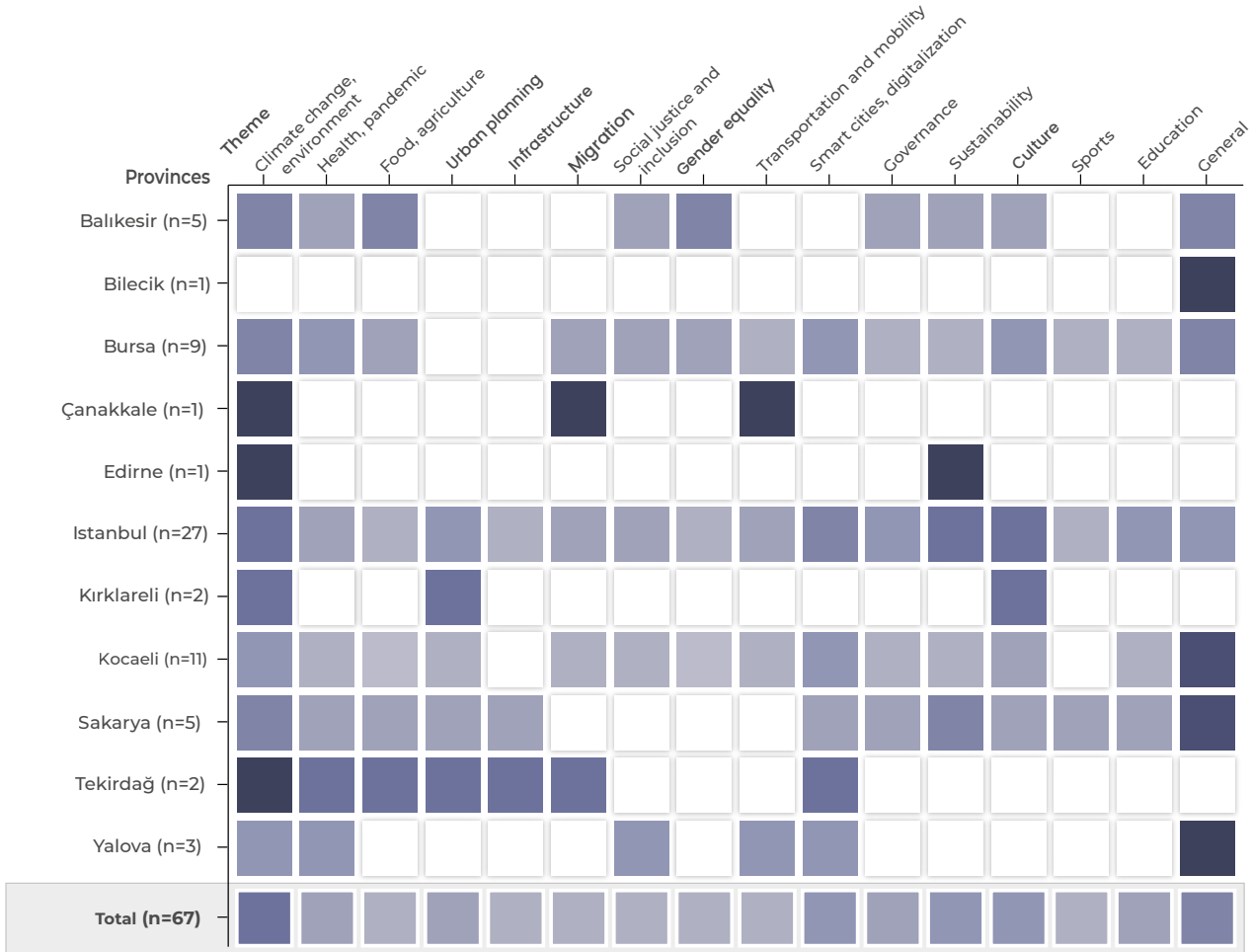
⁴⁹ In Bilecik, only one municipality responded to this question, and the municipality marked the "general" option.

⁵⁰ Considering that the field research was conducted after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not surprising that the theme of health and the pandemic was more prominent than other themes. The data provide significant evidence that current issues have an impact on municipal cooperation.

⁵¹ The health and pandemic theme was marked by at least one municipality in 7 provinces. Additionally, the "general" option was also preferred by at least one municipality in the 7 provinces within the scope of the research.

Figure 44: Areas of Cooperation Between Municipalities and International Networks by Province

In which areas does your municipality develop cooperation with the international networks you are member of?

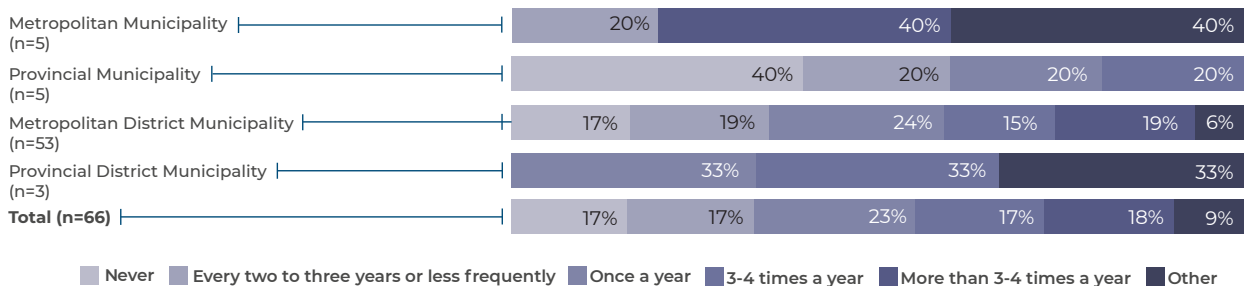


Municipalities' Participation in Events Organized by International Networks

Although local governments are members of international city networks, this membership does not automatically mean active communication or relationships.⁵² Some municipalities, after joining these networks, do not engage further, nor do they ever participate in their activities or events. In some cases, the contact ceases after a period for various reasons.⁵³ To assess the extent to which municipalities are actively engaged with the networks they belong to, they were asked about the frequency of their participation in the networks' events. Of the 66 municipalities that responded, the majority (33%) stated that they participate in their networks' events multiple times a year.⁵⁴ Another 22% of municipalities mentioned that they attend these events once a year. Municipalities with relatively less frequent participation (once every two to three years or less) accounted for 16% of the responding municipalities. A further 16% indicated that they do not attend the networks' events at all. The frequency of participation in these events may be influenced by factors such as how often the networks hold meetings, how often they invite their members to events, and the municipalities' availability. Some municipalities selected the "other" option, noting that the frequency of their participation varies from one network to another. For example, some attend events of specific networks two to three times annually, while they do not attend others at all.

Figure 45: Frequency of Participation in International Networks' Events by Municipalities by Type of Municipality

How frequently do you participate in the activities/events (meetings/webinars/trainings, etc.) of the international networks you belong to?



⁵² In this report, activity and passivity are primarily assessed based on whether municipalities participate in the activities of the networks and to what extent. If municipalities participate even to a small degree in the activities of the networks, this is considered an "active relationship", while a lack of participation is defined as a "passive relationship". Furthermore, the level of activity can vary. Some municipalities participate more frequently in network activities. For this report, participation in network activities "more than once a year" was considered a more active relationship, while participation "once a year" or "less than once a year" was regarded as a relationship that is less frequent.

⁵³ In this study, municipalities that were members of a network but had no contact with the network were not asked why they had cut communication. However, the literature emphasizes that "passive" municipalities, which do not participate in the activities or operations of the networks, often refrain due to a lack of financial, political, or human resources (see Kern and Bulkeley, 2009). Additionally, factors such as changes in the personnel maintaining relationships in the municipality, changes in municipal leadership and priorities, or the increasing cost of participating in events abroad are observed as reasons for reducing international engagements. These reasons, which are similar to those in international literature, could influence municipalities' contact with networks and their participation in their activities.

⁵⁴ This percentage refers to the total of the municipalities that responded with "3-4 times a year" (15%) and those that said "more than 3-4 times a year" (18%).

The frequency of participation in the activities of their networks is high for all metropolitan municipalities. All metropolitan municipalities reported attending their networks' events multiple times a year, with each of them reporting that they participate at least twice annually.

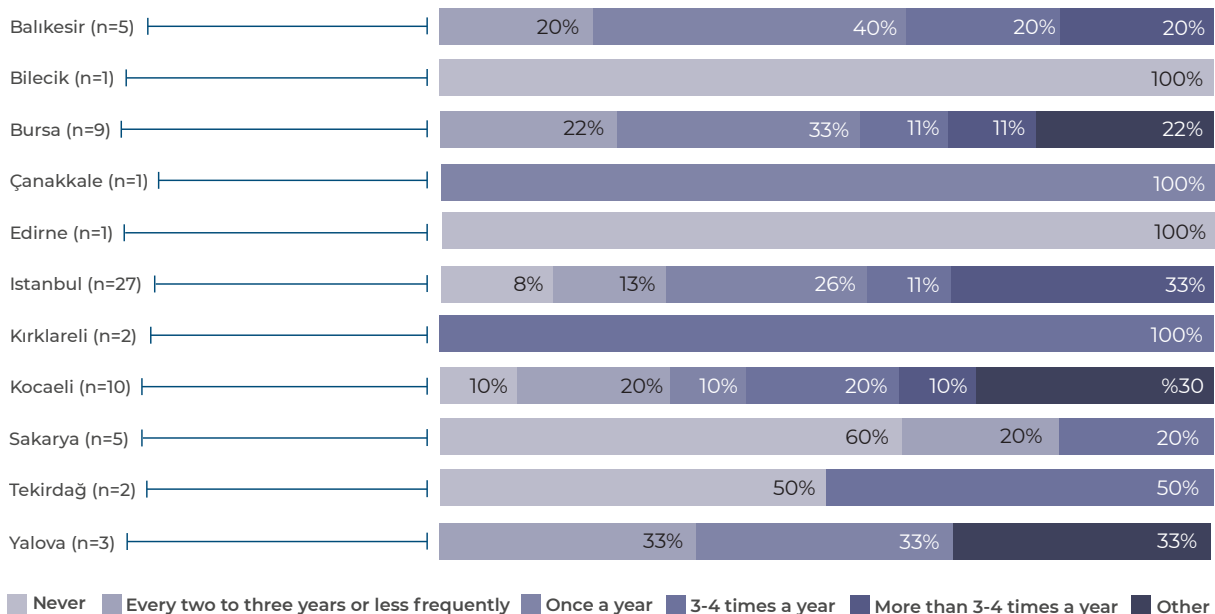
For provincial municipalities, however, the frequency of participation tends to drop. Only 20% of these municipalities stated that they attend their networks' events three to four times a year, while 40% participate once a year or every two to three years or less. Another 40% of municipalities reported that they do not attend any network events.

In metropolitan district municipalities, the frequency of participation is also relatively low. 43% of municipalities attend events once a year or once every two to three years, while 34% attend three to four times a year or more frequently. 17% of metropolitan district municipalities do not participate in any of their networks' events.

Provincial district municipalities each provided a different response. One municipality reported attending network events once a year, another attended three to four times annually, and one municipality mentioned attending based on availability.

Figure 46: Frequency of Participation in International Networks' Events by Municipalities by Province

How frequently do you participate in the activities/events (meetings/webinars/trainings, etc.) of the international networks you belong to?



When breaking down by province, participation in network events three to four times a year was observed in seven provinces, more widely than other responses. Municipalities indicating they participate more frequently than three to four times a year were found in four provinces. Upon examining each response at the provincial level, the rates show variation across provinces. A response that was observed at a high rate in one province may not have been observed at all in another. For example, 33% of municipalities in Istanbul indicated that they participate in network events more than three to four times a year, whereas in Kocaeli, this rate dropped to just 10% (see Figure 46).

International networks organize different types of events for their members to participate. A question was posed to identify the events that municipalities show the most interest in. Among municipalities in the Marmara Region, participation in conferences, symposiums, seminars, and forums was the most common, with 75% of municipalities indicating interest. General assembly meetings of networks were the second most common, with 73% of municipalities participating. On the other hand, the least preferred event types were training sessions (40%) and exhibitions, fairs, and expos (42%). Three municipalities that selected the “other” option mentioned additional activities, such as working on aid activities with their international networks, using information on the network’s website, and participating in the network’s board meetings.

When looking at the data by municipality type, conference-style events were most popular across all types of municipalities, excluding town municipalities.⁵⁵ Among metropolitan municipalities, participation in general assemblies and conferences, symposiums, seminars, and forums stands out, with 80% of these municipalities attending. However, technical visits and fairs were relatively less popular, with only 40% of metropolitan municipalities expressing interest.

Provincial municipalities participate only in conferences, symposiums, seminars, and forums (67%) and workshops (33%) organized by networks.

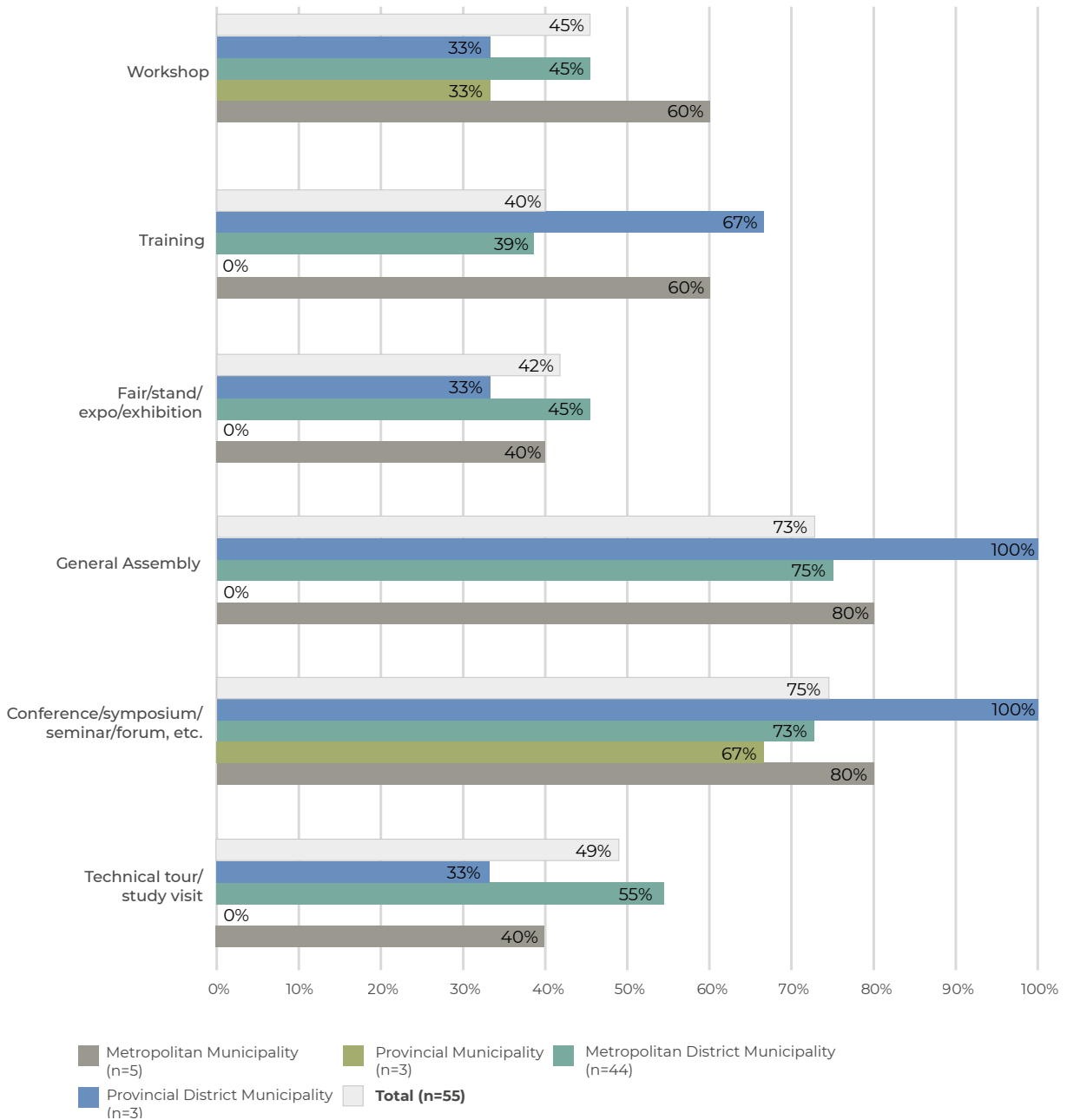
Metropolitan district municipalities favored general assemblies the most, with 75% attending these events. Participation in conferences and symposiums was the second most common, with 73%. Participation in network training sessions was relatively low at 33% for this type of municipality.

All provincial district municipalities reported attending events such as general assemblies and conferences and symposiums organized by networks they belong to. However, workshops, technical visits, and fairs were the least attended events, with 33% of provincial district municipalities participating in these types of events.

⁵⁵Town municipalities did not respond to this question because they indicated they were not members of any network.

Figure 47: International Networks' Events Attended by Municipalities by Type of Municipality

Which types of events of the international networks you belong to do you attend?



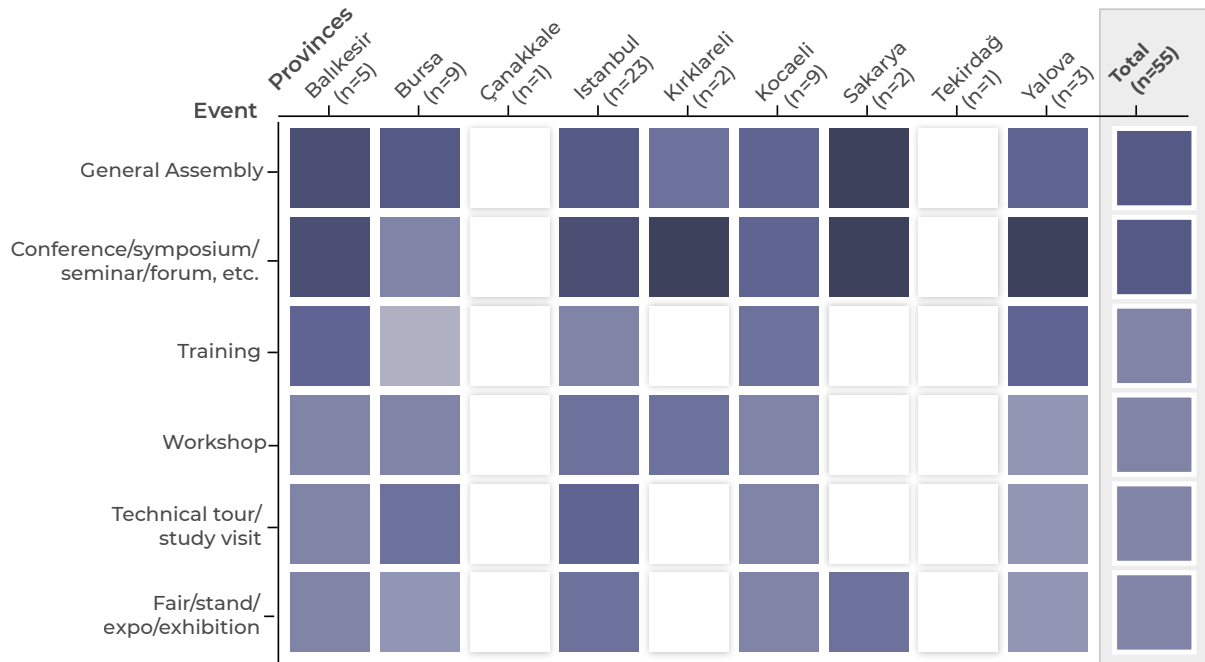
When examining the data by province,⁵⁶ it is evident that general assemblies and conferences are the most commonly attended events. Participation in general assemblies and conferences/symposiums/seminars/forums was observed in at least one municipality from seven provinces. Therefore, it can be emphasized that these two types of events were the most widely attended across provinces. In contrast, training and technical visits/workshops were selected by municipalities in five provinces, making them less widely attended event types.

While there are no significant differences across provinces, the preference rates for each event offer different perspectives within the provinces as the popularity of events may vary from one province to another. When looking at the data, it is evident that this is the case in this context. For instance, participation in general assemblies is preferred by at least 67% of municipalities in most provinces, while participation in workshops has exceeded 50% in only two provinces.

Additionally, when the events are assessed within provinces, the preference rates vary. For example, in Sakarya, all municipalities surveyed attend general assemblies, while in Yalova, no municipality participates in such events.

Figure 48: International Networks' Events Attended by Municipalities by Province

Which types of events of the international networks you belong to do you attend?



⁵⁶ Municipalities in Bilecik and Edirne did not respond to this question because they stated that they did not participate in network activities.

Contributions of International Networks to Their Member Municipalities

International urban networks provide a range of support to their members. To get more insight, MMU member municipalities were asked about the specific contributions they receive from the networks they are part of. According to responses to this multiple-choice question, the most frequently observed contribution, reported by 68% of municipalities, is the support in developing networks with other cities or institutions. Sharing knowledge and experience (67%) and disseminating good practices (64%) are also prominent contributions. In contrast, advocacy (23%),⁵⁷ technical support/expert assistance (26%), and access to funding/grant opportunities (32%) were less frequently experienced contributions. Additionally, 12% of municipalities believe that the networks do not contribute anything to their municipality.⁵⁸

When broken down by municipality type, different trends emerge. All metropolitan municipalities stated that they receive support from international networks in knowledge and experience sharing and staying informed about global developments. However, support for networking with other cities and institutions, as well as advocacy, were the least favored contributions for metropolitan municipalities, with 40% reporting that they received minimal support in these areas.

For provincial municipalities, international visibility and access to funding/grant opportunities stand out with 60% reporting these contributions. On the other hand, none of the provincial municipalities reported receiving technical support or expert assistance from the networks. One provincial municipality even claimed that the networks offered no contributions whatsoever.

Metropolitan district municipalities are most commonly supported in network development, with approximately 72% of municipalities reporting this. Knowledge and experience sharing (66%) and disseminating good practices (62%) follow as the most reported contributions. As with other municipality types, advocacy

⁵⁷ Here, advocacy refers to bringing local issues to international platforms. There could be various reasons why some municipalities stated they did not receive any benefits from international networks. These reasons could include the international network's inability to provide tangible benefits to its members, not being able to communicate equally with all members of the network, a lack of knowledge or insufficient information among municipal staff about the network's activities and services for its members, weak internal communication between different departments of the municipality regarding the network's activities, or the municipality's financial and staff limitations preventing adequate participation in network activities.

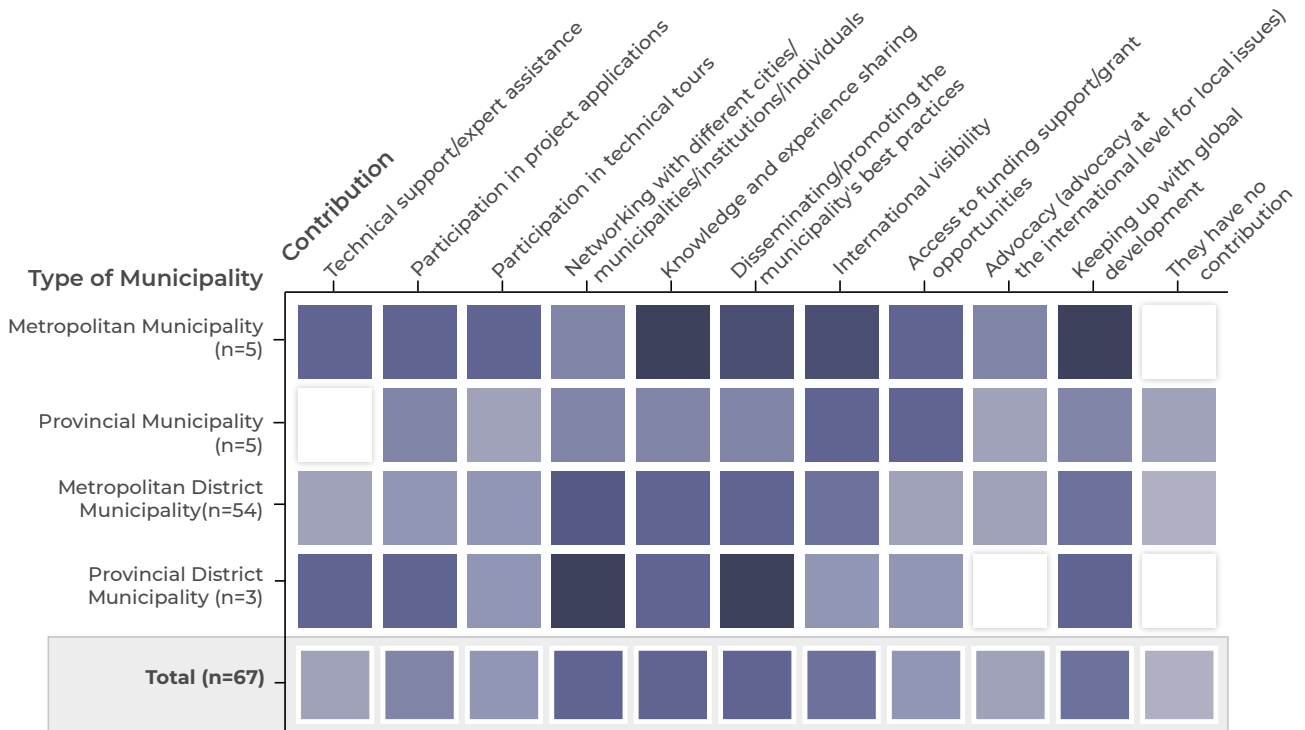
⁵⁸ There could be various reasons why municipalities state that they do not get contributions from international networks. These reasons may include the inability of the international network to provide tangible benefits to its members, ineffective communication with all members on an equal basis, lack of knowledge or incomplete understanding among municipal staff regarding the network's activities and services for its members, weak internal communication within the municipality regarding the network's activities, or insufficient financial and human resources to actively participate in the network's activities.

was the least selected contribution, at 23%, and technical support/expert assistance was chosen by the same proportion of municipalities. Lastly, 13% of metropolitan district municipalities indicated that the networks provided no contributions.

Every provincial district municipality reported receiving support from their networks in terms of network development and disseminating good practices, while none chose advocacy as a preferred contribution.

Figure 49: Contributions of International Networks to Municipalities by Type of Municipality

What contributions do the international networks you belong to make to your municipality?

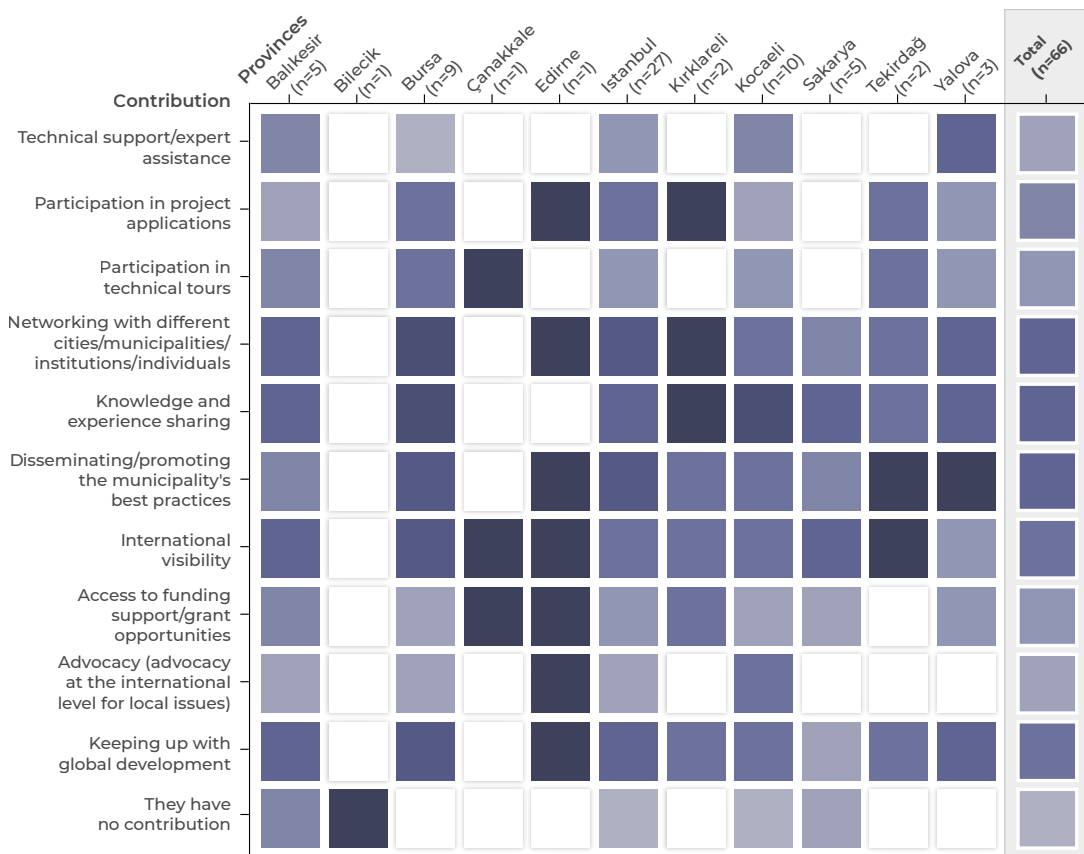


At the provincial level, “international visibility” emerged as the most widely chosen contribution, with at least one municipality from 10 provinces selecting this option. Other forms of contributions, such as networking, disseminating good practices, utilizing funding/grant opportunities, and staying informed about global developments, were chosen by municipalities in 9 provinces. Meanwhile, technical support/expert assistance and advocacy were observed as contributions in a more limited range of provinces.⁵⁹ Additionally, in 5 provinces, at least one municipality stated that the networks did not provide any contribution.

The popularity of each potential contribution from the networks also varies across provinces. For example, the contribution of disseminating good practices was chosen by at least half of the municipalities in 8 provinces, whereas technical support/expert assistance was selected by more than half (67%) of municipal representatives in just one province.

Figure 50: Contributions of International Networks to Municipalities by Province

What contributions do the international networks you belong to make to your municipality?



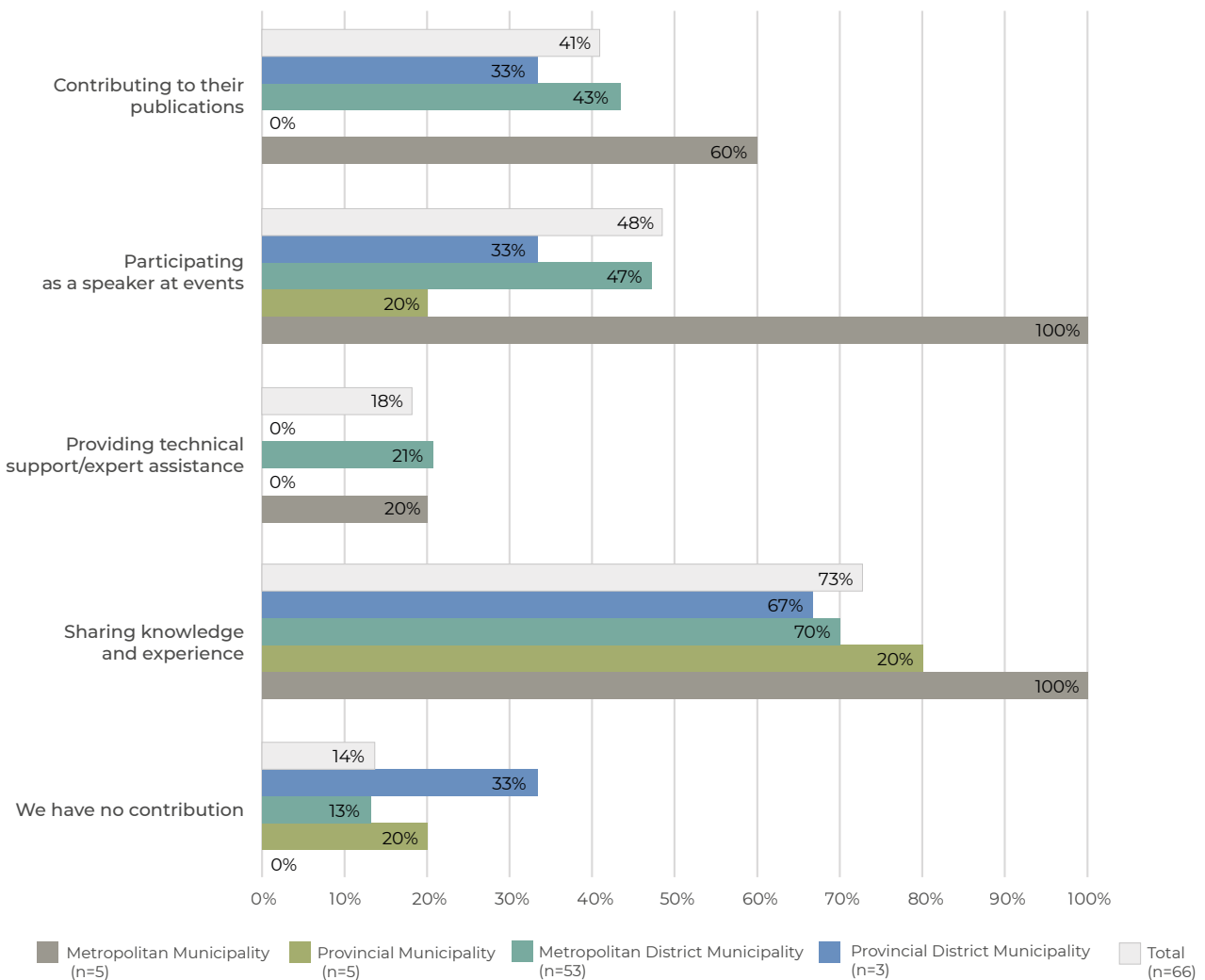
⁵⁹ When examining the type of municipality, these two options have been among the least preferred. Regardless of the criteria used to analyze the data, municipalities appear to receive the least support from international networks in these two areas.

Contributions of Municipalities to International Networks

The relationship between international city networks and their member municipalities is often more than just a one-way support system; municipalities also offer various forms of contribution to the networks they belong to. In this research, the contributions of the MMU member municipalities to the networks they belong to were also examined. It was found that 85% of the MMU member municipalities reported offering some form of support to the networks. This is a significant indication of a mutually beneficial relationship between networks and their members.

Figure 51: Contributions of Municipalities to International Networks by Type of Municipality

What contributions do you, as a municipality, make to the international networks you belong to?



When examining the contributions of municipalities to the networks, it was found that 73% of municipalities shared information and experience with the networks, 48% participated as speakers at network events, and 41% contributed to the networks' publications. A smaller percentage of municipalities (17%) offered technical support or expert assistance to the networks.⁶⁰ 14% of municipalities stated that they did not contribute to the networks. Four municipalities mentioned different contributions beyond the listed options, such as “paying membership fees”, “the mayor’s active participation in the network’s board”, “hosting businesspeople brought by the networks in the city”, and “participating as a partner in applications when there are project calls and a partner from Türkiye is needed”.

All metropolitan municipalities reported that they participated as speakers in network events and shared information and experience with the networks. Only 10% of these municipalities provided technical support/expert assistance to the networks.

Among provincial municipalities, 80% are engaged in sharing information and experience with their networks. Beyond this support mechanism, only the contribution of “participating as a speaker at events” was selected by 20% of the municipalities. Provincial municipalities expressed that they did not contribute to the networks in any other way beyond these two avenues.

For metropolitan district municipalities⁶¹ and provincial district municipalities,⁶² sharing information and experience also ranked first, while technical support/expert assistance was ranked last. 13% of metropolitan district municipalities and 33% of provincial district municipalities indicated that they did not provide any support to the networks.

⁶⁰ Technical support and expertise have emerged as one of the areas where networks provide the least contribution to their members. Although mentoring programs have been developed under various networks or through projects in which networks are involved (e.g., the PROSPECT+ project under the European Energy Cities network – for more details, see “Capacity-Building Programme”, PROSPECT+, accessed December 12, 2024, <https://h2020prospect.eu/learning-programme>), the data in the report suggest that such programs may be insufficient or that cooperation between networks and regional institutions in this area is lacking. To enhance cooperation in this regard, efforts could focus on increasing the number of mentoring programs, broadening their scope, and promoting their adoption more widely.

⁶¹ In metropolitan district municipalities, the percentage of municipalities that marked knowledge and experience sharing is 70%, while those that selected technical support/expert assistance account for 19%.

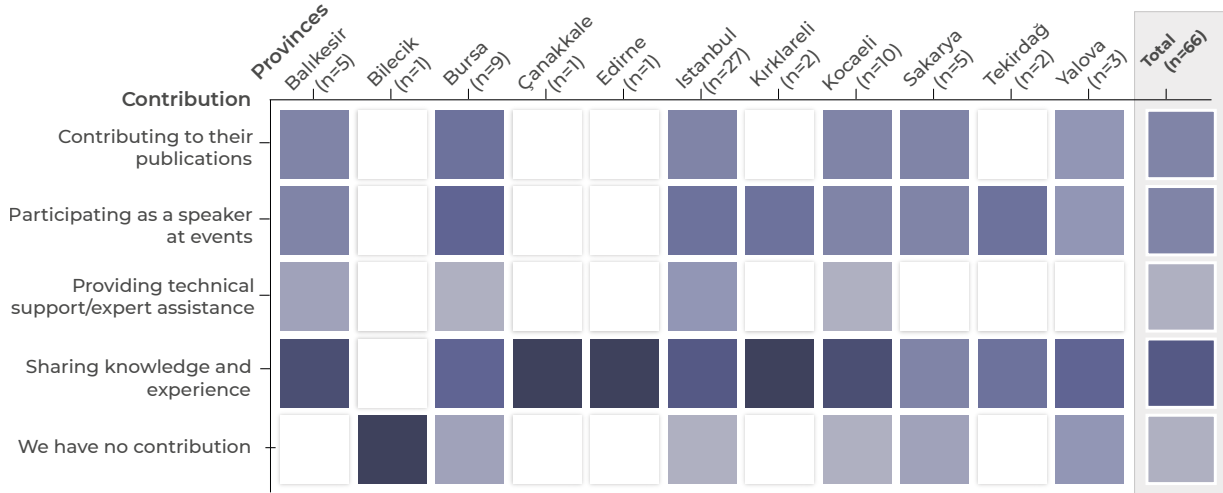
⁶² Among provincial district municipalities, 67% preferred knowledge and experience sharing, yet none of these municipalities provide technical or expert support to the networks.

Information and experience sharing was marked by at least one municipality in 10 provinces. This shows that information and experience sharing is the most geographically widespread contribution. Another widely observed contribution, selected by municipalities in 8 provinces, was participating as a speaker at events. In contrast, technical support/expert assistance remained limited, with only one municipality in 4 metropolitan provinces opting for it.

When examining the preference rates for each option in every province, information and experience sharing emerged as the most frequently selected contribution in the 10 provinces where it was chosen. This suggests that, in general, it is the most popular response across the provinces. In contrast, technical support/expert assistance had the lowest preference rate across the provinces. In 5 provinces, all municipalities reported contributing to their networks in some way.

Figure 52: Contributions of Municipalities to International Networks by Province

What contributions do you, as a municipality, make to the international networks you belong to?







RESEARCH FINDINGS

4. Sister City Relationships of Municipalities

4. SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIPS OF MUNICIPALITIES

The idea of sister city relationships dates back to 1930, when Klagenfurt (Austria) and Wiesbaden (Germany) formed the very first partnership of its kind.⁶³ Following the Second World War, cities in Germany and France began forging diplomatic ties to promote post-war reconciliation and rapprochement between the two countries. Subsequently, town twinning began to gain traction across Europe. By 1991, approximately 8,500 sister city relationships had been established among local governments in European Union member states.⁶⁴ Fast forward to 2019, and more than 40,000 local governments in Europe were involved in over 20,000 partnerships, each connecting at least two municipalities.⁶⁵

In Türkiye, the legal framework for establishing and maintaining sister city relationships is defined in Article 74 of the Municipal Law. According to this article, municipalities can “carry out joint activities and service projects with foreign local administrations or establish sister city relationships”. However, the approval process begins with a decision by the municipal council. This decision, in line with Article 18 of the same law, requires approval from both the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, facilitated through inter-ministerial communication. The process involves submitting detailed information about the foreign municipality, justifying the scope and benefits of the relationship, and submitting the municipal council’s decision along with the draft sister city protocol to the General Directorate of Local Governments under the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change via an official letter. The signing of the agreement occurs after the ministry approval.⁶⁶

When forming sister city relationships, several factors play a significant role, including central-local relations, geographical considerations, cultural ties, historical connections, demographic composition, global political perspectives, and local financial resources. For example, cities in Türkiye frequently establish sister city relationships with municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, often driven by shared historical and cultural connections. Similarly, the labor migration from Türkiye to Germany has resulted in many Turkish municipalities establishing sister city relationships with cities in Germany and other European countries with significant Turkish communities. These partnerships built through town twinning not only enhance relations between local governments but also create opportunities for new collaborations among private sector entities, civil society organizations, and citizens. Eventually, every such relationship provides a platform for knowledge and experience exchange, paving the way for concrete partnerships and

⁶³ CESIE, *Newtwin Manual: Innovation and Practical Ideas for Town Twinning* (Centro Studi ed Iniziative Europeo, 2001), p. 11, accessed October 28, 2024, https://cesie.org/media/newtwin_manual.pdf.

⁶⁴ As of the specified date, there are 12 members.

⁶⁵ CEMR, *Twinning for Tomorrow's World: Practical Handbook*, 2007, p. 3; CEMR Official Website, 2020, accessed October 28, 2024, http://www.twinning.org/en/page/numbers-by-country#.X_TsYtgzY2x.

⁶⁶ Municipal Law No. 5393, accessed October 24, 2024, <http://www.lawsturkey.com/law/municipality-law-5393#:~:text=The%20municipality%20law%20has%20been,procedures%20and%20principles%20of%20municipalities>.

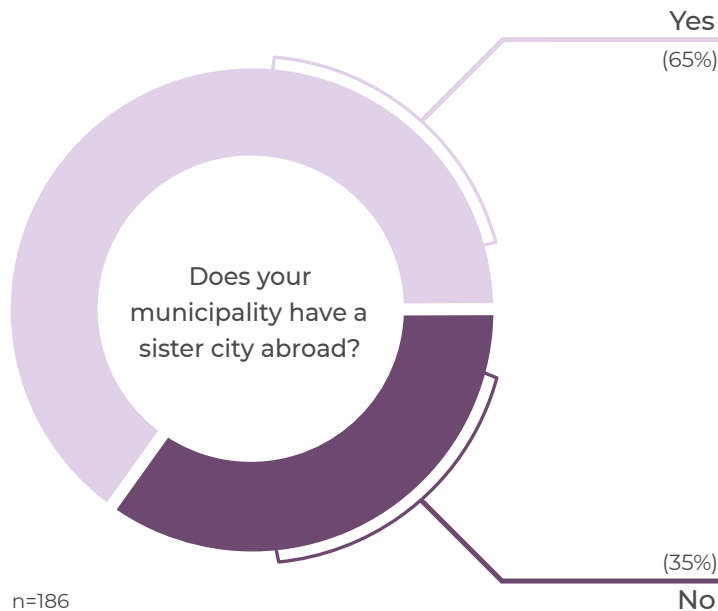
supporting the development of social and economic mechanisms.⁶⁷ Events and projects conducted within the framework of sister city relationships can facilitate the formation of strategic partnerships, foster cultural interaction, and ensure the sustainability of these relationships.⁶⁸

In this section, we explore the sister city relationships of municipalities in the Marmara Region, looking at the motivations behind these partnerships, the activities they engage in, the frequency of meetings and cooperation, the challenges faced in both establishing and maintaining these relationships, and the reasons why some relationships may eventually be terminated.

