



Balkan Cities Network

ISTANBUL WORKSHOPS





B40 Balkan Cities Network continues its activities with high motivation. In order to accelerate the activities of B40 Network working groups, two workshops have been held in Istanbul on 20-25 June 2022. In these workshops, **Smart Cities and Digital Transformation working group** and **Local Economic Cooperation working group** discussed their projects in more detail. Esteemed 40 representatives from 20 member cities have met to work on realizing the potential of the B40 Network.



It aims to organize a series of public concerts at city centers to promote interdisciplinary exchanges and aims to enhance the awareness of B40 Network in public spaces. It aims to stage local and international artists at the same event. Local artists from member cities and also from Istanbul will be staged at the same event. Festival bus events will be free for the public; it will not aim to make commercial profits. The following timetable for the festival bus project was decided: Confirmation of the participating cities on July 1, confirmation of the dates on July 7, and the first concert on July 16. The participating cities of Festival Bus project are Sarajevo, Çanakkale, Prishtina, Tirana, Athens, Constanta, Skopje, Podgorica, Niksic and Kotor. The festival bus project is open to the participation of all member cities when they preferred to join it.



B40 Network Local Economic Cooperation Working Group

Local economic cooperation working group focused on especially the cultural projects. B40 cultural cooperation summer events were presented. Two programs are on the agenda for this summer: **Festival Bus Project** and **B40 Young City Representatives Summit**.

B40 Festival Bus will

Start its route from Istanbul and will tour to the member cities. The festival bus was designed as a concert series that proceeds in a chain between intercity local music groups. The bus will be a branded bus which will be used for promotion only and will not carry any passengers. The festival bus project will proceed on the route of the B40 Network, and local and global artists will be able to take part in the same event.





B40 Young City Representatives Summit

will be planned to host in Istanbul between August 22nd - 27th to create an open space for the future leaders of the Network. The Summit aims to encourage and promote inclusive participation of young people to the Network. Young people from B40 Cities will meet to attend a series of events. As B40 Young City Representatives Summit will host young citizens of the Network; the age group can be 18-25. The participants must necessarily know English. The cities can determine their own specific criteria for the selection of the young representatives. It is decided to evaluate whether the number of participants should be according to the population or equal for each city.



Topics such as environment, climate, science, communication and self-improvement are evaluated for the Summit. B40 Young City Representatives Summit sessions will cover various activities such as workshops, concerts, cultural trips, meet-ups. It is planned that accommodation, meals and transportation in Istanbul will be covered by Istanbul.



B40 Cultural Cooperation - 2023 Events

On the cultural cooperation workshop participants have evaluated 2023 cultural events. Four topics were on the agenda for 2023: Festival Bus Project, Collaboration with major music, culture festivals in B40 Cities, B40 Network Art and Artist Exchange, Funding and Grant Opportunities.



It has stated that the 2022 projects could be the starting point of the real outcomes of the network, to follow considerably bigger project in 2023 and the following years. The importance of funding / grant opportunities is to strengthen diversity, cultural heritage and creativity of B40 Network, to enable the sustainability of B40 Network's cultural projects and to empower the cultural stakeholders to participate in common cultural projects. The significant points during the applying process of the funds are those: To assess the needs and areas of interests for funding and grants, a survey will be held which will allow the Cities to follow a more precise process. The process includes; following the open calls regularly, taking in consideration the main needs, preferences, areas of interest, strengths and weaknesses to develop cultural projects for funding.



As an exciting project it is suggested that B40 Network will be presented in the Womex fair. Womex is the oldest and largest fair for world music. B40 Network will intend to set up a "cluster stand". By participating in this fair, it can reach the member cities of the B40 and offer a good platform for lobbying. As a long-term plan it is possible to bring this fair to B40 cities. It would be sufficient to introduce the B40 network professionally in 2022, and that they could attend the fair with a certain list of artists and focus on lobbying next year. The member cities do not have to participate under a single stand of B40, and that the cities can take place with their own stands if they wish. Until the last week of July, the participating cities and the number of people who will participate are requested to be communicated. In the timeline shared with the participants, it was announced that the stand reservation for the B40 on 1 August and the registration of the B40 on 1 September are targeted. The fair will be held in Lisbon, Portugal on 19-23 October.

On the cultural workshop the expectations for 2023 were stated also:

- **Art and Artist Exchange:** Artist residency can be organized among the cities. (e.g. young editors, curators, musicologists, painters, writers summit etc.)
 - Istanbul Bookstore could provide books from the book fairs/festivals to the B40 cities and vice versa. The fairs/festivals could sell the English editions (also local publications for some destinations) of the prestigious IMM publications
 - **The importance of emphasizing the cultural assets of each city** has been mentioned
 - The importance of programming and executing common cultural projects to underline the City's unique cultural heritage has been mentioned. Such as; theater, restoration, music, heritage
 - **Adapting projects to the City's unique geographies and assets.** In that regard, combining the common cultural heritage, presenting and promoting the unique multidisciplinary assets of Cities
 - Determining a common topic for projects such as a traveling exhibition; global warming, earthquakes, and presenting it in a modern place or in a common cultural heritage.
 - **The importance of digital presence as a Network** has been mentioned as in social media accounts for the Network. (IG, FB, YT, LinkedIn, Twitter)
- The close communication with the colleagues who participated in the workshops is a very good investment for the B40 Balkan Cities Network. For B40 Network to be a long-term and sustainable organization, it is emphasized that the strengths and highlights of all member cities should be involved in B40 cultural events.

