

Kütahya in the International Stage

Since 2017, Kütahya has become an active member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) in the field of Crafts and Folk Art. The city has been actively involved in and started a variety of projects and programs to encourage traditional craftsmanship and maintain the knowledge and heritage that underpin Kütahya’s artisanal community as a result of the membership in United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). Çini is the symbol of our city and, being the most prominent form of art in Kütahya, tile creation serves as the city’s emblem and introduces the region to the outside world. In this article we would like to share our experience of and journey in UNESCO Creative Cities Network—Crafts and Folk Art.



The Flowers in Blooming Fire

Çini is a work of art that is produced by sculpting, drying, embellishing, glazing, and sintering a glazed body that is constructed of a certain ratio of raw ingredients like clay, kaolin, chalk, and quartz. Additionally, it qualifies as a work of art due to its distinctive features, which mirror traditional Turkish patterns and set it apart from other ceramic items.



The Local and International Initiatives

Kütahya, as a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, took part in a number of activities held during the Covid-19 pandemic. The city participated in “A Tour of UNESCO’s Creative Cities Exhibition” organized by Manises, Spain in September 2021 in cooperation with Kütahya Evliya Çelebi Photography Association. Five photographs which are describing Kütahya were sent to be used in the exhibition. Active participation in World Cities Day meetings was ensured in October 2021. Sound recordings were sent to the Global Sequencer application, which was built by the city of Hamamatsu, Japan in November 2021 and has numerous stages.



As a result of our initiatives toward United Cities and Local Governments(UCLG), the Second UCLG World Forum of Intermediary Cities was hosted by Kütahya on 5–8 October 2021. The aim of the forum is to share knowledge and experience so that intermediary cities can develop sustainable development strategies without disturbing their urban fabric. In the World Forum of Intermediary Cities held immediately following the



pandemic, more than 86 cities and 300 participants from all over the world shared their experiences and different cultures. This first appointment after COVID-19 was much more than a forum, it was a reunion of UCLG cities.

Within the scope of Kütahya Municipality:

1. “Municipality-University Hand in Hand to a Strong Future for Kütahya Project” was developed. The aim of the project is to prepare for a strong future as a city by providing training to more than one target group in accordance with the needs of that target group. During the COVID-19 period, it brought us together in the lonely days of lockdown at home. The





project partners are Kütahya Governorship, Kütahya Dumlupınar University, Kütahya Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Kütahya Chamber of Ceramics, Photographers and Handicrafts. Various trainings such as Çini and Pattern Design, English Learning, Cooperative Training and Social Media Management were given to this target audience of approximately 200 people.

2. The “UNESCO Creative Cities Network Unit Mansion,” which has been restored with the aim of preserving its traditional historical and cultural structure, operated in cooperation with the craftsmen and artists in our province. Various trainings such as Candle Workshop, Copper Weaving

Technique and Jewellery Design Workshop, and African Basket Weaving Workshop were given throughout the summer, open to the participation of the public in our mansion. In addition, the works that are permanently exhibited in the mansion are the output of the Municipality-University Hand in Hand to a Strong Future for Kütahya Project.



3. The “Project for the Development of the Digitalization and Creativity Ecosystem in Kütahya,” funded by the EU, is being carried out. The project, which aims to address the issues of a lack of new pattern and form designs on an industrial scale, a lack of product standardization, structural issues in trade, and a lack of branding, is being undertaken by the tile industry in Kütahya as a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network in the field of Crafts and Folk Art. For these purposes, a Creativity Center will be established within the scope of the project. Kütahya Dumlupınar University, Zafer Development Agency, Kütahya Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Kütahya Chamber of Ceramics, Photographers, and Handicrafts are the

project's partners.

In conclusion, in this article we wanted to reveal our past, present and future projects. We hope that you will enjoy and discover Kütahya's çini and ceramic tiles which touch upon not only city but also people's life.

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