Sister Cities of Municipalities

Questions regarding sister city relationships were posed to MMU member municipalities, and they were asked to focus on their partnerships they have established with foreign municipalities when answering. Among the 186 municipalities surveyed, 121 (65%) indicated that they had international sister cities, while 65 (35%) stated that they did not.

Figure 53: Sister Cities of Municipalities

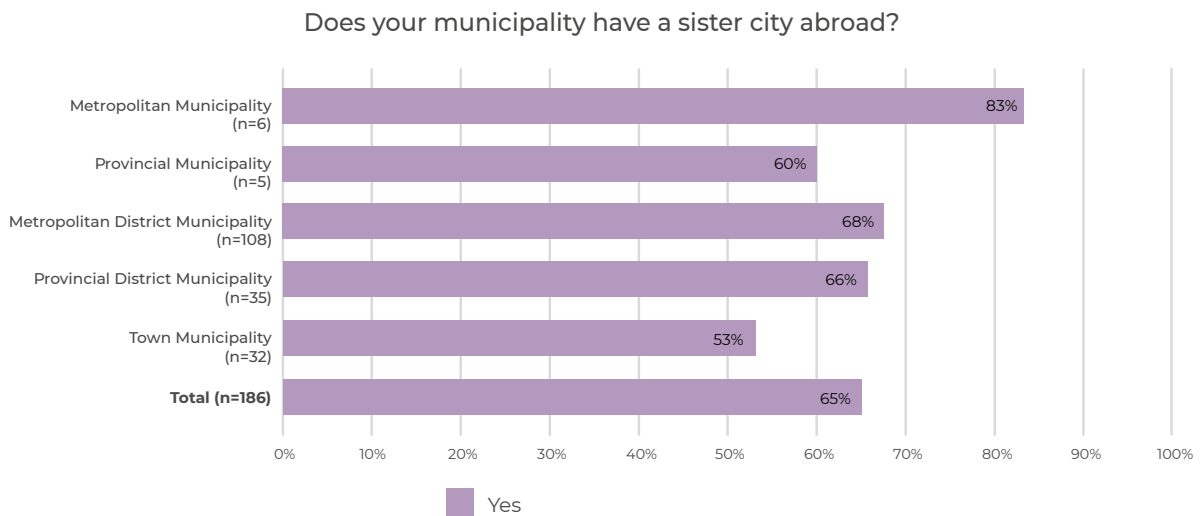


⁶⁷ European Union Presidency, Türkiye’de Etkin Bir Şehir Eşleştirme Yöntemi İçin Yol Haritası (A Roadmap for an Effective City Twinning Method in Türkiye), 2019, p. 8, accessed October 28, 2024, <https://www.yereldeab.org.tr/Portals/8/yayinlar/roadmap.pdf>.

⁶⁸ Merve Ağca, "Bir Diplomasi Aracı Olarak Kültür: Yerelden Küresele Kentler" (Culture as a Tool of Diplomacy: From Local to Global in Cities), Şehir & Toplum: Kültür (City & Society: Culture), no 25 (2023): 79-89.

Breaking it down by municipality type, it was found that 5 out of 6 metropolitan municipalities and 3 out of 5 provincial municipalities had international sister cities. Among metropolitan district municipalities, 68% reported having sister city relationships. This figure was 66% for provincial district municipalities and 53% for town municipalities. Considering that none of the town municipalities in the Marmara Region are members of an international city network, it can be said that sister city relationships are a relatively more preferred diplomatic tool at the town level.

Figure 54: Sister Cities of Municipalities by Type of Municipality



At the provincial level, Istanbul had the highest percentage of municipalities with sister cities, with 82% of its municipalities reporting. Approximately 75% of municipalities in Kocaeli and 68% in Balıkesir also reported having international sister city relationships. In all 11 provinces, more than half of the municipalities had established international partnerships.

Additionally, as seen in Figure 56, among the 33 municipalities in the border provinces of Edirne and Kırklareli, 20 (61%) reported having sister city relationships. Of the 10 municipalities located directly on the border, 5 indicated that they had international sister cities.

Figure 55: Sister Cities of Municipalities by Province

Does your municipality have a sister city abroad?

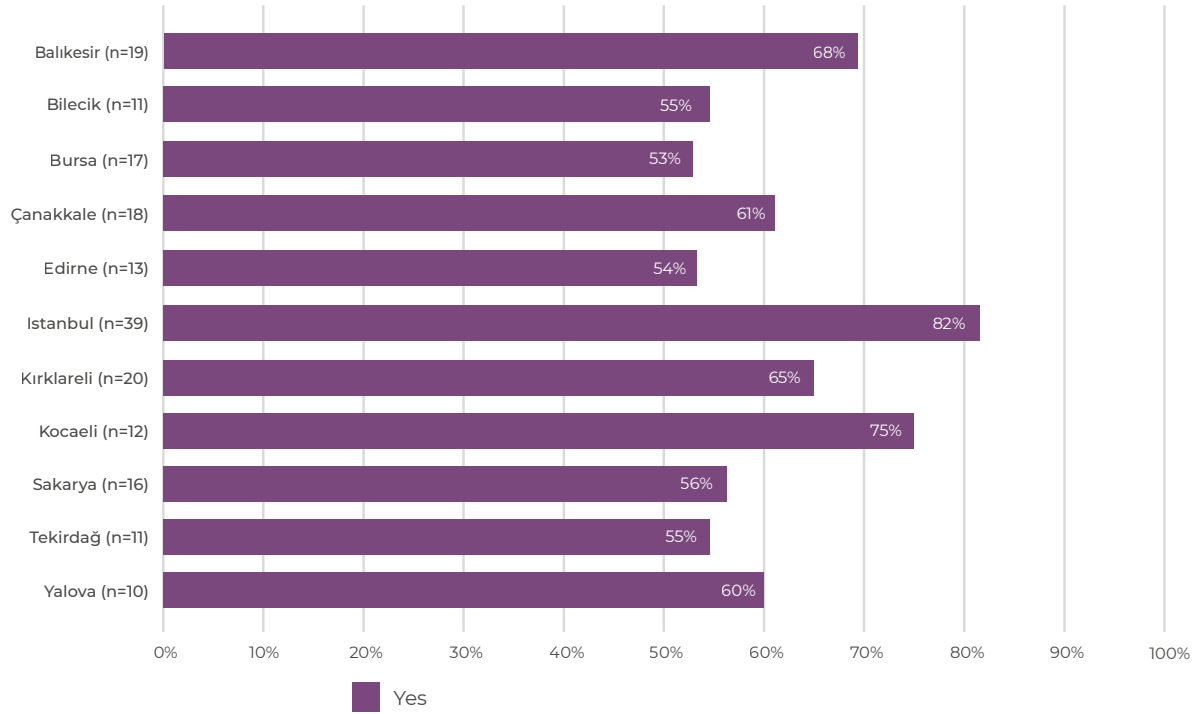
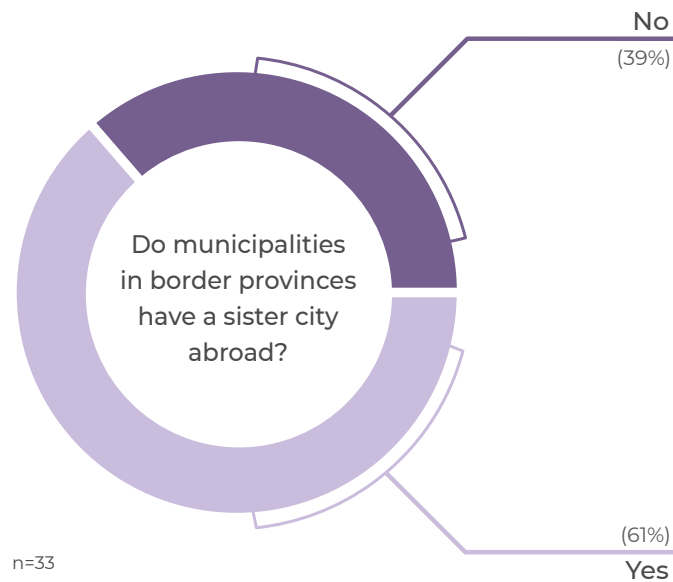


Figure 56: Sister Cities of Municipalities in Border Provinces

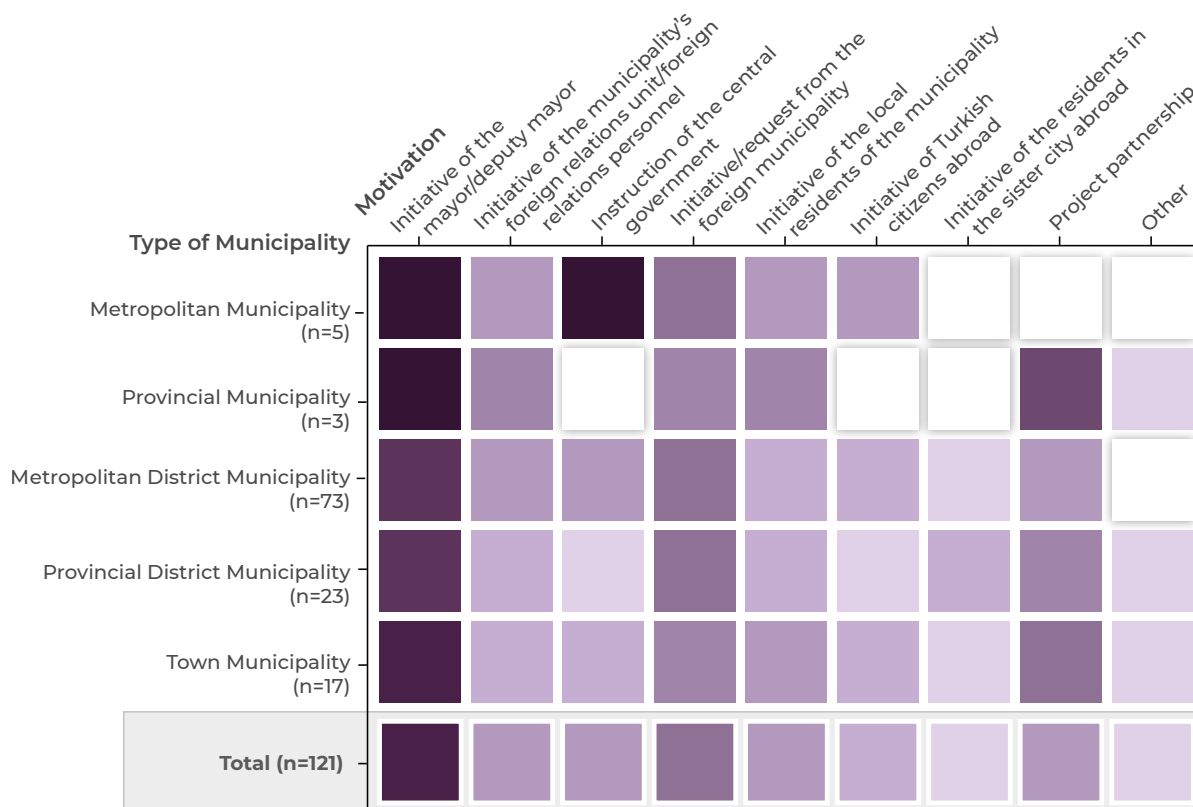


Municipalities' Motivations for Establishing Sister City Relationships

Municipalities with international sister cities were asked about their motivations behind establishing these partnerships and were allowed to select multiple answers. Among the 121 municipalities that reported having sister cities, 98 (81%) stated that “initiative of the mayor or deputy mayor” was a driving factor behind establishing sister city relationships. This was followed by “initiative/request from the foreign municipality” as the second most common motivation, and “project partnership” ranked third. Additionally, all options such as initiatives by the municipality’s foreign relations personnel, instruction from central government, initiatives by local residents within the municipality, requests from Turkish citizens abroad, and initiatives by the residents of the sister city were selected by municipal representatives. Lastly, under the “other” category, the involvement of hometown associations and recommendations from international networks to which the municipality is a member were expressed as other motivations by municipal representatives.

Figure 57: Motivation for Establishing Sister City Relationships by Type of Municipality

What is the motivation for your municipality to establish sister city relationships?



Looking at municipality types, “initiative of the mayor or deputy mayor” was the predominant motivation for more than 78% of municipalities across all categories. All metropolitan municipalities cited “initiative of the mayor or deputy mayor” as well as “instruction from the central government” as motivations for forming sister city relationships. For town municipalities and provincial municipalities, “project partnership” emerged as the second most common motivation, while both for metropolitan and provincial district municipalities, “initiative/request from the foreign municipality” ranked second.

Figure 58: Motivation for Establishing Sister City Relationships by Province

What is the motivation for your municipality to establish sister city relationships?



When analyzing the motivations at the provincial level, in 9 provinces, excluding Bursa and Edirne, “initiative of the mayor or deputy mayor” ranked first. In Bursa, this motivation was selected by 67% of respondents, placing it second, while “initiative/request from the foreign municipality” ranked first with 89%. In Edirne, “initiative of the mayor or deputy mayor” also ranked second, chosen by 57%, while “project partnership” topped the list with 71%.

The “initiative/request from the foreign municipality” ranked second in Balıkesir, Çanakkale, Kırklareli, Istanbul, and Yalova. In Tekirdağ, “initiative from local residents within the municipality” ranked second, selected by 50% of respondents. This factor also ranked among the top three motivators in Yalova (50%) and Kocaeli (44%). Meanwhile, “project partnership” was the second most common motivation in Bilecik and Sakarya provinces. In municipalities located in border provinces, the most frequently mentioned sources of motivation were “the initiative of the mayor/deputy mayor” at 80%, “the initiative/request of the municipality abroad” at 55%, and “project partnership” at 50%.

Reasons for Municipalities to Establish Sister City Relationships

When examining the reasons municipalities establish sister city relationships, “cultural proximity” ranks first, selected by 73% of municipalities, 87 out of 121. The second most common reason is “developing social projects”, chosen by 55%. Ranking third is “shared history”, cited by 46% of municipalities. Other reasons, such as “familiarity between mayors” and “accessing grants and funds”, were not listed as separate options but were mentioned under the “other” category. “Religious proximity” was the least cited reason, with only 12% of municipalities selecting it. “Geographical proximity” was chosen by 26%, making it one of the reasons chosen by a limited number of municipalities. However, among municipalities located in border provinces, “cultural proximity” was the most frequently selected reason, with 67% of the 33 municipalities choosing it. In the border provinces of Edirne and Kırklareli, 65% of the 20 municipalities with sister city partnerships

Figure 59: Reasons for Establishing Sister City Relationships by Type of Municipality

What are the reasons for your municipality to establish sister city relations?



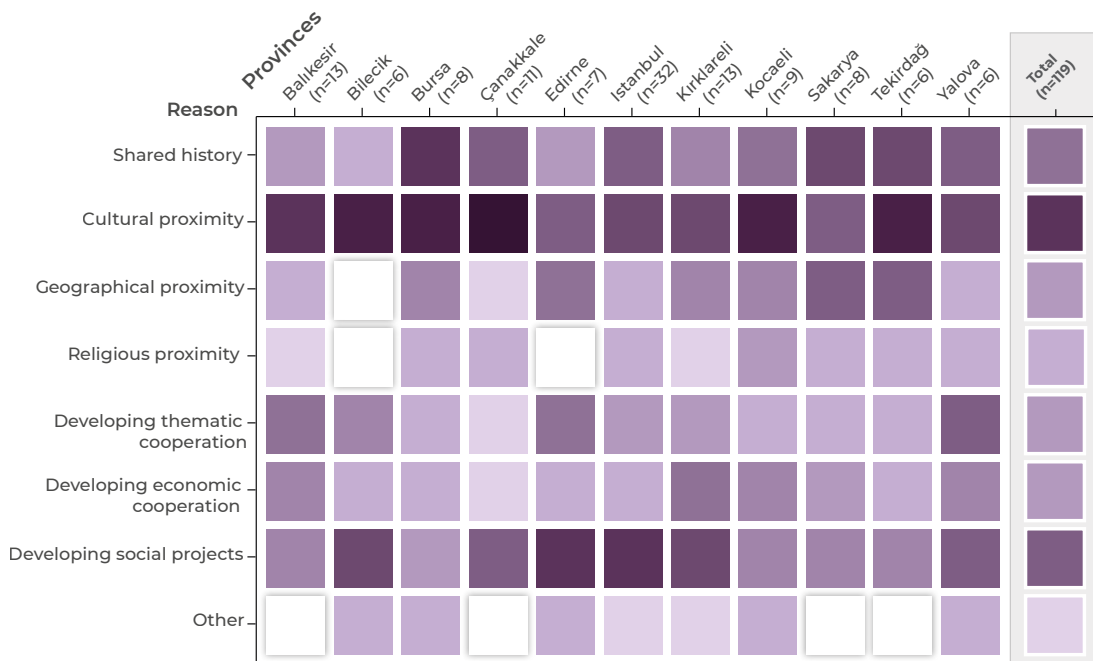
selected “cultural proximity” and “developing social projects” as their motivations, while 40% indicated “geographical proximity” as a factor.

Analyzing sister city relationship motivations by the type of municipality reveals that “cultural proximity” was selected by at least 67% across all types. For metropolitan municipalities, “cultural proximity” was universally cited as the primary reason, with “shared history” ranking second. Provincial municipalities that responded to the survey, on the other hand, unanimously selected “thematic collaborations” and “developing social projects” as motivations, indicating a strong focus on thematic and project-based relationships in these municipalities. For metropolitan district municipalities, provincial district municipalities, and town municipalities, “cultural proximity” and “developing social projects” were consistently ranked the top two reasons. Interestingly, “developing social projects” was not selected by any metropolitan municipalities. Across all municipality types, “religious proximity” was the least preferred option. Notably, no provincial municipality selected “religious proximity”, while it was chosen by two metropolitan municipalities, eight metropolitan district municipalities, one provincial district municipality, and three town municipalities.

At the provincial level, in 8 provinces, “cultural proximity” was the most frequently cited reason for establishing sister city relationships. In Istanbul, 78% of municipalities selected “developing social projects” as the primary reason, while in Edirne, it was chosen by 71%. In Sakarya, “shared history” ranked first with 63%.

Figure 60: Reasons for Establishing Sister City Relationships by Province

What are the reasons for your municipality to establish sister city relations?



In Bursa, Çanakkale, Kocaeli, and Tekirdağ, the option “shared history” emerged as the second most selected motivation for establishing sister city relationships. In Bilecik, Çanakkale, and Kırklareli, “developing social projects” ranked as the second most preferred choice, while in Yalova, this option was chosen by half of the municipalities alongside “thematic collaborations” and “shared history”.

The option “geographic proximity” ranked among the top three motivations in Tekirdağ and Sakarya, with half of the municipalities in each selecting it, the latter tying with “cultural proximity”. This underscores the significance of “geographic proximity” as a factor in forming sister city relationships for these provinces.

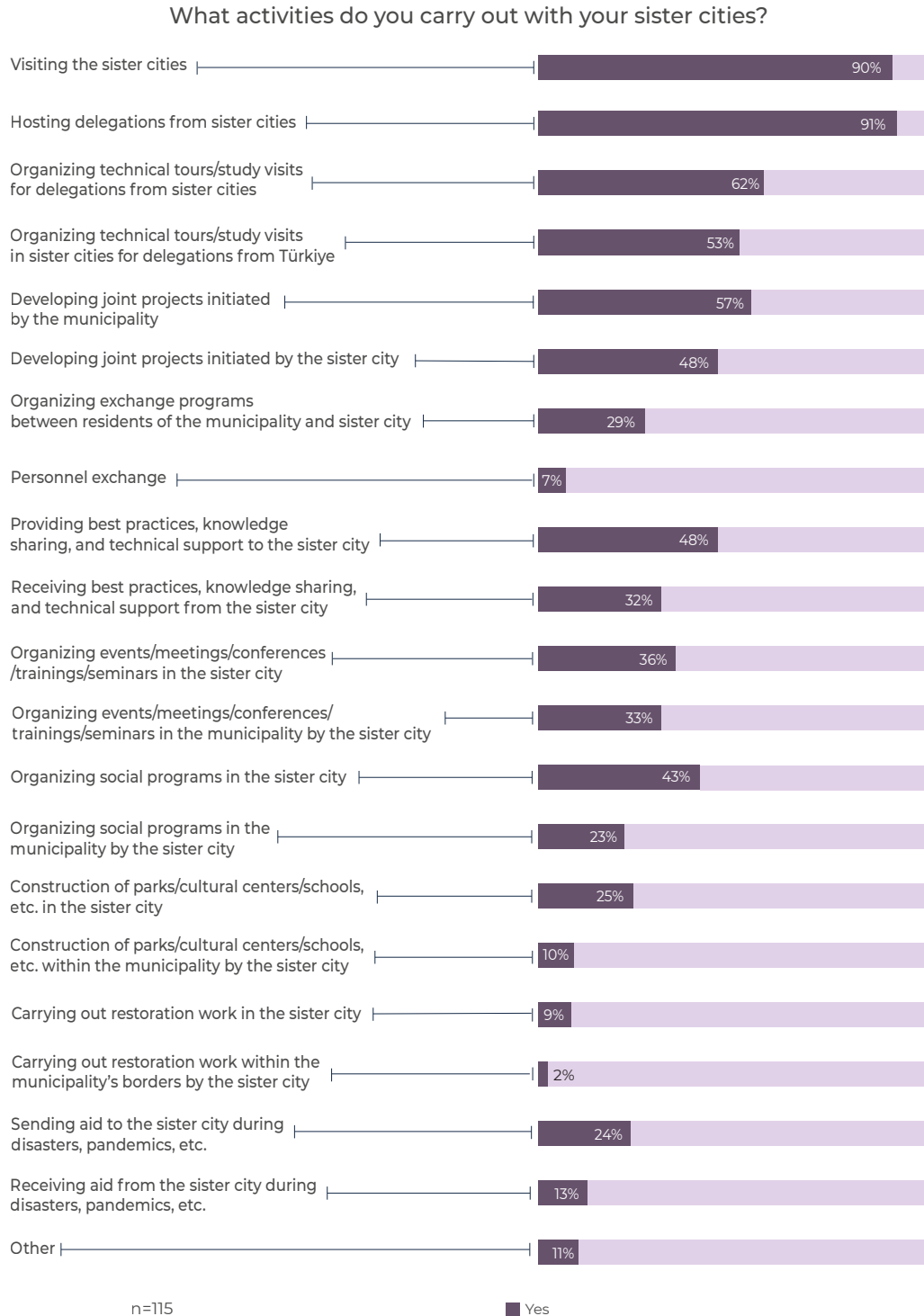
“Religious proximity” consistently ranked as the least selected motivation across provinces. Only one municipality each in six provinces, two municipalities each in two other provinces, and four municipalities in Istanbul chose “religious proximity”. Notably, no municipalities in Bilecik or Edirne selected this option.

In the border provinces of Edirne and Kırklareli, the most preferred motivations, each chosen by 65% of the 20 municipalities with sister city partnerships, were “cultural proximity” and “developing social projects”. Additionally, 40% of these municipalities selected “shared history” or “geographic proximity” as reasons for their partnerships.

Activities Municipalities Conduct with Sister Cities

When municipalities in the Marmara Region were asked about the activities they conducted with their sister cities, approximately 91% reported “hosting delegations from their sister cities”, and 90% indicated “visiting their sister cities”. “Organizing technical or study visits for delegations from sister cities” ranked third, chosen by 62% of the municipalities. Additionally, 57% stated that they had “developed joint projects initiated by their own municipalities”. This was followed by “organizing technical tours/study visits in the sister city for delegations from Türkiye”, selected by 53% of municipalities, “developing joint projects initiated by the sister city” and “providing best practices, knowledge sharing, and technical support to the sister city”, both selected by 48%. The option “organizing social programs in the sister city” was selected by 41% of the municipalities. The least common activities included constructing or restoring facilities such as parks, cultural centers, or schools in sister cities or related municipalities and conducting personnel exchanges. 25% of municipalities in Türkiye reported engaging in “constructing parks, cultural centers, schools, or similar facilities in the sister city”. Under the “other” category, municipalities reported linking their sister cities to Turkish representatives, particularly in construction projects in collaboration with TİKA and ministries, sharing Türkiye’s experience based on cultural differences, building monuments or statues in sister cities, inviting sister cities to festivals held in Türkiye, and organizing promotional or exclusive events for their sister cities. One municipality noted that it occasionally received economic support requests from its sister cities, but these requests went unfulfilled. Six municipalities indicated under the “other” category that they did not maintain active relationships with their sister cities.

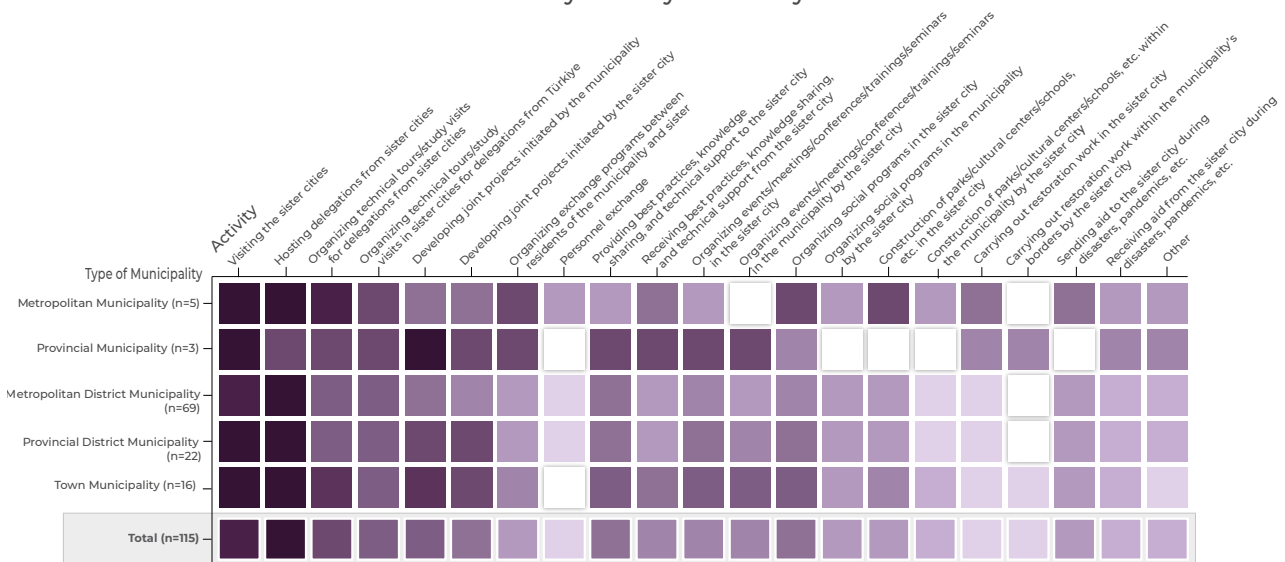
Figure 61: Activities Municipalities Conduct with Their Sister Cities



Analyzing activities with sister cities by the type of municipality reveals that all metropolitan municipalities and town municipalities both visited their sister cities and hosted delegations from them. Reciprocal visits were the most frequently conducted activities across all types and provinces. This was followed by “organizing technical or study visits for delegations from sister cities” and “developing joint projects initiated by the municipality” as the most selected options. The option “developing joint projects initiated by the municipality” was selected by all provincial municipalities. It also ranked among the top three most frequently chosen options by provincial district municipalities and town municipalities. “Personnel exchange” emerged as the least preferred activity across all types of municipalities. Only one metropolitan municipality, six metropolitan district municipalities, and one provincial district municipality reported conducting personnel exchange activities. Restoration and construction projects carried out by sister cities in municipalities in Türkiye were also among the least conducted activities across all types. In cases of disasters or pandemics, it was observed that Turkish municipalities, except for provincial municipalities, were more likely to provide assistance to their sister cities than to receive it.

Figure 62: Activities Municipalities Conduct with Their Sister Cities by Type of Municipality

What activities do you carry out with your sister cities?



When responses are analyzed by province, the options “visiting the sister city” and “hosting delegations from the sister city” emerged as the most frequently selected activities across all provinces. In fact, both options were chosen by all municipalities in Çanakkale, Edirne, Tekirdağ, and Yalova. Additionally, “organizing technical tours/study visits for delegations from the sister city” and “developing joint projects initiated by

the municipality” were identified as common activity types at the provincial level. The option “developing joint projects initiated by the sister city” was selected by 86% of municipalities in Edirne, 80% in Yalova, and 69% in Kırklareli. In Balıkesir, Çanakkale, Edirne, Kırklareli, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Tekirdağ, and Yalova, no municipality marked the option “personnel exchange”.

Among municipalities in border provinces, the most frequently conducted activities with their sister cities were visiting and hosting the sister city at 58%, developing projects either on the initiative of the sister city or the municipality at 45%, and organizing technical tours/study visits for delegations from the sister city at 39%. The option “personnel exchange” was not selected by any municipality in the border provinces.

Figure 63: Activities Municipalities Conduct with Their Sister Cities by Province

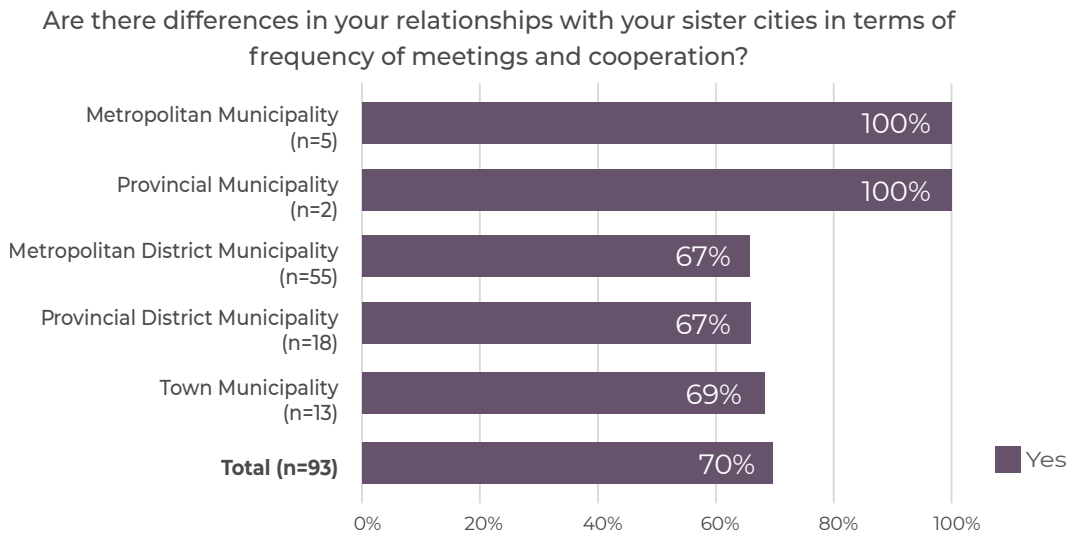
What activities do you carry out with your sister cities?



Frequency of Meetings and Collaborations Between Municipalities and Sister Cities

Among the municipalities that indicated having multiple sister cities and engaging in cooperation efforts with them, 70% reported variations in the frequency of meetings and the nature of collaborations with their sister cities, while 30% stated that there were no such differences. Municipalities highlighted several factors influencing these variations, including the relationships fostered by mayors with their counterparts, the priorities of senior management, and administrative changes. They also noted that project calls, joint project development processes, and annual event planning impacted communication frequency. Additionally, they reported that relationships with older sister cities tend to decline over time, and connections established through individuals often diminish or cease when those individuals leave their positions. Furthermore, it was also reported that the presence of a population in Türkiye with familial or cultural ties to Balkan or border regions has been observed to affect the frequency of interaction with sister cities in those areas. External political relations and the COVID-19 pandemic were also cited as significant factors that negatively impacted communication frequencies. In all metropolitan and provincial municipalities, the frequency of meetings and collaborations with sister cities varied, while this rate was 67% or higher in other types of municipalities.

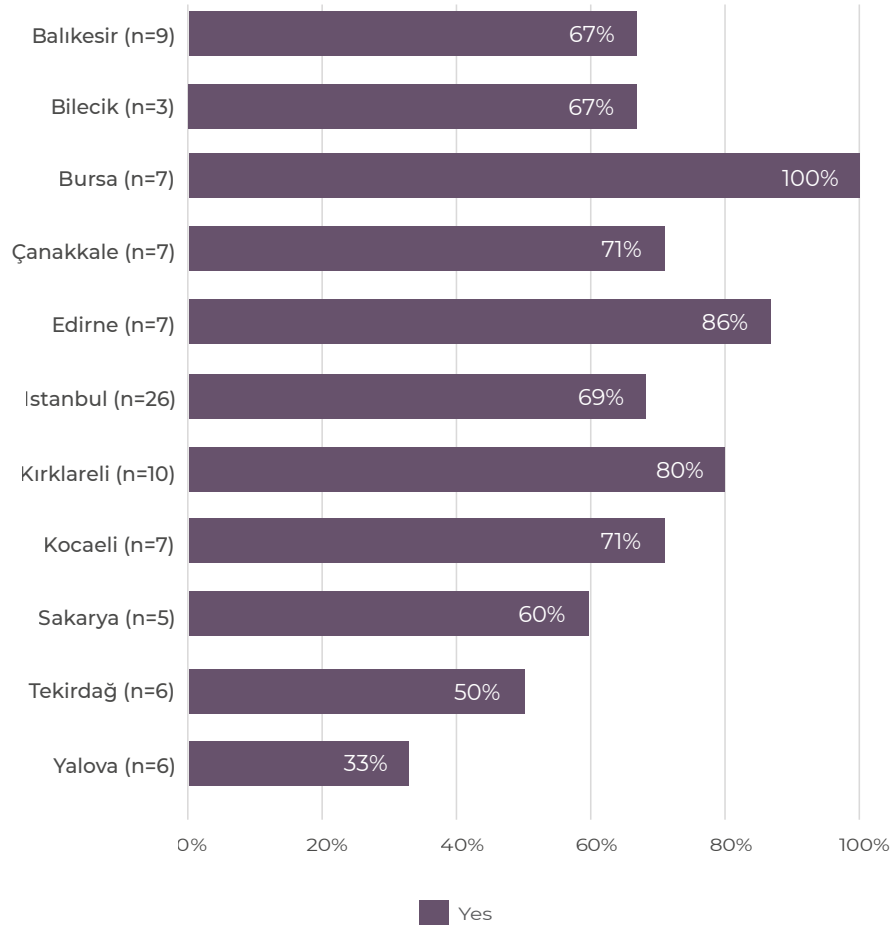
Figure 64: Frequency of Communication and Collaborations with Sister Cities by Type of Municipality



In all provinces except for Yalova, the percentage of municipalities that reported differences in the frequency of meetings and cooperation with sister cities is 50% or higher. In terms of the number of municipalities, Istanbul reported the highest number of municipalities with 18 municipalities; followed by Kırklareli, with 8 municipalities; and Bursa, with 7 municipalities. All municipalities in Bursa have indicated that there are differences in the frequency of meetings and cooperation with their sister cities. Following this, six municipalities in Balıkesir and Edirne have also stated that there are differences in the frequency of meetings and cooperation with their sister cities.

Figure 65: Frequency of Communication and Collaborations with Sister Cities by Province

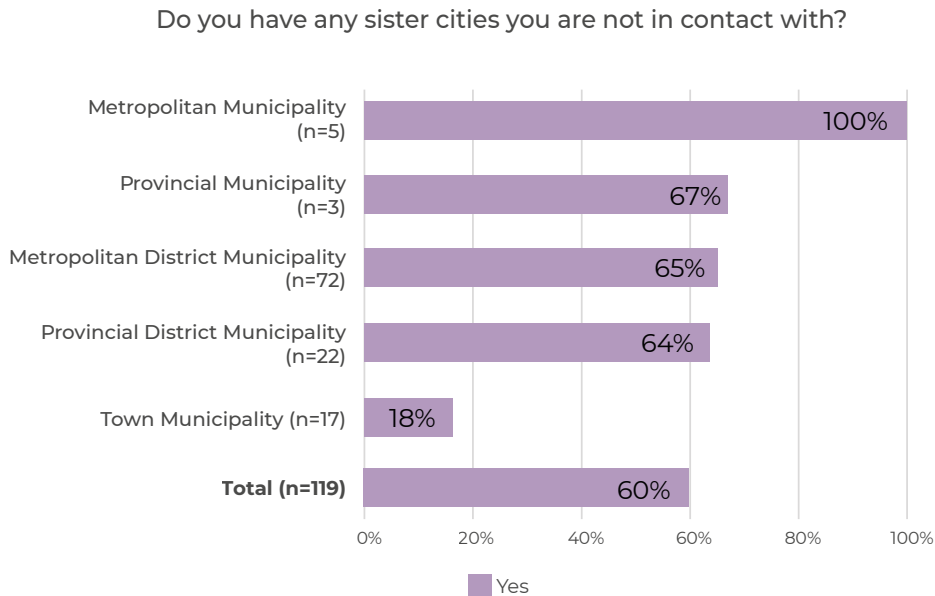
Are there differences in your relationships with your sister cities in terms of frequency of meetings and cooperation?



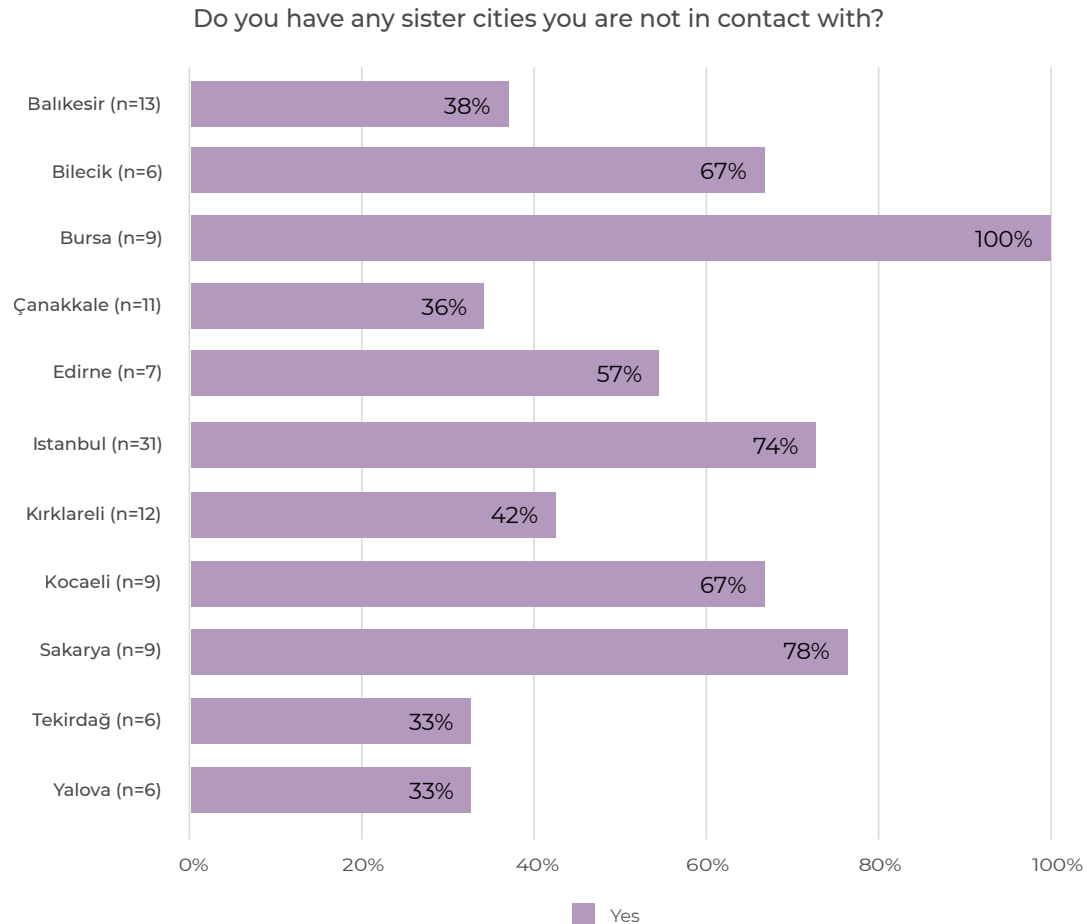
45% of municipalities have stated that they meet with their sister cities once a year or less, while 11% have indicated that they have never met with their sister cities. 34% of municipalities meet with their sister cities at least twice a year. The percentage of municipalities that meet with their sister cities once a month or more is 7%. All metropolitan municipalities have reported meeting with their sister cities once a year or less. The rate is 46% for metropolitan district municipalities and 47% for town municipalities. 35% of town municipalities meet with their sister cities at least twice a year, while the percentage is 34% for metropolitan district municipalities, 35% for provincial district municipalities, and 67% for provincial municipalities.

It was found that 60% of the municipalities with sister cities acknowledged having sister cities with which they do not maintain any communication. This suggests that some of the established sister city relationships have remained on paper over time. When evaluating how active the meetings with sister cities are at the municipal level, all metropolitan municipalities have stated that they have never met with certain sister cities. The rate is 64% or higher for provincial, provincial district, and metropolitan district municipalities. However, 18% of town municipalities have reported that they do not have any communication with some of their sister cities.

Figure 66: Sister Cities Not Actively Contacted by Municipalities by Type of Municipality



When examining the responses by province, it is observed that all municipalities in Bursa, 78% of municipalities in Sakarya, and 74% of municipalities in Istanbul have sister cities with which they are not in contact. The rate is 67% for municipalities in Kocaeli and Bilecik, and 57% for municipalities in Edirne.

