

## «THE LARGEST UNDERGROUND SETTLEMENT OF THE WORLD»



**ECONOMIC HERITAGE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**CULTURAL PUBLIC SPACE PROMOTION HISTORY**  
**INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT GOVERNANCE**

### 1. Context

Nevşehir is considered an important city in Turkey due to its natural cultural and historical features. The underground cities, stone houses, interior decorations and church wall paintings bring cultural tourism in to the forefront. This natural and historic texture has influenced the people all times and reached up today as a heritage to be protected.

The number of domestic and international tourists visiting the region per year is approximately of 2.500.000 persons. Nevşehir has a crucial cultural heritage with its cultural identity and historical



background. It has hosted up to 20 different civilizations over its history. It has maintained its importance in all periods with these features. Now, these beliefs that stayed in the past constitute the cultural richness of the city. Even though the number of the tourists keep increasing year after year, Nevşehir cannot benefit enough from tourism sector. Therefore, Nevşehir is intended to become an important center of attraction through the introduction of newly discovered underground settlements.

THE AIM OF THE PROJECT IS TO PROVIDE THE RUINS TO THE REGION AND COUNTRY TOURISM BY COMPLETING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL WORKS OF THE RUINS AND TO BECOME A MAJOR ATTRACTION CENTER.

## 2. Nevşehir and culture

Municipalities are in charge of local policies related to culture and art. Nevşehir aims to offer local services with an equitable, high-quality, open to development, efficient and effective governance approach, to protect the historical and cultural values, increase people's quality of life and promote sustainable development through a Quality Policy.

The project bears in mind the Agenda 21 for culture as it has adhered to its main principles. More concretely highlights the importance of cultural heritage, tangible and intangible and of human creativity and people's identity. Also, as article no 12 states clearly "It is necessary to emphasize the importance of culture as a factor in the creation of wealth and economic development."

Among the undertakings of Agenda 21 for culture, main priorities are "to protect, valorise and popularize the local documentary heritage generated in the public local/regional sphere, on their own initiative or in association with public and private entities, providing incentives for the creation of municipal and regional systems for that purpose." and "to encourage the free exploration of cultural heritage by all citizens in all parts of the world. To promote, in relation with the professionals in the sector, forms of tourism that respect the cultures and customs of the localities and territories visited." In connection with these policies, Nevşehir Municipality launched excavation works with its own resources for the protection of tangible cultural heritage, aiming at "Cultural Diversity", which is the main heritage of humanity.



### 3. Objectives and implementation of the project

#### 1.1. Main goal

The aim of the project is to provide the ruins to the region and country tourism by completing the archaeological works of the ruins and to become Nevşehir a major attraction center.

#### 1.2. Specific goals

Some of the specific goals of the project are the improvement of sustainable management of natural assets, the protection of historical environment and handing down the future generations, the opening of ruins to tourism, increasing the region's potential, attracting investors through the development of the investment and promotion of opportunities, increasing the number of tourists coming to the region and creating a new tourism attraction centre, and finally, ensuring that the city centre becomes one of the most important stops.

A LASTING SOCIO-ECONOMIC WELFARE INCREASE WILL BE PROVIDED ON THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL PEOPLE IN PARALLEL TO NEW BUSINESS AREAS TOGETHER WITH SUSTAINABLE TOURISM.

#### 1.3. Key stages

- Reinforcement and strengthening works will be conducted in the galleries of underground city and excavation area during the project implementation period.
- All unearthed works particularly underground settlement will be opened to visitors for touristic purposes. In this context, a ruin in which all works and places can be visited will be brought to the region.
- The ruin which will be brought to tourism with the project will be promoted both in national and international platforms and various promotional activities will be carried out for the visitors of the ruin in Nevşehir. It is expected that this archaeological site to be brought to tourism will



be a major tourism destination in the near future as it has the feature of being the world's largest underground settlement.

- The cultural heritage merged with tourism provides significant added value both in economic and social life to all local people. Specially business operating in the field of tourism in the region.

The project could development thanks to several partner entities:

- Volunteer Expert Participants: Culture and history researchers, teachers, academics or any experts living in the city had role in the interpretation of the spaces and materials found during the excavations.
- Volunteers: With the contribution of volunteer citizens who are archiving the old photographs of Nevşehir and have done extensive research to reach these photographs and are still doing, the visual information has been reached regarding the old structure of the area.
- Elderly Citizens: The expressions/narrations of elderly citizens who have lived the history of Nevşehir, listened history from their parents and transferred their experiences and knowledge have helped during the excavations.

Nevşehir also worked with the provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, which took part in promoting and disseminating of the ruins, receiving the necessary permissions and documents; several universities, with students and academicians participating in the screening of the information related to the city history from the Ottoman and Republican Archives ; and with the ottoman and Republican Archives, whose staff gave support on scanning and transposition of the documents to the electronic media.

The beneficiaries of the project are businesses, travel agencies, guides, tour operators being active in tourism and tourism-attached sectors in Nevşehir province and region;

local and regional people benefitting from socio-economic welfare increases; and domestic and foreign tourists who have the opportunity to see and visit the sites.

## 4. Impacts

### 1.1. Direct impacts

#### Impacts on the local government

The municipality was enriched in historical and cultural thanks to the archaeological excavations. It has also become a leading institution in municipalism in the period when the municipalities are seen as institutions only providing infrastructure services.

#### Impact on culture and local cultural actors of the city/territory

The archaeological excavations bring together national and international cultural actors and academics. This cultural discovery has been a platform for all researchers to access easily and work. It has played an important role in introducing region's culture to different cities and countries..

#### Impact on the territory and its population

Nevşehir Municipality that undertake as a duty to move the potential of the region to the highest point by meeting the cultural needs of the region with its works has a leading position in the region in this regard. The participation and satisfaction are increasing every day.

THE PROJECT INCREASED THE REGION'S POTENTIAL FOR ATTRACTING INVESTORS.

### 1.2. Transversal impacts

Free access will be provided for all disadvantaged groups especially women, disabled and young people. It will attract domestic and foreign investors and each investment done will set as an example to other relevant sectors. In time with the increase in employment areas, the socio-economic welfare will increase in the city. The project will contribute significantly to the development of inter-institutional cooperation. It will serve as a model for the institutions of many cities that have a rich history and natural heritage but are not aware of its importance, and will take the lead on the preparation of similar projects.

## 5. Further information

The city of Nevşehir was a nominated candidate for the first 'UCLG International Award – Mexico City – Culture 21' (January – May 2016). The awards jury produced a final report in June 2016 and asked the UCLG Committee on Culture to promote this project as a practical example for the implementation of Agenda 21 for Culture.

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