



European Mobility Week 16–22 September 2024 – “Let’s Share Public Spaces and Live the City Together!”

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European Mobility Week, celebrated since 2022 under the auspices of the European Commission, was launched in İzmir with the theme “Let’s Share Public Spaces and Live the City Together.” The week kicked off with the “Pedalling to University” event, where participants gathered in front of Mavişehir İZBAN Station and cycled to İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University. During the opening ceremony on campus, İzmir Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Dr. Cemil Tugay highlighted the importance of individual awareness, stating, “That car you use for a 100-meter trip, its fuel consumption and carbon emissions, they all matter.”

“We must develop rational solutions”

Mayor Tugay emphasized the growing problems caused by poor urbanization and the global climate crisis triggered by chemical and environmental pollution. “We must see the full picture and generate smart solutions. Everyone, not just public officials, shares responsibility. We need to be conscious and take on as much responsibility as we can,” he said.

“All public spaces belong to everyone”

Touching on this year’s theme, Mayor Tugay urged reflection on the concept of shared public space: “We often limit the idea of ‘our space’ to properties with our name on the deed. But that’s a mistake. Anything we can identify as a public space belongs to all of us. So it is ours, and it is yours. We must develop a sense of ownership—be attentive, act with

care, contribute to improvement, and hold public officials accountable. All of this is possible if we understand the importance of our actions.”

Addressing the climate crisis

On the climate crisis, Mayor Tugay remarked, “I believe we have very little time left. İzmir has pledged to become a Climate Neutral City by 2030. This year we have faced many challenges—droughts, forest fires, and, unfortunately, problems in the Gulf. We could make excuses or try to shift the blame, but that would not be right.”

Healthy cities

Prof. Dr. Saffet Köse, Rector of İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University, said, “Cities play a key role in promoting public health. Creating healthy cities starts with local governments. Increasing physical activity requires a community-based, multi-sectoral, and culturally aware approach. Local authorities, which have the power to build infrastructure for active living, must be supported by all stakeholders in the city.”

“Cleaner air, quieter streets”

Representing the EU Delegation, Virve Vimpari, Head of the Green Development and Inclusive Growth Department, stated: “The EU Delegation works closely with İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and the Union of Municipalities of Turkey on topics ranging from Sustainable Urban Mobility to Green Cities. İzmir is among the cities that signed the 2030 Climate Neutral City agreement, and we appreciate this cooperative spirit. Shared public spaces greatly benefit the environment. By promoting non-motorized and public transportation, we can significantly reduce noise and air pollution. Cleaner air and quieter streets contribute to healthier communities and more enjoyable cities. We don’t see this week as merely a week of awareness—we want to see real behavioral change.”

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans

Serdar Yılmaz, EU Expert at the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, said: “As the Ministry, we remain committed to transforming Turkey’s transportation infrastructure in an environmentally sensitive manner. Under the Transport Sector Operational Programme, Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans are being developed in six cities, including İzmir. These projects aim to expand public transit, reduce carbon emissions, and increase the use of electric buses. We are also expanding bicycle routes and focusing on pedestrian-friendly projects to encourage walking and cycling in our cities.”

“Accessible services for everyone”

Gülfem Kırac Keleş, Director of External Relations at the Union of Municipalities of Turkey, stated: “Our goal is to create more participatory, democratic, and fair municipal services that are accessible to all. We believe events like this play an important role in raising awareness. I want to reiterate the importance of supporting more inclusive and sustainable

public transportation systems through collective decision-making and strong municipal engagement.”

More to come

Following the speeches, participants enjoyed a Slow Cycling Race and a film screening. As part of European Mobility Week, on September 18 the “Pedalling to School” event will bring together cyclists in front of the historic Selçuk Ephesus Aqueduct, who will then ride to Cumhuriyet Primary and Secondary Schools. On September 22, “Car-Free City Day” will take place on Süvari Street in Bornova, featuring panels, forums, workshops, and colorful activities such as sports and dance.