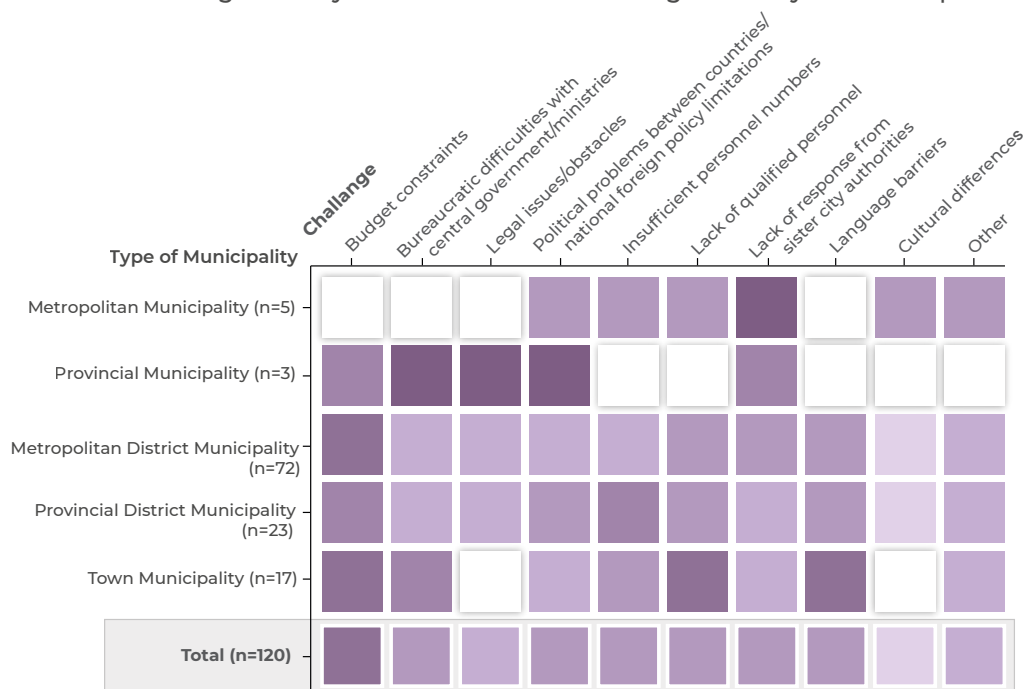
Figure 67: Sister Cities Not Actively Contacted by Municipalities by Province

Challenges Municipalities Face When Establishing Sister City Relationships

When analyzing the challenges municipalities face while establishing sister city relationships, “budget constraints” emerged as the most significant challenge, cited by 40% of respondents. Following this, “lack of qualified personnel” and “language barriers” were each reported by 28% of municipalities as major obstacles. Meanwhile, “cultural differences” were the least mentioned challenge at 7%, with “legal issues/obstacles” being the second least reported at 12%. 9 municipalities that selected the “other” option indicated that they did not face any challenges, while 2 municipal representatives stated that they were not involved in the process and therefore were unaware of it. Under the “other” category, representatives from 5 municipalities pointed out issues such as mutual lack of qualified personnel, the absence of sister city relationship development on their agendas, communication challenges with intermediary institutions, excessive amount of correspondence, procedural complexities, and geographical distance.

Figure 68: Challenges Faced When Establishing Sister City Relationships by Type of Municipality

What challenges have you faced when establishing sister city relationships?



Examined by the type of municipality, except for metropolitan and provincial municipalities, “budget constraints” were the most commonly reported difficulty across all other municipality types. Conversely, “cultural differences” were the least mentioned challenge for municipalities. Among metropolitan municipalities, “lack of response from sister city authorities” was the top issue, followed by “political problems between countries/national foreign policy limitations”, “insufficient staff numbers”, “lack of qualified personnel”, and “cultural differences”, each identified by one metropolitan municipality. Notably, metropolitan municipalities did not consider “budget constraints”, “legal procedures”, “language barriers”, or “relations with central government” as significant challenges.

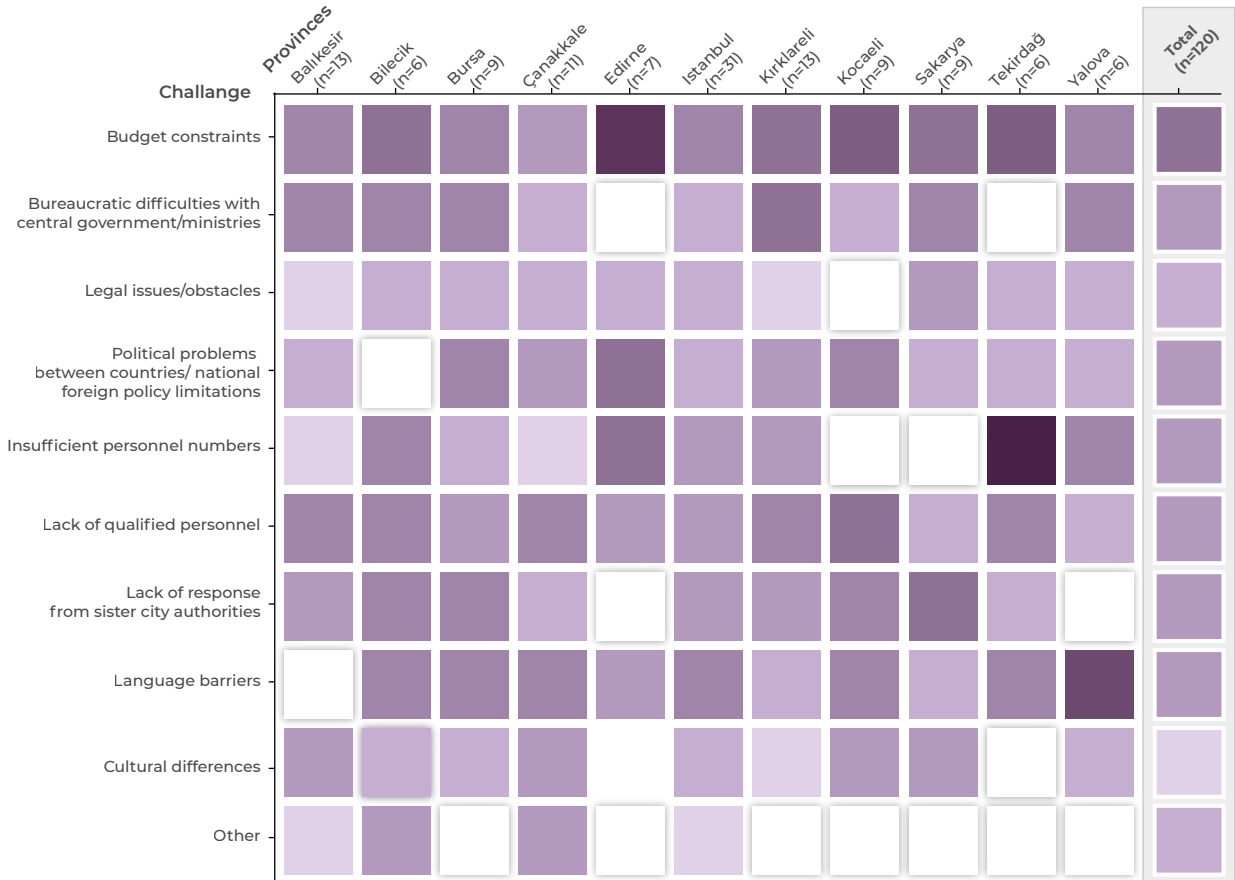
For metropolitan district municipalities, “budget constraints” ranked first at 42%. Other challenges, each marked by 27% of respondents, include “lack of qualified personnel”, “lack of response from sister city authorities”, and “language barriers”. “Cultural differences”, selected by 7% of metropolitan district municipalities, and “legal issues/obstacles”, marked by 12%, were the least mentioned challenges in establishing sister city relations.

Among the three provincial municipalities that responded to the relevant question, two highlighted “bureaucratic difficulties with central government/ministries”, “legal issues/obstacles”, and “political problems between countries/national foreign policy limitations” as significant challenges. However, factors like “insufficient personnel numbers”, “lack of qualified personnel”, “language barriers”, and “cultural differences” were not identified as primary challenges.

“Budget constraints” and “language barriers” were identified as challenging factors by nearly half of the town municipalities. Following these, “lack of qualified personnel” was selected by 41% of the respondents. Neither “legal issues/obstacles” nor “cultural differences” were marked by any town municipalities. Additionally, “bureaucratic difficulties with central government/ministry” was indicated by 35% of the town municipalities.

Figure 69: Challenges Faced When Establishing Sister City Relationships by Province

What challenges have you faced when establishing sister city relationships?



As seen in Figure 69, “budget constraints” stands out as one of the primary challenges at the provincial level as well. In 7 provinces, it ranks among the top three challenges, and in 4 provinces, it was the most frequently marked option. “Insufficient personnel numbers” was raised by 83% of the municipalities in Tekirdağ, and it was also among the top three challenges in Edirne, with 43%. “Lack of qualified personnel” was selected with the same or greater frequency as “insufficient personnel numbers” in seven provinces. Despite the balanced distribution of options, “language barriers” also emerged as a prominent challenge. In Istanbul, “language barriers” was marked with the same frequency as “budget constraints” by municipalities, while 67% of municipalities in Yalova selected this option. Similar to the municipal level, the provincial evaluation reveals that “cultural differences” were not viewed as a major obstacle.

Challenges Municipalities Face When Maintaining Sister City Relationships

When asked about the challenges encountered in maintaining sister city relationships, “budget constraints” emerged as the top issue, cited by 50% of municipal representatives. This was followed by “lack of qualified personnel” and “language barriers” in second and third place, each mentioned by 33% of representatives. Additional challenges mentioned by municipalities included “inadequate travel allowances for overseas travel” (23%), “lack of response or willingness from sister city authorities” (21%), and “political issues between countries/national foreign policy limitations” (20%).

Figure 70: Challenges Faced While Maintaining Sister City Relationships by Type of Municipality

What are the challenges you face when maintaining relationships with your sister cities?

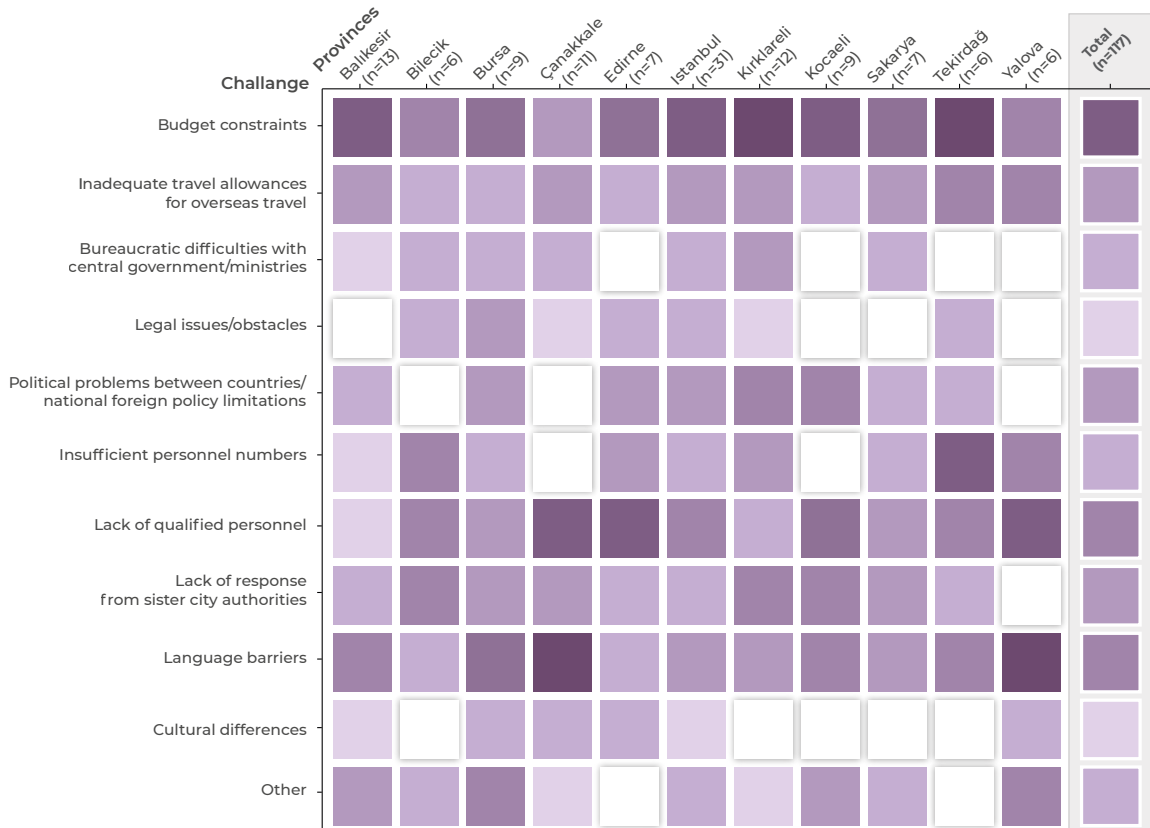


Challenges such as “cultural differences”, “legal issues/obstacles”, and “bureaucratic difficulties with central government/ministries” were the least reported. Half of the municipalities that marked the “other” option stated that they did not encounter any challenges while managing sister city relationships. However, challenges such as changes in the mayor’s and personnel’s duties, economic problems faced by the sister city, and the distance between the sister cities were considered as challenges in managing sister city relations under the “other” option.

When the responses are evaluated by the type of municipality, it is seen that similar to the challenges experienced in establishing sister city relations, metropolitan municipalities did not report challenges related to budget constraints, travel allowances, or legal procedures while maintaining relationships. Furthermore, “insufficient staff numbers” and “language barriers” were not identified as issues by any metropolitan municipality representatives. The issue of “lack of response or willingness from sister city authorities” was mentioned as a challenge in managing sister city relationships by three metropolitan municipalities.

Figure 71: Challenges Faced While Maintaining Sister City Relationships by Province

What are the challenges you face when maintaining relationships with your sister cities?



The remaining options were marked by one metropolitan municipality each. For metropolitan district municipalities and provincial, “budget constraints” were the most frequently cited challenge. Among provincial municipalities, “lack of qualified personnel” stood out as the most significant challenge, with 67% of representatives citing it as an issue. “Lack of qualified personnel” was among the top three challenges mentioned in all municipality types except for metropolitan municipalities. At the level of town municipalities, “language barrier” was cited by 53% of the representatives, and “budget constraints” and “lack of qualified personnel” were considered obstacles by 41%. In addition to township municipalities, “language barrier”, selected by 33% of metropolitan district municipalities, was among the top three challenges faced in managing sister city relations.

When the responses are evaluated by the type of municipality, “budget constraints”, selected by 27% and above in all provinces, emerged as the most frequently mentioned challenge in 6 provinces and among the top three challenges in 2 provinces. In the remaining 3 provinces, there was a balanced distribution among the other options, but “budget constraints” was still among the most frequently mentioned difficulties along with other options selected at the same rate. Additionally, some municipalities also cited the inadequacy of overseas travel allowances alongside budget constraints. “Language barrier”, which was the most frequently cited issue by 44% of municipalities in Bursa, 64% in Çanakkale, and 67% in Yalova, was considered among the top three challenges in 4 provinces. Lack of qualified personnel was also widely identified as one of the challenges faced in managing sister city relations at the provincial level.

Terminated Sister City Relationships

Among the municipalities with sister cities, 22% reported having relationships that have been terminated. When analyzed by municipality type, 80% of metropolitan municipalities and 67% of provincial municipalities indicated they had ended sister city relationships in the past. In metropolitan district municipalities, this rate was 23%, while for provincial district municipalities, it was 14%. Among town municipalities, only one municipality reported having terminated sister city relationships.

When evaluating terminated sister city relationships by province, Kocaeli ranks first with 6 municipalities (75%), followed by Bursa with 4 municipalities (44%), and Edirne (29%) and Sakarya (25%) in third and fourth place, each with 2 municipalities. In terms of numbers, Istanbul, with 7 municipalities (23%), has the highest number of municipalities that have terminated sister city relationships. In Balıkesir, Çanakkale, and Yalova, one municipality in each city has indicated that it terminated its sister city relationship. Tekirdağ and Bilecik provinces reported no terminated sister city relationships. Among the 20 municipalities located in border provinces that have sister cities, 4 have terminated their sister city relationships, and only one of the 5 municipalities located on the border regions has done so.

Figure 72: Terminated Sister City Relationships by Type of Municipality

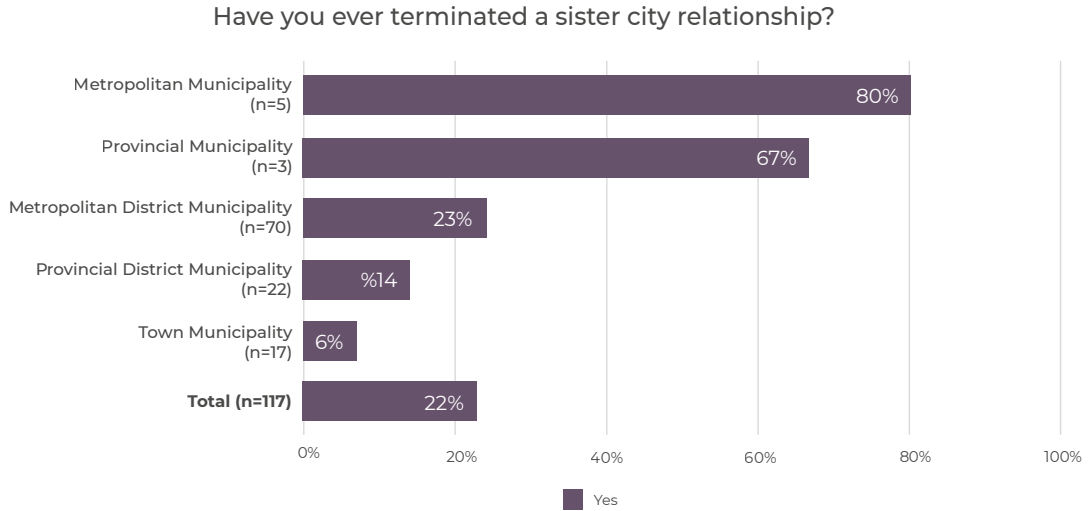


Figure 73: Terminated Sister City Relationships by Province

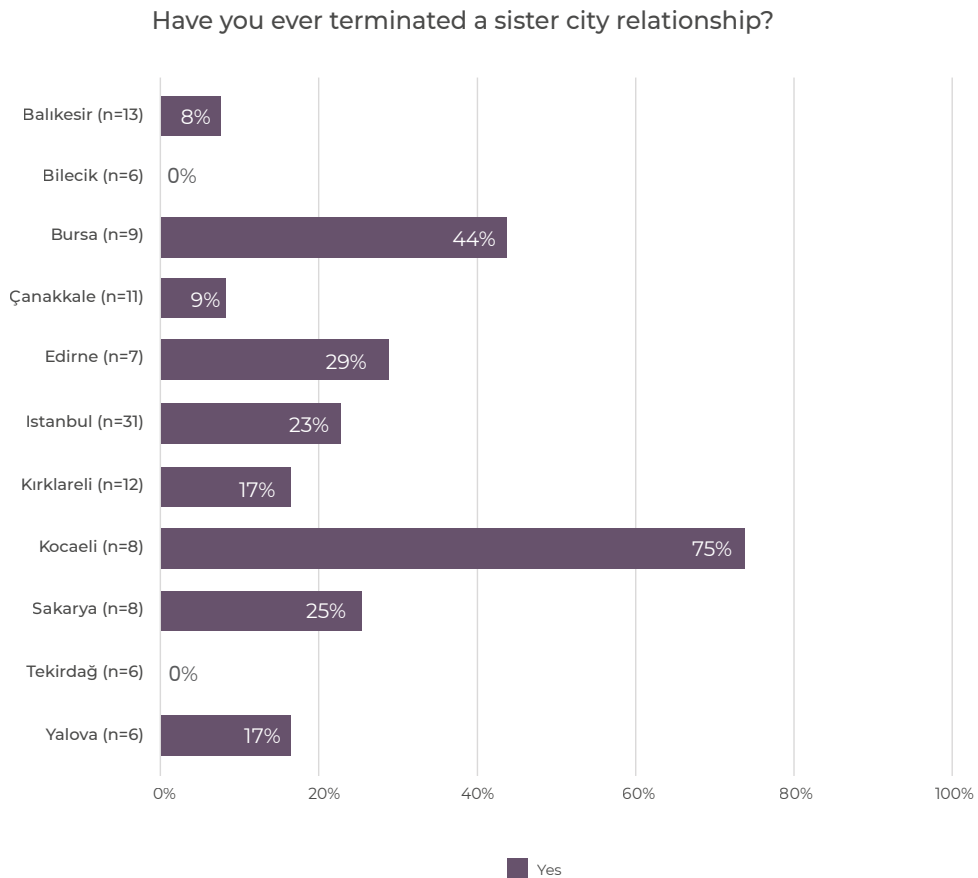
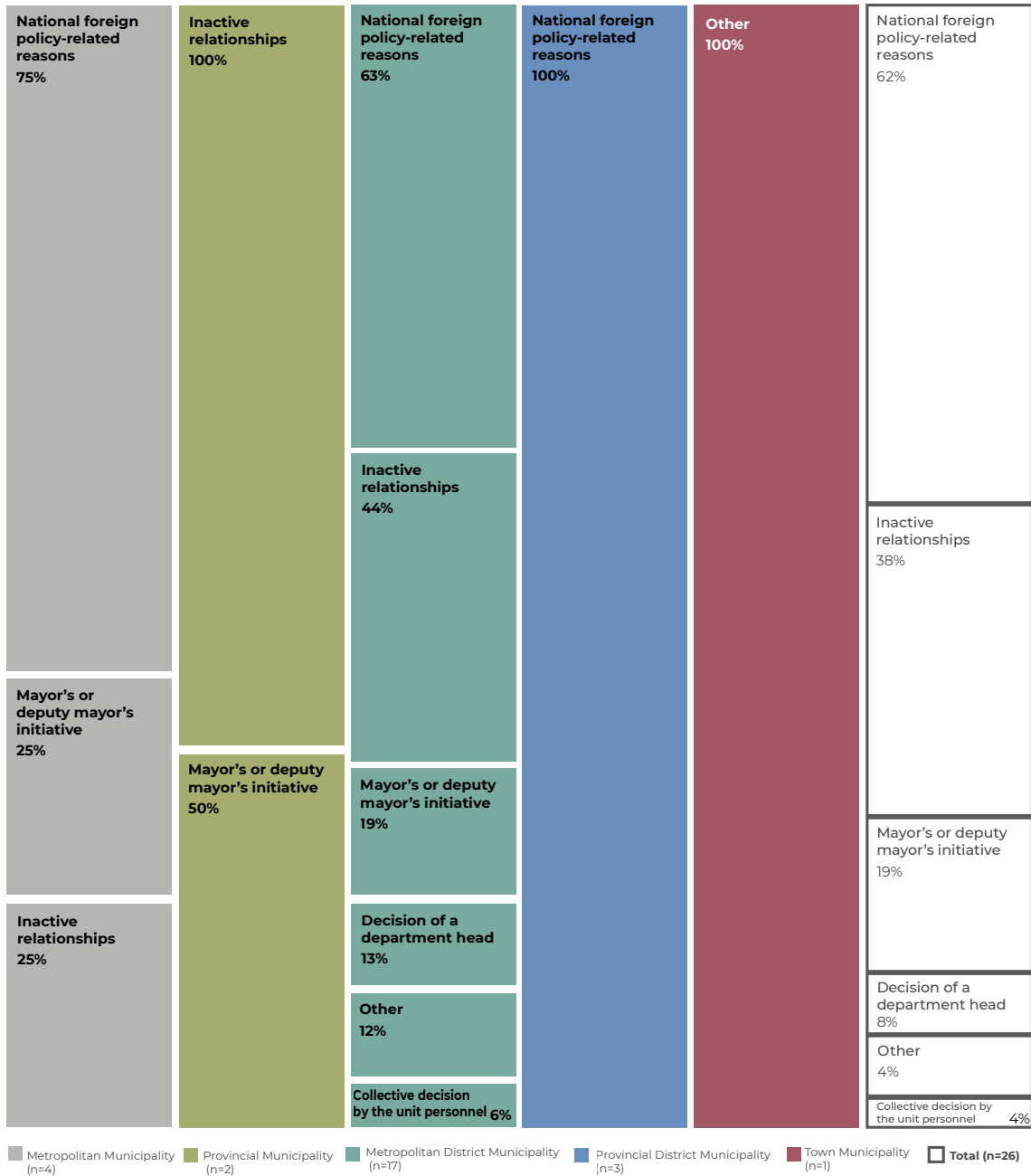


Figure 74: Reasons for Terminating Sister City Relationships by Type of Municipality

What was the reason for terminating the sister city relationship?



The reasons for terminating sister city relationships varied, with “national foreign policy-related reasons” cited by 62% of municipalities, making it the most common reason. “Inactive relationships” were reported by 38% of the municipalities, while 19% attributed the termination to “the mayor’s or deputy mayor’s initiative”. Additionally, two municipalities (8%) indicated “the decision of a department head”, and one municipality (4%) pointed to “a collective decision by staff”.

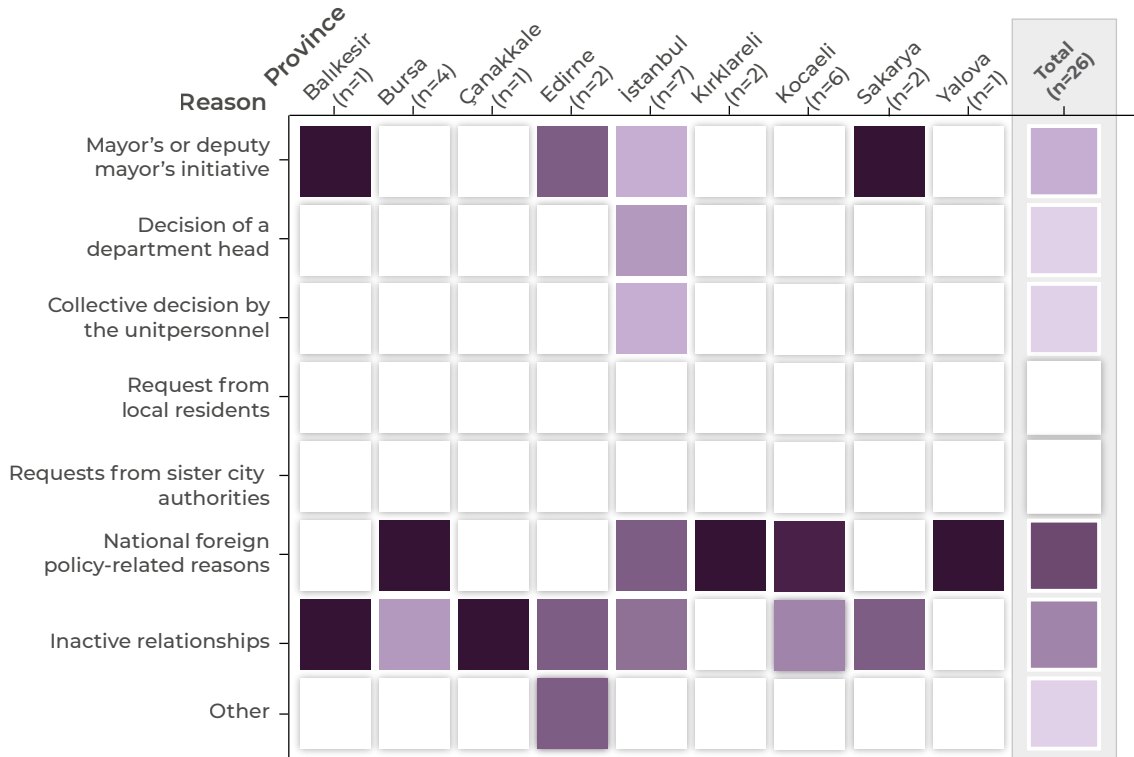
Among metropolitan municipalities, three cited “national foreign policy-related reasons” as the reason for termination. “Inactive relationships” and “the mayor’s or deputy mayor’s initiative” were each mentioned by one municipality. For metropolitan district municipalities, 63% cited “national foreign policy-related reasons”, 44% pointed to “inactive relationships”, 19% attributed it to “the mayor’s or deputy mayor’s initiative”, 13% to “the decision of a department head”, and 6% to “a collective decision by staff”.

Two provincial municipalities with terminated sister city relationships indicated “inactive relationships” as the reason, while one cited “the mayor’s or deputy mayor’s initiative” as the justification. All provincial district municipalities that reported having terminated sister city relationships attributed this to “national foreign policy-related reasons” only. Notably, “requests from local residents” and “requests from sister city authorities” were not cited as reasons by any municipality.

When analyzed at the provincial level, “inactive relationships” emerged as the most common reason for termination in 5 provinces, while “national foreign policy-related reasons” were the most frequently cited in five provinces. In 3 provinces, “the mayor’s or deputy mayor’s initiative” was the leading cause. All municipalities in Bursa, Kırklareli, and Yalova have selected “National foreign policy-related reasons”. In Istanbul, responses were more evenly distributed, with 57% citing “national foreign policy-related reasons”, 43% “inactive relationships”, 29% “the decision of a department head”, and 14% each citing “the mayor’s or deputy mayor’s initiative” and “a collective decision by staff”. In Balıkesir and Çanakkale, all municipalities have listed “inactive relationships” as a reason. In Kocaeli, 83% of municipalities cited “national foreign policy-related reasons”, while 33% pointed to “inactive relationships”.

Figure 75: Reasons for Terminating Sister City Relationships by Province

What was the reason for terminating the sister city relationship?

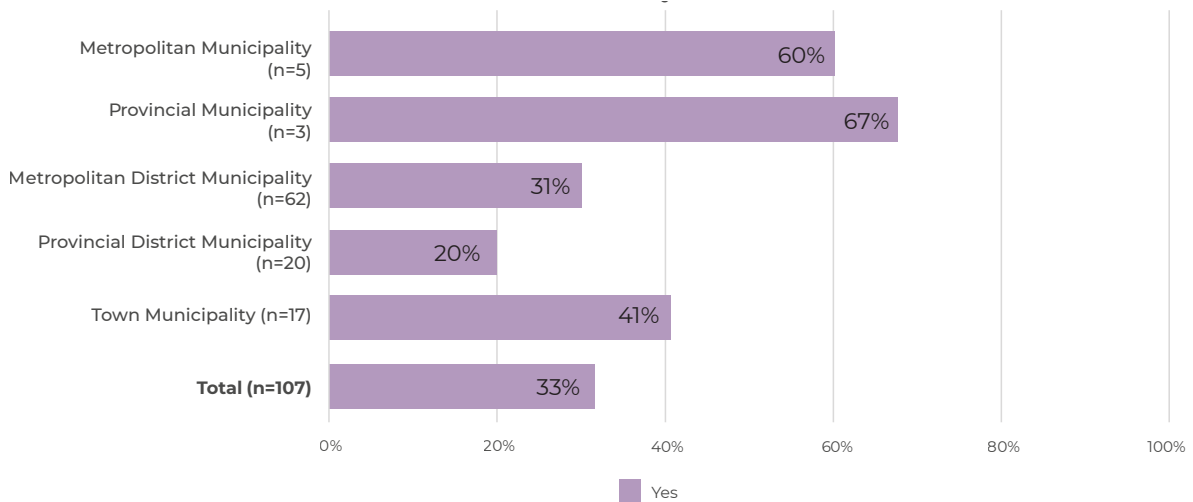


Original Projects Municipalities Develop with Sister Cities

When municipalities were asked about original projects carried out with their sister cities, 33% stated that they had such projects, while 57% indicated they did not. Analyzing based on the type of municipality, 60% of metropolitan municipalities, 31% of metropolitan district municipalities, 67% of provincial municipalities, 20% of provincial district municipalities, and 41% of town municipalities indicated they have original projects developed with their sister cities.

Figure 76: Original Projects Developed with Sister Cities by Type of Municipality

Do you have any projects that you have developed innovatively with original initiatives in collaboration with your sister cities?

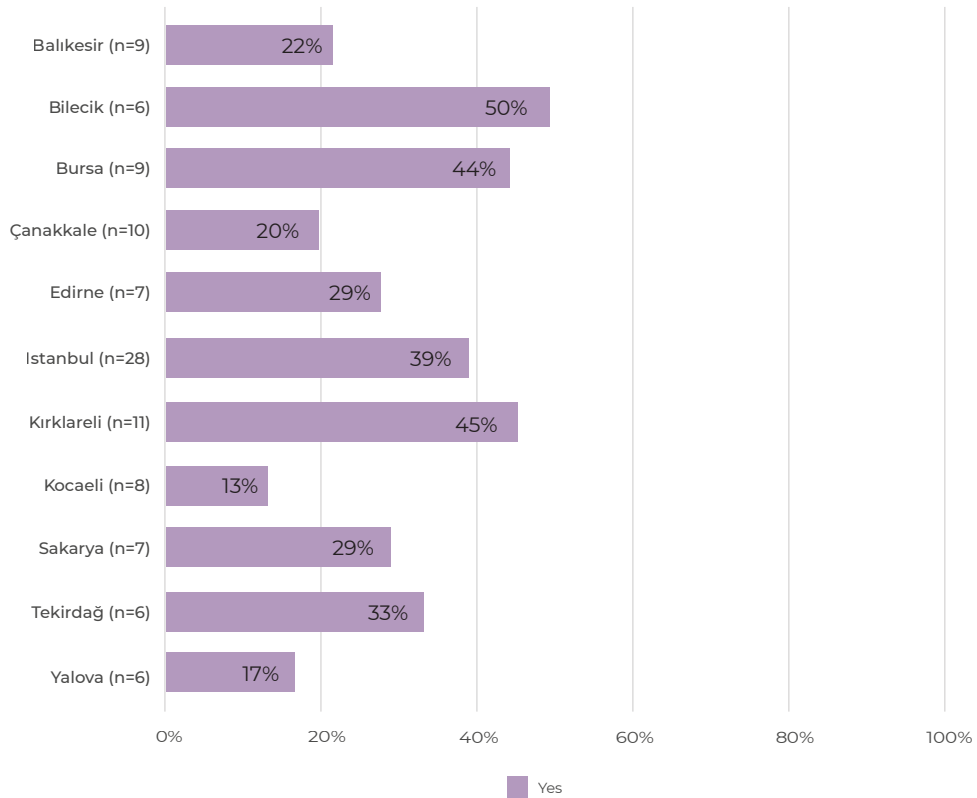


The provinces with the highest number of municipalities participating in innovative projects developed through unique initiatives with their sister cities are Istanbul with 11 municipalities, Kırklareli with 5 municipalities, and Bursa with 4 municipalities. In contrast, only one municipality each in Kocaeli and Yalova reported having original projects with their sister cities (see Figure 77).

These innovative projects, developed through unique initiatives by the municipalities, include youth festivals, cultural exchange programs, EU youth and student exchange programs, sports competitions, festivities, exhibitions, concerts, and similar cultural and artistic projects. Other examples include initiatives in smart city technologies, establishing sister school relationships, creating ethnography museums, constructing childcare facilities/nurseries and hospitals, conducting studies on good agricultural practices, fostering collaborations in firefighting, organizing waste reduction and environmental awareness activities, carrying out landscaping projects, and hosting thematic experience-sharing meetings between municipalities.

Figure 77: Original Projects Developed with Sister Cities by Province

Do you have any projects that you have developed innovatively with original initiatives in collaboration with your sister cities?









**RESEARCH
FINDINGS**

5. Municipalities' Participation
in International Projects

5. MUNICIPALITIES' PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

International projects are among the most influential mechanisms shaping local governments' international relations.⁶⁹ These projects, which can be defined as initiatives whose resources or partners include institutions or organizations from abroad, enable local governments to develop new connections with entities from a wide range of sectors such as local governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, and the private sector. Not only do they help solidify their existing relationships,⁷⁰ but they also boost the international visibility of municipalities. In some cases, international projects pave the way for the establishment of institutional structures or policies related to foreign relations or other areas within the municipality.⁷¹ Therefore, such projects hold significant potential as tools for local diplomacy. However, much of the existing research on local diplomacy tends to focus on sister city relationships, international city networks, and the localization of global agendas. This leaves the impact of international projects on municipal foreign relations largely unexplored. As a result, it's difficult to fully understand the critical role these projects play and the opportunities they present within the scope of local diplomacy.

To address this gap in the literature, the MMU incorporated a section on "International Projects" as part of the Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research survey. Through seven targeted questions, this section seeks to uncover the extent of participation among member municipalities in international projects, their sources of funding, the institutions they partner with, the municipal units managing these initiatives, and the challenges they face in implementing international projects.

⁶⁹ In the study, the concept of international projects refers to those funded and/or partnered by foreign institutions (such as international organizations like the EU, central government institutions of other countries, or development agencies, and international banks providing loans). Municipalities sometimes implement their projects with loans or grants from international organizations, while at other times, they conduct multi-partner projects involving foreign institutions using their own resources.

⁷⁰ Organizations providing grants, especially EU grant programs, often require the establishment of international partnerships for project funding. Therefore, local governments form partnerships with foreign institutions to benefit from these grants. Sometimes, they establish these partnerships with institutions they already have relationships with, while other times, they actively search for partners in order to apply for grants. In this process, organizations like TÜBİTAK, which acts as the national contact point for international funding sources, or institutions such as the European Commission, which provides funds, support the partner search process by organizing events like brokerage events for developing international networks. See "Proje Pazarı" (Brokerage Event), TÜBİTAK, accessed October 28, 2024, <https://ufukavrupa.org.tr/en/taxonomy/term/389>. Additionally, municipalities can also find partners for grant applications through various platforms created for finding project partners or by contacting relevant partners from previous projects listed in the databases of funding organizations. For example, for the EU's partner search platform, see "Partner Search", European Commission, accessed October 28, 2024, <https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/how-to-participate/partner-search>.

⁷¹ For instance, under the Horizon Europe program, one of the EU grant programs, it is mandatory for all project partners to have a Gender Equality Plan (GEP). Institutions must have a GEP in place to sign the grant agreement after their grants are approved. For more information, see "Gender Equality in Academia and Research - GEAR tool", European Institute for Gender Equality, accessed October 28, 2024, https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gear/horizon-europe-gep-criterion?language_content_entity=en.

Municipalities' Participation in International Projects

The first question regarding international projects sought to understand the extent to which MMU member municipalities are involved in such initiatives. Out of 187 MMU member municipalities, 185 responded to the question. According to their responses, 45% of municipalities have participated in international projects or were engaged in one at the time of the survey. Meanwhile, 55% of municipalities stated that they were not involved in any international projects.

Figure 78: Municipalities' Participation in International Projects



All metropolitan municipalities that participated in the survey reported involvement in at least one international project. Among provincial municipalities, the percentage responding “yes” to this question was similarly high at 80%. For metropolitan district municipalities, 49% indicated participation in international projects, while the percentage dropped to 31% for both town municipalities and provincial district municipalities.

A provincial breakdown of the responses to the question reveals more significant differences. For instance, while the majority of municipalities in Istanbul (82%) indicated involvement in at least one international project, all municipalities in Bilecik stated that they had not participated in any international projects. Another notable observation from the responses is that three provinces in the Thrace region, namely Kırklareli, Tekirdağ and Edirne, ranked among the top five in terms of the percentage of municipalities engaged in international projects. These three provinces surpassed the participation rates of municipalities in more populous provinces such as Sakarya, Kocaeli and Balıkesir.

Figure 79: Participation in International Projects by Type of Municipality

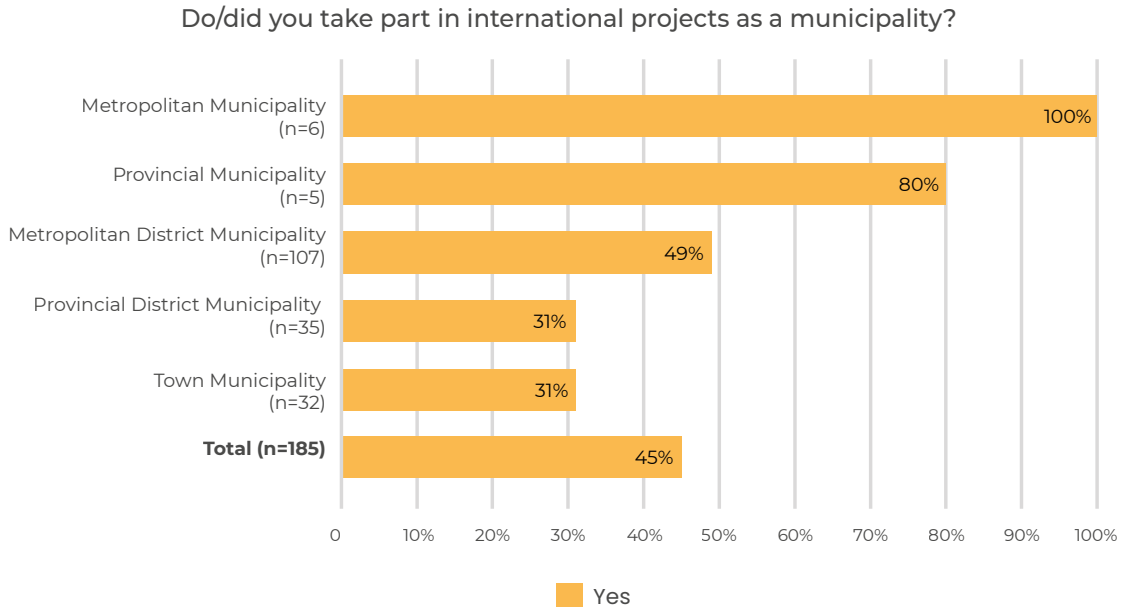
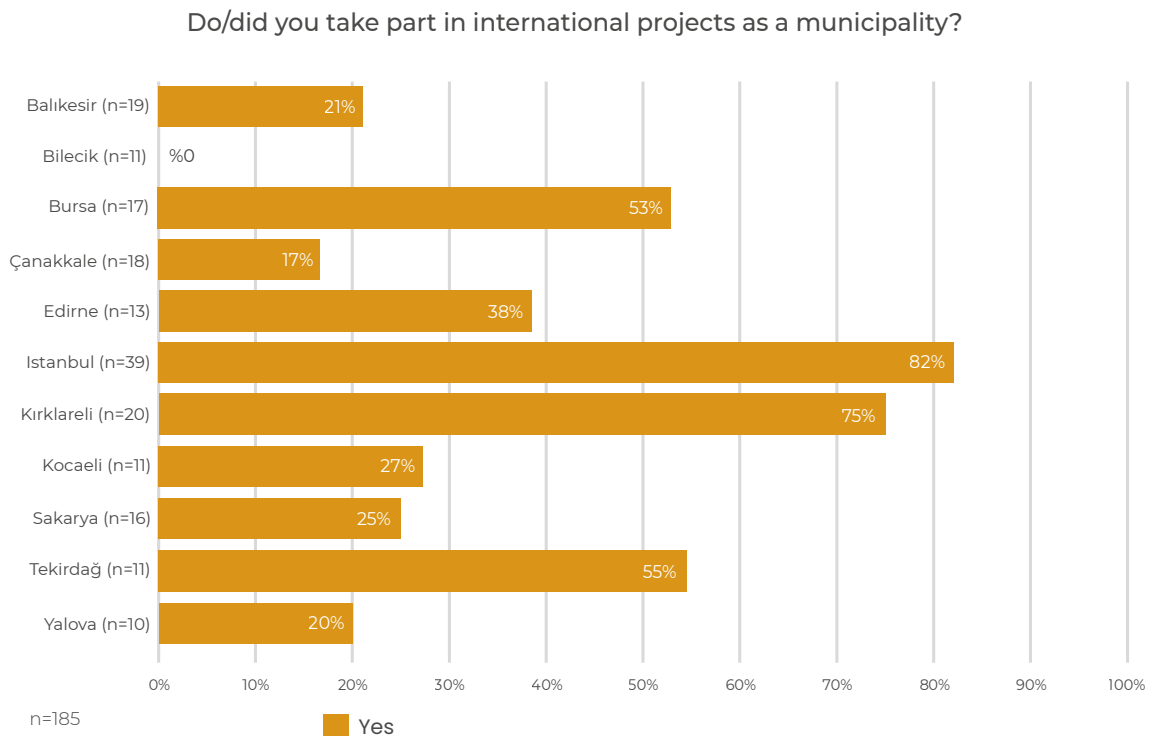


Figure 80: Participation in International Projects by Province



Funding Sources Utilized by Municipalities

Local governments often tap into a variety of funding sources beyond their own budgets to implement or participate in international projects. These include grants from international organizations, particularly the European Union, as well as funding from foreign country representatives and loans from international banks. To better understand the funding landscape, 83 municipalities in the Marmara Region that reported involvement in international projects were surveyed about the international grants and funds they had accessed so far. Among the municipalities surveyed, the majority (57%) identified “other EU funds” as their primary funding sources.⁷² Erasmus, an EU grant program, emerged as the second most frequently used funding source, with 49% of municipalities benefiting from it. For other funding sources, the percentages were significantly lower. The third most commonly used source was the “Town Twinning Between Türkiye and European Union Grant Program”, utilized by 27% of municipalities. Additionally, 24% of municipalities reported benefiting from embassy funds. Among these, the Netherlands Embassy’s funds⁷³ were highlighted as the most prominent, alongside funding from the embassies of Australia, Sweden, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Canada. Horizon,⁷⁴ another significant EU grant program, was utilized by only 18% of municipalities. Some 16% of municipalities indicated they had received funding from non-EU international organizations. These organizations included the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Labour Organization (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Welthungerhilfe (WHH), Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), Kahane Foundation, Refugee Girls Worldwide (RGW), National Democratic Institute (NDI), Relief International, International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF), Handicap International (HI), Bernard van Leer Foundation, ISB e.V., and European Stork Villages Network.⁷⁵ Moreover, 11% of municipalities reported benefiting from Black Sea Cooperation Funds, and 10% accessed funds from foreign development agencies, including the German International Cooperation Agency (GIZ) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). Finally, 4% of municipalities noted that they had utilized funding or loans from international development banks. One municipality explicitly mentioned receiving funds from the World Bank.