TIMELINE

24 June	Smart Rate deadline
1 August	B40 Stand Booking
26 August	Summer Rate Deadline
1 September	B40 Delegates registration
23 September	Late rate deadline
14 October	Sprint Rate Deadline
19-23 October	Walk up Registration WOMEX'22 in Lisbon

B40 Network Smart Cities and Digital Transformation Working Group



Smart Cities and Digital Transformation Working Group

while designing a better future for B40 cities, prepared projects that will make the best use of technology and innovation, the most important instruments. One of the projects in the agenda of the Working Group that was discussed in Istanbul workshop was Open Data Portal, where IMM made a presentation. Specific data were also presented in the field of earthquake. Since Turkey and the Balkans suffer from the same consequences regarding the earthquake, it was mentioned that B40 network could work on joint studies on this matter.

Smart Cities and Digital Transformation working group also discussed the Pay It Forward project.

Pay It Forward, Istanbul's biggest social solidarity application, has been presented. Pay It Forward application is a digital solidarity platform that brings together the citizens that are living on the starvation line and cannot pay their bills, and the citizens that wish to help such people in need. In this platform, on which the hand that receives does not see the hand that gives, solidarity between the person in need and the donator is established anonymously. The people in need are either paid in cash or their utility bills are paid. Istanbul Metropolitan



Municipality would be more than pleased to share this solidarity application and provide technical support for its implementation to any B40 city that wants to implement it, so that we can spread the goodness. B40 Network's biggest achievement and contribution would be to share good practices as such, and increase their number by learning from one another.

It was put forward that a joint open data portal could be created that would include the member cities of B40. This portal could be a copy of IMM Open Data Portal. B40 member cities also introduced their own portals and showed what kind of data they could contribute to B40 open data portal.





Smart Cities and Digital Transformation working group

Also discussed Smart Cities Strategies. Mutual cooperation on the field of smart city strategies can be further advanced. It has been stated that Smart Cities Strategies do not only embody information technology but also includes resilient cities and environmental issues. It was stated that the problems faced by cities today cannot be solved with traditional methods, and that the transition to smart city technologies is extremely essential. Information was given about the transition process to smart cities strategies and 4 steps were discussed about the process:

1. Literature review and review of best practices in the field of smart cities
2. Current situation analysis
3. Determining the smart city vision, mission and roadmap
4. Creation of smart cities information technology architecture

Emphasizing that open data is extremely important in the Smart Cities Strategy, it was stated that sharing data strengthens cities.

One of the issues discussed by the **Smart Cities and Digital Transformation working group** was the Istanbul is Yours application. It was stated that Istanbul is Yours mobile application is a super app that brings all these mobile applications together. There are many mega trends that are transforming cities today. In this context, digital transformation is extremely important and necessary for the whole city. Today, cities are trying to digitize their services. However, in most cities, mobile applications rank low, big data is not well defined, there is a serious lack of experience and they suffer from inefficient cost controls.



It was indicated that there are four pillars of creating a super app which are as follows:

- 1- Technology Partner
- 2- Mini Application Development Partner
- 3- Management Organization
- 4- Marketing Resources (promotion on social media and etc.)

The importance of revenue channels was also emphasized at the point of creating a super app. It was also pointed out that it is extremely critical to develop various projects that make a profit in cooperation with third parties within the scope of the super app.

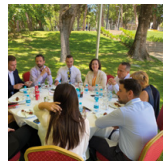


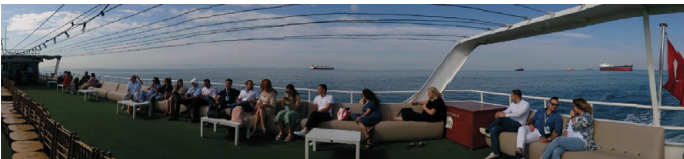
Mayor Ekrem İMAMOĞLU, the Founding President of B40 Network, has met with B40 Network representatives at the 23th June Democracy Festival area. He welcomed the workshop participants to Istanbul. Mayor İMAMOĞLU greeted the participants and wished them success in the B40 workshop.



Workshop participants also attended the concert given in their honor by the world-famous harpist Şirin Pancaroğlu in the Şerefiye Cistern. Şerefiye Cistern is one of the oldest water structures in Istanbul's Historic Peninsula with a history of approximately 1.600 years. It is Turkey's first museum with a 360° projection mapping and the oldest building in the world to integrate this system. The concert interacted with 1.600 years old historical monument while experiencing the three dimensional spatial features of the Şerefiye Cistern. Renowned harpist Şirin Pancaroğlu performed on this special event for B40 Network.







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