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MAJOR SUPPORT FROM KOÇ HOLDING and UNDP FOR CSOs

KOÇ HOLDING ACCELERATES DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN SEVEN LEADING TURKISH CSOs

The first phase of the BOOST Civil Society Technology Challenge, a joint initiative by Koç Holding, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Koç University Entrepreneurship Research Center (KWORKS), is completed. Seven civil society organizations, namely *“Science Heroes Association, Education Reform Initiative, Support to Life, Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, Development Workshop, Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants, and Spastic Children’s Foundation of Turkey”* have been selected to participate to the second phase of the program with the projects they have developed using digital technologies to address social and environmental challenges. The selected organizations, which are eligible to receive a project grant of up to \$10,000, will be invited to an additional 24-week accelerator program. Oya Ünlü Kızıl, Corporate Communications and External Affairs Director at Koç Holding, commented on the program: *“We believe that achieving promising results against large-scale issues such as the climate crisis and growing inequalities, will only happen if the civil society organizations become stronger. We will use Koç Group’s knowledge and experience on digital transformation within the BOOST Program to support civil society organizations in realizing their own digital transformation.”*

Civil society organizations selected for the second phase of the BOOST Civil Society Technology Challenge, a joint initiative by Koç Holding, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and Koç University Entrepreneurship Research Center (KWORKS), have been announced. Out of 19, 7 CSOs selected to continue with their projects in the second phase of the program are *“Science Heroes Association, Education Reform Initiative, Support to Life, Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, Development Workshop, Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants and Spastic Children’s Foundation of Turkey.”*

The 19 CSOs that joined the phase of the program were provided mentorship and training towards innovative project ideas and accelerator support by KWORKS, as well as access to global expert networks. The CSOs that moved to the second phase will be offered a project grant of up to \$10,000, and invited to an additional 24-week accelerator program.

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Commenting on the BOOST program, **Oya Ünlü Kızıl, Corporate Communications and External Affairs Director at Koç Holding** said: *“We believe that achieving promising results against large-scale issues such as the climate crisis and growing inequalities, will only happen if the civil society organizations become stronger. The pandemic has made it clear that civil society organizations are in need of leveraging their digital transformation journeys and efforts to improve their agility. We responded quickly and partnered within the BOOST Program, which aims to support the digital transformation of CSOs and help them increase their impact with new business models.”*

Oya Ünlü Kızıl: “I find it highly valuable for our colleagues to volunteer their expertise in their respective areas to guide civil society organization in the program.”

The BOOST Program will support 7 CSOs in total, including the Science Heroes Association and the Spastic Children’s Foundation of Turkey, which will also receive support from Yapı Kredi’s social responsibility fund “For My Country Fund” noted **Oya Ünlü Kızıl**. *“The BOOST Program is a key part of Koç Group’s manifesto of ‘Lead. Together’, which sets down our sustainable development philosophy. At Koç Group, we value sharing our digital transformation agenda and the experiences we have gained along the way with our close stakeholders. Koç Group’s digital transformation leaders volunteer in the BOOST Program to support civil society organizations. I find it highly valuable for our colleagues to volunteer their expertise in their respective areas to guide civil society organization in the program. My heartfelt congratulations to all civil society organizations, teams and colleagues for their efforts in this project,”* she remarked.

Projects proposing well-defined solutions stand out

The main factors in the selection of CSOs for the second phase of the program were their ability to identify the problems in their respective areas and develop well-defined solutions, the willingness for their teams to embrace the efforts of their organization, and the use of technology in their projects. The 7 selected CSOs have developed the following projects:

- Developed as a community outreach program to provide STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education to disadvantaged children, the **Science Heroes Association** established a networking platform in which volunteers and graduates can actively participate. In addition to its role in education, the platform is also planned to facilitate career planning and mutual learning for volunteers and graduates.
- The **Education Reform Initiative** aims to contribute to structural transformation in education required for the development of children and the society at large, using quality data, constructive dialogue and a common approach drawing from diverse perspectives. The initiative has developed a digital platform to bring together

education stakeholders using quality data, analytics and best practices while also increasing data literacy in education. The Education Reform Initiative views this effort as the first step in the transition to a platform-based business model.

- **Support to Life** is a humanitarian aid organization with the objective of enabling disaster-affected communities to meet their basic needs and exercise their fundamental rights. The organization has developed an e-cash mobile app to enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian aid in the aftermath of a disaster, enabling disaster victims to identify and meet their own needs.
- **Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (İKSÜ)** engages in efforts to enrich the cultural & artistic experiences in Istanbul. The foundation's project is designed to facilitate access to cultural and artistic life for individuals with disabilities, who have been further alienated from social life as a result of the pandemic. The foundation is also looking to develop applications that will make its website more accessible to people with disabilities, and in doing so, facilitate access to information about the upcoming events and participation to the events.
- Contributing to the social development by contriving various sustainable, repeatable and successful projects, **The Development Workshop** is correspondingly developing an online platform that will bring together learners and educators from vocational and technical schools with private sector representatives. The platform will provide students an access to job/internship opportunities while enabling private sector employees and teachers to participate in innovative projects and partnerships.
- Since its inception, the **Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants** has offered social and legal support for asylum seekers and migrants to enable access to fundamental rights and services as well as psychosocial support and various courses and activities to facilitate their adaptation to social life. The association has been developing a mobile app to increase the psychological resilience of its workers, which allows users to assess and track their psychological resilience and access knowledge bases and suggestions to improve it. The organization has plans to promote the application among other civil society organizations and United Nations agencies.
- Responding to the growing challenges associated with the education of children with special needs, especially after the pandemic, the Cerebral Palsy Türkiye aims to build an online education platform designed for children with special needs, students, their families, caregivers and educators. The platform will be tested in a pilot study with 60 students enrolled in Metin Sabancı Special Education Institution, their parents and teachers before being opened to wider access, initially by 500 students currently studying in Ataşehir, Istanbul. The platform and content are planned to be made accessible to educators on a national scale.