⁷² Other EU funds refer to EU programs not covered under the listed programs such as Erasmus, Horizon, the Black Sea Cooperation grant program, or the Türkiye-European Union Town Twinning Grant Program. For example, other cross-border cooperation programs apart from the Black Sea Cooperation Fund may apply but are not limited to this. For the list of EU grant programs valid for the 2021–2027 period, see “EU funding programmes”, European Commission, accessed October 28, 2024, https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes_en.

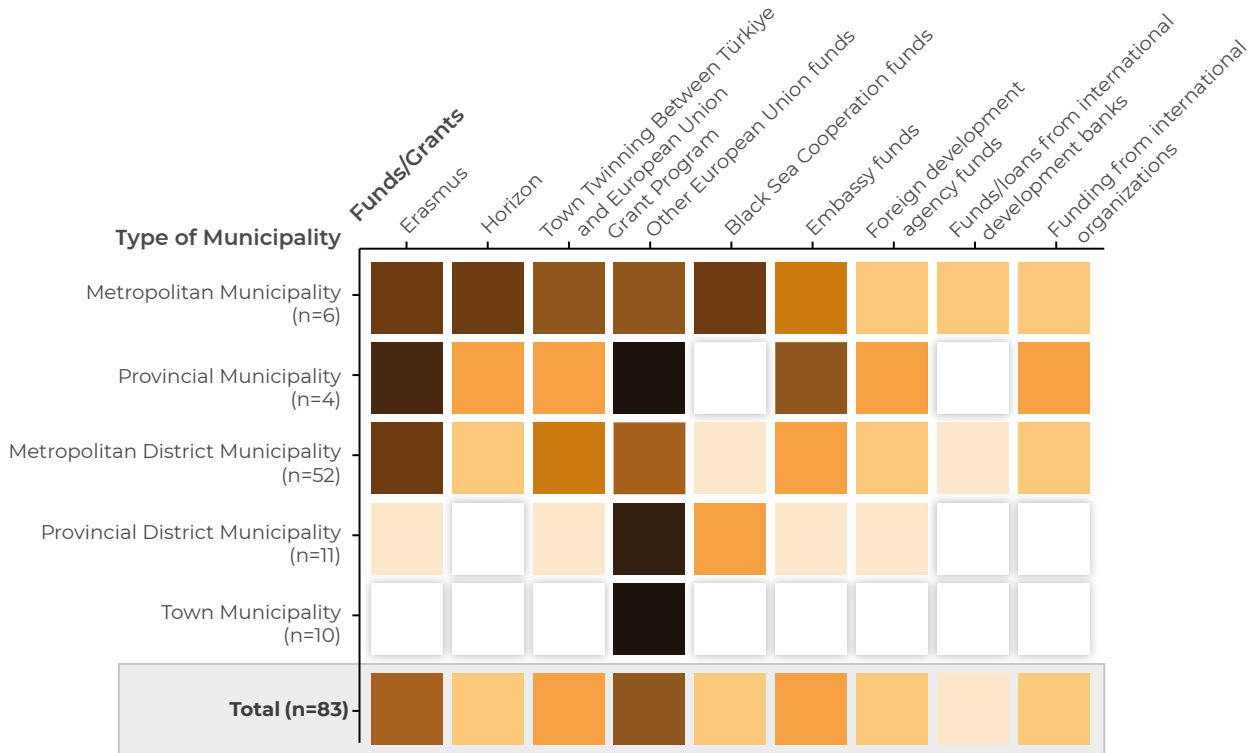
⁷³ The Dutch Embassy offers various funds. Among these, the grant program called the Social Transformation Program (MATRA) has been particularly highlighted as a significant funding source.

⁷⁴ Known in Türkiye as the “Ufuk Avrupa Program”.

⁷⁵ Additionally, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, and GIZ have been included among the international organizations whose grants municipalities benefit from. However, since these three institutions are not considered international organizations, they have been excluded from the data set.

Figure 81: Grants/Funds Utilized by Municipalities by Type of Municipality

Which international grants/funds have you received so far?



When examining the types of funds utilized by municipalities based on municipality categories, metropolitan municipalities were found to benefit most from the EU programs. Among these, Erasmus, Horizon, and Black Sea Cooperation funds rank first, with 67% of metropolitan municipalities utilizing them. These are followed by Türkiye-EU Town Twinning Grant Program and other EU funds, each at 50%. The least utilized funding sources by metropolitan municipalities are foreign development agency funds, international development banks' funds/loans, and international organizations' funds, each at 17%.

All four provincial municipalities that responded to the survey reported utilizing other EU funds. Additionally, 75% of provincial municipalities mentioned Erasmus, while 50% indicated embassy funds. None of the provincial municipalities accessed Black Sea Cooperation Funds or funds/loans from international development banks.

Among metropolitan district municipalities, 63% indicated that they utilized Erasmus for their international projects. Other EU funds were the second most commonly used, with 40% citing them as a resource. Embassy funds ranked third, utilized by 29% of metropolitan district municipalities. The least accessed funds by metropolitan district municipalities were Horizon at 19%, Black Sea Cooperation Funds at 6%, and international development banks' funds/loans at 4%.

For provincial district municipalities, 82% reported benefiting from other EU funds. However, the utilization of other funding sources was minimal. Despite being the second most preferred option, Black Sea Cooperation Funds were accessed by only 18% of provincial district municipalities. None of the provincial district municipalities reported utilizing Horizon, international development banks' funds/loans, or international organizations' funds. Similarly, all town municipalities exclusively utilized other EU funds.

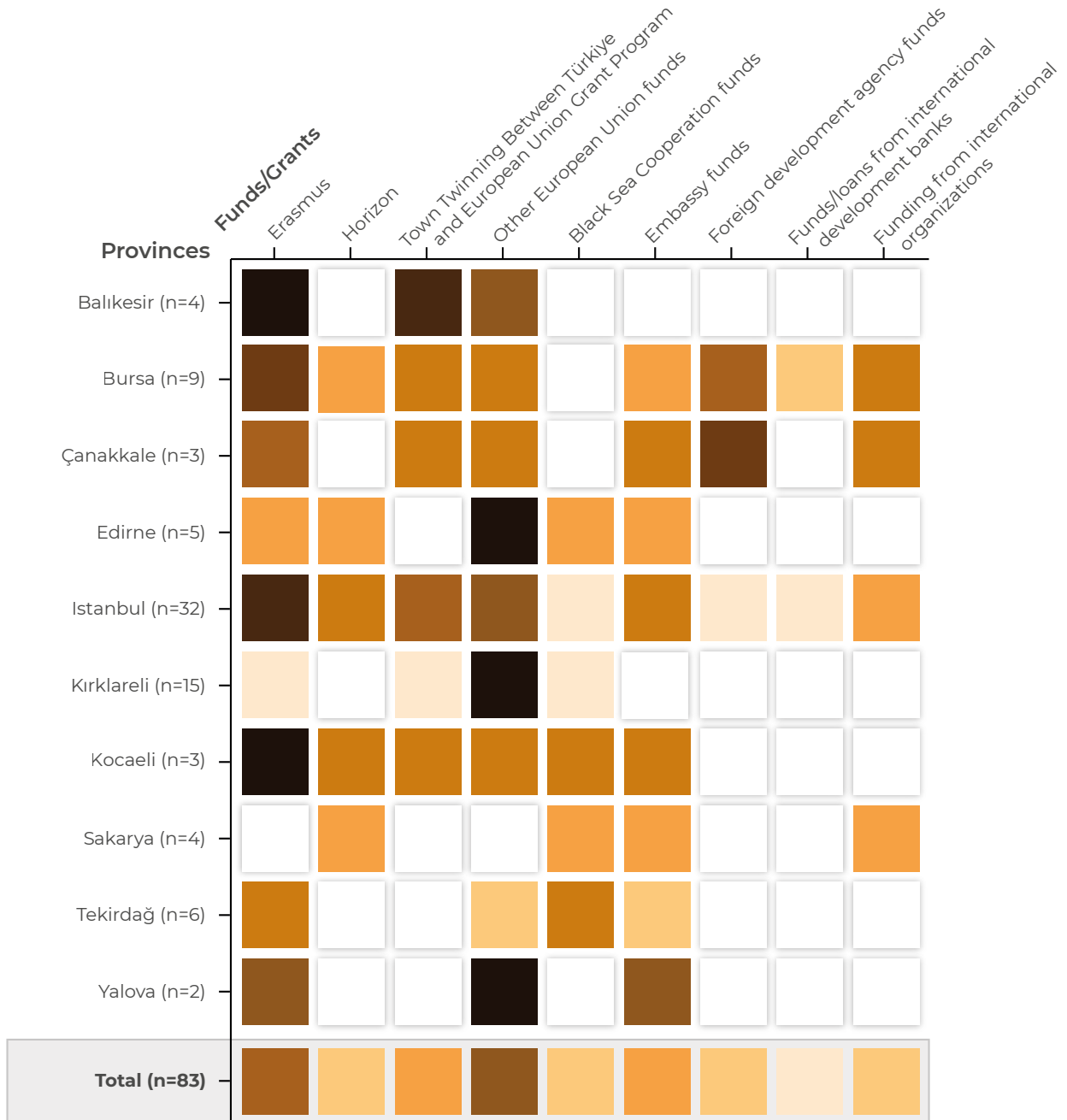
The provincial breakdown of the findings also gives noteworthy insight. It can be observed that Erasmus and other EU funds are more widely spread across the region, with municipalities in 9 provinces stating that they benefit from these two sources for funding. Embassy funds were reported in seven provinces, while Türkiye-EU Town Twinning Grant Program and Black Sea Cooperation Funds were accessed by municipalities in six provinces. In contrast, international development banks' funds/loans were used only in Istanbul and Bursa, making them the least geographically widespread funding source.

Istanbul is the only province where at least one municipality has utilized all the funding sources listed in the survey. Bursa follows with municipalities reporting access to eight funding sources, while Kocaeli and Çanakkale municipalities utilized six sources each. On the lower end, municipalities in Balıkesir, Yalova, and Kırklareli reported accessing only three funding sources.

The geographic spread of funding sources shows significant variation. Erasmus stands out as a resource accessible to over half the municipalities in four provinces. Similarly, other EU funds were utilized by at least half of the municipalities in four provinces, following closely behind Erasmus. However, Horizon, Black Sea Cooperation Funds, embassy funds, and international development banks' funds/loans remain below the 50% threshold in all provinces.

Figure 82: Grants/Funds Utilized by Municipalities by Province

Which international grants/funds have you received so far?

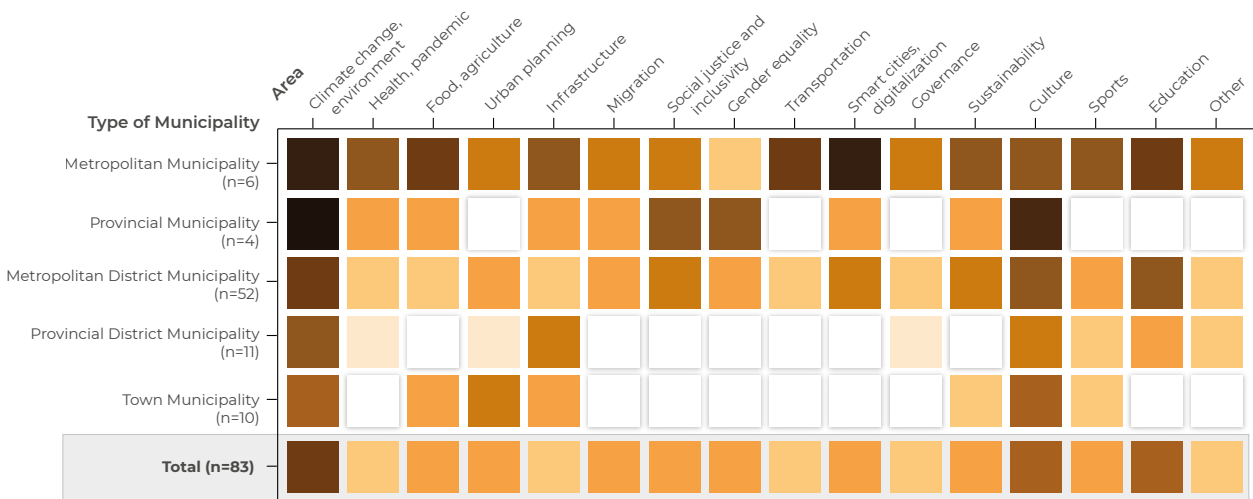


Themes of International Projects Conducted by Municipalities

Municipalities are involved in a wide range of international project activities. To identify the most prominent topics, municipalities were asked about the focus areas of their projects. Among the 83 municipalities that responded, the most popular theme was climate change and environmental issues, with 61% of municipalities working on these areas. This made climate change and the environment the leading theme across all sectors. Culture followed at 48%, and education ranked third at 43%. The least explored areas were health/pandemic (14%), governance (16%), and transportation (17%). Additionally, 23 municipalities selected “other” and highlighted a variety of topics such as youth, sexual abuse, tourism, economic cooperation, social projects, energy efficiency, employment, wildlife, economic development, women and family services, participation, and landscape.

Figure 83: Themes of International Projects by Type of Municipality

What are the focus areas of the international projects you participate in?



When evaluated by type of municipality, in metropolitan municipalities, climate change/environment and smart cities/digitalization stood out as the most prominent themes, each at 83%. Education, transportation, and food/agriculture also ranked highly among the themes for international projects.⁷⁶ Gender equality, however, was the least prioritized theme in metropolitan municipalities' international collaborations.

⁷⁶ 67% of the municipalities selected all three themes.

All provincial municipalities that responded indicated they had conducted at least one international project on climate change/environment. Furthermore, 75% mentioned culture, and 50% reported working on social justice and inclusion and gender equality themes. None of the four provincial municipalities that responded to the question engaged in international projects on urban planning, transportation, governance, sports, or education.

A majority (62%) of metropolitan district municipalities working on international projects focused on climate change/environment. Education (56%) and culture (50%) followed as the next most significant themes. Only a few metropolitan district municipalities worked on themes such as food/agriculture, transportation, governance, health/pandemic, and infrastructure.⁷⁷

Similar to other types of municipalities, most provincial district municipalities structured their international projects around climate change/environment. Culture and infrastructure (36%) and education (27%) were the second and third most emphasized themes, respectively. However, all 11 responding provincial district municipalities indicated that they did not engage in international projects on food/agriculture, migration, social justice/inclusion, gender equality, transportation, smart cities/digitalization, or sustainability.

In town municipalities, climate change/environment and culture were the most targeted themes, each at 40%. Urban planning followed at 30%, making it the second most popular focus. Food/agriculture and infrastructure were tied as the third most preferred themes at 20%. None of the town municipalities reported engaging in international projects on health/pandemic, migration, social justice/inclusion, gender equality, transportation, smart cities/digitalization, governance, or education.

The provincial breakdown reveals that Istanbul and Bursa were the only provinces where international projects covered all the themes listed. Other provinces showed gaps, with at least one theme not being addressed in their municipalities' projects.

Climate change/environment emerged as the most popular and geographically widespread theme for municipalities' international projects, with municipalities in 10 provinces focusing on it. In contrast, themes such as migration, sustainability, transportation, and governance were limited to municipalities in only four provinces, reflecting a more geographically restricted scope.

⁷⁷ Themes such as food/agriculture, transportation, and governance were selected at a rate of 19%, health/pandemic at 13%, and infrastructure at 10%.

Figure 84: Themes of International Projects by Province

What are the focus areas of the international projects you participate in?



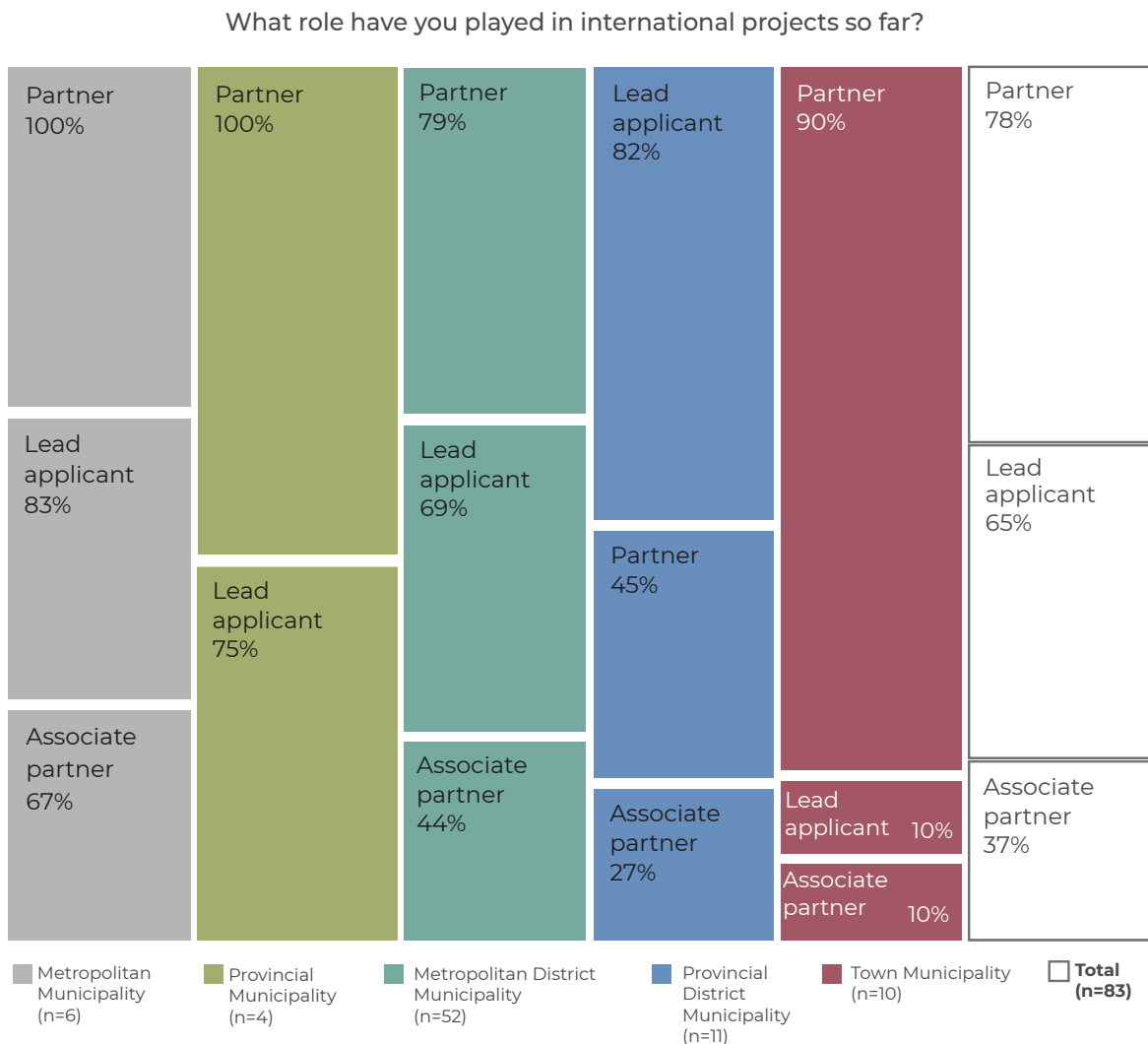
Municipalities' Partnership Status in Applications for International Projects

In the context of international grant and funding programs, municipalities apply to open calls either independently or as part of a consortium, taking on various roles. Marmara Region municipalities were surveyed about the roles they assume in such applications. Among the 83 municipalities that responded, the most common role was “partner”, selected by 78% of respondents. A notable 65% also stated that they applied as the “lead applicant”, while 37% participated as an “associate partner”. Six municipalities selected “other”, specifying roles such as “co-applicant”, “observer city”, “subcontractor”, and “spectator city”.

When broken down by municipality type, the role of “lead applicant” was most common among metropolitan municipalities, with 83% reporting they took on this role in international projects. Provincial district municipalities (82%) and provincial municipalities (75%) also had high rates of participation as the lead applicant. In contrast, only 10% of town municipalities reported involvement as the lead applicant.

All metropolitan and provincial municipalities reported participating as “partners” in at least one international project. Town municipalities followed closely, with 90% reporting involvement in this role. Provincial district municipalities, however, had the lowest participation as partners, with only 45% assuming this role.

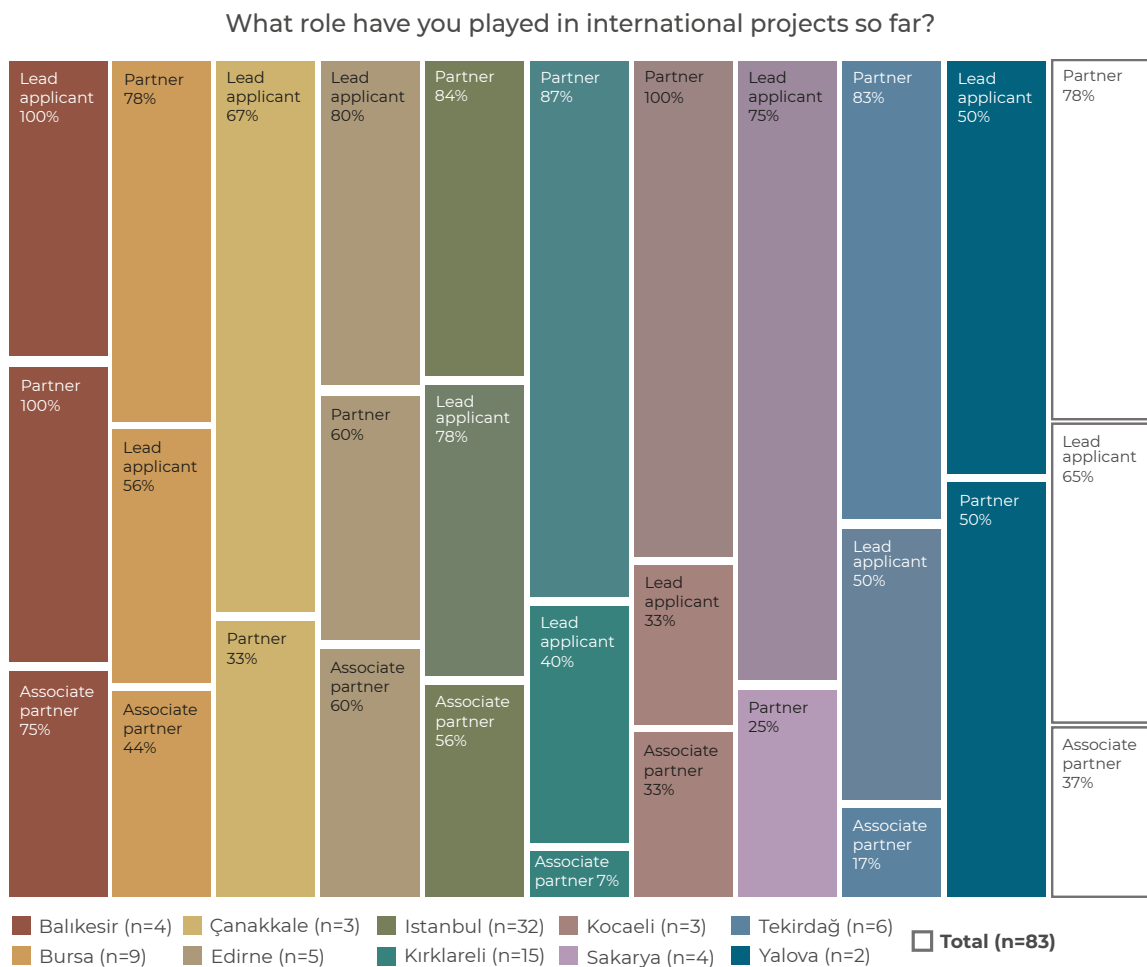
Figure 85: Municipalities' Partnership Status in Application for International Projects by Type of Municipality



Similarly to other roles, the role of “associate partner” was most commonly observed in metropolitan municipalities, with 67% stating they had served in this capacity for at least one project. Metropolitan district municipalities followed at 44%, while provincial district municipalities were at 27%. Notably, provincial municipalities reported no involvement as associate partners in international projects.

The research found that in at least 10 provinces, there was at least one municipality that participated in international projects as either a “lead applicant” or a “partner”. Although less common, the “associate partner” role was observed in seven provinces, indicating a moderately widespread adoption. Balıkesir stood out as a province where at least 75% of municipalities participating in international projects played all three roles—lead applicant, partner, and associate partner.

Figure 86: Municipalities' Partnership Status in Applications for International Projects by Province



In all provinces, some types of roles were more prominent while others remained lower. For example, in Kocaeli, all municipalities participated as “partners” in at least one project. However, only 33% reported involvement as “lead applicants” or “associate partners”. On the other hand, of the municipalities that responded from Çanakkale, 67% acted as “lead applicants”, while 33% were “partners”. None indicated participation as “associate partners”.

Institutions Municipalities Collaborate with in International Projects

Local governments carry out their international projects either independently or through partnerships with other institutions. To understand who municipalities are collaborating with on international projects, they were asked about the types of institutions they work with. According to the responses, municipalities most frequently partner with foreign municipalities (65%).⁷⁸ Turkish NGOs (55%) and universities or research centers in Türkiye (55%) were also prominent collaborators. Additionally, partnerships with foreign NGOs (48%) were common. On the flip side, the least collaboration occurred with international organizations that are not international city networks (17%), foreign local government associations, foreign private sector organizations (18%), and Türkiye’s diplomatic missions abroad (19%). Among the five municipalities that selected the “other” option, three indicated they carried out their projects independently, while others mentioned partnering with entities such as “sports clubs” and “foreign chambers of industry”.

When breaking this down by municipality type, certain partnerships were not seen in provincial, provincial district, and town municipalities. However, metropolitan municipalities and metropolitan district municipalities reported collaborations with all the institution types listed in the survey, albeit at varying rates. Metropolitan municipalities, in particular, demonstrated partnerships with all organizations mentioned in the survey, with some institutions standing out more than others. For instance, all metropolitan municipalities indicated collaboration with both Turkish and foreign municipalities, as well as Turkish universities and research centers in their international projects. Among the metropolitan municipalities, partnerships with foreign private sector organizations were the least frequent.⁷⁹

Provincial municipalities mainly partnered with foreign municipalities, foreign NGOs, and sister cities abroad, with 75% of respondents indicating collaboration with these groups. However, they did not engage with foreign central government institutions, provincial governorates/district governorates, Türkiye’s diplomatic missions abroad, foreign local government associations, or other Turkish municipalities in their international projects.

⁷⁸ Collaboration with municipalities abroad does not include sister city relationships.

⁷⁹ Only one municipality reported establishing partnerships with private sector organizations abroad.

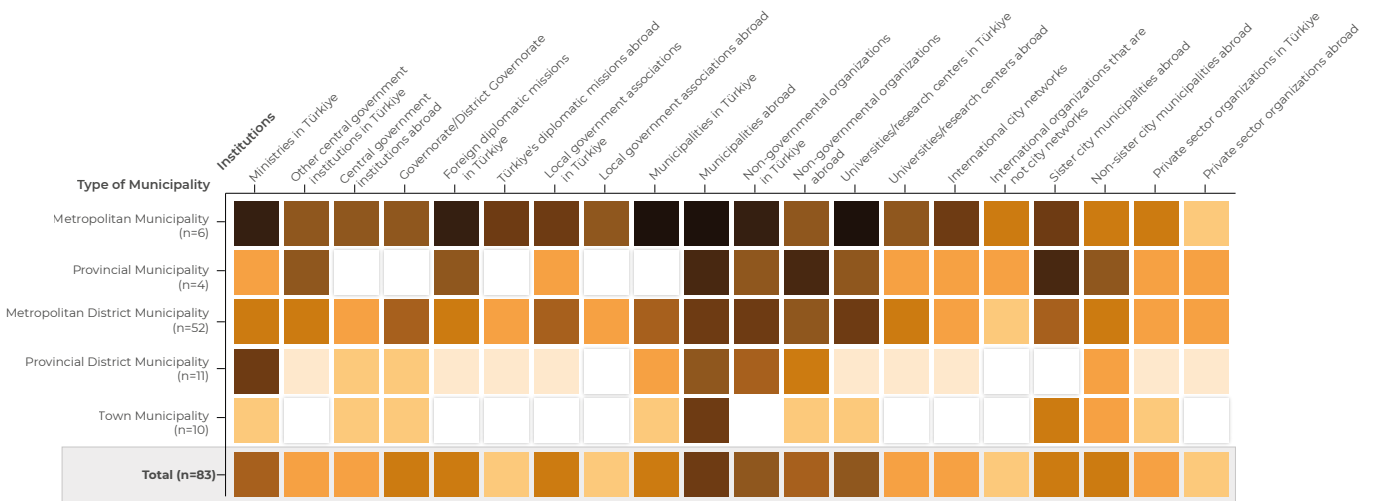
Among metropolitan district municipalities, the most common partnerships were with Turkish universities/research centers (69%), followed by Turkish NGOs (65%) and foreign municipalities (63%). Conversely, partnerships with Türkiye's diplomatic missions abroad and international organizations that are not international city networks were the least frequent, with only 21% of these municipalities engaging in such collaborations.

Provincial district municipalities predominantly collaborated with Turkish ministries, with 64% indicating such partnerships. Foreign municipalities ranked as the second most common partners, with a significant number of provincial district municipalities (55%) reporting involvement. However, fewer than half of the provincial district municipalities engaged with other institution types, and none reported collaborations with foreign local government associations, international organizations that are not city networks, or sister cities abroad.

For town municipalities, foreign municipalities were the primary partners in international projects, with 60% indicating such partnerships. Other institution types were selected by less than 50% of these municipalities. Sister city municipalities abroad were the most prominent among these institutions, with 30% reporting collaboration. None of the town municipalities indicated partnerships with Turkish central government institutions other than ministries, Turkish foreign diplomatic missions, Türkiye's diplomatic missions abroad, local government associations in Türkiye or abroad, Turkish NGOs, foreign universities/research centers, international city networks, international organizations outside of these networks, or foreign central government institutions.

Figure 87: Institutions Collaborated with in International Projects by Type of Municipality

Which institutions do you collaborate with on international projects?

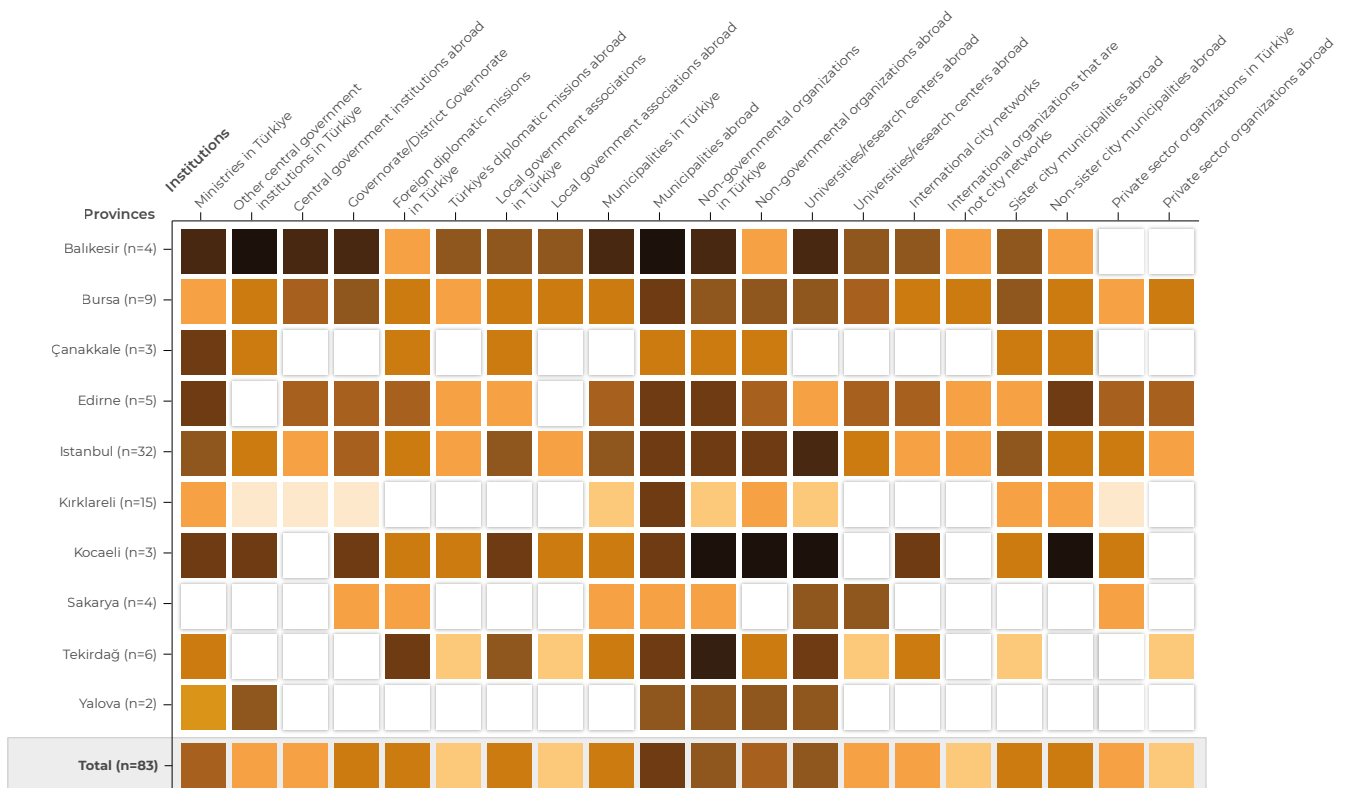


From a spatial perspective, partnerships with foreign municipalities and civil society organizations in Türkiye were observed to extend across 10 provinces. Collaborations with ministries in Türkiye, foreign civil society organizations, and universities/research centers in Türkiye also covered a relatively broad area, spanning 9 provinces. On the other hand, some partnerships were limited to narrower regions. For instance, collaborations in international projects with international organizations outside of international city networks and foreign private sector entities were found in only 4 provinces.

On a provincial level, it was noted that in Bursa and Istanbul, partnerships were established with all types of institutions listed in the survey, even if only by a single municipality. In other provinces, however, there were certain types of institutions with which no partnerships were formed. In Sakarya, it was found that collaboration was established with only 8 different types of institutions included in the options of the survey.

Figure 88: Institutions Collaborated with in International Projects by Province

Which institutions do you collaborate with on international projects?



Municipal Units in Charge of Conducting International Projects

The institutional structures responsible for managing international projects in municipalities vary significantly. To determine whether there is a general trend among municipalities in the Marmara Region regarding this responsibility, and if so, what it entails, municipalities were asked which unit is in charge of international projects. The most common response, given by 45% of municipalities, was that international projects are managed through coordination among multiple units. Another 17% indicated a “thematic unit related to the subject”, while 11% reported a “strategy development unit” and 7% specified a “foreign relations unit”. Additionally, 23% of municipalities selected the “other” option and provided information on organizational structures not listed in the survey. These included, “Directorate of Technical Works/Technical and Urban Planning” (4 municipalities), “Directorate of Registry” (3 municipalities), “Directorate of Research and Development” (2 municipalities), “Directorate of Cultural and Social Affairs” (2 municipalities), “Project Unit”, “EU Project Office under the Office of the Private Secretary”, “Deputy Mayor”, and “Foreign Relations Staff” were also mentioned. One municipality noted that they rely on external support. Another municipality explained that their projects are generally managed by the Strategy Development and Budget Unit under the Directorate of Financial Services, with technical teams from the relevant departments involved in projects related to construction.

When examining the findings by type of municipalities, no clear trend can be identified. However, as the scale of the municipality decreases from metropolitan to town municipalities, there is an observable increase in the selection of the “other” option. For metropolitan municipalities, the majority (67%) manage international projects through the coordination of multiple units. Meanwhile, 17% of these municipalities indicated responsibility lies with either a strategy development unit or a thematic unit related to the subject. Neither the “foreign relations unit” nor the “other” option was chosen by metropolitan municipalities.

Each provincial municipality exhibits a diverse distribution of responsibilities. These structures varied between a “foreign relations unit”, “thematic unit related to the subject”, “coordination of multiple units”, and the “EU Office within the Office of the Private Secretary”.

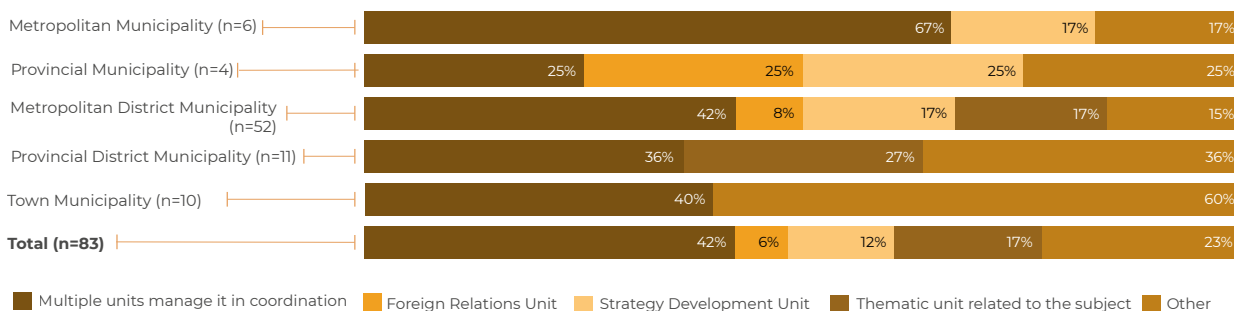
Among metropolitan district municipalities, the most prominent organizational structure (42%) involved coordination among multiple units. Additionally, 17% reported responsibility being held by a thematic unit, 15% by a strategy development unit, and 10% by a foreign relations unit. Meanwhile, 15% selected the “other” option. Under this category, responsibilities were described as being assigned to the “Deputy Mayor”, “Foreign Relations Staff”, “Directorate of Cultural and Social Affairs”, “Directorate of Research and Development”, and the “Directorate of Registry”.

Among provincial district municipalities, 36% reported that international projects are managed through the coordination of multiple units while 27% stated that thematic units handle these projects. Another 36% selected the “other” option, identifying units such as the “Directorate of Registry”, “Directorate of Technical Works” and “Project Unit” as responsible for managing international projects. One municipality highlighted that international projects are typically managed by the Strategy Development and Budget Unit under the Directorate of Financial Services and that for construction-related projects, the technical staff from the relevant department also participates in the process. Notably, Foreign Relations Units and Strategy Development Units are not solely responsible for managing international projects in provincial district municipalities. One reason for this could be the absence of such institutional structures in these municipalities.

The majority of town municipalities (60%) selected the “other” option, indicating alternative institutional structures for managing international projects. In these municipalities, responsibilities are often handled by the Directorate of Registry or the Directorate of Technical Works. Additionally, one municipality reported relying on external support for project management. In 40% of town municipalities, international projects are managed through coordination among multiple units. None of the town municipalities reported having international projects handled solely by a Foreign Relations Unit, Strategy Development Unit, or a thematic unit related to the subject.

Figure 89: Units Managing International Projects by Type of Municipality

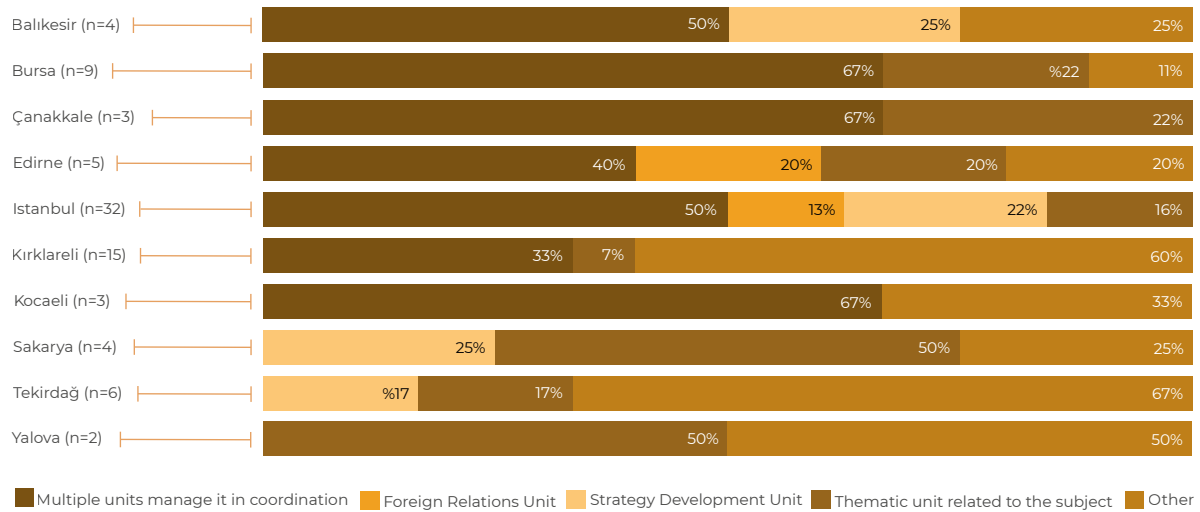
Which unit in your municipality manages the project when participating in international projects?



