



## Urban Agenda Platform

The global platform for sharing progress, action and knowledge on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to achieve sustainable urban development.

# Mezitli Women Producers Market

Region	Europe and Central Asia
Award Scheme	Guangzhou Award
Sustainable Development Goals	Goal 1 - End poverty in all its forms everywhere Goal 2 - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture Goal 5 - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls Goal 8 - Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

## Summary

Mezitli Women Producers Market is an initiative that helps to strengthen local women as sellers, by providing them space and support to sell their local products. Gender equality is supported as well as a local sustainable economy by supporting small-scale production. Therefore this initiative is supportive for a general better atmosphere of the district.

## Background and Objective

Mezitli is the youngest district of the Mersin city region. Founded as a municipality already in 1968, it was just in 2008 that Mezitli became an official province of Mersin. Although during the past years it evolved very fast to be a modern urban district, with modern housing as well as working places, schools, hospitals and modern infrastructures, still almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Mezitli area consist of mountains, plateaus and fields (with 8126 ha agricultural land). In particular, the areas in the north (mountain side) hold their agriculture qualities. The Mediterranean climate of Mezitli is appropriate for a broad variety of fruits and vegetables, especially citrus, grapes, peach and olive products. The big grow in population, mainly through migration from the east of Turkey and the influx from neighboring countries like Syria (especially because of war), has been a big and ongoing challenge for Mezitli. Therefore the region has a high need for social-cultural inclusivity approach as well as economic projects to ensure the local peace and give the inhabitants a good living environment and future perspectives. Women are still one of the most vulnerable groups as in the society of Turkey, they are often very much dependent on their families, and mostly on their male relatives or husbands. The economic independence is a main factor for women of all ages to be able to make their own choices in life and to feel more self-confident. The main goals of the foundation of the 'Mezitli Women Producers Market' is to reduce the gender-based barriers, to increase working opportunities for women; social and cultural exchange between women; to strengthen local women producers from all social and cultural, economic levels, support the local women to organize themselves, encourage them to more active participation in society and thereby to increase their self-confidence. Physical infrastructure and main monitoring have been provided by the Mezitli Municipality, as well as support with experienced staff for the general implementation. Nevertheless certain strategies have been found to give the main power to the women producers themselves. Right from the beginning the Foundation of the Mezitli Women Producers Market was organized as a collaborative work between the Mezitli municipality the local women, producers as well as consumers. First of all, there have been organized meetings to determine the local women producers interested in contributing to the Mezitli Women Producers Market. The first market was opened up in Yeni Mahalle, followed by three more projects and in between more than 730 selling tables/stands have been established. The Municipality took the lead to start the initiative, but the leading is always organized together women producers themselves, the future target is to found a women cooperative and therefore give the whole organization to the women themselves. By developing the concept in continuous collaboration with the producers as well as the consumers, the Mezitli Women Producers Market has been designed according to the needs and wishes of the local population and appropriate to the local conditions. In this way all partners within the initiative are continuous benefiter from this innovative project. Financial support has been given by the Mezitli Municipality, the women producers are giving significant contribution in organizing the implementation of the Mezitli Women Producers Market. After being motivated and supported by the municipality staff Women producers are organizing themselves together with the support of the municipality. To give the women necessary knowledge for their self-organization also education has given by the municipality and meetings have been organized to talk about all open questions together with the women producers.

## Actions and Implementation

Three central aspects coming together in an innovative way in this initiative. First of all women are strengthened, as mentioned before as local women producers are supported by this initiative, local small-scale economy profits from this strategy. At the same time with this initiative women of the district



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get a chance to get more self-esteem and to earn their own living. Thereby they are strengthened as women in their position in society, get more independent and have better possibilities to take their lives in their own hands. This is a very important change for the local society as a whole. Strong women, gender equality, sustainable small-scaled production, these are all aspects giving a better quality of life for the whole district and its citizens.

## Outcomes and Impacts

Local and regional project had already big effects. Women producers of the region become more active and more visible, employment rate has grown. The Women producers markets got a huge media attention, one of Turkey's most important television channel Fox TV newscaster, personally come to the market, the market women were interviewed and presented in the news, and have been welcomed by the local people, as visible for example by the fact that while in the beginning the markets have only be open in the weekends, after the request of the clients as well as the sellers, there are now also opening times during the weekdays. Furthermore, after the first market being implemented three more markets have been opened and there are planned to be more Women Producers Markets opened in the future. Due to the innovative rules of selection for the sellers and products sold, small scaled production of local traditional products (such as small-scale homemade handicrafts and organic products from the gardens) could be strengthened together with providing the support for more gender equality. Mezitli Women's Producers Market has been very successful, and taken as a model project for opening up more markets, this can already be seen as a measurement of success. Furthermore, interviews have been conducted with the women producers to evaluate the success of their activity and to document their stories of success. As the municipality is providing the basic financial support for the markets, control routines are used to measure the development of the initiative. Regular report, as the yearly activities report of the municipality provides also enough data to prove the positive development of this initiative. In comparison to other traditional local market concepts in case of the Women Producers market special methods have been applied. All women sellers have to be from the district, their continued involvement into the markets has to be assured, their products should be produced by themselves and follow standards of hygienic, organic foods and handmade-homemade products are specially preferred. Producer women from all social economic and demographic statue with educated or non-educated. Usually there is an established group of women sellers, new applicants may be set on a waiting list. Due to the high request it is planned to open up more markets in the future. The outcome of this initiative is already clearly visible, as the women of various backgrounds in education and social environment have been brought together and got a platform to develop their own economical existence – there is a clearly visible growth in self-esteem and gender equality as due to earning their own money those women are less dependent to their families, husbands and male relatives. The Women producers market is part of a general vision of the Municipality of Mezitli to be a women-friendly city and to support gender equality. In the same time, the project is also supportive for local small-scale production, that means it is supportive also for more environmentally friendly economy and sustainable trade. Local resources are preferred to import and thereby strengthened together with the female population.

## Innovative Initiative

Mezitli Women Producers Market is a revolutionary project, as it is a first in Mersin to open up a market that is completely run by women producers. At the same time, it has some evolutionary aspects, as there was time giving to the local women producers to organize themselves in cooperation with the future consumers. There was given a big importance to involve the target group in the whole process, from the establishing until the evaluation of the initiative. Local markets have a long tradition, but experience has shown that women producers often are excluded because of certain barriers, one of them is the financial barrier, but also the selection criteria of the local markets (usually male) administration. One basic solution for that was to not take money from the women producers to open up their selling stand, as well as only women producers being allowed to sell in the market. The concept also strengthens the local market as only women producers from the region are accepted as sellers. Small productions as organic vegetables from small gardens, homemade produces handicrafts are specially welcomed. The concept came out to be a big success and got a huge media attention. Taking the first Women Producers Market opened up in Mezitli in 2014 as a model, 7 more markets have been opened up after that. The plan is to open up Women Producers Markets in all 40 sub-districts of Mezitli. Furthermore, the municipality is encouraging the women producers to form their own women cooperation. The combination of cheesecake baking and tomato-producing women resulted in social demographic cliffs and prejudice, but thanks to an innovative perspective, this situation was prevented. Women producers have begun to communicate with the approaches to produce and earn together.

## Resources devoted to delivery

BASIC CITY DATA Population size: 187,536 Population growth rate (%): 2.87 Surface area (sq.km): 416.52 Population density (people/sq.km): 502.80 GDP per capita (USD): 10,597.00