There is no single institutional structure responsible for managing international projects across all the provinces included in the research. However, projects managed by thematic units were observed in a relatively broader region. Similarly, the “other” option was selected by at least one municipality in 7 provinces. Municipalities that reported handling international projects exclusively through their Foreign Relations Units were found only in Istanbul and Edirne.

Figure 90: Units Managing International Projects by Province

Which unit in your municipality manages the project when participating in international projects?



Challenges Faced by Municipalities Regarding International Projects

Municipalities experience a variety of challenges during the application process or while managing international projects after approval. Municipalities in the Marmara Region were asked about the most common issues they encounter regarding international projects. The challenge cited most frequently was the rejection of project applications, mentioned by 49% of municipalities. Other common challenges included the lack of funding, difficulty finding international project partners, insufficient skills in project writing, and a shortage of personnel proficient in foreign languages, each reported by 33% of municipalities. In contrast, difficulty finding project partners within Türkiye was the least reported problem, identified by only 8% of municipalities. Additionally, twelve municipalities selected the “other” option and provided explanations about their specific challenges. These included “an inability to apply for project calls due to municipal debt”, “insufficient personnel and uneven distribution of workloads”, “a lack of transparency among funding organizations favoring certain entities”, “issues with passports and visas”,⁸⁰ “a shortage of staff to prepare project proposals”, and “inadequate salaries for experienced personnel, which hindered the hiring and retention of qualified individuals”. One municipality noted that it did not face any significant challenges related to international projects.

⁸⁰ Different municipalities have highlighted this issue in various ways. Problems with visas and passports include issues such as “not issuing gray passports to personnel other than civil servants and contracted staff” and “delays in the visa and passport processes disrupting international programs”.

In metropolitan municipalities, the most prevalent issues were difficulty finding international project partners and insufficient capacity in project management, both reported by 67%. The rejection of project applications was a significant problem for half of these municipalities, while 33% highlighted challenges related to internal bureaucratic procedures and the absence of relationship networks with funding organizations. However, metropolitan municipalities did not report problems related to finding project partners within Türkiye or shortages of personnel proficient in foreign languages.

Among provincial municipalities, the most common challenges were the lack of funding and the rejection of project applications, both experienced by 75% of respondents. Another significant issue was the absence of relationship networks with funding organizations, reported by 50%. Provincial municipalities did not report difficulties in finding project partners within Türkiye, insufficient project writing skills, or shortcomings in project management capacity.

Metropolitan district municipalities identified the rejection of project applications as the most widespread problem, with 54% of respondents reporting it. Lack of funding and a shortage of personnel proficient in foreign languages were also prominent issues, each affecting 37% of these municipalities. On the other hand, challenges such as difficulty finding project partners within Türkiye and internal bureaucratic procedures were less commonly experienced, mentioned by only 12%.

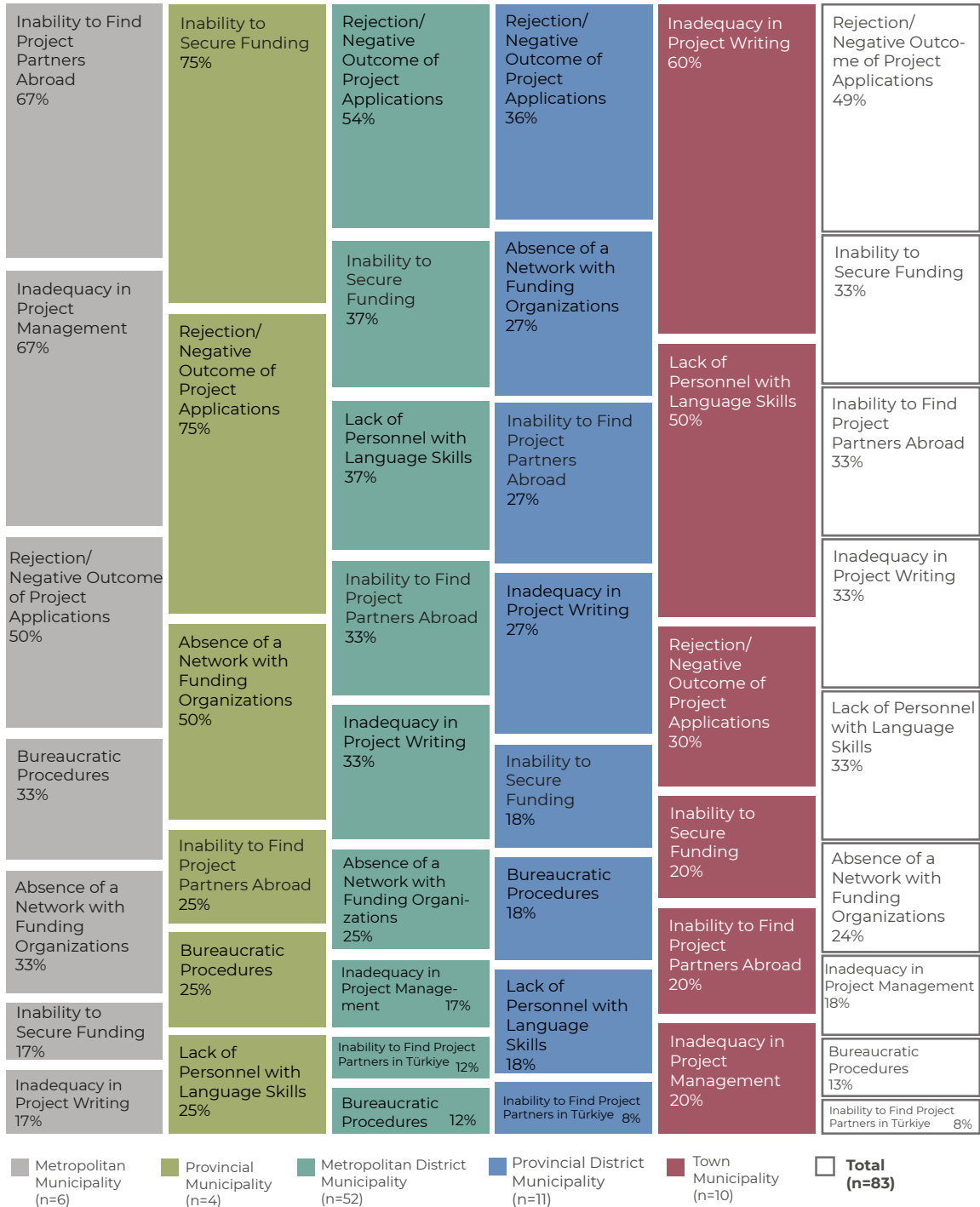
Provincial district municipalities frequently highlighted the rejection of project applications as the most significant challenge, affecting 36% of respondents. Other notable issues included the absence of relationship networks with funding organizations, difficulty finding international project partners, and insufficient project writing skills, each reported by 27% of municipalities. Provincial district municipalities, however, did not report any challenges related to project management capacity.

Lastly, town municipalities demonstrated a distinct pattern of challenges compared to other types of municipalities. The most common issue was insufficient project writing skills, reported by 60%. A shortage of personnel proficient in foreign languages was another significant challenge, affecting 50%, while 30% of town municipalities mentioned the rejection of project applications. Unlike other municipalities, town municipalities did not report difficulties related to relationship networks with funding organizations, challenges in finding project partners within Türkiye, or problems caused by internal bureaucratic procedures.

When broken down at the provincial level, the challenge of securing funding was identified across all ten provinces included in the research. Similarly, the issues of difficulty finding international project partners and the rejection of project applications were observed in a relatively broad area, affecting municipalities in nine provinces. In contrast, the problem of finding project partners within Türkiye was reported in only five provinces, indicating that this issue is confined to a narrower geographical scope compared to other challenges.

Figure 91: Challenges Faced in International Projects by Type of Municipality

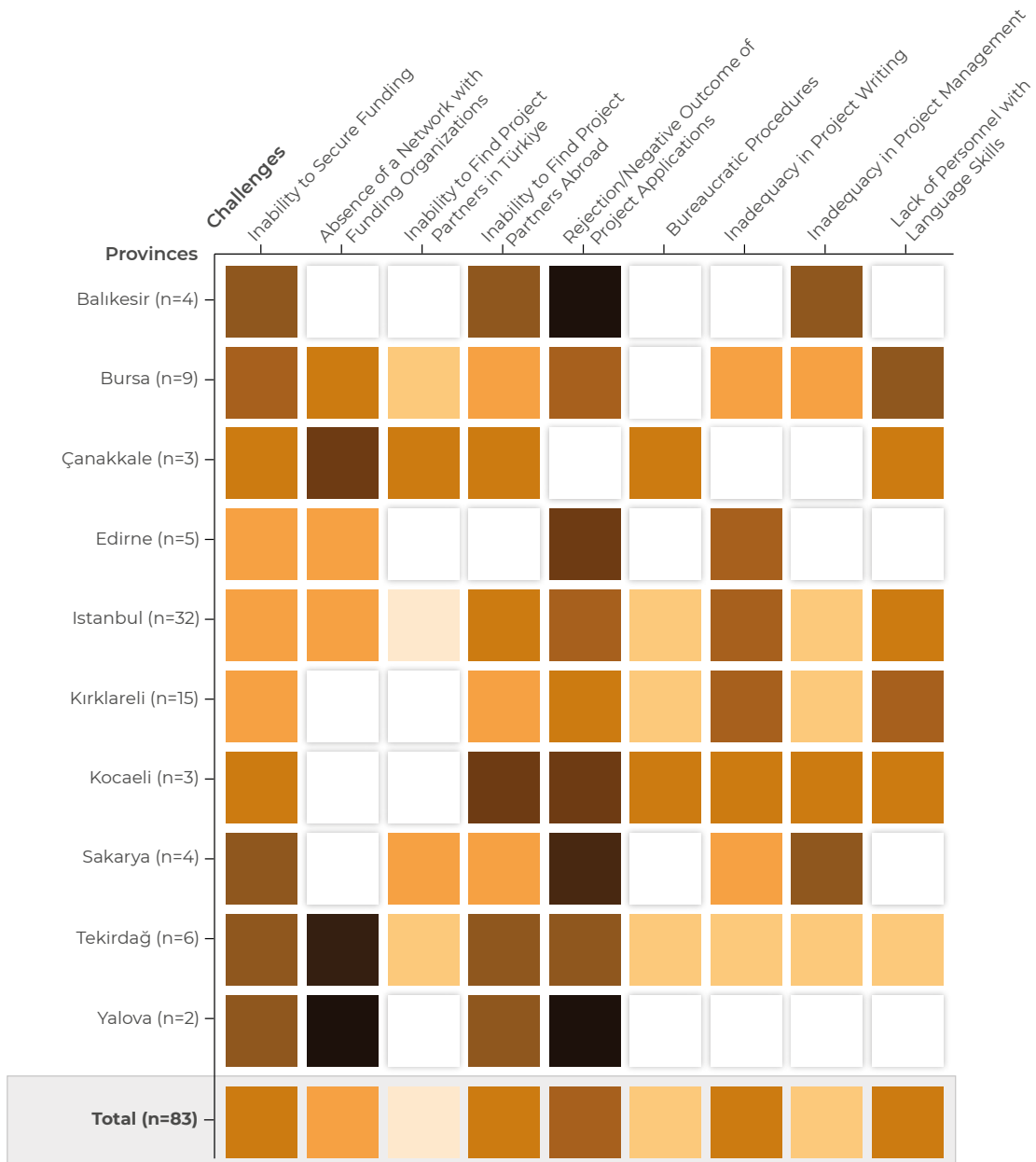
What challenges do you face regarding international projects?



Istanbul and Tekirdağ were the only provinces where all identified challenges were observed. Responses from the survey suggest that certain problems are not experienced by municipalities outside of these provinces. For instance, none of the municipalities in Bursa reported issues stemming from internal bureaucratic procedures.

Figure 92: Challenges Faced in International Projects by Province

What challenges do you face regarding international projects?









RESEARCH FINDINGS

6. International Cooperation Agreements of Municipalities

6. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AGREEMENTS OF MUNICIPALITIES

Municipalities establish international cooperation in diverse ways. The most common and recognized forms include sister city relationships, membership in international city networks, and participation in international projects. However, international partnerships are also formed through other channels. Municipalities collaborate with a wide range of organizations from different sectors, such as foreign municipalities, international organizations like the EU and the UN and their affiliated agencies, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations, for various reasons and on a range of themes. These cooperation processes are often formalized through agreements, such as “Memorandums of Understanding” (MoUs), which involve two or more partners expressing their commitment and readiness to cooperate on specific issues without being legally binding or other protocols and agreements established between institutions.

In this section of the Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research, the focus turns to international cooperation addressing the municipalities’ international partnerships. To understand whether municipalities have established cooperation with foreign institutions or international organizations through MoUs and other protocols, which institutions they have collaborated with, and in which areas, the municipalities were asked several targeted questions regarding their experience.

Municipal Cooperation Agreements with Overseas Institutions

When asked whether MMU member municipalities had established partnerships with foreign municipalities, international organizations, or other institutions through formal agreements or protocols, 185 municipalities responded. Approximately 24% of these municipalities reported that they had engaged in cooperation through protocols/agreements with foreign institutions, while 76% stated that they had not. Given the data from other sections of the research (sister city relationships, membership in international city networks, international projects), it is evident that cooperation agreements are less commonly preferred than other forms of cooperation.

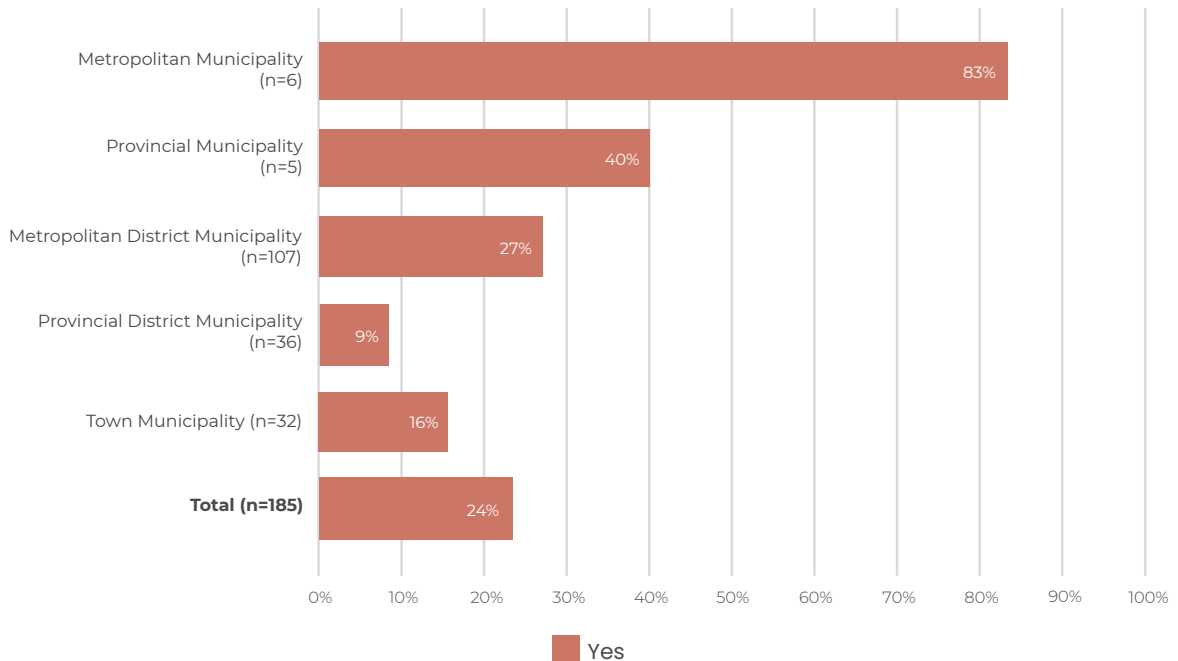
Looking at the breakdown by municipality type, 83% of metropolitan municipalities, 40% of provincial municipalities, 27% of metropolitan district municipalities, 16% of town municipalities, and 9% of provincial district municipalities engage in cooperation with international organizations or foreign institutions through protocols or agreements.

Figure 93: Municipal Cooperation Agreements with Overseas/International Institutions



Figure 94: Municipal Cooperation Agreements with Overseas/International Institutions by Type of Municipality

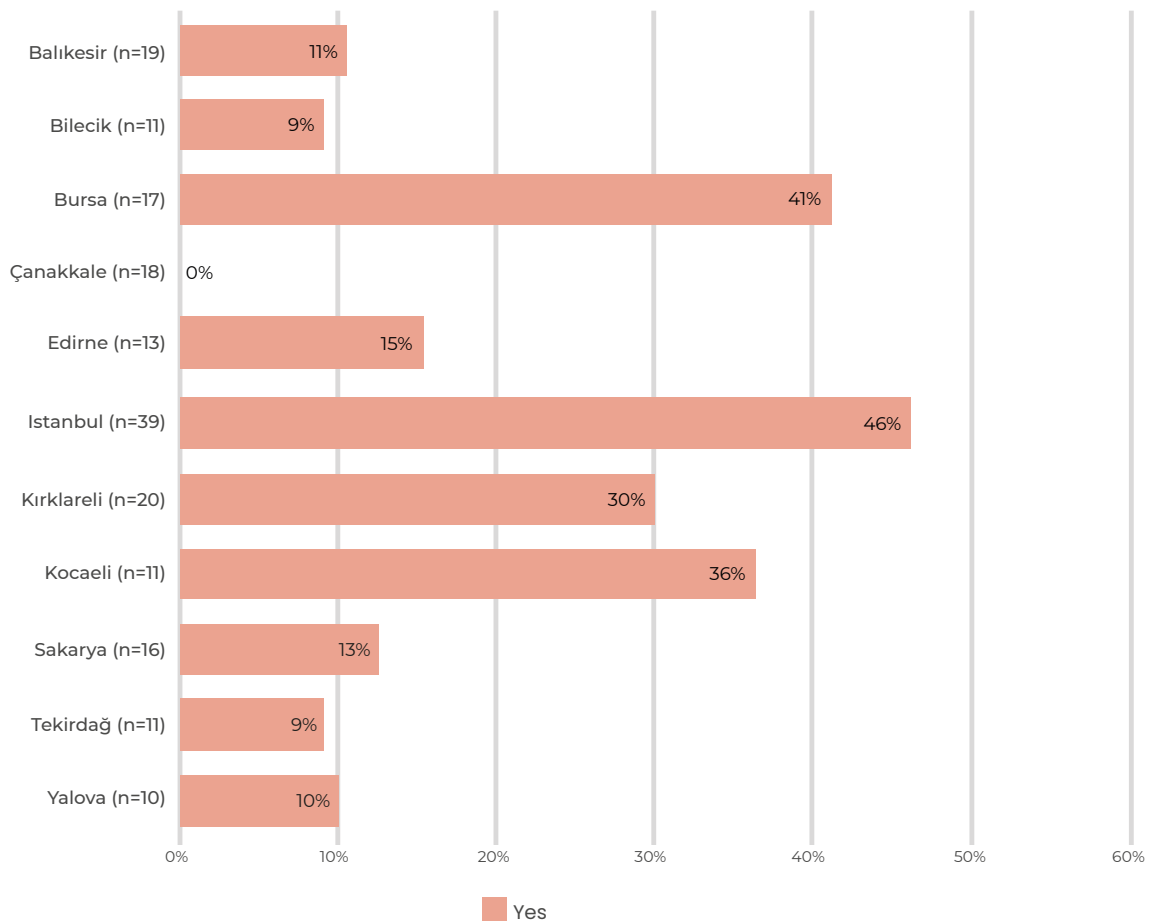
Do you have/have you had relationships through cooperation agreements and protocols with foreign municipalities or international organizations?



When broken down by province, municipalities in every province except Çanakkale reported that at least 9% of them had established cooperation through agreements/MoUs. However, this percentage remained low across all provinces, and in no province did it exceed 50%. The highest percentages were observed in the metropolitan areas of Istanbul (46%), Bursa (41%), and Kocaeli (36%). In Tekirdağ and Bilecik, only 9% of municipalities reported establishing cooperation through agreements, making these provinces, alongside Çanakkale, the least active in this regard.

Figure 95: Municipal Cooperation Agreements with Overseas/International Institutions by Province

Do you have/have you had relationships through cooperation agreements and protocols with foreign municipalities or international organizations?



Areas of Municipal Cooperation with Overseas Institutions

Municipalities cooperate with foreign municipalities or other institutions on a diverse range of topics. To identify the areas of cooperation that municipalities have engaged in so far, 44 municipalities responded to the relevant question.⁸¹ According to their responses, the most frequent areas of cooperation for municipalities' cooperation with international city networks were culture (43%), climate change and the environment (36%), and education (32%). The prominence of this theme in all three sections of the research provides evidence that municipalities have developed a serious sensitivity toward climate change and environmental issues and have actively engaged in initiatives on these matters.

Food and agriculture, with 5%, was the least common area for cooperation, followed by infrastructure, transportation,⁸² and governance themes, each with 7%. Additionally, 20% of the municipalities reported that they had signed a general cooperation agreement that could encompass multiple themes rather than focusing on just one specific area. Eight municipalities mentioned that they had signed cooperation agreements in areas not listed in the options, including youth and tourism, disaster management, social rights, employment, local economic development, social services, and energy.

Most metropolitan municipalities (60%) have structured their cooperation agreements around climate change, sustainability, and infrastructure themes. Sports, however, is not a focus area for cooperation agreements in these municipalities. Furthermore, no municipality selected the "general" option, indicating that they have not structured their partnerships to be more flexible and broad but rather concentrated on specific themes.

In contrast to the metropolitan municipalities, all provincial municipalities responding to the question reported signing a "general" cooperation agreement. This contrast highlights the potential for variation in how municipalities approach cooperation. The themes of focus for provincial municipalities were climate change/environment, sustainability, and culture, each at 50%. Provincial municipalities indicated they had not signed cooperation agreements in other themes.

⁸¹ In evaluating the answers in this section, the scope of the municipalities' authority and the type of the municipalities that answered the question should be considered. For example, municipalities have limited responsibility in education in Türkiye. Additionally, responsibilities in infrastructure issues like transportation mostly belong to metropolitan municipalities. The differences in authority and responsibilities are closely related to the type of the municipalities working on those issues. For the legislation shaping the duties and responsibilities of metropolitan municipalities, see Law on Metropolitan Municipalities No. 5216, accessed October 24, 2024, <https://www.lawsturkey.com/law/law-on-metropolitan-municipalities-5216#:~:text=The%20law%20on%20metropolitan%20municipalities,effective%2C%20efficient%20and%20consistent%20manner>; for the legislation shaping the authority areas of other municipalities, see Municipal Law No. 5393, accessed October 24, 2024, <http://www.lawsturkey.com/law/municipality-law-5393#:~:text=The%20municipality%20law%20has%20been,procedures%20and%20principles%20of%20municipalities>.

⁸² Transportation and infrastructure are legally more within the service area of metropolitan municipalities. When examining the data by municipality types, the low rate is due to legal differences in authority.

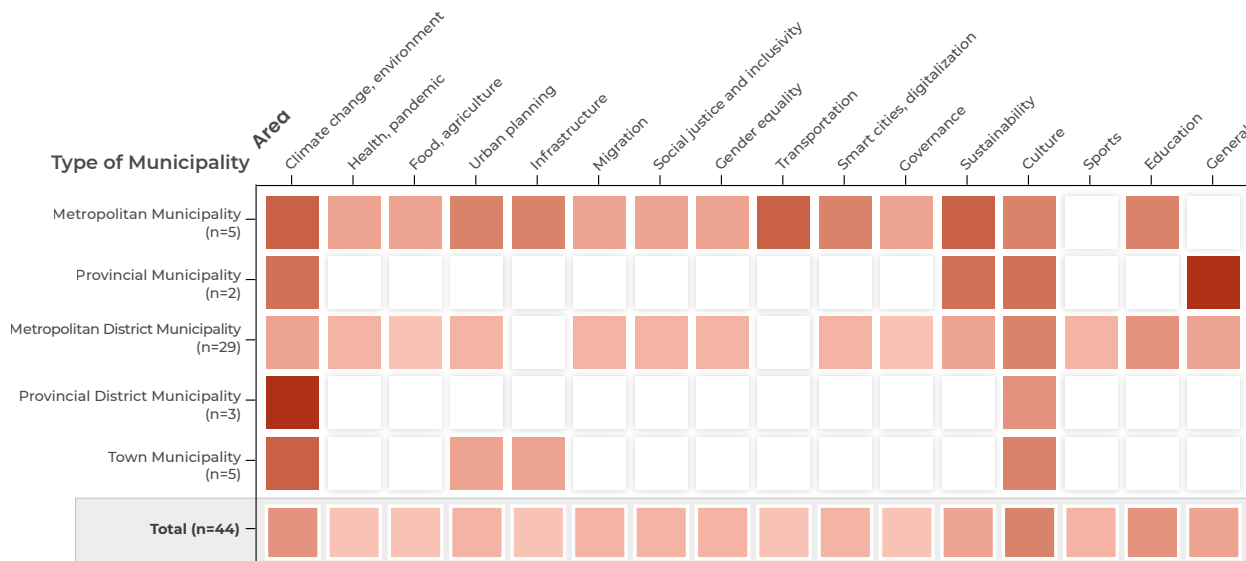
In metropolitan district municipalities, culture was the dominant theme in international cooperation agreements, with 45%. Education followed at 38%, and climate change/environment was the focus for 21%. Additionally, 24% of these municipalities reported signing “general” cooperation agreements. These municipalities did not establish cooperation agreements in infrastructure and transportation.

All provincial district municipalities cooperated with foreign institutions on climate change/environment issues. Furthermore, 33% of these municipalities established partnerships in culture, sports, and education. Provincial district municipalities did not cooperate in other areas.

As with other types of municipalities, town municipalities reported that climate change/environment (60%) and culture (40%) were the most prominent areas of international cooperation. Town municipalities also mentioned international cooperation in urban planning (20%) and infrastructure (20%).

Figure 96: Areas of Cooperation with Overseas/International Institutions by Type of Municipality

In which areas have you signed cooperation agreements/protocols?



Looking at the provincial distribution, significant differences were observed across themes. For instance, climate change and culture were the subjects of cooperation in at least one municipality in eight provinces. On the other hand, food/agriculture, migration, social justice, smart cities/digitalization, and governance were the focus of municipal cooperation only in two provinces.

Figure 97: Areas of Cooperation with Overseas/International Institutions by Province

In which areas have you signed cooperation agreements/protocols?



Challenges Municipalities Face While Cooperating with Overseas Institutions

Municipalities encounter various challenges when establishing cooperation with foreign institutions through agreements/protocols or after such cooperation has been established. Among the most commonly reported issues related to cooperation agreements were that the agreements/protocols remained on paper (36%), the lack of personnel who speak foreign languages (36%), and a shortage of human resources and personnel (34%). Issues such as reluctance of the personnel conducting foreign relations (9%) and reluctance of the senior management in the municipality (11%) were the least reported problems. Seven municipalities selected the “other” option. Of these, three reported that they did not encounter any challenges while establishing or after establishing cooperation, one municipality faced passport-related issues, and one municipality experienced mutual problems with its partner.

Among metropolitan municipalities, the most commonly observed problem was that agreements/protocols remained on paper and no concrete activities were carried out, with 60% reporting this issue. Issues such as reluctance of the senior management in the municipality and insufficient budgets did not present significant challenges for these municipalities in their international cooperation efforts.

Half of the provincial municipalities reported experiencing problems with agreements/protocols remaining on paper and no concrete activities taking place, as well as with the reluctance of the senior management in the municipality and budget shortages during the international cooperation agreement process. These municipalities indicated that they did not encounter issues in other areas.

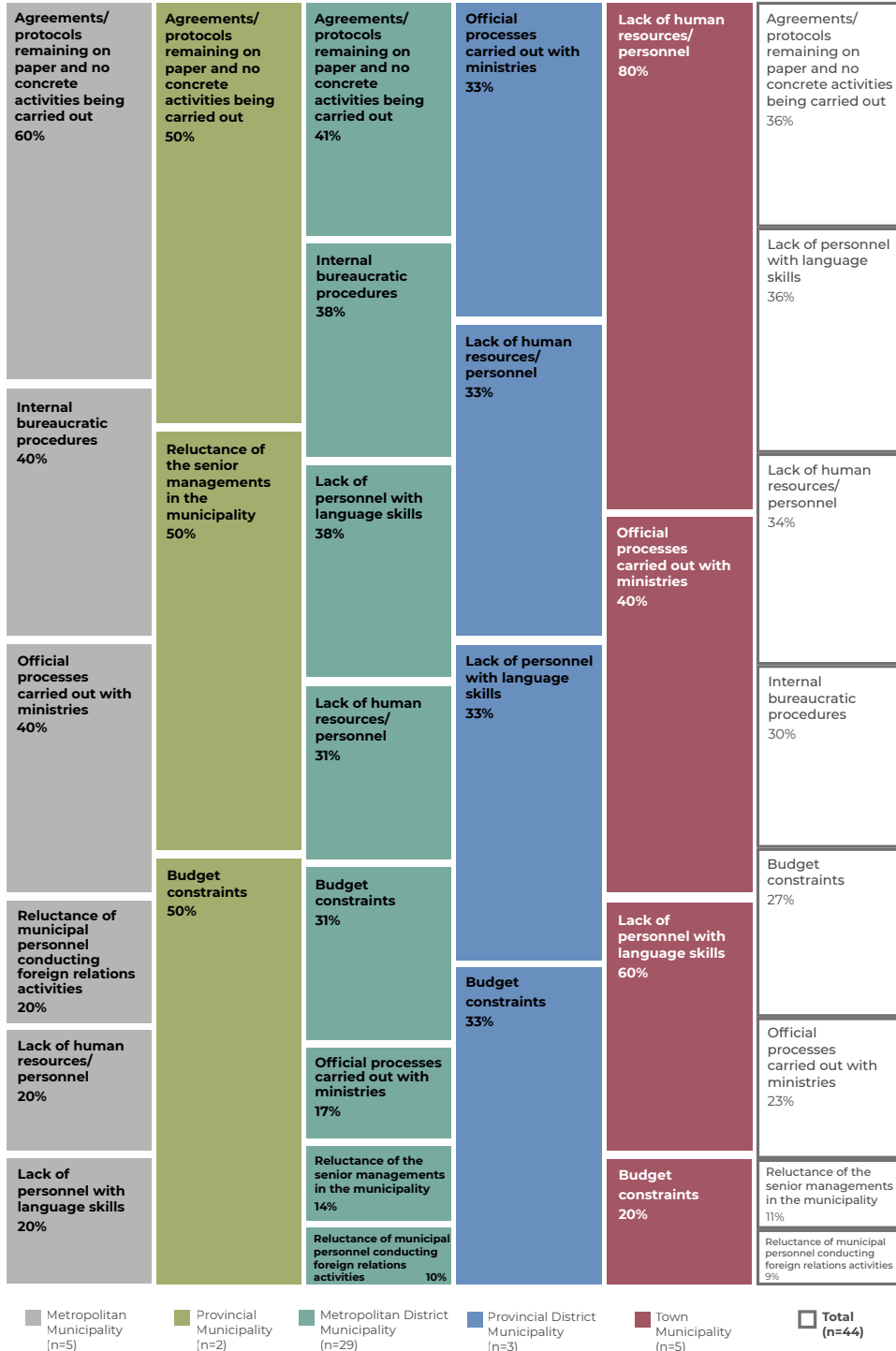
For metropolitan district municipalities, the most frequently mentioned problem, just like for metropolitan and provincial municipalities, was the issue of agreements/protocols remaining on paper and the lack of concrete activities, reported by 41% of these municipalities. The reluctance of the municipal personnel conducting foreign relations was noted as the least affecting issue (10%), followed by the reluctance of the senior management in the municipality (14%) and official processes with ministries (17%).

Provincial district municipalities, on the other hand, reported facing problems related to budgets constraints, lack of personnel who speak foreign languages, human resources/personnel shortages, and official processes with ministries, with 33% citing these issues in their international cooperation agreements.

In town municipalities, the most prominent issue was lack of human resources/personnel, identified by 80% of the town municipalities. This was followed by a lack of personnel who speak foreign languages, mentioned by 60%. Town municipalities reported no challenges with agreements/protocols remaining on paper and lack of concrete activities, internal administrative procedures, reluctance of the senior management in the municipality, or reluctance of the municipal personnel conducting foreign relations.

Figure 98: Challenges Faced While Cooperating with Overseas/International Institutions by Type of Municipality

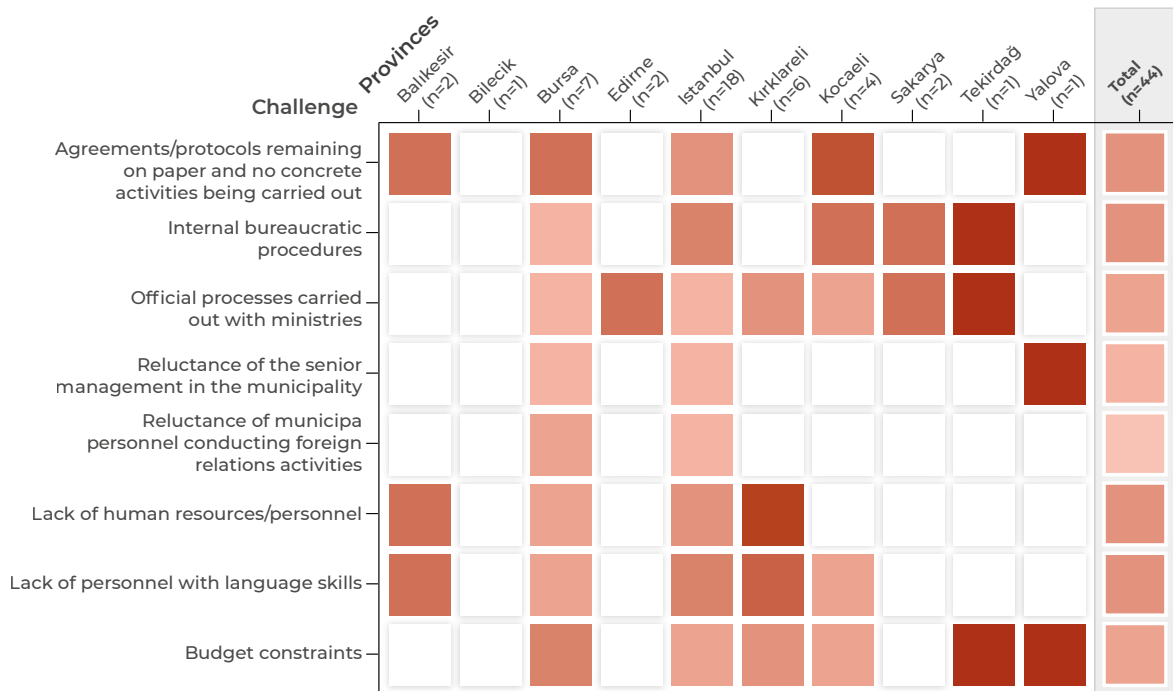
What challenges have you faced regarding the cooperation agreements/protocols you have made?



The challenges faced by municipalities in international cooperation vary across provinces. The most geographically widespread issue, observed in seven provinces, was the problem with official processes involving ministries. The issue affecting the smallest area, seen in only two provinces, was the reluctance of the personnel conducting foreign relations in municipal foreign relations activities.

Figure 99: Challenges Faced While Cooperating with Overseas/International Institutions by Province

What challenges have you faced regarding the cooperation agreements/protocols you have made?









RESEARCH FINDINGS

7. Municipalities' Participation in International Events

7. MUNICIPALITIES' PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

International events are among the essential tools for representation, visibility, and relationship-building on a global scale. Each year, events are organized worldwide with the participation of cities from various regions to raise local awareness, to build capacity, and to disseminate good practices in areas such as climate change, waste reduction, mobility, governance, inclusion, local democracy, and sustainable development. These events contribute to enhancing communication and interaction among stakeholders and provide opportunities for networking, paving the way for concrete collaborations. Through international events organized by international organizations, city networks, or sister cities, a wide range of stakeholders—including local governments, public institutions, universities, non-governmental organizations, private sector entities, and representatives from other sectors—come together.⁸³

This section of the Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research on international events examines the municipalities' participation in international events, the obstacles to such participation, the types of international events attended, the frequency of participation, and the institutional visits conducted during overseas assignments.

Municipalities' Participation in International Events

Figure 100: Municipalities' Participation in International Events

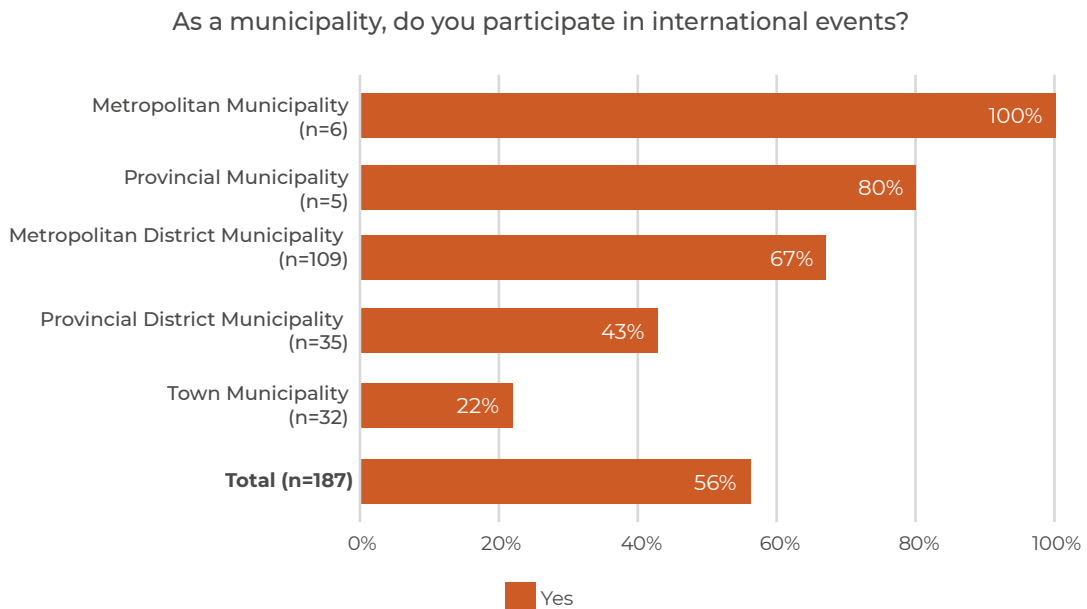


⁸³ Merve Ağca, "Tools of Local Diplomacy: International Events and Awards", in *Local Diplomacy: Policies, practices and tools*, edited by M. Cemil Arslan and Burcuhan Şener, Istanbul: Marmara Municipalities Union Publications, 2023: p. 201-220.

When asked about their participation in international events, 56% (105) of the 187 surveyed municipalities indicated that they attend international events, while 44% (82) stated that they do not.

All six metropolitan municipalities reported participating in international events, as did four out of five provincial municipalities. Among metropolitan district municipalities, 67% stated that they participate in such events, while this figure stood at 43% for provincial district municipalities. The participation rate for town municipalities was significantly lower at 22%.

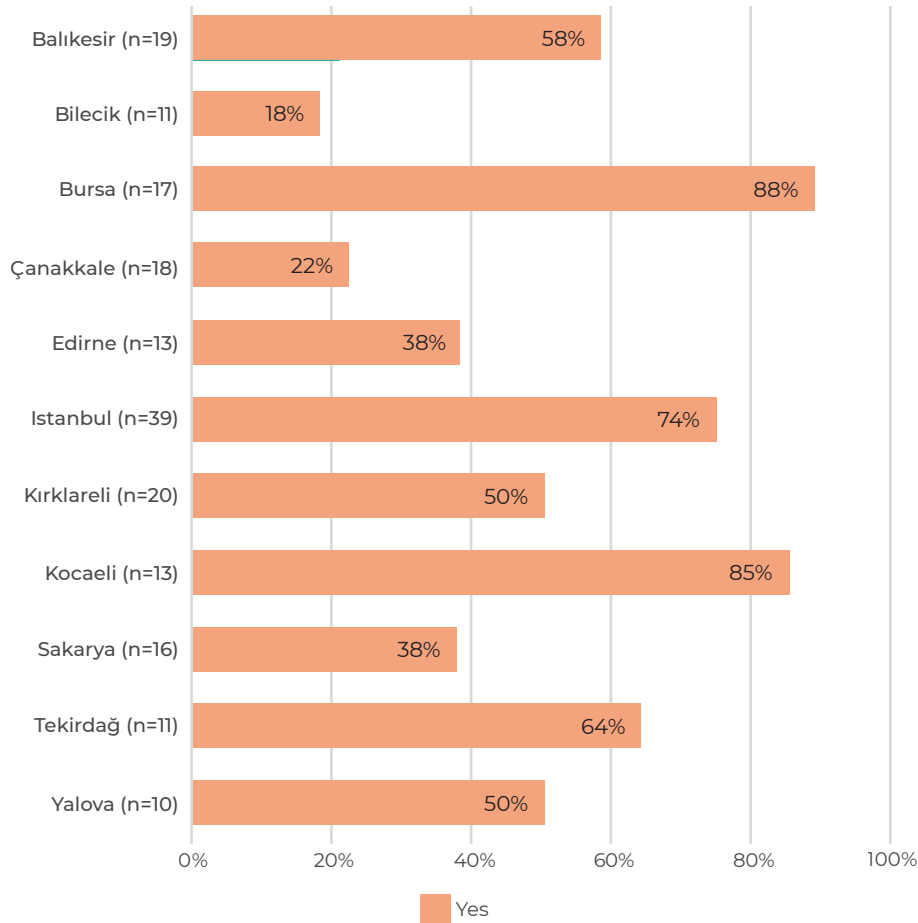
Figure 101: Municipalities' Participation in International Events by Type of Municipality



The provinces with the highest percentage of municipalities participating in international events were Bursa (88%), Kocaeli (85%), İstanbul (74%), and Balıkesir (58%). In contrast, Bilecik had the lowest participation rate at 18%. Out of the surveyed municipalities, 33 were located in border provinces, and 10 were situated directly on the border. 15 municipalities in border provinces reported participating in international events, resulting in a participation rate of 45% for these areas. Of the 10 municipalities located directly on the border, 5 stated that they participate in international events.

Figure 102: Municipalities' Participation in International Events by Province

As a municipality, do you participate in international events?

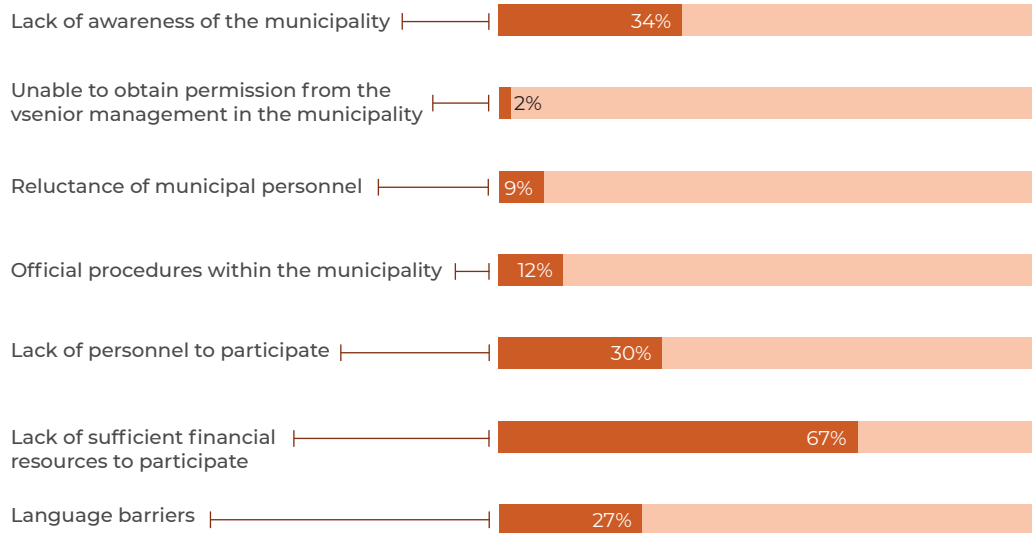


Reasons for Municipalities Not Participating in International Events

Although international events are critical tools for fostering international collaborations and advancing local diplomacy, certain municipalities face constraints that prevent their participation. 82 municipalities that stated they do not participate in international events were asked about their reasons for non-participation, with a maximum of three options allowed. The primary reason cited was the lack of sufficient financial resources (67%). This was followed by a lack of awareness about international events (34%), the absence of personnel to facilitate participation (30%), and language barriers (27%).

Figure 103: Reasons for Municipalities Not Participating in International Events

If your municipality does not participate in international events, what is the reason?

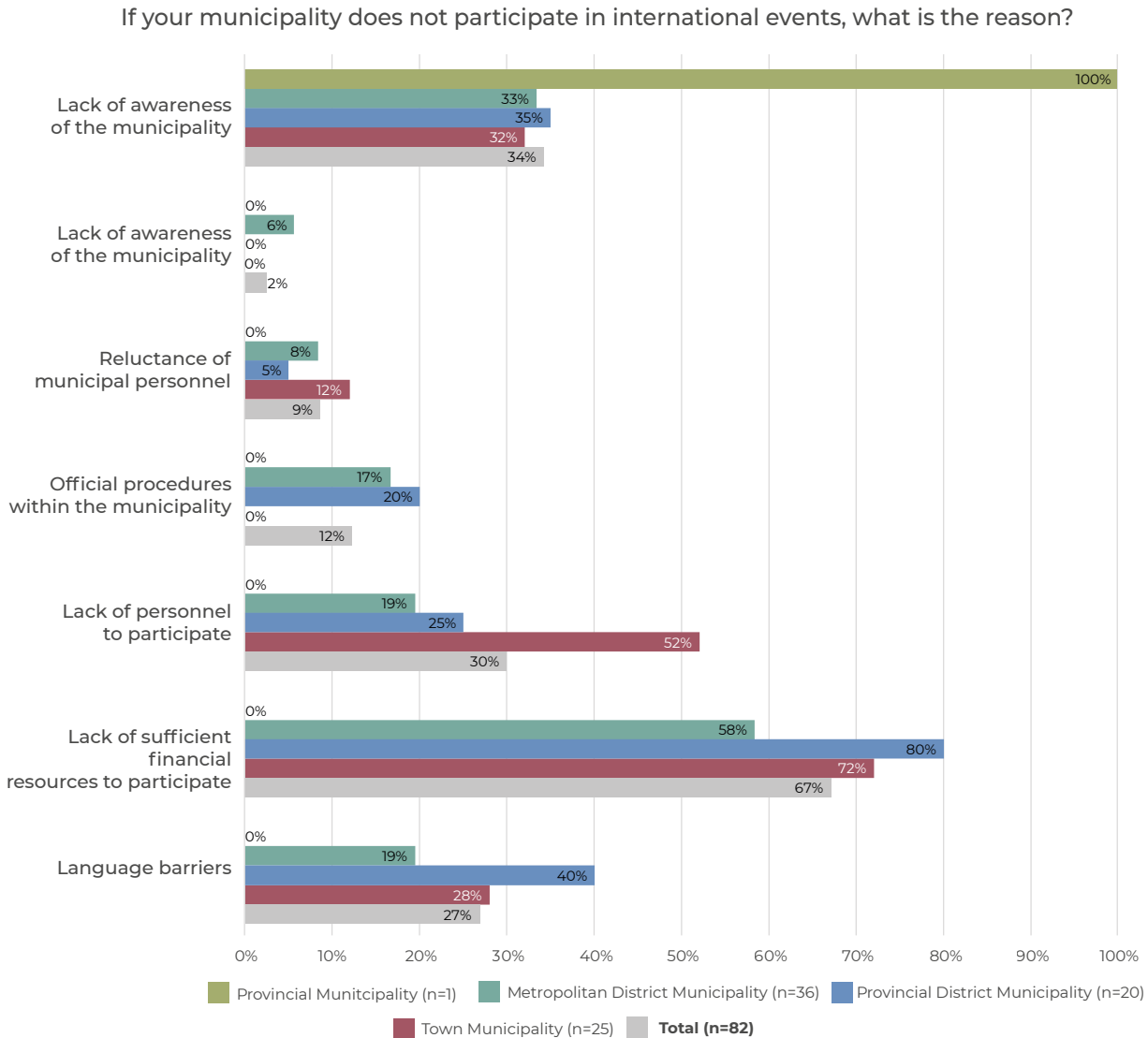


n = 82

Access to financial resources emerges as a significant barrier across all municipalities, with this issue being cited by 80% of provincial district municipalities, 72% of town municipalities, and 58% of metropolitan district municipalities. Language barriers, on the other hand, were mentioned by 40% of district municipalities affiliated with provinces, 28% of town municipalities, and 19% of metropolitan district municipalities as reasons for non-participation. Additionally, 52% of town municipalities stated they lacked personnel to participate in international events.

Other factors negatively affecting participation include internal official procedures, lack of motivation among personnel, and challenges in obtaining approval from municipal leadership. Some municipalities reported that their staff showed no interest in participating in such events, that international collaboration efforts were still in their infancy, that they lacked adequate networks related to these events, and that they were not invited to participate in such activities. Additional reasons included insufficient capacity of municipal staff regarding international collaborations, excessive workloads, and a lack of prioritization for international events by the senior management or mayors. One municipality explicitly stated that they refrained from participating in international events due to cost-saving measures implemented at various times.

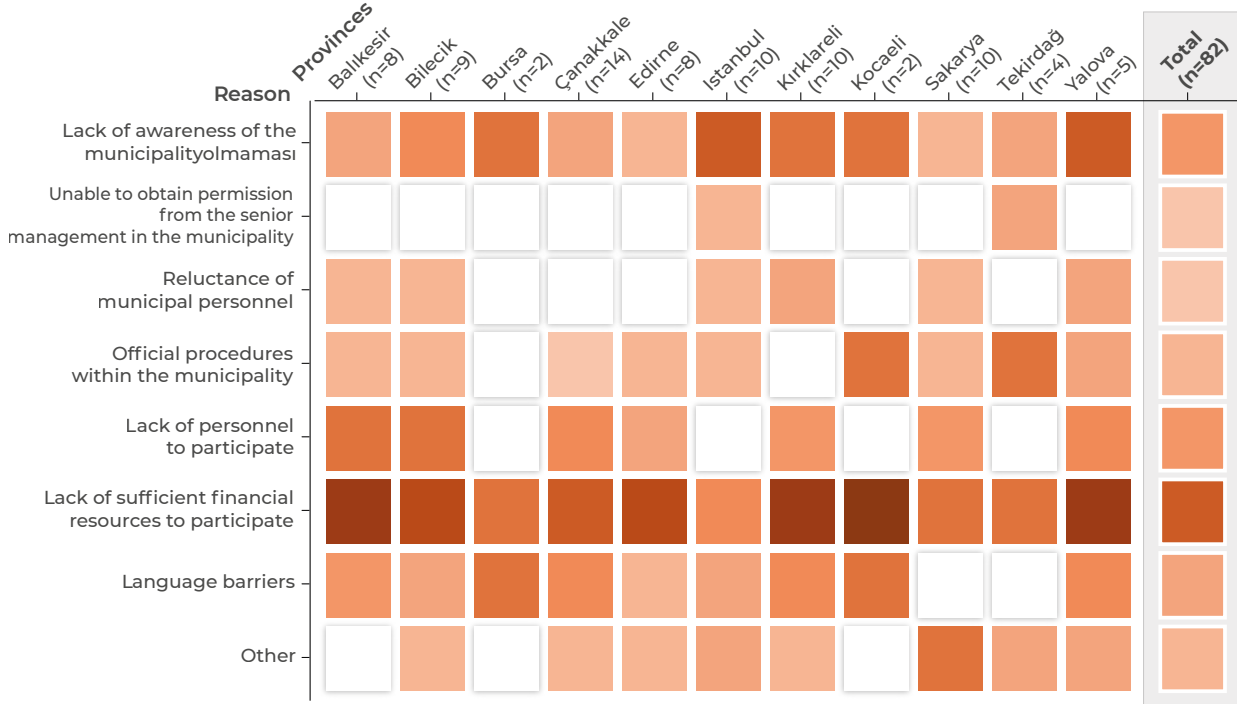
Figure 104: Reasons for Municipalities Not Participating in International Events by Type of Municipality



The lack of adequate financial resources ranked as the primary barrier to participation in international events for municipalities in 10 provinces, while it was the second most frequently cited reason only in Istanbul. The lack of personnel to participate was the second most significant factor in Balıkesir (50%), Bilecik (56%), Çanakkale (43%), and Edirne (25%). Similarly, the lack of awareness about international events ranked among the top three reasons in Bilecik (44%), Bursa (50%), Istanbul (60%), Kırklareli (50%), Kocaeli (50%), and Yalova (60%). Language barriers were also frequently cited in Balıkesir (38%), Bursa (50%), Çanakkale (43%), Istanbul (20%), Kırklareli (40%), Kocaeli (50%), and Yalova (40%).

Figure 105: Reasons for Municipalities Not Participating in International Events by Province

If your municipality does not participate in international events, what is the reason?



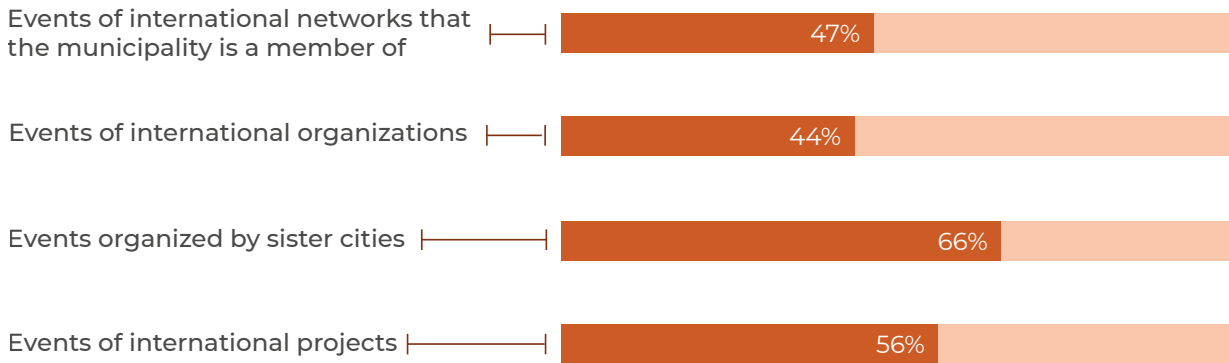
International Events Attended by Municipalities

Municipalities were asked about the types of international events they participated in, with the option to select multiple responses. According to the results, participation in events organized by sister cities was the highest at 66%. This was followed by participation in events related to international projects (56%), events held by international networks to which municipalities are members (47%), and events organized by international organizations (44%).

It was observed that town municipalities primarily attended events organized by their sister cities (86%) or those related to international projects (57%). All metropolitan municipalities indicated participation in events related to international projects, while their participation in other types of events was 83%. Among metropolitan district municipalities, 64% participated in events organized by their sister cities, 55% in events related to international projects, 52% in events held by international networks that they are members of, and 48% in events organized by international organizations. All provincial municipalities stated that they participated in events organized by their sister cities. However, only three provincial municipalities participated in events organized by international networks and organizations, while two participated in events related to international projects. Among provincial district municipalities, 47% participated in events organized by sister cities and international projects, while participation in events held by international networks and international organizations was at 20%.

Figure 106: International Events Attended by Municipalities

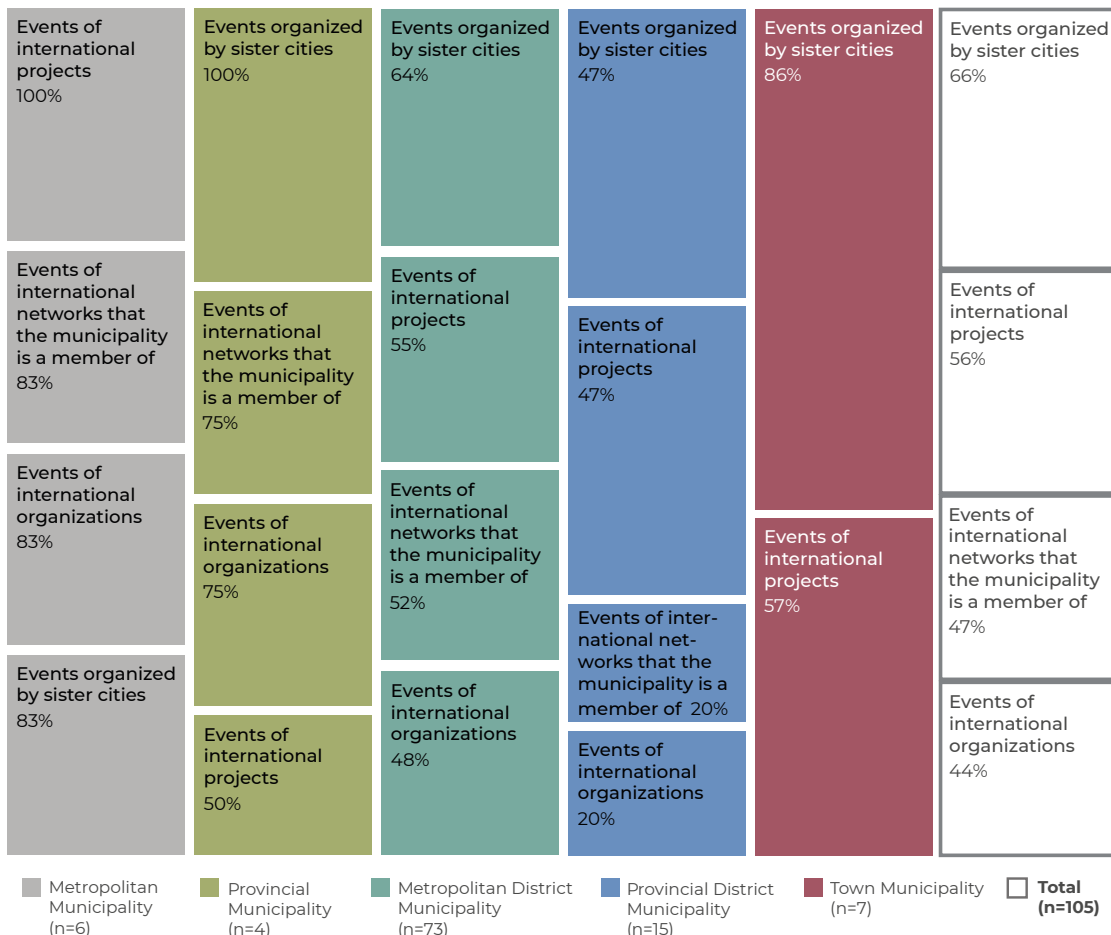
Which events does your municipality participate in?



n = 105

Figure 107: International Events Attended by Municipalities by Type of Municipality

Which events does your municipality participate in?

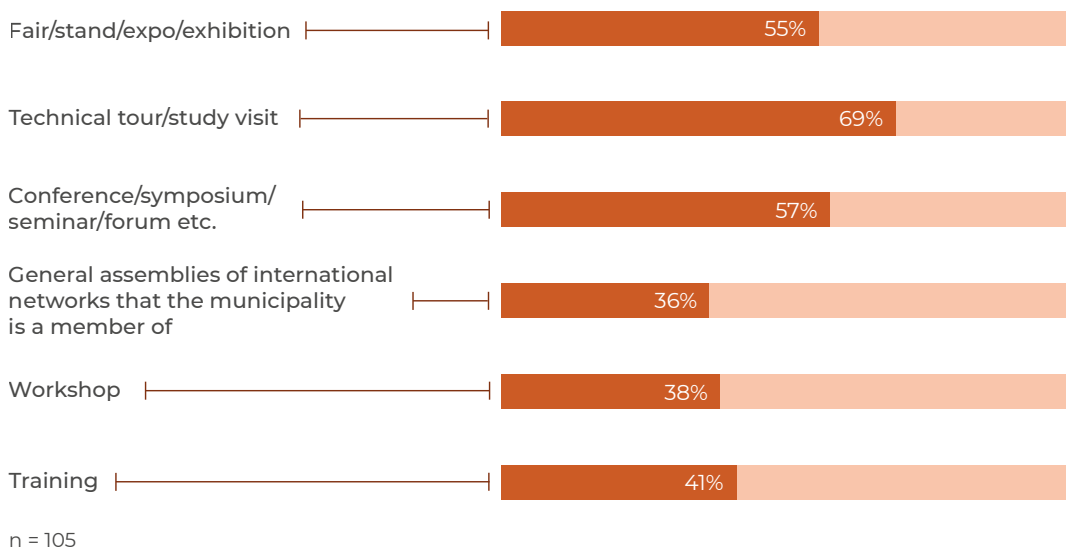


Municipalities that participated in international events reported being informed about these events by local government associations. They also mentioned attending events organized by international financial institutions, international events abroad in tourism and culture, festivals and sports competitions organized by foreign municipalities, international events organized in Türkiye by ministries, international events organized abroad by Turkish authorities, and events hosted by Turkish associations abroad.⁸⁴

When the types of events attended were examined, technical tours or study visits ranked first (69%), followed by conferences, symposiums, seminars, etc. (57%), and participation in fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions (55%). Additionally, 41% of municipalities participated in training sessions, 38% in workshops, and 36% in events hosted by international organizations they are members of.

Figure 108: Types of International Events Attended by Municipalities

What types of international events does your municipality participate in?



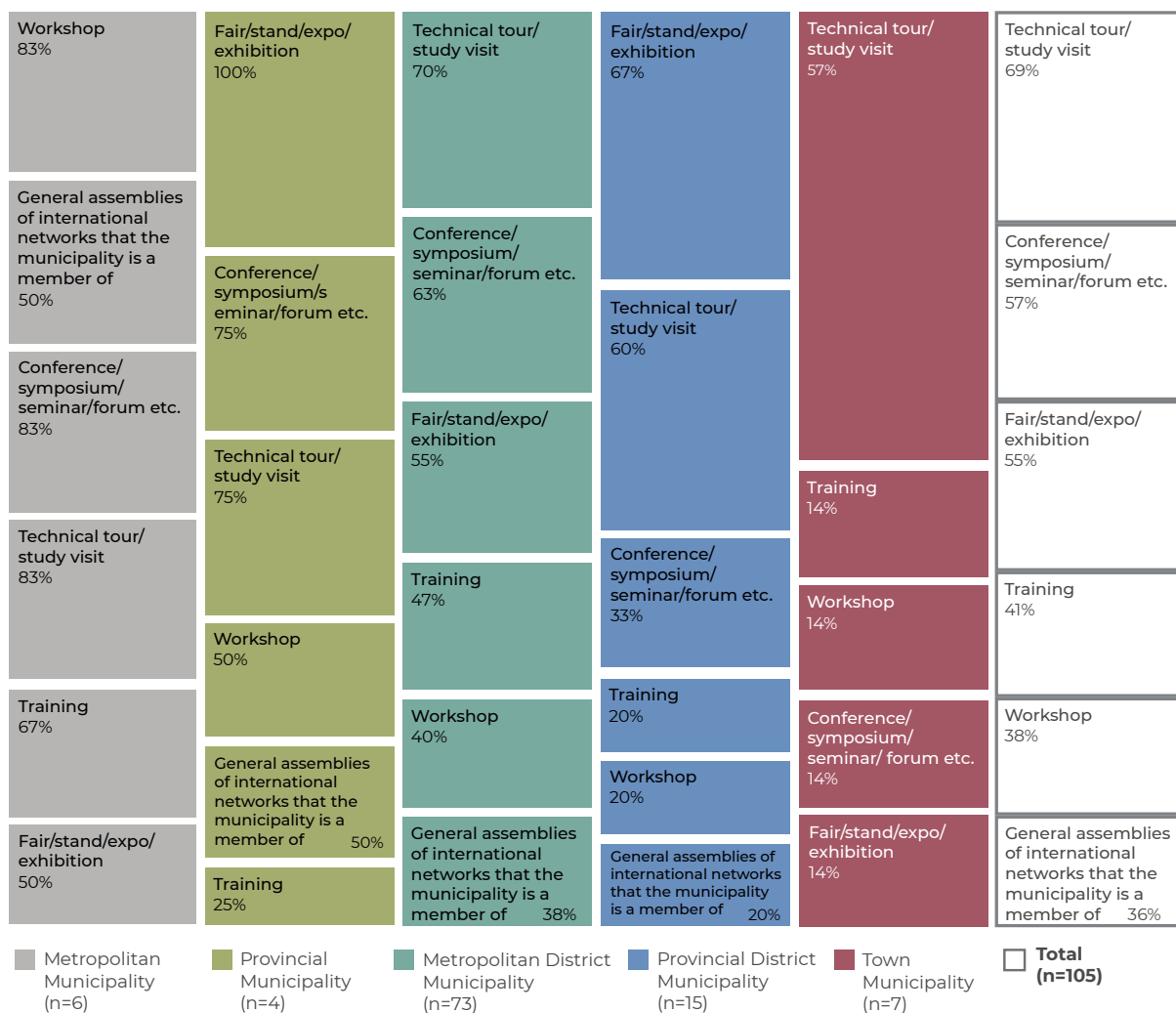
Technical tours were the most attended event type across all types of municipalities. 83% of metropolitan municipalities, 70% of metropolitan district municipalities, 75% of provincial municipalities and 60% of provincial district municipalities stated that they participated in technical tour programs.

⁸⁴ Events such as EWWR, ELDW, and European Mobility Week have been particularly mentioned by municipal representatives.

Fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions were attended by 50% of metropolitan municipalities, all provincial municipalities, 55% of metropolitan district municipalities, and 67% of provincial district municipalities. Conference participation rates stood at 83% for metropolitan municipalities, 63% for metropolitan district municipalities, 75% for provincial municipalities, 33% for provincial district municipalities, and 14% for town municipalities. Since no town municipalities are members of international city networks, they did not attend any network-related events.

Figure 109: Types of International Events Attended by Municipalities by Type of Municipality

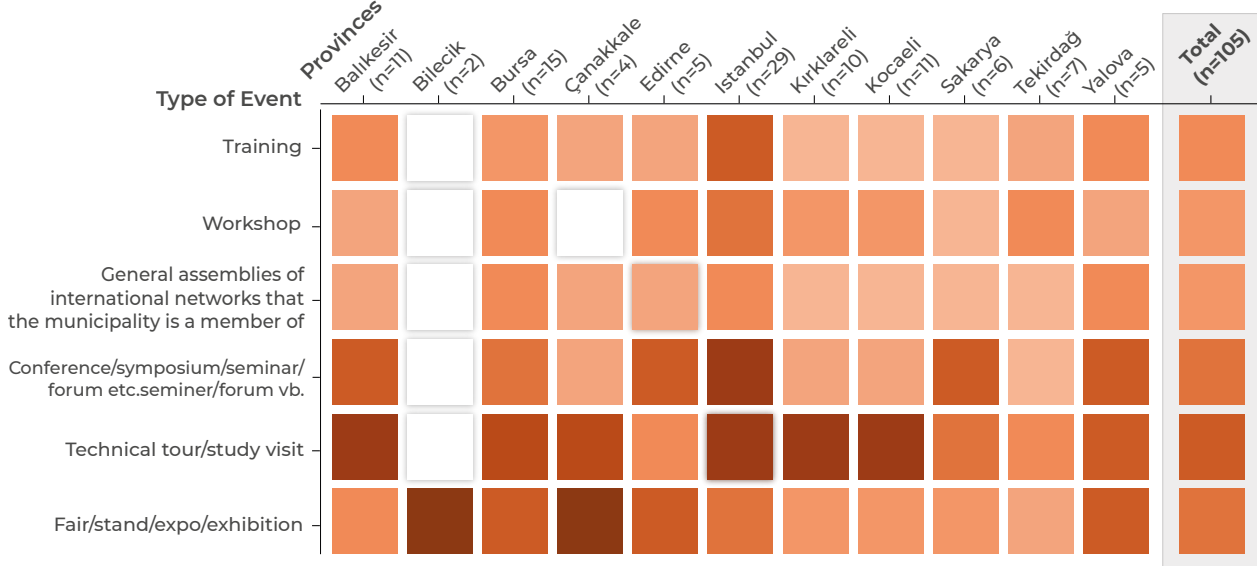
What types of international events does your municipality participate in?



When evaluated by province, the most common types of international events municipalities participated across all provinces were technical tours or study visits, conferences, symposiums, seminars, forums, and fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions. In Bilecik, the two responding municipalities stated they only participated in fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions. The types of events that the majority of 29 municipalities of Istanbul participated in were technical tour/study visits and conferences/symposiums/seminars/forums etc. with a rate of 83%. In Bursa's 15 municipalities, the most attended events were technical tours/study visits (73%) and fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions (67%). Similarly, in Kocaeli 64% of the 11 municipalities participated in the general assemblies of international networks, conferences, symposiums, seminars, forums, and fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions. In Balıkesir, 82% of 11 responding municipalities preferred technical tours/study visits, and 64% attended conferences/symposiums/seminars/forums. In Sakarya, participation in conferences/symposiums/seminars/forums (67%) and technical tours/study visits (50%) stood out. In Tekirdağ, both technical tours/study visits and workshop participation had equal rates (43%). In Kırklareli, 80% of 10 municipalities reported participating in technical tours or study visits, while 30% preferred fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions. Edirne's municipalities participated equally in conferences, symposiums, seminars, forums, and fairs, stands, expos, or exhibitions, each accounting for 60%. In Yalova, the leading event types were conferences, symposiums, seminars, forums (67%), technical tours or study visits (50%), and fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions (30%). In Çanakkale, three municipalities reported attending technical tours or study visits, and all participating municipalities confirmed their involvement in fairs/stands/expos/exhibitions.

Figure 110: Types of International Events Attended by Municipalities by Province

What types of international events does your municipality participate in?

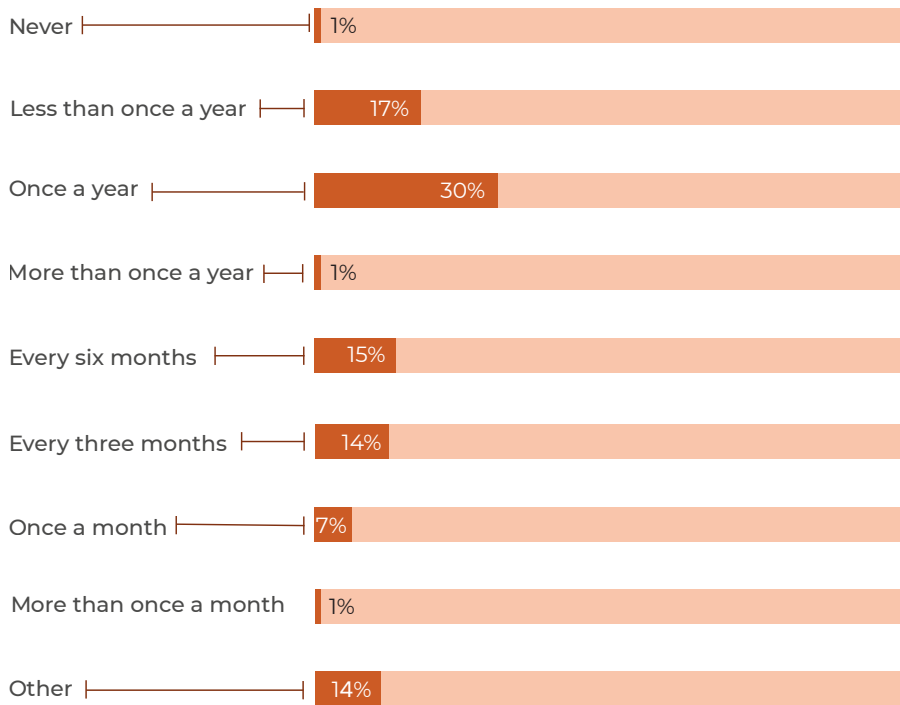


Frequency of Municipalities' Participation in International Events

While the frequency of municipalities' participation in international events varied, approximately 30% of municipalities stated they participated in such events once a year, while 17% participated less than once annually. Around 15% attended every six months, 14% participated quarterly, and 7% attended monthly. Additionally, one municipality reported attending more than once a year, another attended three to four times annually, and one municipality noted that it participated in international events more than once a month.

Figure 111: Frequency of Municipalities' Participation in International Events

How frequently does your municipality participate in international events?

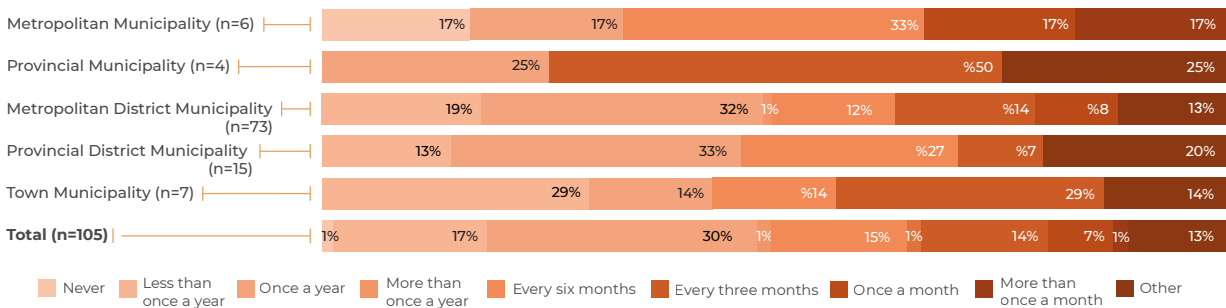


n = 105

When the frequency of participation in international events is analyzed by municipality type, metropolitan and metropolitan district municipalities demonstrated higher engagement compared to others. While 77% of metropolitan municipalities and 59% of metropolitan district municipalities selected once a year, once every three months, once every six months or more than once, 17% of metropolitan municipalities and 8% of metropolitan district municipalities stated that they participate in international events once a month. In comparison, 57% of town municipalities reported attending international events once a year or more, whereas 29% indicated participation less than once a year. Among metropolitan district municipalities, 19% selected the “less than once a year” option. The four provincial municipalities that responded to the survey stated they participated in international events once a year or more frequently. For provincial district municipalities, 13% attended less than once a year, while 67% participated once a year, once every six months, or once every three months.

Figure 112: Frequency of Municipalities' Participation in International Events by Type of Municipality

How frequently does your municipality participate in international events?



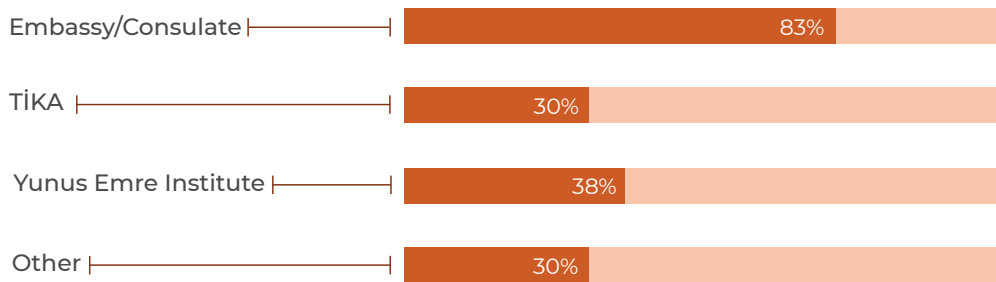
The frequency of participation in international events was noted to vary depending on periods and circumstances such as specific needs or financial constraints. Municipal representatives explained that project and event calendars significantly impacted their participation, with involvement increasing when municipalities were engaged in international projects. It was also noted that participation in international events was higher before the pandemic, whereas the post-pandemic period saw an increase in attendance at online events. Another critical factor influencing participation frequency was direct invitations extended to municipalities.

Visits Made by Municipalities During Overseas Assignments

Regarding visits conducted during overseas assignments, 60% of 105 municipalities that reported participating in international events also mentioned visiting Türkiye's overseas representations during these trips. Of these, 83% visited embassies and consulates, 38% visited the Yunus Emre Institute, and 30% visited the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA).

Figure 113: Institutions Visited by Municipalities During Overseas Assignments

Which of Türkiye's foreign representation offices do you visit during your overseas trips?



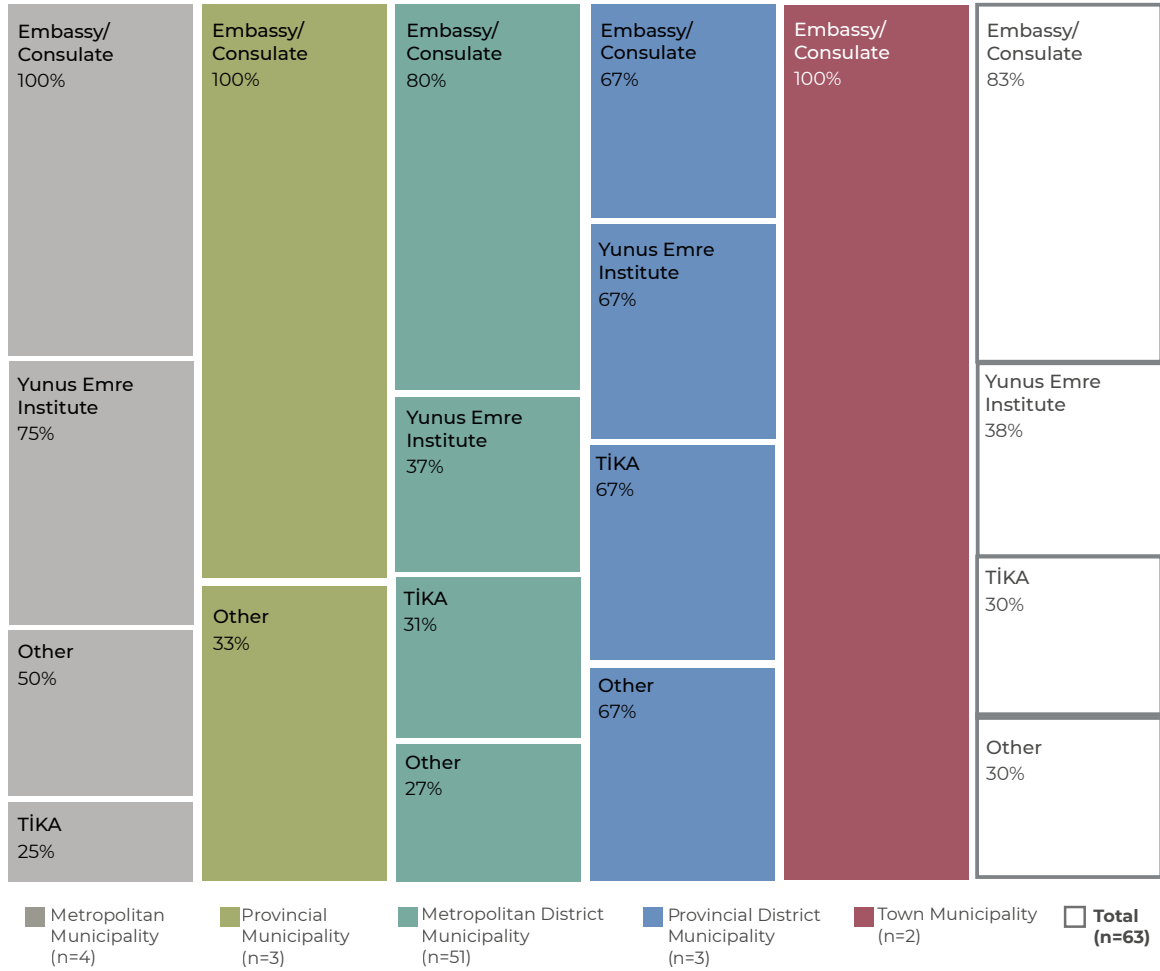
n = 63

Diplomatic missions were the most frequently visited institutions during overseas assignments across all municipality types. Notably, three provincial municipalities and two town municipalities exclusively visited Türkiye's diplomatic missions abroad, such as embassies and consulates.

19 municipalities selected the "other" option in the survey to share their additional perspectives. The institutions visited varied depending on the purpose of the assignment but frequently included civil society organizations established by Turkish people abroad and officials of Turkish descent. Istanbul, Bursa, and Kocaeli emerged as key provinces with municipalities actively visiting overseas missions.

Figure 114: Institutions Visited by Municipalities During Overseas Assignments by Type of Municipality

Which of Türkiye's foreign representation offices do you visit during your overseas trips?







RESEARCH FINDINGS

8. Municipalities' Awareness and Activities Regarding the Global Agendas

8. MUNICIPALITIES' AWARENESS AND ACTIVITIES REGARDING THE GLOBAL AGENDAS

Across different levels of governance, institutions—especially states—convene within international organizations to establish “global or regional agendas”. These policy frameworks help direct the future actions of both these networks and their individual institutions. Within networks like the UN and EU, where states are members, central governments play a pivotal role in shaping the content of these agendas. On the other hand, in organizations such as UCLG, which are focused on local and regional governments, local authorities themselves play a crucial role in shaping these agendas. The role of local governments in these agendas varies significantly. The concept of cities and urban governance as active players in international discussions is a relatively recent development. The fact that cities, due to both the problems they generate (such as damage to nature, inefficient resource use, and increased greenhouse gas emissions due to reasons like population density, urban lifestyles, and consumption habits) and their capacity for solutions (such as local authorities' ability to plan, create policies, implement urban transformation initiatives, and raise public awareness on consumption habits), has made them a significant player in sustainable development, leading to increased interest in urban governance on the international stage.

However, in agendas prepared by international organizations where central governments are the decision-makers, the direct role given to local governments is limited, and in some cases, unclear. Whether or not local governments are officially assigned a role, the importance of local governments in the realization of global agendas is emphasized in many studies. For example, the OECD's report titled “A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals” highlights that the realization of 105 of the 169 Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) sub-targets in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development depends on the involvement of local and regional authorities. Although the authority and responsibilities of local governments vary from country to country, even in cases where local governments are the weakest, it is frequently emphasized in various international platforms that there are still things local governments can do to achieve these agendas.

In this context, it is observed that local governments in different countries are proactively adopting these agendas and voluntarily shaping their policies and actions based on them. On the other hand, the limited number of research done on this subject has shown that some municipalities do not engage with these agendas and have low or no awareness of them. Studies measuring local governments' awareness of glob-

al agendas and their work often focus on a single framework. One example of a study focusing on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs is the “Localization of Sustainable Development Goals: The Case of the Marmara Region” report published by MMU in 2022.⁸⁵ The study, which was completed in 2021 through fieldwork in MMU member municipalities, focuses on the municipalities' awareness of the SDGs, their activities on the subject, and the collaborations they have established to achieve the SDGs. Additionally, UCLG conducts an annual survey measuring the SDG awareness and activities of its members and reports the results.

While these existing studies provide an opportunity to examine attitudes towards a specific agenda in-depth, they do not allow for comparisons across global agendas. To address this gap in the literature, the Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research surveyed municipalities to uncover the awareness of and efforts related to various agendas prepared by different institutions within the Marmara Region. The findings will be shared in the following two subsections.⁸⁶

Municipalities' Awareness About Global Agendas

The awareness of global agendas among MMU member municipalities was assessed through a single question: which international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements are municipalities familiar with. The question asking which international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements the municipalities were aware of gave the municipalities options to choose from six different policy documents.⁸⁷ Among the 187 municipalities that responded to the question, the most recognized global agenda was the Paris Agreement (63%). This was followed by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (54%) and the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (53%). The least recognized framework was the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (19%). Given that the Marmara Region is heavily impacted by various disasters, including earthquakes, it is surprising that only 19% of municipalities are aware of this framework, and this low recognition rate is worth addressing. Additionally, agendas such as Local Agenda 21, the European Youth Strategy, the Ramsar Convention, the European Green Deal, the Faro Convention, and the European Landscape Convention were included under the “other” option.

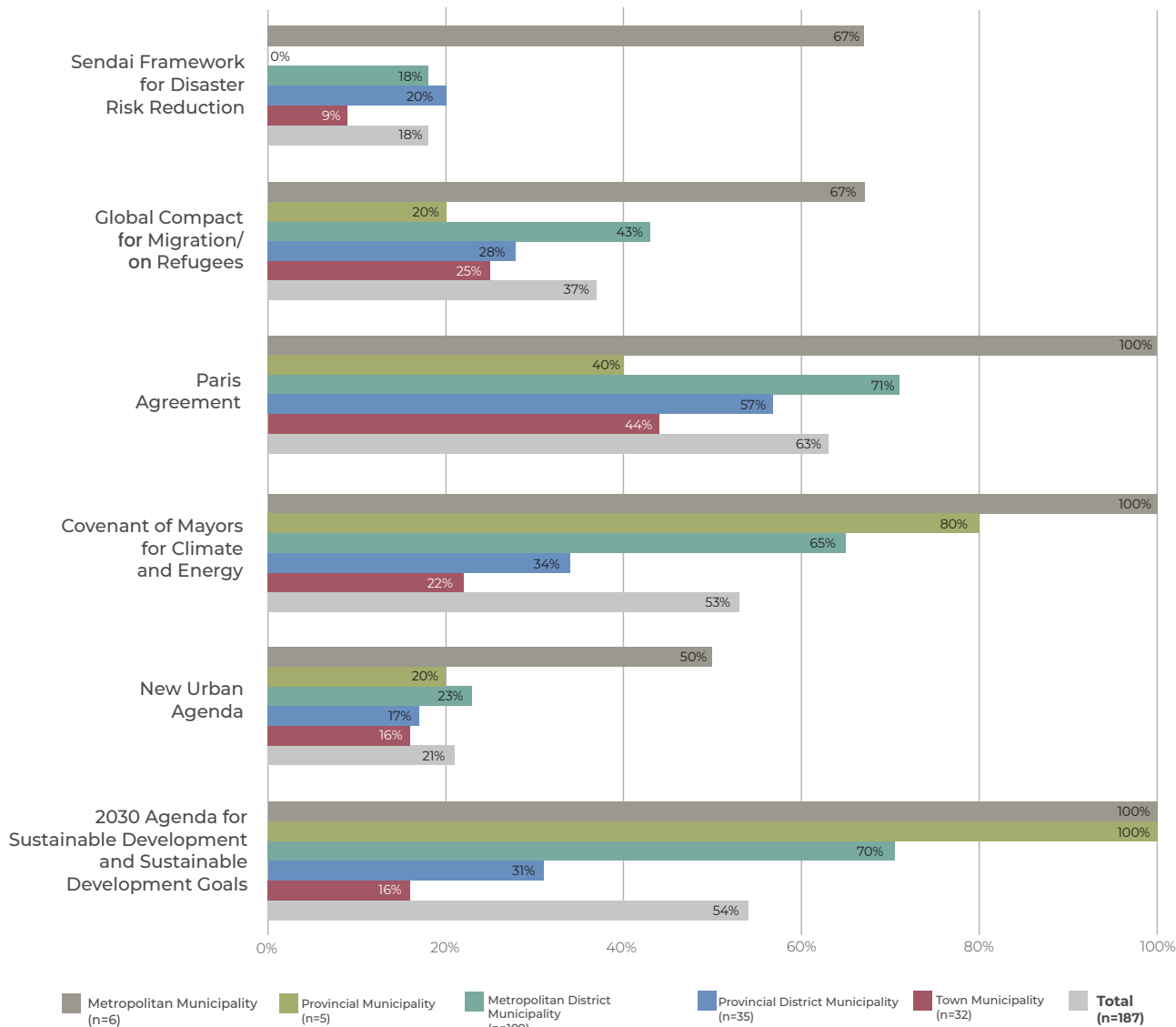
⁸⁵ E. Emre Kanaat et al., *Localization of Sustainable Development Goals: The Case of the Marmara Region*, edited by Burcuhan Şener, Istanbul: Marmara Municipalities Union Publications, 2022.

⁸⁶ The subsections of this chapter are taken from the article titled “Yerelde Küresel Gündemi Aramak: Marmara Bölgesi'nde Bir Araştırma” (Searching the Global Agenda Locally: A Study in the Marmara Region), written by Özge Sivrikaya, published in the 28th issue of *City & Society* journal. See Özge Sivrikaya, “Yerelde Küresel Gündemi Aramak: Marmara Bölgesi'nde Bir Araştırma” (Searching the Global Agenda Locally: A Study in the Marmara Region), *Şehir & Toplum: Küresel Gündem, Yerel Eylem* (City & Society: Global Agenda, Local Action), no 28, 2024.

⁸⁷ These are respectively: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, the Paris Agreement, the Global Compact for Migration/on Refugees, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Figure 115: Municipalities' Awareness About Global Agendas by Type of Municipality

As a municipality, which of the following international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements are you aware of?



When broken down by municipality type, the data reveals that all metropolitan municipalities and provincial municipalities are familiar with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These municipalities are followed by metropolitan district municipalities at 68%. However, awareness of the 2030 Agenda is notably low among town municipalities, where only 16% recognize it.

The New Urban Agenda, which focuses on cities, is known by fewer local governments than expected. Only 21% of the municipalities surveyed are aware of the agenda, with metropolitan municipalities aware of it the most (50%). Metropolitan district municipalities are second with 23%, and provincial municipalities are third with 20%. Only 16% of town municipalities expressed awareness of the agenda.

The Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy is fully recognized by all metropolitan municipalities. Provincial municipalities follow with 80% awareness, while town municipalities show the least awareness at just 22%.

The Paris Agreement, although primarily managed by central governments with significant roles assigned to them, stands as the most well-known framework among municipalities, at 63%. All metropolitan municipalities are familiar with the agreement, and metropolitan district municipalities also show high recognition at 71%. The lowest recognition rate is 40%, which belongs to provincial municipalities.

The Global Compact for Migration/on Refugees are known by fewer than half of the municipalities (37%). Given that Türkiye is one of the countries most affected by migration, this relatively low awareness rate is another unexpected finding. As with other frameworks, metropolitan municipalities have the highest awareness rate (67%) regarding these two frameworks. Metropolitan district municipalities are second with 43%. Only 20% of provincial municipalities reported awareness of both agendas.

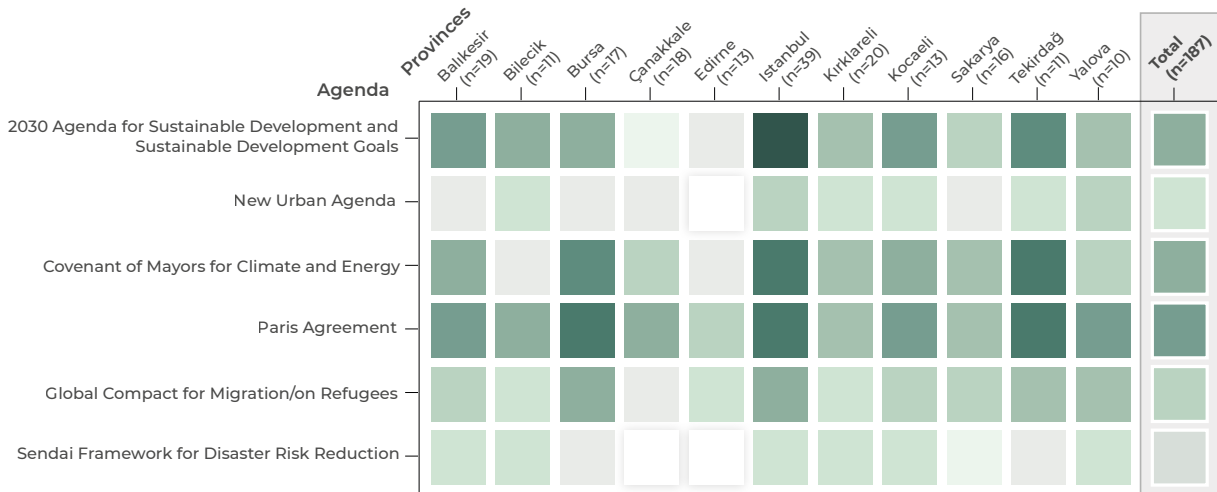
Lastly, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted by the UN in 2015, is known by the majority of metropolitan municipalities with 67%. The awareness rate falls dramatically in other municipal categories. Only 23% of provincial district municipalities expressed awareness of the framework, which still makes it the second-highest rate for this question. All provincial municipalities reported that they were unaware of this document.

When examining awareness of global agendas by province, it is revealed that the Paris Agreement is relatively well-known across all cities, while the New Urban Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction are less recognized. The province with the lowest awareness of the Paris Agreement is Edirne, where only 38% of municipalities reported being aware about it. This is followed by municipalities in Kırklareli at 40%, and Sakarya at 44%. In other provinces, more than half of the municipalities indicated they were aware of the agreement. The New Urban Agenda has the most awareness among municipalities in Istanbul at 33%, followed by Yalova at 30% in the second place, and Bilecik and Tekirdağ at 27% in the third place. In Edirne, no municipalities reported awareness of the New Urban Agenda. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction is one of the least recognized agendas across all provinces. Like the New Urban Agenda, Istanbul has the highest awareness of the Sendai Framework at 28%. In Çanakkale, no municipalities are aware of the Sendai Agenda, and municipalities' awareness in Sakarya, which experienced the 1999 earthquake, is very low at just 6%.

It is difficult to draw a general trend regarding other agendas as their awareness levels vary significantly across provinces. For instance, 90% of municipalities in Istanbul are aware of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, while only 6% of municipalities in Çanakkale know about it. A similar situation occurs with the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, where 82% of municipalities in Tekirdağ and Istanbul are aware of it, while the number drops to 15% in Edirne. Similarly, awareness of the Global Compact for Migration/on Refugees varies across provinces, but the differences are less pronounced compared to the 2030 Agenda/SDGs and the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy. The migration agenda has the most awareness among municipalities in Bursa at 59%, and has the least awareness in Çanakkale at 17%.

Figure 116: Municipalities' Awareness About Global Agendas by Province

As a municipality, which of the following international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements are you aware of?



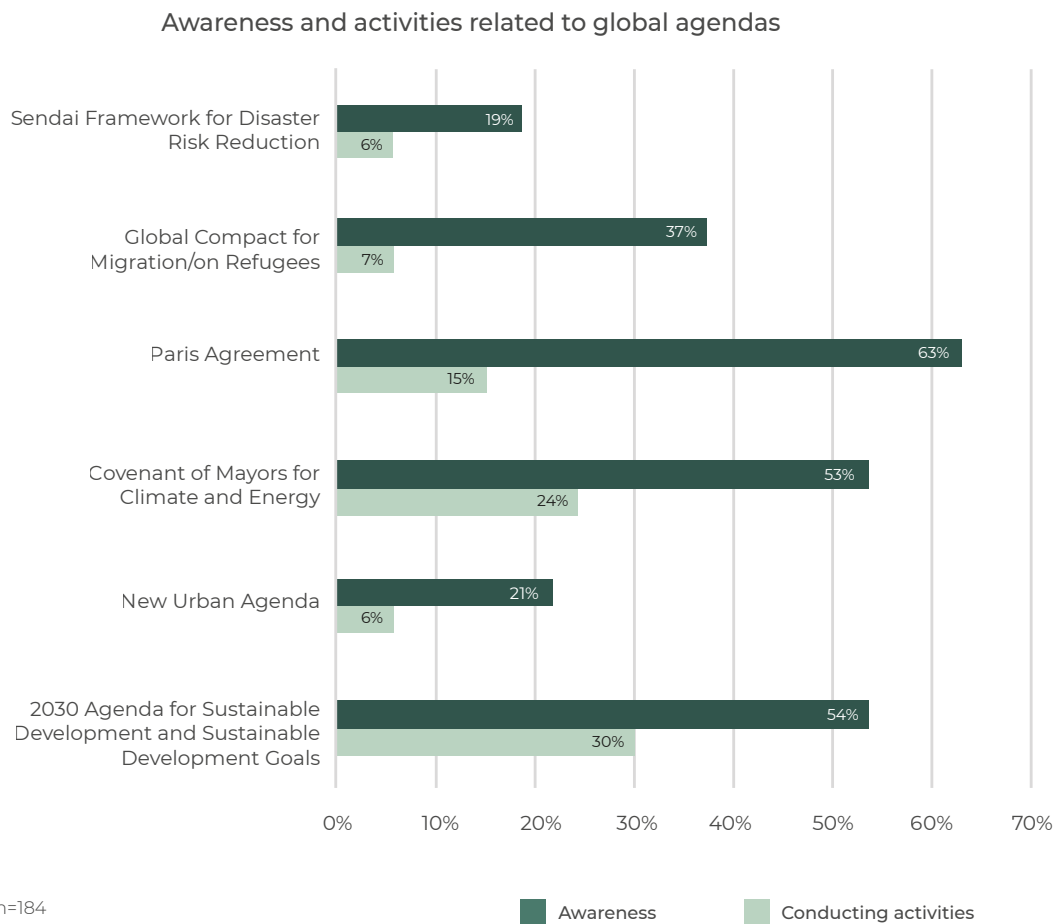
Activities of Municipalities Related to Global Agendas

Municipalities' activities related to global agendas were assessed through three questions. The first question aimed to understand which international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements municipalities were working on. This included activities such as integrating these frameworks into municipal policy documents, preparing reports on the agendas, and conducting awareness-raising activities. Among the various agendas, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda has been the most worked-on. However, even for this agenda only 30% of municipalities reported they were working on it. The percentages for other frameworks are as follows: 24% for the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, 14% for the Paris Agree-

ment, 6% for the Global Compact for Migration/on Refugees, 6% for the New Urban Agenda, and 6% for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. One municipality that chose the “other” option mentioned additional agendas, including the European Green Deal, the Faro Convention, and the European Landscape Convention.

Compared to the question regarding awareness, these figures are considerably lower. For example, while the awareness of the Paris Agreement reached as high as 63%, the most frequently selected option for activities was the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, with only 30% of responding municipalities indicating they were working on it. Furthermore, there is a significant drop from awareness to action for each agenda. This drop varies across agendas; for example, the difference between awareness and activity for the Paris Agreement is around 48%, while for the Sendai Framework, the difference is just 13%.

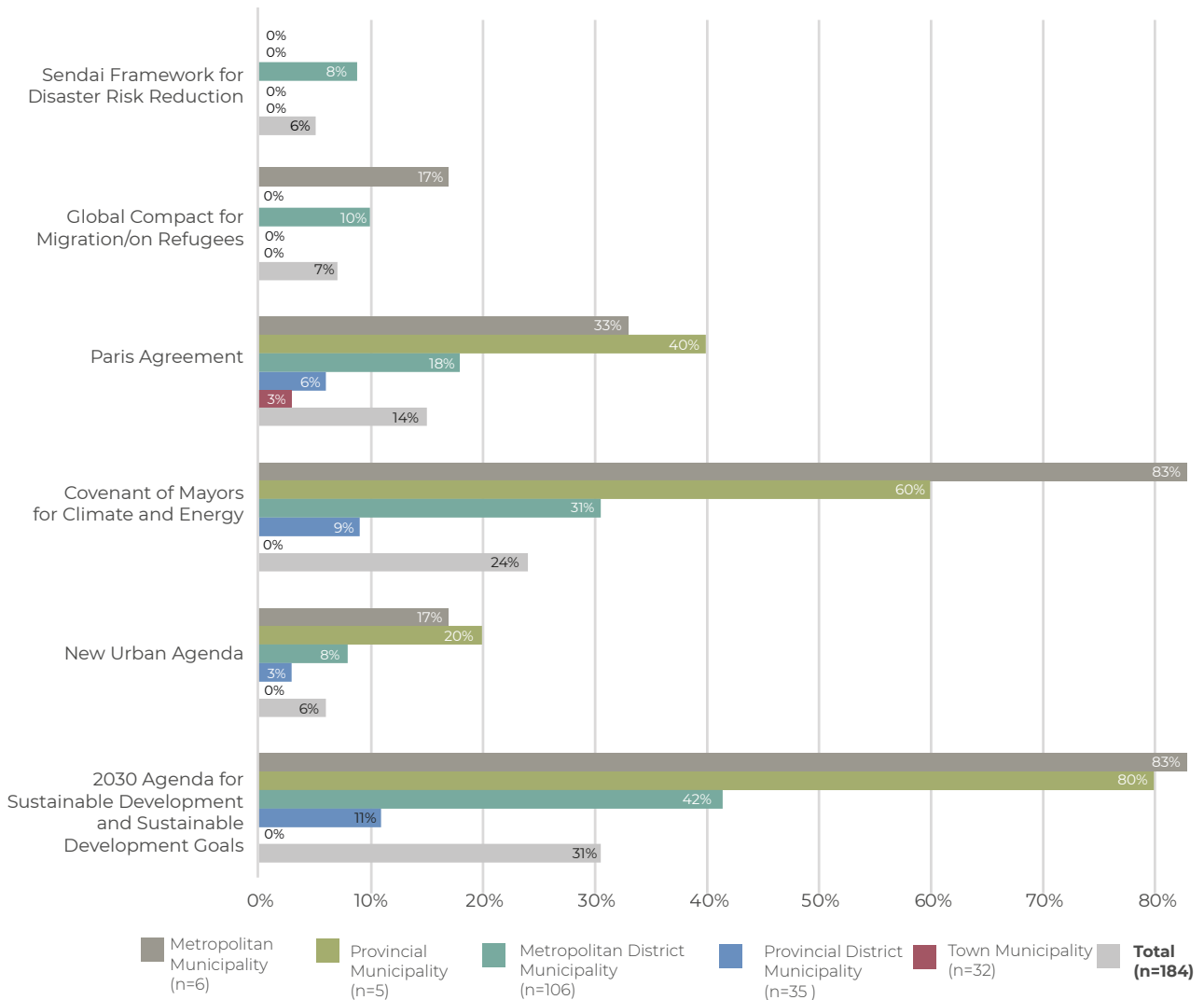
Figure 117: Municipalities' Awareness and Activities in Global Agendas



When looking at the activities related to global agendas by type of municipality, the highest percentage of municipalities working on the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda are metropolitan municipalities, with 83% of them involved. This is followed by provincial municipalities at 80%, metropolitan district municipalities at 40%, and provincial district municipalities at 11%. Town municipalities reported that they were not working on this agenda. The rate of municipalities working on the New Urban Agenda is quite low. The highest rate for this agenda is 20%, which is found in provincial municipalities, while the lowest rate, which represents municipalities not working on this agenda, belongs to town municipalities.

Figure 118: Municipalities' Activities Related to Global Agendas by Type of Municipality

As a municipality, which of the following international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements are you working on?



Regarding the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, 83% of metropolitan municipalities and 60% of provincial municipalities reported working on this agenda. After these two categories, the percentages drop significantly. 33% of metropolitan district municipalities and 6% of provincial district municipalities are engaged in this agenda. Town municipalities indicated that they are not working on this covenant.

The highest percentage of municipalities working on the Paris Agreement is in provincial municipalities at 40%. Metropolitan municipalities follow with 33%, and metropolitan district municipalities are in third place with 18%. As with other agendas, very few provincial district municipalities (9%) and town municipalities (3%) are working on this agenda. Regarding the Global Compacts for Migration/on Refugees, only metropolitan municipalities (17%) and metropolitan district municipalities (10%) are taking action. Finally, regarding the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, only metropolitan district municipalities (10%) reported working on this framework.

When examining the findings on which agendas municipalities are working on by province, it is observed that only in Balıkesir, İstanbul, and Tekirdağ, all of the global agendas listed in the options are being worked on. In the other 8 provinces, municipalities have not worked on at least one of the agendas. The only agenda that is being addressed in all provinces is the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda/SDGs. For other agendas, at least two provinces report no action.

Figure 119: Municipalities' Activities Related to Global Agendas by Province

As a municipality, which of the following international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements are you working on?



It is difficult to establish a general trend by province. There are variations in the agendas municipalities focus on across provinces. The 2030 Agenda/SDGs is the framework with most related activities in Istanbul (69%), while it is a relatively under-addressed agenda in Çanakkale (6%). Although there are differences across provinces, generally, the 2030 Agenda/SDGs and the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy are the agendas with most related activities in municipalities across different provinces. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Global Compact for Migration/on Refugees are among the least worked-on international frameworks across the provinces.

According to the responses to the third question, which aimed to understand the types of activities municipalities are conducting regarding these agendas, the most prominent type of activity, at 41%, is raising awareness among the local population about these agendas. Other popular responses include referring to global frameworks in international projects (24%) and setting goals related to the topics in these frameworks within action plans or preparing action plans/roadmaps related to these agendas (22%). Only 11% of municipalities reported preparing reports on these agendas. Four municipalities (2%) selected the “other” option and listed activities not mentioned in the options, such as referencing these agendas in the “Golden Ant” project,⁸⁸ including them in the municipality’s activity report, referencing them in reports sent to other institutions, and referring to them in project reports prepared within projects.

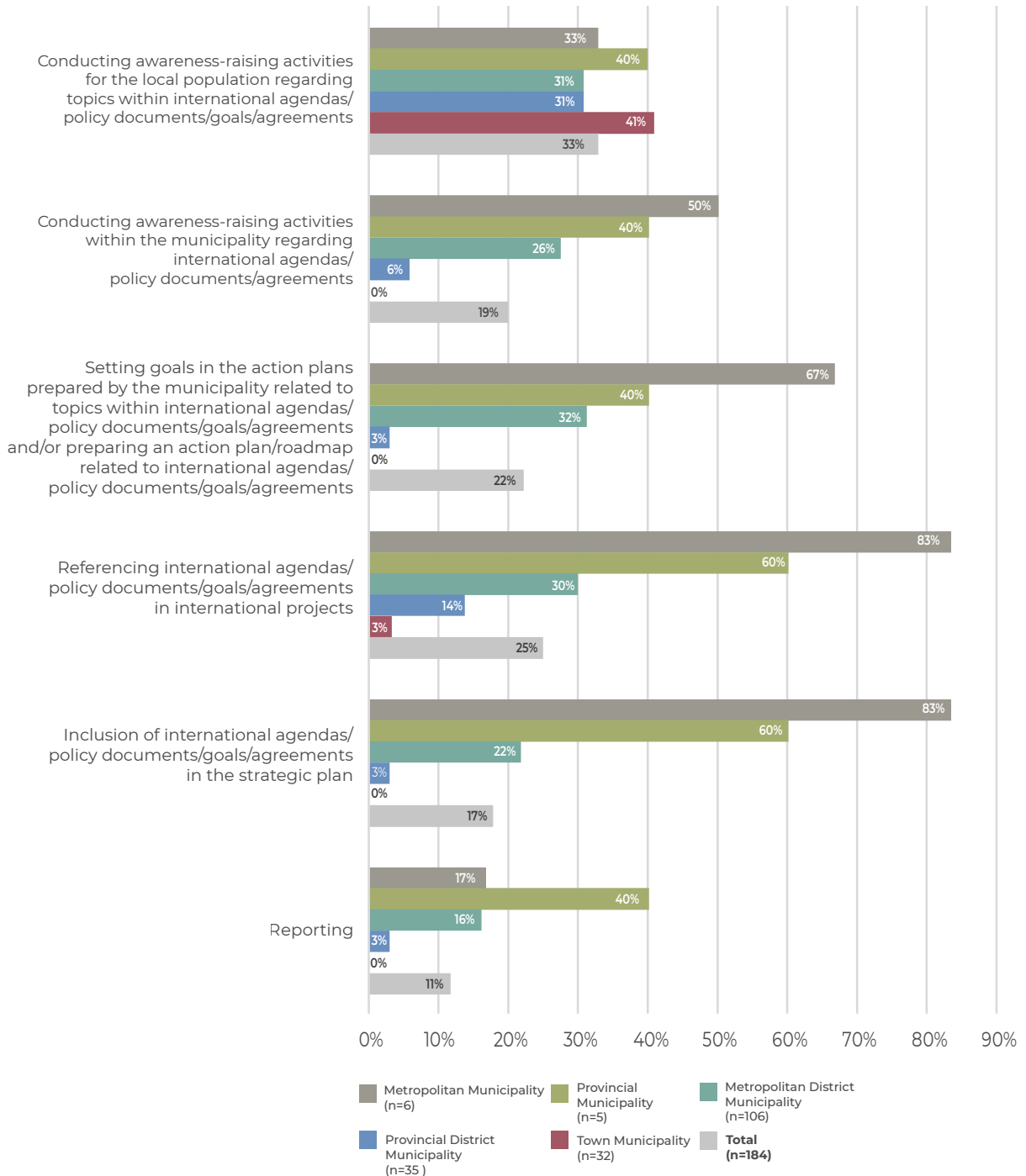
When examining the activities related to global agendas by municipality types, it is observed that metropolitan municipalities are more likely to set goals related to the topics of global agendas in action plans and prepare action plans for these agendas (67%), refer to these actions in international projects (67%), and include them in strategic plans (67%). Only 17% of these municipalities are engaged in reporting and awareness-raising activities for the local population regarding these agendas.

In provincial municipalities, the most common activities are referring to the frameworks in international projects (60%) and including these agendas in strategic plans (60%). The least focused activity in provincial municipalities is awareness-raising for the local population (20%).

⁸⁸The Golden Ant Awards are a mechanism through which MMU rewards good practices by local governments. During the application process for the awards, municipalities are expected to relate their practices to the SDGs. For more information, see “About”, Golden Ant, accessed October 28, 2024, <https://www.altinkarinca.com.tr/>.

Figure 120: Types of Activities Conducted by Municipalities Related to Global Agendas by Type of Municipality

What type of activities are you carrying out regarding these agendas/policy documents/goals/agreements?



Among metropolitan district municipalities, the top three most selected activities are raising awareness among the local population about the agendas (34%), setting goals related to global agendas in action plans and preparing action plans (31%), and referring to these agendas in international projects (30%). As with metropolitan municipalities, the least performed activity in metropolitan district municipalities is report preparation.

In provincial district municipalities, the most selected activity is raising awareness among the local population about international frameworks (54%). There is a significant decrease in the selection of other activities. The second most selected activity is referring to the agendas in international projects, chosen by only 11% of municipalities. The activities of reporting, including global frameworks in strategic plans, setting goals related to global frameworks in action plans, or preparing action plans related to these agendas are only selected by 3% of provincial district municipalities.

The situation in town municipalities is similar to provincial district municipalities. The most selected activity is raising awareness among the local population about global agendas (50%), followed by referring to these agendas in international projects (3%). Town municipalities reported that they do not engage in other activities. It should be noted that only municipalities with a population over 50,000 are required to prepare strategic plans in Türkiye. Therefore, it is expected that town municipalities with a population under 50,000 do not select the option of “including global agendas in strategic plans”.

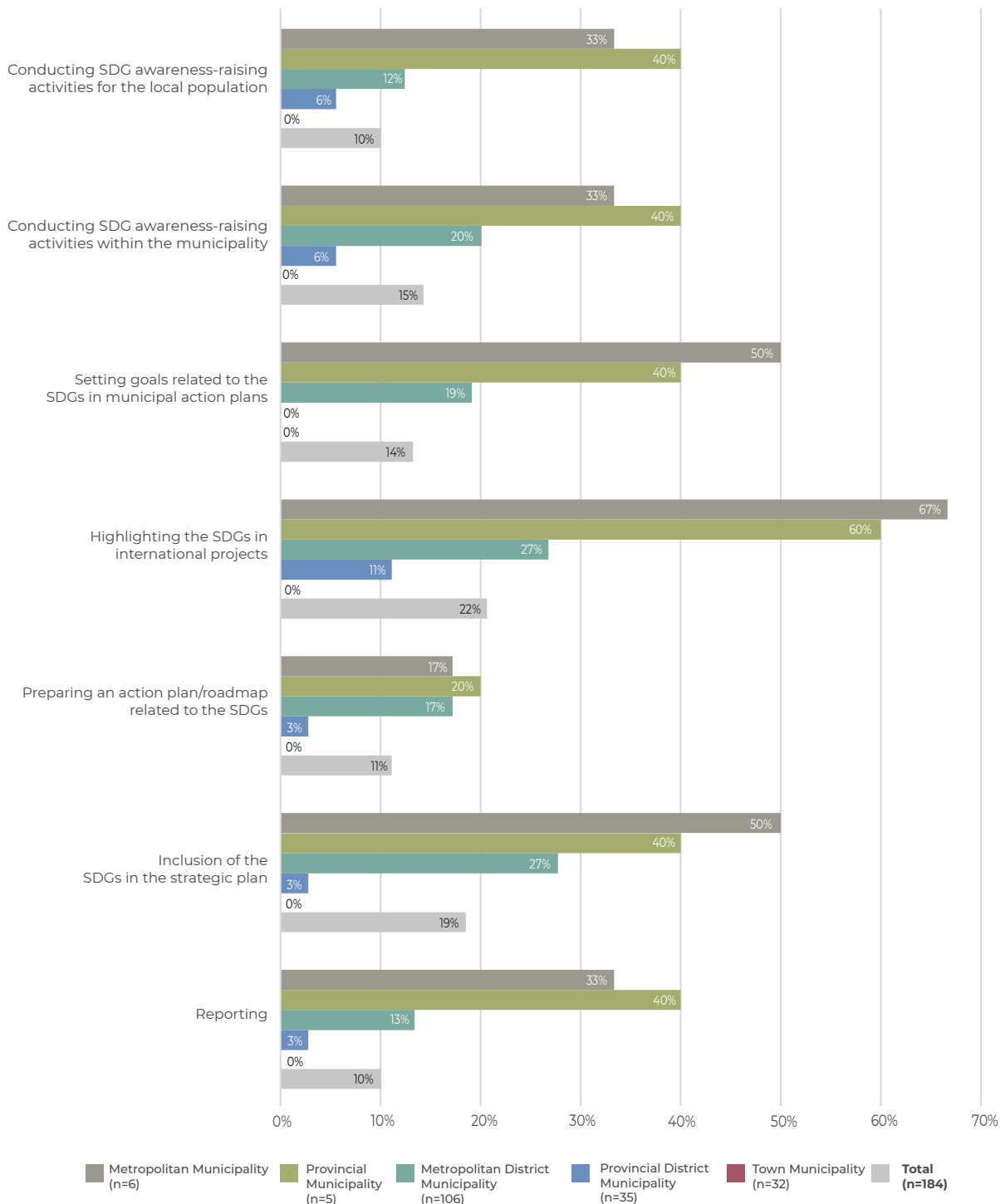
When examining the types of activities municipalities are conducting regarding global agendas by province, there is a clear geographic variation in the scope of these activities. For instance, referencing global agendas in international projects appears to be the only activity consistently performed across all provinces involved in the research, though the level of involvement varies. On the other hand, report writing is confined to municipalities in just six provinces.

The final question about the activities related to global agendas focused on the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. The most frequently mentioned activity among municipalities was highlighting the SDGs in international projects (21%). Incorporating the SDGs into strategic plans ranked second at 19%, while SDG awareness activities within municipalities came in third at 15%. The least focused activities among municipalities were reporting (10%) and local SDG awareness campaigns (10%). In addition, four municipalities selected the “other” option, emphasizing activities such as referencing global agendas while applying for the Golden Ant Awards, opening an SDG Cities office in Türkiye, referring to the SDGs in activity reports, referencing them in reports sent to other institutions, and measuring public awareness of the SDGs through surveys.

When examining the types of activities by municipality type, reporting is most common among provincial municipalities (40%). Town municipalities, however, do not engage in report preparation. The highest rates of incorporating SDGs into strategic plans are seen in metropolitan municipalities (50%) and provincial municipalities (40%). This rate is as low as 3% in provincial district municipalities and zero in town municipalities. Since the obligation to prepare strategic plans applies only to municipalities with a population of over 50,000 in Türkiye, it is expected that the rates in provincial district and town municipalities are lower. Preparing action plans/roadmaps for SDGs is a very low-priority activity across all municipal types, with the highest rate (20%) being seen in provincial municipalities. Highlighting the SDGs in international projects is most common in metropolitan municipalities (67%) and provincial municipalities (60%). The highest rate for setting SDG-related goals in municipal action plans is found in metropolitan municipalities (50%), while provincial district and town municipalities have not conducted any activities related to this issue. SDG awareness activities within municipalities are more common in provincial municipalities (40%). Finally, local awareness campaigns are more frequently carried out by provincial municipalities (40%). No town municipalities reported engaging in any of these activities.

Figure 121: Types of Activities Conducted by Municipalities Related to the SDGs by Type of Municipality

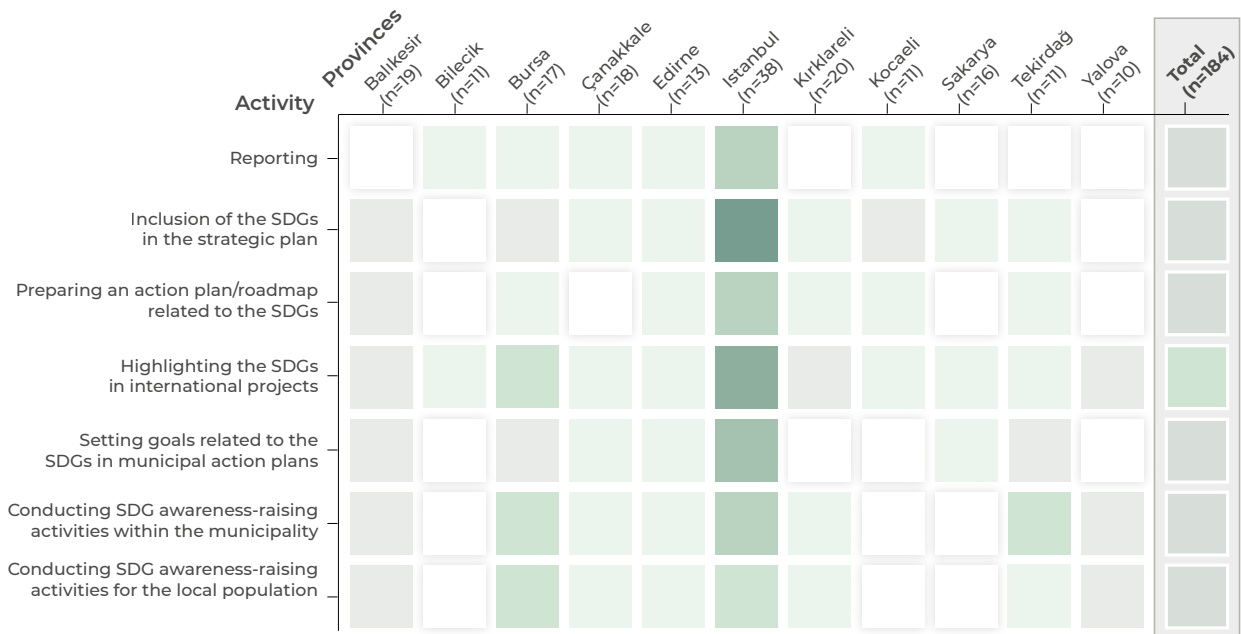
As a municipality, what type of activities are you carrying out regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?



When examining the activities related to SDGs by province, it is clear that all activities, except for local SDG awareness campaigns, are more widespread among municipalities in Istanbul than in other provinces. Outside of Istanbul, the rates drop significantly. In Balıkesir, Bursa, Edirne, Istanbul, and Tekirdağ, all activities are being conducted. However, in other provinces, at least one activity is not being carried out.

Figure 122: Types of Activities Conducted by Municipalities Related to the SDGs by Province

As a municipality, what type of activities are you carrying out regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?







CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION

Cities have developed relationships with foreign actors beyond their borders throughout different periods in history. Modern diplomacy, outlined by the Treaty of Westphalia, is not independent of this evolution. For a long time, the relationships that cities cultivated were not adequately considered or overlooked by both mainstream international relations literature and the institutions and public opinion shaping international politics. However, in recent years, due to factors such as the role of central governments in the rise of global issues, their insufficient action in resolving these problems, developments in information technologies, and the ease of communication brought by globalization, local governments have increased their engagement with foreign organizations. Simultaneously, international organizations have also started to recognize local governments as critical actors in solving global challenges and have begun involving them in policymaking and implementation processes.

Municipalities in Türkiye are also part of this trend, reflecting the increasing role and importance of cities in international relations. The first known contacts related to local diplomacy were established in the 1950s, and the initial legal frameworks started to be developed in the 1960s. Over time, municipalities have intensified their relations with foreign institutions, and new legal documents have been prepared to more clearly define the scope of local government diplomatic activities.

Parallel to these developments, there have been advancements in both the global and Turkish academic literature on local diplomacy. Academic studies in Türkiye and monitoring efforts related to local diplomacy have increased over the past decade. However, research on local diplomacy still covers only a small portion of studies dealing with the dynamics of international relations. Furthermore, most existing studies focus on one or a few municipalities or concentrate on only one aspect of local diplomacy, rather than addressing its holistic framework. Therefore, there is a need for comparative studies examining the foreign relations activities of municipalities at different scales and in various regions to better understand the diplomatic activities of local governments worldwide and in Türkiye.

In response to the gap in the literature, MMU conducted the “Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research” between December 2022 and January 2024. This research covered all of MMU’s member municipalities, including metropolitan, provincial, metropolitan district, provincial district, and town municipalities, and resulted in the report titled “Local Diplomacy Analysis of Marmara: Global Connections of Local Governments”. The report aims to shed light on the local diplomacy activities of municipalities in the Marmara Region, to highlight the similarities and differences between municipalities’ diplomatic efforts at various scales and in different provinces, and to provide guidance to local leaders and local diplomacy experts working in municipalities. The research also identifies obstacles and problems hindering a more effective execution of local diplomacy activities and shortcomings in local diplomacy. In the light of these findings, suggestions have been presented to institutions working at international, national and local levels for the development of local diplomacy activities of the municipalities in the region, so that they can utilize this information while determining their work. The conclusions and suggestions derived from the research are as follows:

- Local governments' efforts to develop foreign relations provide municipalities with numerous tangible benefits in the short, medium, and long term. These benefits include increased financial capacity, enhanced human resource and expertise capacity, improved institutionalization, and the dissemination of best practices. Through international grant programs, municipalities can implement projects addressing local problems with minimal or no use of their own resources. According to the research findings, over half of the municipalities that are members of international city networks have developed relationships with various institutions through these networks, engaged in knowledge and experience sharing, disseminated best practices, and increased their visibility both nationally and internationally. Considering the significant contributions that local diplomacy activities bring to municipalities and the broader city community, it is essential for municipalities to actively engage in this area. However, there are obstacles preventing municipalities from effectively pursuing activities in foreign relations. One of these obstacles is the lack of awareness within municipalities about the importance, benefits, and tools of local diplomacy. For instance, 53% of municipalities not affiliated with any international city network stated that they were unaware of such networks. Similarly, 34% of municipalities not participating in international events attributed their non-participation to a lack of information about these events. Therefore, awareness-raising activities targeting municipalities should be conducted, including publishing various materials on different aspects of local diplomacy, organizing informational and networking events, and implementing capacity-building activities. Additionally, platforms could be established to enable municipalities to follow global developments and events related to the international agenda.
- Another significant obstacle hindering municipalities' local diplomacy efforts is budget constraints. Foreign relations activities are often deprioritized in municipalities' financial planning or, even when prioritized, lack adequate financial resources for implementation. According to the research, 69% of respondents identified "budget constraints" as the primary challenge faced when conducting foreign relations activities. Budget constraints were also frequently cited in relation to various aspects of local diplomacy. For instance, 67% of municipalities not attending international events stated that they lacked financial resources to participate. Municipalities with international sister city partnerships listed budget constraints as one of the three most common challenges in establishing and maintaining these relationships. Enhancing municipalities' financial capacities can be achieved through various methods and collaborations with different types of organizations. There are periodically or continuously available programs offered by international organizations and central governments to financially support municipalities' foreign relations initiatives. One such example is the "ORTAK: German-Turkish Initiative to Promote Municipal Expert Dialogue", launched by Stiftung Mercator in 2022 to promote knowledge and experience sharing and collaboration between German and Turkish municipalities. This program aims to financially support development-oriented knowledge exchange processes between municipalities in Germany and their counterparts in Türkiye. Expanding programs

like this can strengthen municipalities' international partnerships and increase their presence on global platforms. Awareness-raising activities regarding existing programs could also be conducted to ensure municipalities are informed about these opportunities.

- Budget constraints also pose challenges in terms of “international assignments”. Within the research, 28% of municipalities identified “insufficient travel allowances for overseas travel” as an issue in their foreign relations activities, while 23% suggested the need for legislative amendments to increase these allowances. Due to limited financial resources, municipalities often deprioritize international assignments which are essential components of foreign relations activities. Especially during periods where austerity measures are taken, foreign relations activities, including international assignments and membership in international networks, are among the first to be scaled back. Economic crises on a global scale, national financial difficulties, and rising accommodation costs have further compounded the insufficient travel allowances for international assignments. Consequently, there is a need to revisit the regulations in the Law No. 6245 on Travel Allowance and reevaluate both the amounts and calculation methods for travel allowance payments to mayors and municipal staff participating in international assignments. In particular, the travel allowances for mayors attending international events often fall short due to increased costs arising from high demand in host cities and the need for accessible accommodations. This challenge is further exacerbated for municipal representatives accompanying the mayors, as their travel allowances are often limited based on their positions and ranks within the municipal hierarchy.
- Another critical challenge identified in various sections of the research is the inadequacy of human resources, encompassing both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Qualitative inadequacies include the lack of specialized personnel in relevant fields, language barriers, and lack of qualified graduates in related disciplines. Quantitatively, the insufficient number of personnel further compounds the issue. According to the research, the second most frequently reported problem in foreign relations (43%) was the “lack of personnel qualified or graduated from relevant departments in foreign relations”, followed by “insufficient staff numbers” (32%) and “language barriers” (29%). Similarly, during the establishment and maintenance of sister city relationships, “lack of qualified personnel” and “language barriers” were among the top three challenges. These recurring issues underline the need to reassess the regulations on staffing norms and standards within municipal foreign relations units and to prioritize the recruitment of multilingual personnel. Currently, the legal framework does not provide adequate positions for graduates in disciplines such as international relations, political science, or public administration within foreign relations units. To address this gap, it is essential to amend the Regulation on Staffing Norms, Standards, and Permanent Staffing Arrangements for Municipalities and Affiliated Organizations and Local Government Associations to include position titles specific to foreign relations.

- The problem of the inadequacy of human resources is particularly pronounced in town municipalities, which face severe challenges in recruiting qualified personnel. Limited budgets in these municipalities often result in a small workforce, with individual staff members tasked with multiple responsibilities. During the research process, many town representatives expressed this concern, noting that they lack experts who can focus on or dedicate time to local diplomacy efforts. While hiring new personnel may appear to be a solution, budget constraints frequently render this option unfeasible. Town municipalities thus require financial support to recruit qualified human resources. Additionally, programs facilitating knowledge and experience sharing or personnel exchange among municipalities could be established to support existing staff. Initiatives such as the MMU's "Mentor" Program could be expanded to more municipalities to foster such exchanges. Projects are another critical tool for providing financial and institutional capacity support to municipalities. Including budget items in project budgets to support the participation of municipal experts in international events and training programs within the thematic areas of the projects they are participating in could further enhance their expertise and capacities.
- In sections of the research aimed at uncovering municipalities' local diplomacy activities, notable differences were observed based on the type of municipality. Although there were some unique cases that varied across specific sections, it was generally found that metropolitan municipalities have established institutional structures for foreign relations and engaged more extensively in various aspects of international outreach. Conversely, municipalities of other types were found to require further development in institutionalization and their local diplomacy efforts across different dimensions. This need is particularly pronounced for town municipalities, of which only 3% have a dedicated foreign relations unit. These municipalities require the support of institutions that can help enhance their local diplomacy capacities. For instance, none of the town municipalities are part of any international city networks. In areas such as participation in international events, sister city relationships, and involvement in international projects, which are all key dimensions of local diplomacy, town municipalities are the most in need of support among all types of municipalities.
- The research also highlights provincial disparities in local diplomacy efforts. Municipalities in provinces with metropolitan municipalities, such as Istanbul, Kocaeli, and Bursa, tend to engage more actively in various dimensions of local diplomacy than those in provinces without metropolitan municipalities. These differences between metropolitan and provincial municipalities are particularly stark in certain areas. For instance, 85% of municipalities in Kocaeli are members of at least one international city network, compared to just 6% in Çanakkale. However, not all inter-provincial differences are this dramatic. One such area with a relatively smaller difference is the sister city relationships. For example, the proportion of municipalities with a sister city abroad is 82% in Istanbul, the highest rate, while Bursa has the lowest rate at 53%. These disparities suggest that capacity-building and awareness-raising

programs for municipalities should consider regional differences. For areas with smaller disparities, region-wide programs may suffice, but for areas with significant disparities, tailored initiatives addressing specific provincial needs would be more effective. For instance, while it would be more meaningful to design advanced training programs on project applications and management for municipalities in Istanbul, where 82% have international project experience, introductory programs emphasizing the importance of such projects may be more suitable for provinces with little or no project engagement.

- The differences in institutionalization and local diplomacy activities across municipalities and provinces can be attributed to various factors, including financial capacity, workforce size and qualifications, and the priorities set by municipal administrations. To identify the root causes of these disparities and develop solutions, targeted research is necessary. Based on the findings, capacity-building programs, awareness campaigns, networking activities, or legislative adjustments can be implemented to address identified needs.
- One of the most frequently used local diplomacy tools among local governments in the Marmara Region is sister city relationships. However, many of these relationships are not actively maintained. 60% of municipalities reported having sister cities with which they no longer communicate, and 22% indicated having terminated such relationships. The reasons for ending these ties include national foreign policy decisions, the passive nature of the relationships, and the initiatives of municipal administrations. One of the key features of sister city relationships is their potential to serve as tools for peacebuilding between countries during crises at the national level. When there is a national conflict between countries, maintaining communication and relationships between cities becomes crucial. Considering the significant role that local diplomacy and sister city connections can play in resolving inter-country disputes, it is advisable not to terminate these relationships abruptly. Instead, ensuring their continuity over the long term and seeking guidance from relevant central government authorities can be more beneficial in fostering peace and stability.
- Enhancing the visibility of municipalities' activities on an international scale is crucial for developing international collaborations and accessing financial resources. Research indicates that participation in international events and inclusion in international networks play a key role in achieving this visibility. Among municipalities involved in international networks, 58% reported that these networks contributed to increasing their international visibility. The frequency of municipalities participating in international events and joining international networks fluctuates periodically, often linked to financial obligations. For municipalities with significant budget constraints, international city networks should consider adopting alternative membership fee systems that require lower fees. Additionally, international organizations could establish tailored pricing policies for municipalities with limited budgets for their paid events. It should be noted that financial support is also available for joining internatio-

nal networks and attending networking events organized as part of projects. For instance, TÜBİTAK's "Support Program for Membership in Networks" serves as an example. Local government associations and relevant institutions can carry out informational campaigns about existing support programs aiming at municipalities and engage in advocacy to expand such initiatives. To support local diplomacy and international cooperation, international organizations, diplomatic missions, and funding institutions should create special support programs aimed at facilitating the participation of smaller municipalities in international events and programs and their membership in international networks. Another factor influencing the frequency of participation in international events is the projects in which municipalities are involved. Municipalities often attend international events associated with the projects they are implementing, but this participation decreases once the municipalities conclude the projects. To sustain the collaboration and dialogue established during projects, mechanisms to ensure continuity should be incorporated into project designs. Furthermore, municipalities should engage in various activities to enhance their international visibility. In this regard, it is essential for municipalities to establish relationships with international organizations with representation in Türkiye, such as UNHCR, UNFPA, UNDP, ILO, and IOM, and international city networks to communicate their work and foster partnerships.

- Among the types of international events municipalities attend, those organized within the framework of international projects rank among the top three. In this context, encouraging concrete and sustainable partnerships at the local level and supporting municipalities' capacity for project development are crucial for leveraging external resources, following global agendas, and sharing best practices.
- Technical visits emerge as the most attended type of event at all types of municipalities and across all provinces. Additionally, 35% of municipalities that are members of international networks reported participating in study visits organized by these networks. International study visits contribute significantly to disseminating best practices globally by enabling on-site observations and facilitating knowledge and experience sharing. These visits also enhance the vision of representatives working in foreign relations units and expose them to diverse practices and urban planning examples, providing valuable insights for urban development. However, observations by MMU reveal that funding bodies and international organizations often express concerns about the impact assessment of technical tours programs, leading to hesitation in organizing such tours or incorporating them into project activities. Therefore, creating well-structured technical tour programs enriched with pre- and post-visit sessions, follow-up mechanisms, and reporting frameworks is essential for maximizing program benefits, ensuring the sustainability of relationships, and measuring their impact. Technical visit programs that also offer networking opportunities pave the way for developing collaborations even after the events conclude.

- Among the institutions visited during international assignments by municipalities, Türkiye's diplomatic missions abroad rank first. Therefore, Türkiye's foreign missions can potentially facilitate concrete collaborations between municipalities in Türkiye and those in the host countries where international missions are located.
- Reciprocal visits have been identified as the most frequently mentioned activity across all types of municipalities and provinces within the scope of sister city partnerships. Among the expected contributions of sister city relationships, cultural and economic benefits achieved through joint projects are paramount. The initiative of the mayor or deputy mayor plays a significant role as the primary motivation for establishing sister city relations. However, "project partnerships", which rank third as a motivation at 29%, and "developing social projects", cited by 55% of municipalities as a reason for establishing sister city relations, appear to have limited impact on these partnerships. Additionally, some sister city relationships remain only on paper over time. To ensure these relationships are effective and productive, municipalities must emphasize technical collaborations and project-based partnerships alongside cultural exchanges. Municipalities should prioritize this issue, and institutions that support capacity development for municipalities at international, national, and local levels should also provide assistance.
- When evaluating the reasons for establishing sister city relationships thematically, cultural proximity emerges as the primary factor, cited by 73% of municipalities. Indeed, an analysis of sister cities in Türkiye reveals that numerous municipalities have established relationships with those in the Balkan region. It is crucial that these relationships progress as mutually beneficial partnerships. Moreover, insufficient knowledge about the cities planned for establishing sister city partnerships reduces the potential benefits of these relationships. To ensure the sustainability of sister city relationships and to support mutual learning processes, municipalities need assistance in selecting sister cities that align with their scale, local characteristics, and ongoing activities. Municipalities should review the compatibility of their existing and planned sister city partnerships, while national and international networks should provide proper guidance to local governments.
- During interviews, municipal representatives noted that the frequency of communication with sister cities varies depending on the bilateral relations established by the mayors and that changes in administration sometimes negatively affect these relationships. Institutionalization and the creation of institutional memory are critical for the continuity of sister city relationships. To prevent disruptions of relationships, holding discussions with the sister city's mayor and administrative teams during election cycles and administrative transitions is essential to maintain the sustainability of these partnerships.

- A notable gap exists between municipalities' awareness of global agendas and their level of conducting activities. For instance, the disparity is particularly evident regarding the Paris Agreement. While awareness is a critical first step, it alone is insufficient to drive action. Thus, the reasons why municipalities with awareness of global agendas are not actively working on these issues should be examined, and improvement efforts tailored to their needs should be implemented.
- The least conducted activity regarding global agendas has been reporting. Only 11% of municipalities stated that they had made an effort to prepare reports on global agendas. Similarly, in the 2022 report by the MMU titled "Localization of Sustainable Development Goals: The Case of the Marmara Region", only 3% of surveyed municipalities indicated that they had prepared reports on the Sustainable Development Goals, one of the agendas that have the most awareness among municipalities. While the Marmara Region Local Diplomacy Research included questions about multiple global agendas rather than focusing on a single one, the number of municipalities that prepared reports on these agendas remained limited. Yet, reports play a vital role in shaping local government policies during the process of building sustainable communities. While the reluctance of municipalities to engage in report preparation may stem from lack of awareness, factors such as insufficient institutional capacity, or challenges in data collection may also be possible reasons. Each of these challenges should be examined, potential improvements explored, and recommendations to overcome these obstacles should be provided to municipalities. Furthermore, awareness-raising events and training sessions should be organized to emphasize the importance of data and inform municipalities about various data sources they can utilize. Various public institutions, academic organizations, civil society organizations, international bodies, and private sector entities collect data related to cities. Municipalities facing difficulties in data collection processes due to limited capacity can obtain data for missing indicators from these entities after ensuring the reliability of the sources. To facilitate this, municipalities can identify institutions producing data for their regions and develop collaborations.
- Border municipalities in Türkiye's Marmara Region demonstrate remarkable engagement in local diplomacy. Of the 33 municipalities along the western border, 61% have international sister cities. Furthermore, municipalities in the border provinces of Edirne and Kırklareli are more active in international projects than those in larger metropolitan areas like Sakarya, Kocaeli and Balıkesir. Having sister cities appears to enhance border municipalities' awareness of EU projects and eases their efforts in finding international partners. The role of being in a border region as a determinant of effectiveness in local diplomacy should be further investigated. The relationship between being a border municipality and conducting foreign relations activities warrants more detailed examination as well.

- The theme of “environment and climate change” stands out across various international collaborations. Among municipalities involved in international projects, 61% of these projects focus on the theme of environment and climate change. Similarly, 36% of municipalities reported engaging in collaborations on this theme through protocols and cooperation agreements. In terms of collaborations with international city networks, the most prominent theme, at 51%, was also environment and climate change. Additionally, it appears that municipalities are more aware of global agendas related to these topics. The significant prominence of the environment and climate change theme indicates a broad consensus among municipalities regarding its importance, with many prioritizing it as a key focus area. It can also be said that awareness-raising efforts by institutions at international, national, and local levels regarding this theme have resonated with municipalities. Similarly, awareness campaigns should be conducted on other global issues affecting the region, such as migration and disasters, to encourage municipalities to embrace these themes as well.
- The research revealed that while some municipalities have established relationships with international institutions in various forms, they often fail to maintain these relationships effectively. Among municipalities with sister cities abroad, 60% stated that they are not in contact with at least one of their sister cities. Additionally, 16% of municipalities that are members of city networks reported not participating in the activities of those networks. Furthermore, 36% of municipalities that established relationships through cooperation protocols with international institutions or organizations highlighted that their agreements remained merely on paper, identifying this as a problem. Considering these findings, it is evident that some of the international connections and collaborations established by municipalities have transformed into passive relationships. Beyond initiating contact with international institutions, ensuring the continuity of these relationships and turning them into mutually beneficial collaboration models is equally important. City networks should directly communicate with members who do not participate in activities and investigate the reasons for the lack of active participation. Municipalities should also reassess their existing connections and adopt a proactive approach to revitalize relationships with networks they perceive as potentially beneficial. Moreover, organizations that aim to strengthen municipalities’ capacities, particularly local government associations, should inform municipalities about support mechanisms, such as the ORTAK Program and networking events, that can help revive these relationships.
- The preference and use of different local diplomacy tools can vary depending on the type of municipality. In metropolitan municipalities within the Marmara Region, there are no significant differences in the use of various local diplomacy tools during foreign relations activities, and most of these tools are utilized based on needs. All of these municipalities have participated in at least one international project and attend international events. 5 out of 6 metropolitan municipalities in the region are members of at least one international network, have at least one sister city abroad, and establish international cooperation through protocols. However, this changes as the type of municipality becomes smaller.

In provincial municipalities, engagement with international networks stands out. All municipalities of this type are members of international networks. 4 out of 5 provincial municipalities have utilized international projects and events as local diplomacy tools. Sister city relationships, the most commonly focused local diplomacy tool for most municipality types, are relatively less popular in provincial municipalities. Only three provincial municipalities reported having sister cities abroad. Relationships established through protocols are the least utilized foreign relations tool among this group, with only two municipalities using them. In metropolitan district municipalities, there is a relatively balanced distribution. Sister city relationships are the most prominent local diplomacy tool in this category. Among the participating metropolitan district municipalities, 68% have at least one sister city abroad. Participation in international events follows at 67%, membership in international networks at 50%, and involvement in international projects at 49%. Similar to provincial municipalities, the number of municipalities in this category developing foreign relations through cooperation protocols is low. Only 27% of metropolitan district municipalities focused on this tool for local diplomacy. Similarly, in provincial district municipalities, sister city relationships stand out with a 66% prevalence. The use of other local diplomacy tools is significantly lower. In this group, 43% reported attending international events, 31% were involved in international projects, and only 9% were members of international networks or established cooperation protocols with international institutions. Finally, in towns, the establishing of sister city relationships is the primary local diplomacy tool, with more than half (53%) of municipalities focusing on it. Interest in other local diplomacy tools is relatively low. While 31% of town municipalities have participated in international projects, only 16% have entered into cooperation protocols, and 22% have attended international events. None of the town municipalities are members of international city networks. Considering the variations in the use of local diplomacy tools across different municipality types, raising awareness and conducting capacity-building activities for underutilized local diplomacy tools at each type of municipality is essential.

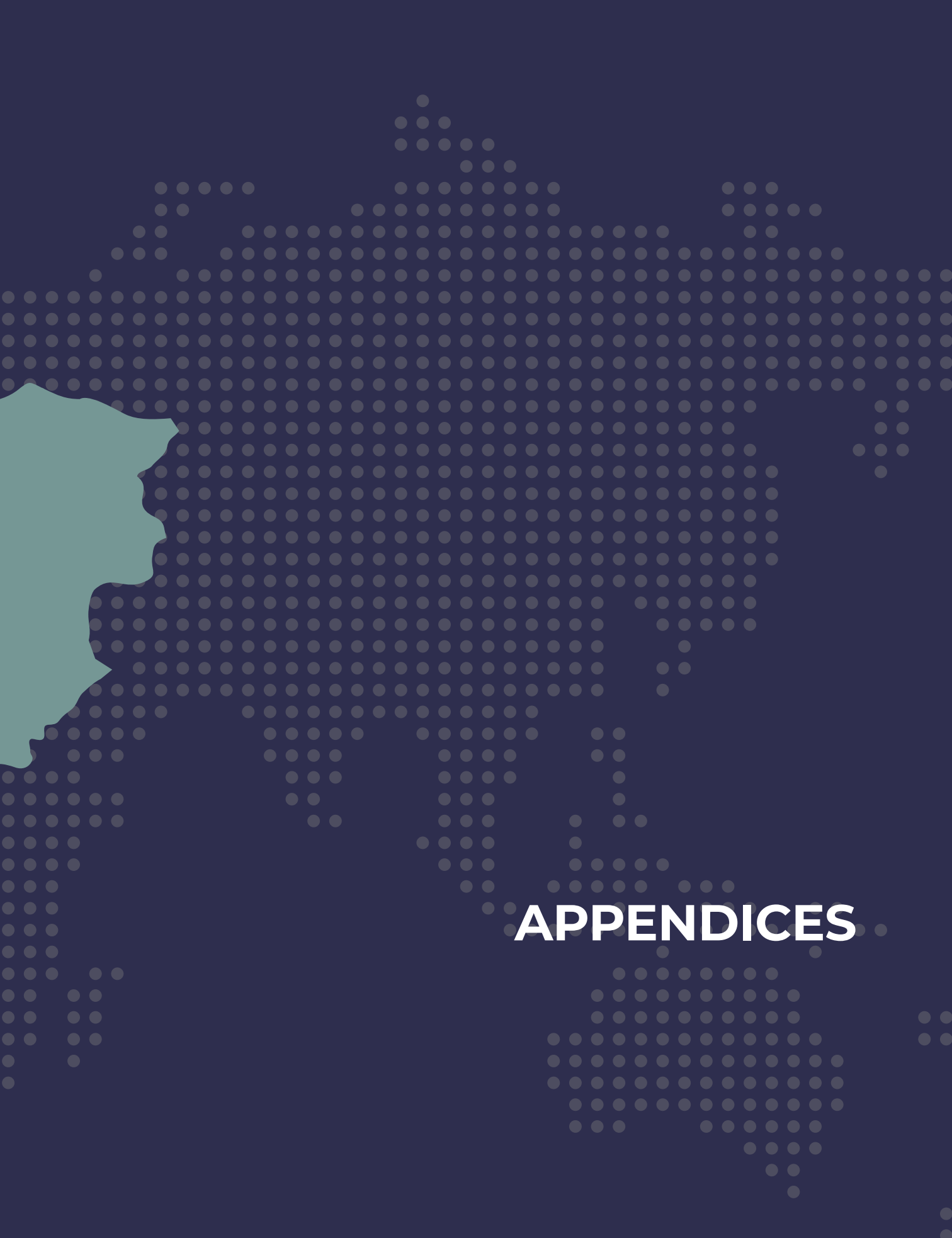
- Local diplomacy tools show varying levels of prominence across provinces.
 - In Balıkesir, forming sister city relationships emerged as the most prominent local diplomacy tool, with a rate of 68%. More than half of the municipalities in this province (58%) stated that they participated in international events. However, the rates for other local diplomacy tools are considerably lower. Only 28% of municipalities in Balıkesir are members of international networks, 21% are involved in international projects, and 11% have established cooperation through protocols.
 - In Bilecik, the only local diplomacy activity conducted by more than half of the municipalities (55%) is developing sister city relationships. Other local diplomacy tools are not widely used in this province. Only 18% of municipalities reported participating in international events, 9% stated they were members of international networks, and 9% indicated they established cooperation through protocols. Notably, no municipality in Bilecik has participated in international projects.

- In Bursa, over half of the municipalities reported activities related to local diplomacy tools except cooperation established through protocols. Participation in international events stands out in Bursa with a rate of 88%, followed by forming sister city relationships, membership in international networks, and involvement in international projects, each with a rate of 53%. The rate of municipalities establishing cooperation through protocols with foreign institutions is 41%.
- In Çanakkale, as in Bilecik, sister city relationships are the only local diplomacy tool focused on by more than half of the municipalities (61%). The rates for other tools are significantly lower. Here, 22% of municipalities participated in international events, 17% were involved in international projects, and only 6% reported membership in international networks. Additionally, no municipality in Çanakkale has signed international cooperation protocols.
- Similarly, in Edirne, forming sister city relationships stands out with a rate of 54%. Participation in international projects and international events share second place, each with a rate of 38%, followed by establishing cooperation through protocols, which is reported by 15% of municipalities. In Edirne, only 8% of municipalities reported being members of an international city network.
- In Istanbul, at least 69% of municipalities engage with all local diplomacy tools except cooperation protocols. Among the tools utilized in Istanbul, sister city relationships and international projects stand out at 82%, followed by participation in international events at 74%. Membership in international city networks ranks fourth at 69%. As in most provinces, the percentage of municipalities establishing ties through cooperation agreements is relatively low at 46%. However, while these agreements remain the least utilized tool, they are employed at a comparatively higher rate in Istanbul than in other provinces.
- In Kırklareli, the level of interest in local diplomacy tools varies significantly. The highest rate is recorded for international project participation at 75%, while membership in networks remains low at around 10%. Developing sister city relationships (65%) and participation in international events (50%) are the two relatively common local diplomacy tools, with at least half of the municipalities in this province focusing on them. Cooperation agreements, though more prevalent than network memberships, are still less frequently utilized, with 30% of municipalities employing this tool.
- In Kocaeli, membership in international city networks and participation in international events lead at 85%, followed by sister city relationships at 75%. Cooperation agreements (36%) and involvement in international projects (27%) receive comparatively less attention among municipalities in this province.

- In Sakarya, municipal interest in local diplomacy tools is generally lower compared to other metropolitan areas. Sister city relationships rank first at 56%, followed by participation in international events (38%) and membership in international networks (31%). Additionally, 25% of municipalities reported involvement in international projects, while only 13% indicated establishing international relations through cooperation agreements.
- In Tekirdağ, participation in international events ranks first at 64%, followed by sister city relationships and involvement in international projects, both at 55%. Beyond these tools, the engagement significantly decreases. Only 18% of municipalities in Tekirdağ are members of an international city network, and 9% conduct local diplomacy activities through cooperation agreements.
- Lastly, in Yalova, sister city relationships (60%) and participation in international events (50%) stand out as the leading local diplomacy tools. Membership in international city networks (30%), involvement in international projects (20%), and developing cooperation protocols (10%) are relatively less prioritized local diplomacy tools in this province.

Looking at the overall picture, sister city relationships emerge as the most frequently utilized method compared to other local diplomacy tools. However, preferences for local diplomacy tools vary by province. Therefore, just as with approaches based on municipality type, efforts to raise awareness and develop capacity for less utilized local diplomacy tools at the provincial level are essential.





APPENDICES

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERNATIONAL CITY NETWORKS

List of International City Networks Surveyed Municipalities Are Members Of*

Official Name of the Network	Abbreviation	Number of Members Among MMU Member Municipalities
Asian Mayors Forum	AMF	2
Association of Cities and Regions for Sustainable Resource Management	ACR+	1
B40 Balkan Cities Network	B40	1
C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group	C40	1
CIVITAS Community	CIVITAS	1
Cities for Mobility	-	1
Cittaslow International	Cittaslow	2
Climate Alliance	-	0
Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy Europe	CoM	12
Energy Cities	-	3
EU Innovation Network	EU-IN	1
Eurocities	-	7
European Association for Local Democracy	ALDA	1
European Association of Service providers for Persons with Disabilities	EASPD	1
European Capitals and Cities of Sport Federation	ACES Europe	1
European Circular Cities Declaration	ECCD	1
European Cities Against Drugs	ECAD	1
European Coalition of Cities against Racism	ECCAR	2
European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Urban Mobility	EIT Urban Mobility	2
European Network of Living Labs	ENoLL	1
European Social Network	ESN	1
European Stork Villages Network	-	1

*The list is based on the statements of the municipalities that responded to the survey, no additional research was conducted. We would like to thank Aylin Zaman for her contribution to the preparation of the list.

Official Name of the Network	Abbreviation	Number of Members Among MMU Member Municipalities
Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy	GCoM	2
Global Sustainable Tourism Council	GSTC	1
ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability	ICLEI	5
Intercultural Cities Programme (Council of Europe)	ICC	1
International Agricultural Cities Union	AGRICITIES	5
International Black Sea Club	IBSC	1
International Committee for Historic House Museums (ICOM) DEMHIST	DEMHIST	1
International Observatory on Participatory Democracy	IOPD	1
Lighting Urban Community International	LUCI	1
Making Cities Resilient 2030 (UNDRR)	MCR2030	2
Mayors for Peace	-	1
Metropolis	-	2
Milan Urban Food Policy Pact	MUFPP	1
Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities	OICC	1
Organization of World Heritage Cities	OWHC	1
POLIS Network of Cities and Regions for Transport Innovation	POLIS	1
Rainbow Cities Network	Rainbow Cities	1
Union of Turkish World Municipalities	TDBB	38
United Cities and Local Governments Middle East and West Asia Section	UCLG-MEWA	26
WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities	-	1
WHO Healthy Cities Network	-	4
World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization	WeGO	2

APPENDIX 2: MARMARA REGION LOCAL DIPLOMACY RESEARCH SURVEY FORM

MARMARA MUNICIPALITIES UNION MARMARA REGION LOCAL DIPLOMACY RESEARCH

SURVEY QUESTIONS

A) INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

1. Does your municipality have a dedicated unit for international affairs /foreign relations?
 - ▶ Yes
 - ▶ No
2. (If you answered "yes" to question 1) What is the name of the unit dedicated to foreign relations in your municipality?
3. Please specify the department/directorate to which the unit that carries out work related to foreign relations within your municipality is affiliated.
4. Which other directorate(s)/department(s)/unit(s) are active in foreign relations within your municipality?
5. (If you answered "yes" to question 1) If you have a dedicated foreign relations unit, in which year was this unit established?
6. (If you answered "yes" to question 1) What is the reason for establishing the foreign relations unit within your municipality? (Select all that apply)
 - ▶ Mayor's initiative
 - ▶ Need for cooperation with international organizations
 - ▶ Need to conduct relations with sister cities
 - ▶ Project activities
 - ▶ Other (Please specify:)
7. Who is the spending authority of the unit that conducts activities related to foreign relations within your municipality?
 - ▶ Directorate of Foreign Relations (if there is one)
 - ▶ Office of the Private Secretary
 - ▶ Directorate of Strategy Development
 - ▶ Department Head of the unit conducting activities related to foreign relations
 - ▶ Secretary General/Deputy Secretary General of the unit conducting activities related to foreign relations
 - ▶ Other (Please specify:)

8. If your municipality has a foreign relations unit, how many personnel does it consist of? / If your municipality does not have a foreign relations department, how many employees in the relevant unit handle foreign relations activities?

- ▶ 1
- ▶ 2
- ▶ 3
- ▶ 4
- ▶ 5
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

9. Which departments have the personnel involved in foreign relations activities within your municipality graduated from? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Translation and Interpreting
- ▶ Urban Planning
- ▶ Political Science and International Relations / International Relations
- ▶ Political Science and Public Administration / Public Administration
- ▶ Local Governments
- ▶ Tourism
- ▶ Teaching
- ▶ Economics
- ▶ Sociology
- ▶ Programming
- ▶ Engineering
- ▶ Military Academy/Military
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

10. Have the personnel working on foreign relations in the municipality been trained on issues related to foreign relations such as diplomacy, courtesy, protocol rules?

- ▶ Yes (Please indicate the subject you received the training and from which institution:)
- ▶ No
- ▶ Other (For example, "the municipality did not provide training but I received private training from outside on my own." Please specify:)

11. If your municipality has a foreign relations unit, how many personnel in this department are proficient in foreign languages? / If your municipality does not have a foreign relations unit, how many personnel conducting foreign relations activities are proficient in foreign languages?

- ▶ None
- ▶ 1
- ▶ 2
- ▶ 3
- ▶ 4
- ▶ 5
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

12. If the personnel involved in foreign relations activities within your municipality are proficient in foreign languages, which languages do they speak? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ English
- ▶ German
- ▶ French
- ▶ Spanish
- ▶ Arabic
- ▶ Russian
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

13. Do you consult with the mayor and/or deputy mayors regarding activities related to foreign relations and international cooperation?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

14. (If you answered “yes” to question 12) How often do you meet with the mayor and/or deputy mayors for consultations?

- ▶ More than once a month
- ▶ Once a month
- ▶ Once every three months
- ▶ Once every six months
- ▶ Once a year
- ▶ Less than once a year
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

15. What are the expectations of the mayor and/or deputy mayors from the unit responsible for foreign relations activities? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Establishing sister city relationships
- ▶ Developing projects
- ▶ Cooperation with international organizations
- ▶ Organizing international events
- ▶ Generating external funding/financing
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

16. Do you have an institutionally established strategy/roadmap for foreign relations?

- ▶ Yes (Please elaborate:)
- ▶ No

17. How do you determine your foreign relations activities? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Direction from the mayor/deputy mayor
- ▶ Decisions made by the unit director
- ▶ Consensus among unit employees
- ▶ Requests/directions from international organizations
- ▶ Requests/directions from sister cities
- ▶ International agendas/agreements/goals etc.
- ▶ Direction from the central government
- ▶ Demand from the public
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

18. Do you communicate with local government associations while conducting foreign relations?

- ▶ Yes (Please specify:)
- ▶ No

19. Do you communicate with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs while conducting foreign relations?

- ▶ Yes (On which issues and for what purpose do you communicate? Please specify:)
- ▶ No

B) OPINIONS OF MUNICIPAL PERSONNEL

1. Do you think Türkiye's national foreign policy affects the foreign relations of your municipality?

- ▶ Yes (How does it affect your relations? Please specify:)
- ▶ No

2. To what extent do you think local diplomacy contributes to global peace?

- ▶ 1 (Very little)
- ▶ 2
- ▶ 3
- ▶ 4
- ▶ 5 (Very much)

3. Do you think municipalities should actively engage in international relations/foreign relations?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

4. What do you think is the contribution of conducting international affairs/foreign relations activities for municipalities?

Explain (e.g. capacity building, establishment of a database, provision of external resources, etc.):

5. What do you think are the three main challenges municipalities face in international relations/foreign relations? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Budget constraints (budget of the unit, budget allocated for external relations activities)
- ▶ Insufficient travel allowances for overseas travel
- ▶ Bureaucratic challenges in central government/ministry processes
- ▶ Legal issues/obstacles
- ▶ Political issues between countries/limitations arising from national foreign policy
- ▶ Insufficient personnel numbers
- ▶ Lack of personnel qualified or graduated from relevant departments in foreign relations
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Cultural differences
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

6. Do you think amendments should be made in the Municipal Law and/or other regulations to help municipalities better manage their international relations/foreign relations activities?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

7. What areas should be amended in the Municipal Law and/or other regulations to better manage the foreign relations/foreign affairs activities of municipalities? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Regulation on staffing norms and standards
- ▶ Permanent staffing arrangements for graduates from departments related to international relations
- ▶ Definition of authority and responsibility areas
- ▶ Reorganization of areas requiring ministry approval
- ▶ Shortening of ministry approval processes
- ▶ Clearer definition of bureaucratic processes to be carried out with ministries
- ▶ Increase in overseas travel allowances
- ▶ Regulation on covering accommodation expenses for overseas travel
- ▶ Regulation on covering accommodation expenses for mayors during overseas trips
- ▶ Other
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

8. Do you think municipalities should have a foreign relations unit dedicated to international relations/foreign relations activities?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

9. Which department graduates do you think should be employed in the foreign relations units of municipalities? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Translation and Interpreting Studies
- ▶ Urban Planning
- ▶ Political Science and International Relations / International Relations
- ▶ Political Science and Public Administration / Public Administration
- ▶ Local Governments
- ▶ Tourism
- ▶ Teaching
- ▶ Economics
- ▶ Sociology
- ▶ Engineering
- ▶ Military Academy / Military Vocational School / National Defense University
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

C) MEMBERSHIPS IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

1. Is your municipality a member of any international city networks?*

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

2. (If you answered “no” to question 1) If you are not a member of any international city network, what is the reason? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ We are not informed about the networks
- ▶ The networks do not provide any contribution to the municipality
- ▶ Membership fees are too high
- ▶ We do not have staff to manage the relationship
- ▶ Decisions/Priorities of the senior management in the municipality
- ▶ Preference/reluctance of staff responsible for foreign relations
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

*If your answer to question 1 is “no”, please skip to section D (Sister City Relationships).

3. Which of the following international city networks are you a member of? Please indicate with the dates of membership. (Select all that apply)

- ▶ ALDA (Date of membership:)
- ▶ ICLEI (Date of membership:)
- ▶ Energy Cities (Date of membership:)
- ▶ Eurocities (Date of membership:)
- ▶ Climate Alliance (Date of membership:)
- ▶ Intercultural Cities (Date of membership:)
- ▶ C40 (Date of membership:)
- ▶ Cittaslow (Date of membership:)
- ▶ The EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (Date of membership:)
- ▶ Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy (Date of membership:)
- ▶ ECCAR (Date of membership:)
- ▶ TDBB (Date of membership:)
- ▶ UCLG-MEWA (Date of membership:)
- ▶ WeGO (Date of membership:)
- ▶ Other (Please specify with the date of membership:)

4. In which areas does your municipality develop cooperation with the international networks you are a member of? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Climate change, environment
- ▶ Health, pandemic
- ▶ Food, agriculture
- ▶ Urban planning
- ▶ Infrastructure
- ▶ Migration
- ▶ Social justice and inclusion
- ▶ Gender equality
- ▶ Transportation and mobility
- ▶ Smart cities, digitalization
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Education
- ▶ General
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

5. How frequently do you participate in the activities/events (meetings/webinars/trainings, etc.) of the international networks you belong to?

- ▶ Never
- ▶ Every two to three years or less frequently
- ▶ Once a year
- ▶ 3-4 times a year
- ▶ More than 3-4 times a year
- ▶ Other
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

6. (If you answered “never” to question 5, you can skip this question) Which types of events of the international networks you belong to do you attend? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ General assembly
- ▶ Conference/symposium/seminar/forum, etc.
- ▶ Training
- ▶ Workshop
- ▶ Technical tour/study visit
- ▶ Fair/stand/expo/exhibition
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

7. What contributions do the international networks you belong to make to your municipality? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Technical support/expert assistance
- ▶ Participation in project applications
- ▶ Participation in technical tours
- ▶ Networking with different cities/municipalities/institutions/individuals
- ▶ Knowledge and experience sharing
- ▶ Disseminating/promoting the municipality's best practices
- ▶ International visibility
- ▶ Access to funding support/grant opportunities
- ▶ Advocacy (advocacy at the international level for local issues)
- ▶ Keeping up with global developments
- ▶ No contribution
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

8. What contributions do you, as a municipality, make to the international networks you belong to? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Contributing to their publications
- ▶ Participating as a speaker at events
- ▶ Providing technical support/expert assistance
- ▶ Sharing knowledge and experience
- ▶ We have no contribution
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

D) SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIPS

(When answering the questions in this section, please take into account the sister city relationship you have established with municipalities abroad)

1. Does your municipality have a sister city abroad?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

2. (If you answered "yes" to question 1) How many sister cities does your municipality have?

Please specify:

3. Please indicate the name of the municipality with which you have established a sister city relationship, the country, city and date of establishment of the sister city relationship.

4. What is the motivation for your municipality to establish sister city relationships? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Initiative of the mayor/deputy mayor
- ▶ Initiative of the municipality's foreign relations department/foreign relations personnel
- ▶ Instruction of the central government
- ▶ Initiative/request from the foreign municipality
- ▶ Initiative of the local residents of the municipality
- ▶ Initiative of Turkish citizens abroad
- ▶ Initiative of the residents in the sister city abroad
- ▶ Project partnership
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

5. What are the reasons for your municipality to establish sister city relations? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Shared history
- ▶ Cultural proximity
- ▶ Geographical proximity
- ▶ Religious proximity
- ▶ Developing thematic cooperation
- ▶ Developing economic cooperation
- ▶ Developing social projects
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

6. What activities do you carry out with your sister cities? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Visiting the sister cities
- ▶ Hosting delegations from sister cities
- ▶ Organizing technical tours/study visits for delegations from sister cities
- ▶ Organizing technical tours/study visits in sister cities for delegations from Türkiye
- ▶ Developing joint projects initiated by the municipality
- ▶ Developing joint projects initiated by the sister city
- ▶ Organizing exchange programs between residents of the municipality and sister city
- ▶ Personnel exchange
- ▶ Providing best practices, knowledge sharing, and technical support to the sister city
- ▶ Receiving best practices, knowledge sharing, and technical support from the sister city
- ▶ Organizing events/meetings/conferences/trainings/seminars in the sister city
- ▶ Organizing events/meetings/conferences/trainings/seminars in the municipality by the sister city
- ▶ Organizing social programs in the sister city
- ▶ Organizing social programs in the municipality by the sister city
- ▶ Construction of parks/cultural centers/schools, etc. in the sister city
- ▶ Construction of parks/cultural centers/schools, etc. within the municipality by the sister city
- ▶ Carrying out restoration work in the sister city
- ▶ Carrying out restoration work within the municipality's borders by the sister city
- ▶ Sending aid to the sister city during disasters, pandemics, etc.
- ▶ Receiving aid from the sister city during disasters, pandemics, etc.
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

7. Are there differences in your relationships with your sister cities in terms of frequency of meetings and cooperation?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

8. How often do you get together with your sister cities with whom you have more frequent contact and cooperation?

- ▶ More than once a month
- ▶ Once a month
- ▶ Once every three months
- ▶ Every six months
- ▶ Once a year
- ▶ Less often than once a year
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

9. Do you have any sister cities you are not in contact with?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

10. What challenges have you faced when establishing sister city relationships? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Budget constraints (budget of the unit, budget allocated for foreign relations activities)
- ▶ Bureaucratic difficulties with central government/ministries
- ▶ Legal issues/obstacles
- ▶ Political problems between countries/ national foreign policy limitations
- ▶ Insufficient personnel numbers
- ▶ Lack of qualified personnel
- ▶ Lack of response from sister city authorities
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Cultural differences
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

11. What are the challenges you face when maintaining relationships with your sister cities? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Budget constraints (budget of the unit, budget allocated for foreign relations activities)
- ▶ Bureaucratic difficulties with central government/ministries
- ▶ Legal issues/obstacles
- ▶ Political problems between countries/ national foreign policy limitations
- ▶ Insufficient personnel numbers
- ▶ Lack of qualified personnel
- ▶ Lack of response from sister city authorities/ reluctance of sister city authorities
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Cultural differences
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

12. Have you ever terminated a sister city relationship?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

13. (If you answered “yes” to question 12) What was the reason for terminating the sister city relationship? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Mayor’s or deputy mayor’s initiative
- ▶ Decision of a department head
- ▶ Collective decision by the unit personnel
- ▶ Request from local residents
- ▶ National foreign policy-related reasons
- ▶ Inactive relationships
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

14. Do you have any projects that you have developed innovatively with original initiatives in collaboration with your sister cities? (Cultural exchange programs etc.)

Please explain:

E) INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

1. Do/did you take part in international projects as a municipality?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

*If your answer to question 1 is “no”, please skip to Section F (Cooperation Agreements).

2. Which international grants/funds have you received so far? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Erasmus
- ▶ Horizon
- ▶ Town Twinning Between Türkiye and European Union Grant Program
- ▶ Other European Union funds
- ▶ Black Sea Cooperation funds
- ▶ Embassy funds (Please specify which embassies:)
- ▶ Foreign development agency funds (Please specify which development agencies:)
- ▶ Funds/loans from international development banks (EBRD, EIB, World Bank, Islamic Development Bank, etc.) (Please specify which banks:)
- ▶ Funding from international organizations (Please specify which organizations:)
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

3. What are the focus areas of the international projects you participate in? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Climate change, environment
- ▶ Health, pandemic
- ▶ Food, agriculture
- ▶ Urban planning
- ▶ Infrastructure
- ▶ Migration
- ▶ Social justice and inclusion
- ▶ Gender equality
- ▶ Transportation and mobility
- ▶ Smart cities, digitalization
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

4. What role have you played in international projects so far? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Lead applicant
- ▶ Partner
- ▶ Associate partner
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

5. Which institutions do you collaborate with on international projects? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Ministries in Türkiye
- ▶ Other central government institutions in Türkiye
- ▶ Central government institutions abroad
- ▶ Governorate/District Governorate
- ▶ Foreign diplomatic missions in Türkiye
- ▶ Türkiye's diplomatic missions abroad
- ▶ Local government associations in Türkiye
- ▶ Local government associations abroad
- ▶ Municipalities in Türkiye
- ▶ Municipalities abroad
- ▶ Non-governmental organizations in Türkiye
- ▶ Non-governmental organizations abroad
- ▶ Universities/research centers in Türkiye
- ▶ Universities/research centers abroad
- ▶ International city networks
- ▶ International organizations that are not city networks
- ▶ Sister city municipalities abroad
- ▶ Non-sister city municipalities abroad
- ▶ Private sector organizations in Türkiye
- ▶ Private sector organizations abroad
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

6. Which unit in your municipality manages the project when participating in international projects?

- ▶ Foreign Relations Unit (If there is a dedicated unit)
- ▶ Strategy Development Unit
- ▶ Thematic unit related to the subject
- ▶ Multiple units manage it in coordination
- ▶ Multiple units manage it in an uncoordinated manner
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

7. What challenges do you face regarding international projects? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Inability to secure funding
- ▶ Absence of a network with funding organizations
- ▶ Inability to find project partners in Türkiye
- ▶ Inability to find project partners abroad
- ▶ Rejection/Negative outcome of project applications
- ▶ Internal bureaucratic procedures (Council approval, etc.)
- ▶ Inadequacy in project writing
- ▶ Inadequacy in project management
- ▶ Lack of personnel with language skills
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

F) COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

1. Do you have/have you had relationships through cooperation agreements and protocols with foreign municipalities or international organizations?*

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

*If your answer to question 1 is "no", please skip to section G (International Events).

2. With which institutions did you sign a cooperation agreement/protocol? Please specify the name of the institution and the date of signing the cooperation agreement/protocol.

- ▶ Lack of human resources/personnel
- ▶ Lack of personnel with language skills
- ▶ Budget constraints
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

3. In which areas have you signed cooperation agreements/protocols? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Climate change, environment
- ▶ Health, pandemic
- ▶ Food, agriculture
- ▶ Urban planning
- ▶ Infrastructure
- ▶ Migration
- ▶ Social justice and inclusion
- ▶ Gender equality
- ▶ Transportation and mobility
- ▶ Smart cities, digitalization
- ▶ Governance
- ▶ Sustainability
- ▶ Culture
- ▶ Sports
- ▶ Education
- ▶ General
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

4. What challenges have you faced regarding the cooperation agreements/protocols you have made? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Agreements/protocols remaining on paper and no concrete activities being carried out
- ▶ Internal bureaucratic procedures (Council approval, etc.)
- ▶ Official processes carried out with ministries
- ▶ Reluctance of the senior management in the municipality
- ▶ Reluctance of municipal personnel conducting foreign relations activities

G) INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

1. As a municipality, do you participate in international events?*

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

2. If your municipality does not participate in international events, what is the reason? (Please select three options that apply)

- ▶ Lack of awareness of the municipality
- ▶ Unable to obtain permission from the senior management in the municipality
- ▶ Reluctance of municipal personnel
- ▶ Internal bureaucratic procedures (Council approval, assignment, etc.)
- ▶ Lack of personnel to participate
- ▶ Lack of sufficient financial resources to participate
- ▶ Language barriers
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

*If your answer to question 1 is “no”, please skip to Section H (Global Agenda).

3. Which events does your municipality participate in? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Events of international networks that the municipality is a member of
- ▶ Events of international organizations
- ▶ Events organized by sister cities
- ▶ Events of international projects
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

4. What types of international events does your municipality participate in? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Training
- ▶ Workshop
- ▶ General assemblies of international networks that the municipality is a member of
- ▶ Conference/symposium/seminar/forum etc.
- ▶ Technical tour/study visit
- ▶ Fair/stand/expo/exhibition
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

5. How frequently does your municipality participate in international events?

- ▶ Never
- ▶ Less than once a year
- ▶ Once a year
- ▶ More than once a year
- ▶ Every six months
- ▶ Every three months
- ▶ Once a month
- ▶ More than once a month
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

6. During your visits abroad, do you visit Türkiye's foreign representation offices?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

7. (If you answered "yes" to question 6) Which of Türkiye's foreign representation offices do you visit during your overseas trips? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ Embassy/Consulate
- ▶ TİKA
- ▶ Yunus Emre Institute
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

H) GLOBAL AGENDA

1. As a municipality, which of the following international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements are you aware of? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals
- ▶ New Urban Agenda
- ▶ Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy
- ▶ Paris Agreement
- ▶ Global Compact for Migration/on Refugees
- ▶ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

2. As a municipality, which of the following international agendas, policy documents, goals, or agreements are you working on? (Select all that apply)

- ▶ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals
- ▶ New Urban Agenda
- ▶ Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy
- ▶ Paris Agreement
- ▶ Global Compact for Migration/on Refugees
- ▶ Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

3. What type of activities are you carrying out regarding these agendas/policy documents/goals/agreements?

- ▶ Reporting (e.g. Local Voluntary Report (VLR), Sustainability Report, Integrated Report or thematic report, etc.)
- ▶ Inclusion of international agendas/policy documents/goals/agreements in the strategic plan
- ▶ Referencing international agendas/policy documents/goals/agreements in international projects
- ▶ Setting goals in the action plans prepared by the municipality related to topics within international agendas/policy documents/goals/agreements and/or preparing an action plan/roadmap related to international agendas/policy documents/goals/agreements
- ▶ Conducting awareness-raising activities within the municipality regarding international agendas/policy documents/agreements
- ▶ Conducting awareness-raising activities for the local population regarding topics within international agendas/policy documents/goals/agreements
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)

4. As a municipality, do you work on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No

5. (If you answered “yes” to question 3) As a municipality, what type of activities are you carrying out regarding the SDGs?

- ▶ Reporting (e.g. Local Voluntary Report (VLR), Sustainability Report, Integrated Report, etc.)
- ▶ Inclusion of the SDGs in the strategic plan
- ▶ Preparing an action plan/roadmap related to the SDGs
- ▶ Highlighting the SDGs in international projects
- ▶ Setting goals related to the SDGs in municipal action plans
- ▶ Conducting SDG awareness-raising activities within the municipality
- ▶ Conducting SDG awareness-raising activities for the local population
- ▶ Other (Please specify:)





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